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Christa Pagenkopf

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An Alberta Craft Beer Success Story Ready for Its Next Chapter

Cowboy Trail Brewery (CTB) has spent the year doing something notable in Alberta's craft-beer landscape: growing fast, earning national recognition, and strengthening its ties within the province's craft-beer community. It has become one of Alberta's most compelling family-run success stories.

Despite a competitive market, CTB has emerged as a standout performer. The brewery's core lineup continues to gain strong traction, with great support from nearly every establishment in Bragg Creek, to Calgary Co-op, Sobeys Liquor, Wine and Beyond, Ace Liquor, and many other independent stores across the province. Re-orders, tap placements, and community partnerships have pushed the brand further into the spotlight.

That momentum is backed by national recognition. CTB's Dark Ale earned Gold at both the World Beer Awards and the Canada Beer Awards, claiming top honours not just in Canada, but globally. The Blonde Ale secured Silver, the Wheat Ale brought home Bronze, and High Noon recently won Bronze at the Canada Beer Cup 2025. For a brewery still operating without its own facility, this level of recognition

is uncommon, and speaks to the quality behind every brew.

Community connection has been a core value at the brewery since the very beginning. CTB sponsors local events, partners with local groups and associations, supports Bragg Creek Chamber initiatives, and collaborates with many local businesses. From festivals and community events to fundraisers, the brewery has become a familiar and trusted presence.

As the brand grows, the team continues exploring options for a future brewery location in Bragg Creek; a space that reflects the community's character and enhances both local and visitor experiences. Our vision is clear: a warm, western-inspired taproom; a place for locals and visitors to gather; and a destination that celebrates both the community and the landscape around it.

"We're focused on choosing a location that truly adds to the Bragg Creek experience," said founder Jason Traviss. "The right space will let us create something meaningful for the community."

Alongside these plans, CTB is expanding its lineup. New releases, including the Hippiest & Cowboys



Hazy NEIPA and the Lock & Load Pilsner, have joined the award-winning core beers, and new seasonals continue to roll out. Retailers have responded strongly, and customers are showing growing excitement for the brand's clean, Alberta-inspired flavours.

What began as a passion project has quickly grown into a recognizable part of Alberta's craft-beer landscape; community-minded, quality-focused, and proudly local. The story continues to unfold, driven by hard work, loyal supporters, and a steady commitment to doing things right.

As CTB continues to grow, its story reflects what's possible when a brand stays true to its roots and committed to the community that's supported it from the beginning.

Wishing you and your families a wonderful holiday season. Cheers to the WEST!

Cowboy Trail Brewery products are proudly available at local establishments in Bragg Creek, including Bragg Creek Distillers, Creekers Liquor, Spirits West, and many restaurants. You can also find us at liquor stores across Alberta such as Co-op, Sobeys, Safeway Liquor, Wine and Beyond, and more.



www.cowboytrail.beer

@cowboytrailbrewery

Bragg Creek, Alberta

403.390.8899



HIGH COUNTRY News

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Winter has finally arrived and our communities are beginning to have that magical Christmas vibe. For our family, we're looking forward to having all of our adult children coming home. There will be 11 children, 5 spouses, 5 grandchildren, one great grandfather, a dog, and a nephew! We're looking forward to the time, albeit it will be chaotic.

I'm really looking forward to taking my British son-in-law out to find and cut down his first REAL Christmas Tree. For many people, finding the "perfect" gift, entertaining and meal preparation, an over full schedule, and the unresolved relational challenges can bring increased pressure. Before hurling ourselves into the intense Christmas fray, ask "When all is said and done, what will define my Christmas season as a positive lasting memory?" I would argue that investment into relationship is what's most important. Then allow the allocation of your resources and creativity to go towards that.

Calendar

If you haven't viewed our online community

calendar, please do so. This service helps promote the various events that are taking place. Check it out and get involved.

The Business Directory is now Online

This will be fully functional in the New Year however the basic listing information is currently live. Check it out and, if your business isn't there, give us a call.

Classifieds

We will be re-branding this service in the New Year. Stay tuned. Included in this re-brand will be a service specific to the business community where we help connect available work to those looking for it. We want to be part of the solution that bridges the employment gap.

Lastly, if you enjoy reading the High Country News, we would appreciate your financial contribution. We fully rely on advertising revenues from our local business community and have no external government funding. In order to keep our advertising rates reasonable, and to provide space for our non-profit contributors, your generous support is appreciated. Scan the QR code provided if you would like to donate to what we do.

*From my family to yours,
Lowell Harder*



COVER ARTIST PROFILE

Ursula Pagenkopf is a native of Germany and has made her second home in Calgary where she and her husband raised three children. Her paintings reflect the 'naive' style which people have come to know as 'happy paintings' because of the subject matter: children at play.

Ursula is a self-taught artist and has received various art achievement awards. She has been a long-time member of the Calgary Sketch Club. With this group she exhibits regularly in various locations throughout Calgary. Ursula's paintings have also been auctioned off at the Western Art Auction of the Calgary Stampede. Ursula has also been featured with her art work in various local newspapers and magazines. For more information you can reach the artist at her studio at 403-242-9386

We are looking to feature local amateur and professional artists or photographers. Now that we have a colour publication our ability to feature your work is better than ever. Submit your work to info@highcountrynews.ca We are looking forward to seeing what you create.

HIGH COUNTRY LIFE

BY MARK ADMASI.CA

 **BRAGG CREEK**
community church

Christmas Eve CAROL SERVICE

7:00pm • December 24th
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Bring the entire family and join us as we celebrate the reason for the season at the heart of Christmas!

Questions? Check out www.braggcreekchurch.ca or email braggcreekcommunitychurch@gmail.com



SPRINGBANK HERITAGE CLUB

Springbank Heritage Club is a not-for-profit organization created for the benefit and enjoyment of senior citizens age 50+ in Springbank and surrounding communities. We are located at 244168 Range Road 33 and you can find us online at www.springbankheritageclub.com.

We will be hosting a panel discussion on healthy ageing on Wednesday December 3rd from 7:00 to approximately 8:30pm. The panel will include two physicians from the Alberta Centre for Healthy Ageing and an Occupational Therapist. This will be a good opportunity to ask the tough questions about ageing and how best to age well. There is a \$5.00 fee to cover the pie. Please register and pay via email at springbankhc@telus.net. Hope to see you there!

Are you in the Christmas spirit? If not, let us help! The "CommUKEity" group (students who play the ukulele and sing!) from Harmony will be coming to the Springbank Heritage Club to perform a few songs and lead the seniors in a Christmas

Carol singalong. Come for some fun holiday music to kick off the month of December!

Monday December 1st at 4:30pm

Approximately 30 minutes of music. Bring your singing voice, song sheets will be provided.

Our winter series of exercise class will start in January. Classes are Monday, Wednesday

and Friday 9:00 – 10:00am. This is a low-impact class that offers a variety of movements designed to increase muscular strength and balance through the use of weights and cardio exercises. Details are available on our website.

We wish you a very Merry Christmas, and a prosperous New Year!



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OUNCILLOR UPDATE ROCKY VIEW COUNTY By Kevin Hanson - Division 1

Quick Bits

The new Council is gelling nicely, and we are fully into budgeting mode between now and mid-December. This months' update was prepared before the election, so is a bit dated, but still relevant.

Building the second span of the bridge over the Elbow River has seen pile construction into the river bed, and approaches laid out and graded. Completion of the divided Highway 8 portion towards Stone Pine turn off is progressing. The roadbed for the new west-bound lanes is laid out and partially graded, revealing how it will be merged from its twinned configuration crossing the Elbow back into a single two-lane configuration.

Once completed, Rocky View will have the ability to work on adding its municipal features like pedestrian cross walks into the provincial road right of way at Lott Creek Drive (with the Province's permission).

Municipal Development Plan Review

This is the highest-level statutory planning document for the County. Being "statutory" means that it is a legal policy document that any development in the municipality must adhere to. As the top-level planning document, it serves as the umbrella under which all Area Structure Plan are constructed. It is also the default planning policy for any areas of the County outside of an ASP (all our agricultural lands). Updating this plan was one of this Council's major priorities, and it was a fulsome 2-year journey with much public engagement along the way.

The first public hearing was on July 10th. Council gave first reading referring it back to administration to aggregate the feedback with individual councilor's recommendations, and produce a final set of amendments. Since they were substantive, a second public hearing was called on September 2nd, to allow for public comment. At the close of this hearing, Council postponed debate to September 16, 2025. This would allow time for administration to update the proposed amendments, and provide additional information and alternative options.

My point to all this is that the review and update was a very deliberate and thoughtful

process, with lots of engagement and time for Council to consider not only the general intent of a policy statement, but all the potential implications or unintended consequences of the policy language.

There were 50 amendments to debate on Sept 16th, considered in three tranches: 21 Minor, 11 Major, and 18 Clarifying. Administration provided 8 minor and clarifying amendments capturing the public feedback and translating into proper policy language for us. I provided 6 minor, 2 major and 8 clarifying amendments. Councillor Samra had a handful, while Councillor Wright had the bulk of suggestions. No other Councilors provided amendments for consideration.

My amendments focused on protecting agricultural lands, minimizing fragmentation of agricultural land by incursion of country residential development, stronger policy for 3rd-party review of complex technical documents, requirement for fiscal impact modelling of ALL new area structure plans, requirements for recreation matters, open space, parks, and trails & pathways be considered in ASP's with a residential component, and having a 10-year sunset clause in any ASP with potential for rescinding if no progress has been made, or the plan is no longer compatible with the MDP. Many, but not all were successful.

Utilities Rate Increase

At the September 16th Council meeting, Council unanimously approved a 10% across the board increase for all county operated water and wastewater utility systems. After 3-years of gyrations amongst Council with no progress and no rate adjustments during that time, we have stopped the backwards slide into more subsidy with this inflation-only adjustment. There is much more work here to be done on our overall Utilities Strategy.

Recreation Grant Adjustment for Bragg Creek Trails

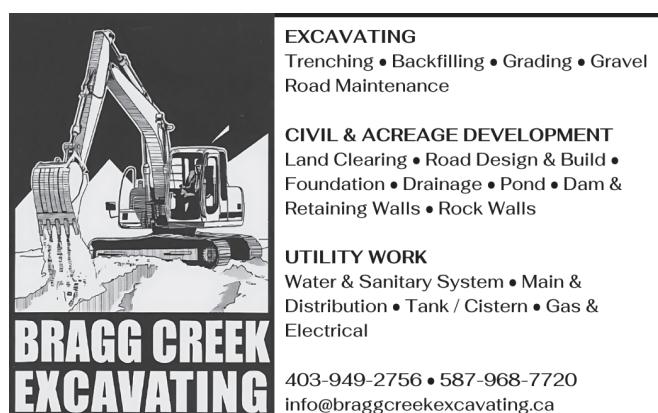
BCT came before the Recreation Governance Committee to ask for consideration of some allocation adjustments to their approved grant funding of \$166K for trail building and maintenance. Due to changes at the Provincial level, they have to reduce the scope of their project to trails "closer to home" which will leave a portion their grant available to invest in feasibility studies for an improved trailhead building. They also requested a one-year time extension to use the funds. Their ask was successful.

Kineticor Datacentre ASP

Just a note explaining my lone opposing vote for this ASP. During the public hearing I asked the proponent a number of questions relating to their willingness to modify the scale, scope, phasing, and policy addition for water conservation and protection of net agricultural output from the land they chose to locate on. Although their answers strongly indicated unwillingness to budge, I thought that if the application was referred back to administration for further work, they would more seriously consider the resident feedback and make adjustments. I also asked clarifying questions of administration about potential alternative directions to support that.

By not refusing the application, I did not vote in favour. I was looking towards an alternative direction for those considerations to be incorporated. I learned at the hearing that Kineticor's public engagement was abysmal, and that the County should not leave stakeholder engagement in the hands of developers on a "developer funded" ASP. We need skin in the game.

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ROCKY VIEW SCHOOL BOARD

TRUSTEE REPORT

By Joanna Brownlee - Ward 4

As your new trustee I look forward to working with the communities of Ward 4, advocating for our students and promoting a safe, innovative and successful learning environment for all. As a Springbank Community High School alumni this community is very close to my heart. In my first few weeks of trusteeship I have had the opportunity to get to know and work with some of you, seeing all the hard work that goes on behind the scenes to make our school operations run so smoothly day to day. I am very fortunate to be working with so many who are just as passionate as I am about making our schools the best they can be.

Many of you knew Judi Hunter, the previous trustee, who did not seek re-election this term. I want to take a moment to reflect on all of her hard work and service during her two terms on the board. She worked diligently and passionately in all aspects of the role. Her contributions will continue to be appreciated by our communities for years to come.

The new Rocky View Board of Trustees was sworn in on the morning of October 30th. Following the swearing in ceremony, the board held their yearly Organizational meeting where Fiona Gilbert (Ward 5) was re-elected Chair and Melyssa Bowen (Ward 3) was elected vice-chair for the first time. Regular board meetings are held on Thursdays and are open to the public. Dates vary so please check the RVS calendar for specific dates.

It has been an eventful first few months of school so I want to touch on some updates Rocky View has released following the recent labour actions.

Following the labour action, students and staff returned to school on Wednesday October 29th. Throughout all Rocky View Schools, I am pleased to report that we have seen strong attendance of all our ATA members and I would like to commend all of our staff for their hard work in resuming activities with such short notice and such huge success.

RVS will be reimbursing parents for funds that went unused during the labour action such as bus, sports, class and field trip fees.

Refunds for transportation fees are underway, as service was suspended during the labour action. Families will receive direct communication from the transportation department. School based fee's will take longer to process as impacts vary by school. RVS administration is working with schools to determine appropriate refunds.

Diplomas and PAT'S have officially been cancelled for the first semester, if students want to take their diploma they will have the option to do so in April or June - grade 6's will still be taking their PAT'S as usual.

Rocky View has changed the last day of regular instruction in January to accommodate 5 additional days of regular instruction and give students and teachers additional time to make up for the lost instructional time caused by labour action. This will impact only grades 8/9-12 students and changed the last day from January 16th to January 23rd.

For Middle and Elementary schools; no changes were made to term dates. The decision was made not to formally change dates, allowing schools to adjust within their own needs.

The Alberta government has created a Class Size and Complexity Cabinet Committee consisting of 14 members who will spend the coming months collecting data, consulting school authorities, academic experts and community partners with 3 goals in mind.

- Establishing criteria for funding and resource allocation based on class size and composition data.

- Implementing recommendations from the Aggression and Complexity in Schools Action Team report.

- Developing a new Inclusive Education Policy Framework to replace the 2004 Standards for Special Education.

<https://www.alberta.ca/taking-action-on-classroom-complexity#:~:text=Formed%20in%20November%202025%2C%20the,in%20the%20public%20education%20system.>

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MLA UPDATE - BANFF/KANANSKIS

By Sarah Elmeligi

Back in the Legislature: Standing Up for Albertans and Banff-Kananaskis

With only 5 weeks of session and over 15 bills to debate, fall session has been beyond busy! From the Throne Speech to the first week, protestors gathered outside the legislature each day. Many Albertans are very upset with decisions this government is making. After the Throne Speech, I went outside and was greeted by over 35,000 teachers, parents, and students protesting the Alberta government's approach to dealing with the teacher strike. It was unlike any protest I've ever seen in Edmonton: Singing, drumming, dancing, incredible speeches, passionate Albertans of all ages standing up for public education and supporting our teachers through an incredibly hard time. I was inspired and motivated to stand up for our parents, students, and teachers and advocate for a better public school system with better classroom sizes and supports. The stories I've heard from teachers, parents, and students across our riding about their experiences have exemplified the challenges our public education system is experiencing, and I am so grateful to

everyone who emailed me or stopped me in the street to share their concerns.

Our first Monday of session started with Bill 2 – the act that legislated teachers back to work. Alarmingly, the government used the notwithstanding clause in Bill 2 – never before used in Alberta's history – in an unprecedented abuse of power. We were in the legislature until 2am as the Government pushed through this act by limiting debate. As opposition, we fought as hard we could and delayed the

passing of the bill. We continue to push against this government's heavy-handed and controlling approach that is literally limiting our freedoms. When I became MLA, I thought we would be questioning ideological approaches and how we best support our Albertans to succeed. I never considered we would debate upholding the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is my honour to stand in that House and defend our democracy and our rights.



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Jerry & Nancy Kamphuis

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It was awfully hard to start session with the government intentionally and unjustifiably violating the Charter-protected rights and freedoms of teachers, workers, and their unions rather than use proper procedure with all its checks and balances that safeguard the rights of its citizens. From there, the Government again invoked the notwithstanding clause to limit the rights of Trans youth. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms is designed to protect ALL Canadians and guarantee us rights equally, and this government is choosing to weaken that promise upon which our shared belief in democracy depends.

Water Amendment Act

As Shadow Minister, my role includes reviewing and debating pieces of legislation introduced by the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas. This fall, we debated Bill 7: the Water Amendment Act. The Minister's direction in her mandate letter is to make more water available to Albertans and this bill does that. Though, to be honest, I've always struggled with the idea that we can make more water available — we can't make it rain. What we can do is increase water use efficiency and find ways to do more with less water.

Bill 7 defined some provisions that would improve water license administration efficiency and help users work through

monitoring requirements. These pieces are good in that they help improve bureaucratic processes as well as working with users to improve water monitoring and use. Yet while this bill contained some good components, I didn't feel like it was focused on protecting Albertans' water availability and quality for present and future generations. This bill also gave the Minister far-reaching powers without requiring consultation with experts of Albertans—the ability to act without consultation always makes me uncomfortable.

The Bill defined low-risk interbasin transfers allowing water to be transferred between adjacent basins. Prior to this Bill, interbasin transfers were allowed but only through a special act in the legislature. Interbasin transfers are inherently risky, having the potential to introduce invasive aquatic species or alter water quality and quantity in one of the basins. While the Bill contained some definitions of low-risk transfer to address these concerns, I introduced an amendment to strengthen those criteria and to increase monitoring of basin transfers to ensure we are continuing to protect our water. I also advocated for instream flows and ensuring aquatic habitat quality be more explicitly considered in the Bill. I look forward to working with

stakeholders and the Minister to ensure forthcoming regulations protect our water, our access to it, and our rivers and streams.

Happy Holidays

Every year, I set an intention to visit a holiday market in every community in this riding. Our local artisans are incredible and all our holiday gifts to friends are family are unique, locally made, and special. From Springbank and Bragg Creek to Millarville and Priddis and into Canmore and Banff, it is always great to connect with our community and support our local artists' great work. I've got 2 more markets left in the first half of December so if you see me, come say hi. Be sure to register via email for Trails Day on December 18th — I always look forward to these special days that offer a slight change to my standard MLA on Tour events. Spending time together outdoors, walking in the woods with dogs and kids, we have a great chance to chat while enjoying this beautiful place we are so lucky to call home. Check here or my social media for details on these and more MLA on Tour events in the New Year.

Please note that our office will be closed over the holiday from December 23rd to January 4th. My staff and I wish you all the brightest Holiday Season filled with great food and laughter shared with family and friends.

Sarah Elmeliqi



SARAH ELMELIQI
MLA BANFF-KANANASKIS
Connect this month at:
Local Holiday Markets
Trails Day: Dec 18th



Stay updated on Social Media

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The Hidden Role of Luck in Building Wealth

When it comes to money and investing, a lot of people fall into the same trap: chasing what's "hot" right now. If a certain stock, sector, or trend is making headlines, many will jump in—hoping they've found a "sure thing."

The funny thing is, that's the exact opposite of how real planning works. Whether it's a financial strategy, goal setting, or life in general, **lasting results come from acting before the proof is obvious.**

Think about New Year's resolutions. When you commit to exercising three times a week or finding a new job, you're betting on something you want, not something you already see. At first, there's no evidence it will work—but over time, if your actions match your intentions, results show up. Eventually, you may even enjoy the process.

The problem is, most people want proof first. Actually, it works the other way around: action comes first, then proof follows. For example—Gandhi imagined a free India long before there was any evidence it could happen.

A financial strategy works the same way. When you buy a car, you get the keys immediately. But when you sit down with an advisor to map out retirement, you're taking steps today for something you might not see for 20 or 30 years. The only "evidence" we have is the past—and while it can guide us, it can't guarantee the future.

That's where both wise behavior and a little luck come into play. Advisors can point to past success stories, but your journey will be unique. You might even do better than expected—but there are no promises.

The smartest path? Follow proven strategies to build wealth as efficiently as possible, while tailoring them to your comfort level, lifestyle, and financial situation. Your plan should factor in your health, earning potential, savings ability, and resilience against life's bumps—like recessions, job loss, or unexpected expenses.

Once the key pieces are in place—saving tax-efficiently with RRSPs or TFSAs, managing risk, and living within your

means—the next step is to give your plan the one thing it truly needs: time.

But don't confuse that with "set it and forget it." The economy changes. Government policies shift. Markets evolve. These things will impact your plan, which is why regular check-ins and adjustments are crucial.

And then there's luck—the wildcard you can't control but can certainly be ready for. Who could have predicted that real estate values in some Canadian cities would skyrocket, giving many Baby Boomers an unexpected boost to their retirement? Sometimes, simply owning the right asset at the right time makes all the difference.

In the end, good planning is about creating the conditions where luck can work in your favor. Preparation doesn't guarantee success—but it sure stacks the odds.

Let's talk about how to combine smart planning with life's unpredictable twists to help you reach your goals.

Call me today to set up an appointment to review your goals and objectives and to ensure that your current investment approach will allow you to fulfill your goals.

The key to successful long-term investing is to keep your present situation in perspective and be optimistic that you can respond to any circumstances that life throws at you, while working with a professional advisor.

Call today for a review of charting the path forward.

**Warmest Wishes
for a Merry
Christmas
and a
Healthy and
Prosperous
New Year**



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MAKE YOUR MARK

By Mark Kamachi

The last article of 2025.

Thanks to those who have followed me to the end. And speaking of the end, in this article I'll turn my attention to businesses that use a sales strategy that attempts to turn last-minute profits. That strategy is a Boxing Day sale. What is a Boxing Day sale?

When I Google it, I get the following: *Boxing Day comes from two traditions: the giving of "Christmas boxes" containing gifts and money to servants and tradespeople, and the collection of money in church donation boxes to be distributed to the poor on the Feast of St. Stephen on December 26th.* Over the years it's turned into something a bit more like Black Friday, a major retail promotion held the day after the US Thanksgiving and is financially focused, referring to retailers moving from "in the red" to "in the black". Either of these days to shoppers means one thing: Sales.

When you engage your business in a Boxing Day event, you're broadcasting not only your brand's personality with a disco ball but inviting your bottom line to a game of roulette. The sign promises urgency and generous savings. Things that can either make your brand look like it's over caffeinated or sales are sluggish and in need of another cup of joe.

Done well, it can help you boost foot traffic, attract new customers, sell impulse purchases and help clear out inventory that's been rotting since January. Done poorly, it trains shoppers to treat full price like a "suggestion" you can outwait. It undermines your product's value and exhausts your employees. Either way, the sign is a signal. Are you about discounts and joy, or about panic and markdown pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey? Your cash register and reputation will answer honestly.

Consider a candy shop that does it right: The advertisement doesn't scream. It invites. Your social media post announces a "Sweetheart of a Boxing Day Sale" with a "Buy 2, Get 1" on remaining holiday treats. Inside, staff bundle high margin seasonal crowd-pleasers such as peppermint bark with candy canes. Shoppers feel welcomed, not hustled, and leave with treats they didn't know they needed ten minutes

earlier. A bonus, since it's after Christmas. The brand comes off neighbourly, generous and fun. You just had a huge turnover of seasonal stock and customers leave with a grin sure to return. Plus your bottom-line nods in happiness.

Now, what if it's not the right strategy for a business? Consider the tire shop next door. A digital ad flies across your screen as you check out the day's weather online. "BOXING DAY 70% OFF TIRES!!!!" in letters large enough to reach the sky. Tires aren't impulse items. They are size specific, safety critical, labor heavy, and thin margined. The headline summons shopping snipers expecting the exact fit in stock and installation. Inventory lags, other shoppers jostle and fight, wait times stretch, and staff spend hours run off their feet trying to fend off blood thirsty deal hunters. Disappointment morphs into walk-outs, price expectations crater, and whatever remains of your brand shopping experience evaporates in the sweaty scuffle. Not exactly inspiring confidence at highway speeds and the shopper may go elsewhere calmer next time.

The takeaway. When it comes to your brand, use sale strategies sparingly for the right product and right audience.

See ya next year, mark.

THE POWDERHORN SALOON
BRAGG CREEK, AB.

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Experiencing sales pressure?

A huge sale can boost revenue, attract customers and squeeze out unwanted inventory. However, deep discounts risk eroding your brand value, training deal-seeking behavior and potentially alienating loyal buyers who paid full price. Don't blow up years of building with one bad blow out. Let us create your next sales extravaganza.



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BRAGG CREEK AND AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

As we close out another successful year in Bragg Creek, the Chamber of Commerce would like to extend our warmest thanks to all our members, volunteers, and community partners. Your dedication, enthusiasm, and willingness to give your time have made a remarkable impact throughout 2026.

Whether you volunteered on the Board, supported Chamber initiatives, or contributed your energy to community events and activities, your involvement has helped strengthen our local business community and enrich the spirit of Bragg Creek. We are truly grateful for your commitment.

Please note that we will not be holding a Chamber meeting in December. We encourage everyone to enjoy the holiday season, spend time with loved ones, and recharge for the year ahead.

Our next Chamber meeting will take place on:

January 21, 2026

7:00 PM

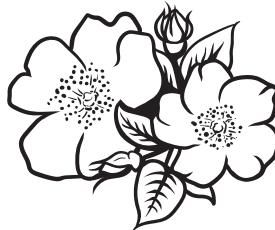
The Post House

We look forward to starting the new year together and continuing our shared efforts to support local businesses and build a vibrant community.

Wishing you all a joyful holiday season and a wonderful start to the new year!

W: visitbraggcreek.com/bragg-creek-chamber
E: Office@braggcreekchamber.com

On behalf of your Bragg Creek & Area Chamber team.



COY'S CHRISTMAS TREES

TWO DAYS ONLY
Sat & Sun December 6/7
10:00AM to 5:00PM
(While supply lasts)

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and all the best in 2026!**

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TOMMY JOHN INJURIES

As I write this article, The Toronto Blue Jays just wrapped up their last game in the World Series. What an amazing season. We came so close, several times, to almost clinch that final game! Regardless, it's been exciting for Canada to be part of this event after more than 30 years, and watching many Canadians come together in another sporting competition. As internet algorithms go, and being a Physiotherapist, my social media has been blowing up with information about Tommy John injuries. Namely, a tear or sprain of the ulnar collateral ligament (UCL) on the inner elbow. Named after the first baseball player to successfully undergo UCL reconstruction surgery in 1974, this injury has become a defining issue in modern throwing sports.

The UCL is a strong band of tissue on the inner side of the elbow that stabilizes it during the throwing motion. Repetitive stress from overhead throwing places extreme forces on the ligament. Over time, microtears accumulate, which can lead to partial or complete rupture. Other overhead sports such as racquet sports, football and water polo can experience UCL injuries from repetitive motions. In addition, trauma such as a fall on an outstretched arm, a direct blow to the

elbow or sports such as gymnastics or wrestling can cause trauma to this ligament.

Diagnosis is based on a combination of physical examination, history, and possibly imaging such as MRI or ultrasound. Mild or partial tears may respond to conservative management, while complete ruptures in competitive athletes often require UCL reconstruction ("Tommy John surgery"). Often people complain of medial elbow pain, decreased throwing velocity, perhaps a popping sensation. There may be numbness or tingling to the ring and little fingers that may occur due to irritation of the ulnar nerve that runs along the inner elbow.

Physiotherapy plays a critical role in both non-surgical and post-surgical management, focusing on restoring strength, stability, and efficient throwing mechanics. Initial rest, protection and modalities can help protect the ligament and reduce inflammation. Progressing to gentle stretching with elbow and shoulder range of motion. Then a graduated dynamic strengthening program including wrist, forearm, elbow, shoulder and scapular control is integral to restore proper throwing mechanics.

Physiotherapy also plays a preventive role. Overuse is the primary risk factor for UCL injuries, particularly in young athletes who throw year-round. Prevention elements include ensuring adequate rest and cross training, maintaining shoulder and core strength, teaching proper

throwing mechanics and addressing "kinetic chain deficits" – issues in the hips, trunk, or shoulders that may overload the elbow. Education on recovery, workload management, and early symptom recognition helps athletes stay healthy and avoid re-injury.

The Tommy John injury highlights the complex relationship between biomechanics, overuse, and sport performance. Physiotherapy is vital—not only in rehabilitation after UCL injury or surgery but also in preventing recurrence through strength, stability, and movement retraining.

Whether an elite pitcher or a recreational athlete, early physiotherapy intervention ensures a safer, stronger, and more sustainable return to activity. If you are struggling with any type of elbow injury, we are here to help you diagnose the problem and get you back to your best functional self.

Happy Holidays this season! We wish this great community a happy and healthy end to 2025 and all the best for the new year ahead.

*Jennifer Gordon
(BSc.PT, GunnIMS, AFCI)
Physiotherapist - Bragg Creek Physiotherapy
www.braggcreekphysio.com*

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BRAGG CREEK COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

We were looking for a few bright sparks; people with energy, ideas, and a passion for community to volunteer on the Board. What we found at the BCCA AGM on October 28th was a fantastic community turn out that showed involvement, energy, and support. In fact, we were overjoyed to have filled all the board seats with folks ready to roll up their sleeves and make fireworks!

Heading into a bright December, we can legitimately say, "The More the Merrier!" Let's get started...

A team of elves have once again been hard at work to present **Bragg Creek's Spirit of Christmas Festival!** There will be different happenings on different days, so be sure to get your festival map! It will be available in print around town the day of, and in advance on the BCCA website www.braggcreekca.com.

- Friday, December 5th: Sneak-a-Peek Indoor Market Night: 4pm to 8pm
- We are thrilled to be partnering with 45+ small and local businesses

- Free entry, free parking, and free smiles
- Saturday, December 6th:
 - Activities generously hosted by local businesses
 - Indoor Holiday Market from 10am to 5pm
 - Wagon Rides from 11am to 4pm
 - Photos with Santa
 - Coy's Christmas Tree sales
- Sunday, December 7th:
 - All of the Saturday activities PLUS
 - Kids Only Shopping Store at the Post House from 11am to 4pm (timed tickets encouraged)

This very special weekend is always dependent on our wonderful community volunteers. It is not too late to jump on the train and put your elf hat on. Please check our website and SignUp.com for a multitude of fun volunteer opportunities. Thank you for being part of the magic!

The Community Centre has a position opening for Operations Manager posted on the website. Do you know someone who would be the perfect fit?

For us, it's not just a workplace; we're a team with heart and we're passionate about where we live and work.

Holiday stop and go dates: All regular programs will wrap up by December 19th, and resume the week of January 5th.

Ice Rink: The Rink Committee is excited to see us all out skating as soon as the weather and conditions permit. There is a daily schedule posted at the rink for both open skating and ice hockey times.

Save the Date! We are excited to bring you Winter in the Woods on January 31st. You won't want to miss this celebration of all things winter, with a specific focus on fundraising for our beloved outdoor rink. To help create this quintessential day of Bragg Creek Heart, reach out to get in on the festival planning! Email Shaye at program@braggcreekca.com

Reflection: The Bragg Creek Community Church offers support in many ways including food bank access. If you need to reach out, do not hesitate to contact the Church, us, or anyone you feel comfortable with. Bragg Creek is a supportive community and we want to ensure the warmth of the season is felt by all.

Let in the sparkle, the joy, and the warmth. Merry Christmas, with gratitude, from the BCCA!

Your BCCA - www.braggcreekca.com

**Bragg Creek's
Spirit of
Christmas
FESTIVAL**

Sat Dec 6 & Sun Dec 7 10 AM - 4 PM

Join us for Bragg Creek's Annual Christmas Festival including Horse Drawn Wagon Rides, Kids-Only Shopping Store, Local In-Store Activities and more!

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Sat Dec 6 10 AM - 5 PM
Sun Dec 7 10 AM - 4 PM**

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Congratulations and a Heartfelt Thank You

Celebrating New Beginnings at the Cinnamon Spoon Coffee Shop

We are delighted to announce that two of our long-standing staff members, Kylie and Eleanor, have recently purchased the beloved Cinnamon Spoon Coffee Shop. Their dedication, passion, and unwavering commitment to our community make them the perfect new stewards for this special place.

Please join us in congratulating Kylie and Eleanor on this exciting new chapter – be sure to stop by, say hello, and show your support as they embark on this wonderful journey.

Additionally, Anne and I would like to extend our deepest gratitude to all our loyal customers. Over the past 30 years, your support, friendship, and encouragement have meant the world to us. It has been quite a journey, filled with memorable moments and cherished connections. Thank you for being an integral part of the Cinnamon Spoon family.

With warmest regards, Anne Goss & Michael Woertman

We sincerely thank you for your many continuous years of patronage and take this opportunity to extend our Christmas Greetings and Best Wishes for 2026

Tegtmeyer Family & Staff

Bragg Creek Trading Post





XC BRAGG CREEK SKI AND BIKE SOCIETY

Despite the lack of snow XCBC's Competitive Nordic Season is in full swing. We got off to an awesome start with our first Weekend Camp in early November and our athletes are continuing to develop and hone their skills on and off the snow. These Athletes will be competing at the Alberta Cup 1 & 2 in Canmore on December 20 and we wish them the best of luck!

From Coach Joni:

A big shout-out to our athletes who took on the Grizzly Ultra Marathon and Relay in Canmore this past weekend! Despite fresh snow, cold temperatures, and constantly changing trail conditions, our athletes showed incredible grit and teamwork as they covered 49.6 km of mountain trails.

Owen K. raced solo and earned an impressive 4th place finish, while our relay team - Evelyn P., Logan R., Micah S., Bruce M., and Jordan M. - also brought home a strong 4th place.

We are so proud of these athletes for their perseverance, sportsmanship, and determination.

Our Non-Competitive Nordic Program is going to be starting at the beginning of December.

XCBC's Bunnies and Jackrabbits programs promote the fundamental development of ski skills in a fun-filled environment. The objective is for children to learn basic cross-country ski skills and to foster a lifelong interest in the sport, thereby enhancing their quality of life and health.

We are also immensely excited to be reintroducing our Rec Ski Program! This program is for skiers who have either finished Jackrabbits and love being outside, skiing with friends, and want to continue developing their skills in a fun and social environment, or skiers who are new to the sport, and want to develop their skills but are outside the Jackrabbits age limits.

There will be instruction, with emphasis on technique but the Rec Ski Program's goal is to build proficient lifelong skiers who love the sport.

Planning for XCBC's Biggest annual event is underway. **We will be hosting the Alberta Youth Championships in West Bragg Creek on March 7th & 8th.**



This is the premiere event for youth skiers, providing an opportunity for them to stay in camp over the weekend, meet new skiers from other clubs and compete for club pride in three different ski events. AYC is often the highlight of youth skiers' involvement in cross country skiing! We are always looking for support with this event, from sponsorship opportunities, to donations, to boots on the ground volunteers. If you are interested in supporting AYC contact programdirector@xcbraggcreek.ca to get involved.

Good Luck
XC Bragg Creek

We wish XCBC's Nordic Ninjas & Club Racers the best of luck as they head into the first race of the 2025-2026 season

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Bragg Creek Wild - A Year in Review

It's amazing how taking a moment to pause and look back can fill us with a renewed sense of purpose. Yes, there are always 101 things left to do, and progress can feel slow on some fronts. But Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither is a community where people and wildlife truly coexist. This past year brought momentum, challenges, and quiet progress behind the scenes. Here's a glimpse of what Bragg Creek Wild has been up to. If you feel inspired to join us, we'd love to hear from you.

Late last fall, we were invited to submit a five-year plan for funding through the BearSmart program. We are still awaiting a response from Alberta Forestry and Parks (as are the other BearSmart committees in the province). Meanwhile, the recent heartbreaking incident resulting in the killing of a mama bear, leaving three orphaned cubs and one hunter at the hospital, highlights the importance of this program and that of the Alberta Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan. We remain hopeful that support for this effective program will soon be renewed.

One of the brightest moments of the year came on March 14, when Brian Keating filled the Bragg Creek Community Centre gym with his trademark enthusiasm. Through stories brimming with humour and wonder, he reminded us how lucky we are to share this landscape with such extraordinary wildlife.



Shortly after the event, we launched a community survey to understand residents' needs and their awareness of garbage handling challenges at home, in public areas, and across commercial spaces. Around the same time, Rocky View County conducted its own survey. Both efforts received more than 600 responses and revealed a shared set of concerns: the need for better education, the installation of bear-proof bins in the commercial core, and the provision of subsidized bear-proof bins for residents.

A series of follow-up meetings with County staff and Council produced concrete commitments and a clear communication plan. We are encouraged by this momentum and look forward to seeing these initiatives put into action in our community soon.

In May, the BCW board dedicated two full days to governance training and strategic planning. These sessions were energizing and helped us sharpen our focus for the next five years and improve aspects of our operations. Among our top priorities: regenerative land-use practices and helping residents and visitors become truly "wild smart."

Meanwhile, our online presence is getting a full refresh. Our redesigned website will be more intuitive, more informative, and a true "hub" for anyone seeking guidance on living safely with wildlife. We expected to launch our new website in January.

Education remains at the heart of everything we do, from monthly articles in the High Country News and quarterly newsletters to active social media outreach and rotating messages on our road signs. Bragg Creek Days brought extra joy, as kids and adults alike learned how to use bear spray and followed our "moving bear on a track," an idea sparked by an Alberta BearSmart workshop we attended this spring.

Bragg Creek Wild is 100% volunteer-powered. Our community is rich with skilled, knowledgeable people who care deeply about our environment, understand our connection to wildlife, and believe in protecting and restoring our wild spaces. To everyone who lends a hand, whether for an hour or a whole project, THANK YOU!

For more information visit www.braggcreekwild.ca



DECK THE HALLS

With Fresh Baked Pretzels! Fa-la-la-la-la into our dining room this December to feast on seasonal offerings like the baked brie, as well as all your traditional favourites including fresh pretzels. Book your Christmas or New Year's Eve table now and treat your friends and family to the best gift of all, an evening at the Bav Tav. La-la-la-la!

75 White Avenue, Bragg Creek | Call 403 949 3632 to reserve your table | bavtav.com

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THE
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MOUNTAIN DRINKING

AT THE BAVARIAN INN



A BRAGG CREEK CHRISTMAS By J.M. Nylund

This story is a reflective tale, a patchwork of my memories from Christmases of my youth combined into one story. Although it is a work of fiction the people are real.

A Christmas concert at the Bragg Creek Round Hall.

It was Friday, December 19th, 1958. Eighteen inches of fresh snow had blanketed the hamlet of Bragg Creek turning it into a pristine wonderland. Tonight was the annual school Christmas concert at the Round Hall so volunteers were to meet at the hall for a day of preparation for this special event. The day was bright and sunny, but the deep snow was hindering travel. Undaunted, the local women bundled up and walked through the knee-deep snow to the hall. A few days ago, several boxes of donations, goodies and decorations had been dropped off at Elsdon's Bragg Creek Trading Post. Very

early that morning Jack Elsdon delivered the boxes to the hall by loading them on a large sled and pulling the sled by hand across the frozen Elbow River to the hall. Jack started a fire in the wood burning stove in the centre of the room; stoked it with wood and then placed a large enamel coffee pot on top. By the time the women arrived the hall was cozy and warm, the aroma of coffee filled the air!

The work began as gifts were wrapped and candy bags stuffed with an assortment of Christmas candy and oranges. A candy cane was carefully tied to each candy bag with a red ribbon. Mid-morning the women took a break to enjoy a cup of coffee. About then, the Fullerton brothers, who had a post & pole company, arrived in their huge logging truck breaking a trail through the snow! Jack, Steve, and Jim were pleased to provide the Christmas tree for the concert and what a beauty it was! The tree was set up near the stage and everyone pitched in to decorate it with strings of popcorn garlands, ornaments and candy canes. Someone had anonymously donated a beautiful hand-crafted star that was placed on the very top of the tree. Spruce boughs were carefully hung along

the log walls to add to the festive décor. Lanterns had been placed on hooks on the log beams providing soft lighting and making the room warm and inviting. Dave Jacobs, Bun Burles, Gene Fullerton and Jack Merryfield arrived with Jack's truck loaded with wooden chairs and benches that were quickly brought in and set up in theatre fashion. Just as everything seemed ready for the concert, in came Bob Fullerton and Dan Boucher with a very large chair covered with a beautiful Hereford cowhide. Bob announced, "Well, Santa has to have something comfortable to sit on!"

Suddenly, off in the distance, they heard the jingling of bells as a team of horses pulling a sleigh arrived driven by Keitha Watrin whose cheeks were red and rosy from the cold. Keitha had picked up her mail at Jackie McLennan's post office and was on her way back to her ranch. She stopped by the Round Hall and donated some straw bales and a beautiful nativity scene that had been handmade and donated by Bob McLennan, who was a master woodworker. The old Round Hall was going to be a magical place that evening and everyone was looking forward to the concert.

CHRISTMAS SHOPPING AT THE ORIGINAL

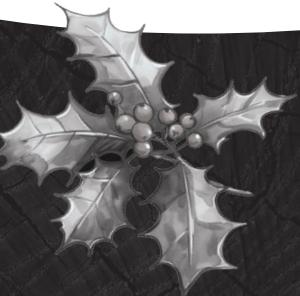
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Meanwhile, the school students were attending the little one-room school house with their teacher Miss Lillian Kelly. Their excitement was building and it was difficult to keep the kids focussed on school work so Miss Kelly decided it was best to spend the afternoon rehearsing for the concert. Desks were pushed aside and the students practiced their rhythm band performances, Christmas songs, recitations and skits. The school was kept warm and toasty by the large upright Findley Brothers wood heater that stood at the front of the classroom. Sitting on the stove was a large pot containing hot chocolate for everyone to enjoy.

The evening arrived with clear starlit skies and crisp, frosty air. The roads had been miraculously cleared. Neighbours from miles around made their way to the Round Hall filling it with energy and excitement. The Christmas concert turned out to be a wonderful success. For some reason, the kids had forgotten about Santa when suddenly the door flew open followed by the sound of heavy bootsteps, jingling bells and a loud "Ho! Ho! Ho!". To the delight of everyone, in came Santa carrying a huge red bag full of gifts. A few of the smaller children were frightened at first but when they noticed that most of their friends weren't scared, they soon joined in the group surrounding Santa's chair!

Some of the older children thought that Santa looked vaguely familiar – he kind of resembled their neighbour Albert Sanders. No! It couldn't be Mr. Sanders! It was Santa!

HIGH COUNTRY News

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BCEC AND THE NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL BANDING STATION

The BCEC Bird Group continues to evolve. In the April 2025 HCN we wrote about our Nocturnal Owl Monitoring citizen science work, as well as our members training in bird banding with the Calgary Bird Banding Society (CBBS). That work, and a serendipitous meeting with Millie Coeling – the Bander in Charge of the CBBS's Northern Saw-Whet Owl migration monitoring project – has led us on a wonderful adventure of learning, and a significant opportunity to contribute.

Millie reached out to us this spring with a proposal: the Northern Saw-Whet Owl (NSWO) banding station needed a new home – was there any chance BCEC could provide an appropriate ongoing site for the project? Fast-forward six months...and welcome to the new NSWO banding station located on the private property of a BCEC member in West Bragg Creek. We couldn't be more thrilled – it's a match made in bird heaven!

Since 2004 the CBBS has been monitoring migrating NSWOs (*Aegolius acadicus*). The CBBS's work is part of Project OwlNet, as collaborative, continent-wide research effort to study the migration of NSWO using mist-nets and banding. The project was founded

in 1994 to standardize and coordinate banding methods across North America.

Monitoring begins in mid-September and continues through the end of October. A continuous audio-lure – a recording of NSWOs – is played to attract the migrating owls. The lure is placed amongst an array of mesh mist-nets. The audio-lure commences approximately 0.5 hours after sunset and continues for 4 hours, weather and other factors permitting. Nets are checked at regular intervals by a Bander-in-Charge (BIC) and a team of volunteers. Sex, age and morphometric data are collected on all owls captured. Basic weather data (wind direction and speed, sky conditions and temperature) are noted at start and finish each evening.

In addition to four BCEC members participating in their role as volunteers, the CBBS was able to offer a guest experience to our general membership. Nine BCEC members had the opportunity to observe and help for an evening of NSWO banding. It's safe to say that the thrill of holding one of these gorgeous creatures in our hands (to release them) will remain a vivid memory.

The data collected from NSWO migration monitoring helps scientists understand migratory movements, pathways and timing, as well as estimate population trends. The data gathered also informs conservation strategies for Northern Saw-Whet Owls and their habitats.

All bird banding in North America is jointly administered by Canada's Bird Banding Office and the United



BCEC member Liz Breakey helps out at the NSWO Banding Station in Bragg Creek"

States' Bird Banding Laboratory. This programme relies on the public to report observations or recoveries of bird bands. If you see/find a banded bird, you can report it online* or call toll-free on 1-800-327-BAND (2263).

BCEC is always looking for new members to help us with our projects. There are many ways to participate. We'd love to hear from you.

braggcreekenvcoalition@gmail.com

Follow us on Instagram: www.instagram.com/braggcreekenvcoalition

*www.pwrc.usgs.gov/BBL/Bander_Portal/login/reportband.php

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BRAGG CREEK TRAILS

Let's talk dogs

Our canine friends love the West Bragg Creek (WBC) trails as much as we do — roaming the woods, stretching their legs and enjoying a break from busy off-leash parks in the city. With the growing popularity of WBC, a Dog Owner Code of Conduct has become essential.

WBC sits at the intersection of multiple public land designations, each with different regulations regarding dogs. At the centre is a small Provincial Recreation Area (PRA) containing the parking lot and trailheads. Surrounding it is the Kananaskis Public Land Use Zone (PLUZ). Each has its own rules, which can be confusing if you're not aware of the boundaries.

At the simplest level, dogs visiting WBC must not interrupt the enjoyment or safety of other users. Regulations fall under the Parks Act, Trails Act, Public Lands Act and Wildlife Act, but instead of diving into legislation, here are the basic expectations to keep everyone safe, including your dog.

Dog Regulations at WBC

1. Dogs must be on leash in the PRA (parking lot area).
2. Dog waste in the PRA must be disposed of properly.
3. Dogs may be off leash in the PLUZ, once you leave the PRA (watch for boundary signs on feeder trails).

4. Obey posted signs where dogs are prohibited (public buildings, washrooms).
5. Do not allow your dog to harass wildlife or damage habitat.
6. Do not allow your dog to harass cattle.
7. Dogs must be under control at all times. Owners are fully liable for their dog's behaviour and any resulting damages.

Being a Good Canine Neighbour

Regulations are one thing; sharing the trails responsibly is another. Here are a few important considerations when bringing your four-pawed pal to WBC:

1. Not everyone loves your dog — some people may be nervous or fearful.
2. Aggressive behaviour toward people or animals is never tolerated. If there's any doubt, BCT strongly recommends pursuing certification through the Canine Good Neighbour Program.
3. Excellent recall is essential. Dogs must be in sight and under voice control at all times. With fast-moving trail users (bikes, skis), keeping your dog close prevents collisions. Please remember, you are liable for any damages.
4. When encountering horses, put your dog on leash until the riders have passed.
5. Dog waste is a major issue. Leaving "treat bags" beside the trail, even with the intention to pick them up later, often leads to plastic litter.
6. Recommended dog maximums:
 - One dog for skijoring
 - Two dogs per user, up to a maximum of four per group

WBC: Still a Haven for Trail Dogs

Despite increasing restrictions in other wilderness areas, WBC remains a welcoming place for responsible dog owners. And we love seeing well-behaved dogs and their humans enjoying the trails together. Let's keep it that way by following the code of conduct and respecting all trail users.

Have a Safe and Happy Holiday Season on the trails!

Con Schiebel, BCT President

Triple Your Donation December 1-6

Between December 1 and 6, every donation to Bragg Creek Trails goes 3x as far!

Thanks to our Trailblazing Donor, Cavy Energy, and our long-time charity partner, the Rocky Mountain Charitable Giving Fund, all donations made during this period will be triple matched (up to \$14,000) — turning every \$1 into \$3 for trail stewardship across the West Bragg Creek trail network.

Giving Tuesday is a global celebration of generosity and community and for Bragg Creek Trails, it's about giving back to the places that connect us all.

We are grateful for your generosity, gratitude and trail love.



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1-4pm: Ladies Group & Snooker

Thursdays

1-4pm: Snooker

4-9pm: Open House/Pub Night

First Wednesday each month

1:15pm Book Club - bring a book to share with the group

Third Thursday each month

7pm: Open Mic Night
come play or listen!

Fridays

1:15pm: Exercise Class - 45 minutes
bring your own dumbbells or borrow
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REDWOOD MEADOWS EMERGENCY SERVICES

It's the most wonderful time of the year!

Here's some holiday safety tips to keep you safe as you enjoy the holidays:

1. Merry and Bright: Carefully inspect holiday light strings each year and discard any with frayed cords, cracked lamp holders, or loose connections. When replacing bulbs, unplug the light string and be sure to match voltage and wattage to the original bulb.

2. Lights Out: Always turn off holiday lights when you leave the house unattended or when going to bed.

3. O Christmas Tree: If you have a freshly cut tree, keep it watered and away from open candles. If you buy an artificial tree, make sure it's labeled "fire resistant." Fire-resistant trees are less susceptible to catching fire.

4. Work as a team: When stringing lights and decorations above your normal reach, be sure to use a proper ladder with someone supporting the base.

5. The Great Outdoors: When hanging outdoor lights, keep electrical connectors off the ground and away from metal rain gutters. Use insulated tape or plastic clips instead of metal nails or tacks to hold them in place.

6. Don't burn wrapping paper in the fireplace. Paper burns very hot, which can ignite a fire in any residue in your chimney or the chase. Instead, recycle (or better yet, reuse!) your wrapping paper. And, have your chimney professionally cleaned prior to use.

7. Prevent electrical cord damage. Don't mount lights in a way that might damage the cords, and avoid using nails or tacks. Use hooks or insulated staples instead.

8. Secure candles. Keep candles on a sturdy base to prevent tipping. Never leave a lit candle unattended.

9. Sound the Alarm: Test your smoke alarms monthly to make sure they work, and be sure to install smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms on every level of your home -- especially near sleeping areas.

10. Clean the Clutter: Don't store combustible materials near your tree, furnace or block furnace vents. Think of your friendly local firefighters when you're decorating near front doors and ensure there is ample room for us to move in/out of your front entrance, without bumping into Frosty the Snowman!

And...if you see our big red trucks coming down the highway with lights flashing; pull over, STOP, and let us get quickly and safely to a neighbor in need!

Until next month, stay safe and happy holidays!



THE LITTLE SCHOOLHOUSE

Merry Christmas from all of us at The Little Schoolhouse!

Our classrooms are filled with Christmas excitement and cheer this December. It's a time to celebrate kindness and share special gifts of love.

Each class is eagerly anticipating our Christmas concert, where we'll spread laughter and joy with our families. Another highlight is our pyjama day, celebrating all things cozy and warm as we welcome the first day of winter.

December is truly a magical month in our little gingerbread schoolhouse, and we feel so grateful to work, play, and learn within such a wonderful community!

To discover more about our quality Kindergarten and Preschool programs, please visit our website:

www.thelittleschoolhouse.ca.

Registration for the 2026-27 school year will be coming up at the end of January, and we would love to welcome you!

Wishing you all a joyous holiday season and a happy 2026!

Ms. Shelley and The Little Schoolhouse Team

Residents in Bragg Creek Area Are Invited

Open House for the New Area Structure Plan

Wednesday December 3, 5 - 7pm
Bragg Creek Community Centre

This is a chance to see the new plan, offer a final review and give feedback, before it is shared with Council.

If you can't attend, you can view the new ASP online and provide feedback at – engage.rockyview.ca





WELL OWNERS

ARE YOU NEGLECTING YOUR WATER SYSTEM?



Standard Water System Maintenance Schedule:

Equipment/ System	Maintenance Required	Recommended Frequency	Risks/Results if Neglected
Reverse Osmosis Membrane/Filters	Membrane, carbon & sediment filters replacement	Annually	Excess waste water, low volume or pressure, bacteria/bio-film build-up and bad taste
Water Softeners	Ion Resin Replacement & Control Valve service	Every 5 years	Hard water, scaling on fixtures, white film on glassware, dry skin/hair, mineral bed channelling, reduced efficiency & control valve jamming
Iron/Sulphur Filters	Mineral Bed Replacement & Control Valve service	Every 3 – 5 years	Sulphur smell, red-brown staining in toilets, sinks, showers/tubs & appliances, metallic taste, stained laundry, plugged/channelled mineral bed, build-up & bio-film, mineral bed solidification & control valve jamming
Ultra-Violet Sterilization System	UV Lamp & Sleeve Replacement	Annually	Contamination of distribution system with micro-organisms, bacteria, e-coli, coliforms, etc.
Well Shock Chlorination	Correct dosage of chlorine injection into well & flush	Annually (as per Alberta Environment)	Reduced well yield, bio-fouling, incrustation, bacteria build-up, sulphur smell & black slime on surfaces
Raw Well Water Testing (Provincial Lab)	Obtain water sample & submit to lab	Twice per year (as per Alberta Environment)	Contamination of distribution system with micro-organisms, bacteria, e-coli, cryptosporidium, giardia, coliforms, etc

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Detecting a Credit Card Scam

I want to relate to you the modus operandi of a potential credit card scam that was attempted on me recently. If they tried it on me, they may attempt the same on you.

It began when I received a call on my cellphone at 5:45 pm on a Friday evening. The call kept ringing and ringing and wouldn't stop until I sent it to voicemail (maybe 10 rings later). I don't use my cellphone much as I live in a poor reception area and calls are often dropped. I tell friends and businesses to use my landline. This was the first clue something might be amiss as almost all calls I do get on my cellphone are from scammers or marketers.

Even if your cellphone is your primary/only phone, if you don't recognize a number, it might be wise to send it to your voicemail. Why? Because by accessing the contact from your voicemail, you now control the contact. Once you listen to the voicemail you have plenty of time to process the call's information as opposed to having to deal with the interaction real time. One of the main schemes used by scammers is to force you to make real-time, immediate decisions. By going to voicemail, the interaction is now on your time.

The caller had left a message that said it was Nick from my bank and, after checking with his colleague, he confirmed my credit card had been sent to my home address. If I didn't receive it by Tuesday to call them back on the phone number they left. It sounded fairly legitimate and reasonable, but something seemed off.

By now I've got a few things that make me suspicious:

1. What financial institution calls you at 5:45pm on a Friday? It's possible I suppose.
2. They called me on my cell which I've stated is not my preferred contact method.
3. I don't know a "Nick" at my bank. He gave only a first name with no surname.

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4. They made it sound like there was a choice as to where the credit card could be sent. I use no other address so that was suspicious.

Since I didn't have to get back to them immediately, it gave me time to check my credit card to see if it was expiring soon. It didn't expire for a while so there didn't appear to be a reason to send me a replacement card (clue #5). I never responded to the call. If it was a legitimate call, they'd call me back.

I had to call the bank on another matter a few days later and took the opportunity to relate to them the call I had received. They checked my credit card number and there were no issues, so we assumed it was a scam. The bank said they would never call about a credit card delivery unless it was a case where the credit card was delivered to the bank and that it was now available for pickup.

What the scammers would do if I called back is to ask me a number of questions to "verify" who I am. The purpose of these questions is to obtain my personal information. By divulging this information, they could now use my credit card as if they were me.

If you are suspicious of a call, or an email, concerning your credit card, you can always call the phone number on the back of your card. Don't hesitate to call your bank. They want you to call them about suspicious activity as they will likely be on the hook for any losses suffered.

Another method criminals will employ to obtain your credit/debit card information is the use of skimmers at the point of sale or at an ATM machine. Skimmers are realistic looking but fake faceplates or credit/debit card slots placed over legitimate credit card processors. The best thing to do prior to using one is to carefully look over the device for any unusual covers, glue, excessive bulkiness, loose parts or other signs of tampering.

As always, guard your PIN entry not only from prying eyes, but also from hidden cameras. Very tiny cameras can be placed in, on or near the ATM. From the camera they can get a picture of your card number and watch you enter your password. You are particularly susceptible at remote ATM machines where malicious hardware can be installed at less risk of detection.

Dave Schroeder - HCRCWA Board Member



LONGVIEW LIBRARY

Bingo was a great hit during the teachers strike and there were requests for more during the next school break. Sharon Brown and Karen Wight donated prizes for the games and we thank you very much.

A sewing camp is scheduled for November 12th and 13th in the board room. This program is to teach children the basics of sewing. Check with Lynda, our librarian, for times and to register.

Don and Linda Lovett of Calgary have kindly donated some art supplies and a light box to our library, which we will add to our Library of Things. Again, thank you. It is really appreciated.

We are eager to have new board members. We meet in the morning of the first Tuesday of the month. We work hard, but we have a lot of fun, too.

New books in are: Wild Dark Shore by Charlotte McConnaghay, and Three Days in June by Anne Tyler.

Sylvia Binkley - sliv@telus.net



MILLARVILLE HORTICULTURAL CLUB

Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of the month, September to May at 7 pm. The meetings are held at the Millarville Anglican Church House on Hwy 549 East

Our next meeting is December 9, 2025 at 6:30 pm. It is our Christmas potluck. Bring your favorite holiday dish. Whether it is savoury or sweet. Share your year's successes (or failures) with the club members.

New members always welcome at our upcoming meetings:

January 14, 2026

February 10, 2026 - Bring your favorite seed catalogue to share with club members.

If you are interested in attending any of our presentations, please contact Louise Patterson Bruns (our new President) at louise.patterson.bruns@gmail.com or at millarvillehorticulturalclub@gmail.com. Whether you are a novice or expert in landscaping or gardening, join our club; \$15/year for singles or \$20/year for a family. Check us out on Facebook as well.

millarvillehorticulturalclub@gmail.com
millarvillehortclub.com



MILLARVILLE-STOCKLAND 4-H CLUB



Kicks off the Season with Elections and a Successful Weigh-in!

The Millarville Stockland 4-H club is ready to start the year with new members and new projects! We had our first Club business meeting on October 8th at the Millarville Race Track. We then discussed and decided on our new club elections. We're so lucky to have Jackie Rawn as our general leader again and Jeff Blatz returning as our beef leader. Our sheep club welcomes new leaders Matt Penman and Paul Stanley. Our president is Maddie Watkins, vice president is Peyton Chrisman and Sterling Christman returns as our club secretary. Audrey Spencer is our Treasurer followed by our new club reporter Colbie Johnson and Pyper Stanley as this year's club historian.

Our club beef weigh-in was held on November 1st at Black Diamond Land and Cattle Co. Our whole club thanks them for letting us use their facility for many years now. It looks like all our projects are healthy, happy and ready to start off the year learning and growing together!

Almost every month our club hosts a clinic or workshop; this month was a diary workshop. We filled out our diaries from last year and if there were any new members in attendance they would learn about how to fill their future diaries. We also did our first club multi-judging event at weigh in. We have lots of exciting events ahead including our club Christmas party and some wonderful community engagement activities including hamper packing and visiting seniors. Stay tuned for more exciting news from this fantastic club!

Colbie Johnson





MILLARVILLE MUTTS AND MUSTANGS 4H CLUB

The Millarville Mutts and Mustangs have kicked off the 2025/2026 4H year with lots of excitement and energy. We currently have 35 members and 8 Cleavers, all ready to learn new skills, take on challenges, and have fun together.

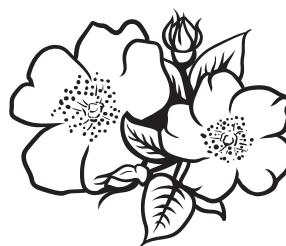
Our club is offering a wide variety of projects this year, giving members plenty of options to explore. We have Archery, Canine, Creative Options, Equine, Foods, and Sewing. The Creative Options project has been especially active, with members trying out guitar, digital arts, jewelry making, and dog training. It's been great to see everyone discovering what they enjoy and building confidence in new areas.

Our Executive this year is made up of:
General Club Leader – Tammy Mazubert,
President - Russell Hodson, Vice President - Sydelia Dunne, Secretary - Lauren Kornelson, Treasurer - Hope Bruneau, and Parliamentarian - Eva Driscoll.

We also have several upcoming events on our calendar. For community service, our club has already volunteered at the MRAS Christmas Market and will be helping with the Salvation Army Kettle Bells, two opportunities we look forward to every year. We are also preparing for project clinics and starting to plan our annual club Christmas party, which is always a fun way to bring everyone together.

The Millarville Mutts and Mustangs continue to be a friendly, hardworking, and enthusiastic group, and we're excited for everything this year has in store. If anyone is thinking about joining 4H, it's an incredible program with something for everyone.

Please reach out to us here:
millarvillenuttsandmustangs@gmail.com
Club Reporter: Brianna Maull



Hello Priddis

We wanted to take a moment to wish our community a very happy holiday season. We hope it is filled with joy and special time with family and friends. We are grateful for what a wonderful year 2025 has been and are looking forward to all that 2026 will bring for our community.

*Sincerely,
The Priddis Community Association Board of Directors*



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SHEEP RIVER LIBRARY

Light up Diamond Valley on Saturday, December 6 has expanded to include Light Up Daytime. There are many events happening at the library from 1-3 pm. Storyteller Alberta Smallwood will be at the fireplace sharing stories with the help of her puppet friends. Alberta will be reading to families with children of all ages. Drop in to listen to a story—or more—before moving on to other activities. While that's happening, there will be cookie decorating for the kids with Trish Draper of Artistic Adventures. Other activities include face-painting and wagon rides outside in Millennium Park. There will be hot chocolate inside and bonfires outside to keep you warm and toasty throughout the afternoon. The Foothills Lions Club has created a passport which you can pick up and get stamped at local businesses in Turner Valley. Passports can be turned into the library on Saturday, December 6, once they are complete to go into a draw for a fabulous prize! Before our activities begin, don't forget to drop into the SPCA Christmas Market taking place in the Flare'n'Derrick from 9 am-4 pm. Light Up Daytime will be a great opportunity to stop by and see the newly painted mural in our Children's Area by Jazz Randle, which should be unveiled December 1. Once events finish at the library don't forget to head on over for more fun activities in Black Diamond in the evening. For more information go to sheepriverlibrary.ca/news and click on the links.

Join Bruno Canadien on Tuesday, December 2 at 6:30 pm for the Intro to Sheep River Christmas Bird Count as well as a presentation on Birding in Belize. Find out about North America's longest-running citizen science project and how you can participate locally. This evening session is for people of all ages and abilities, from experienced birders to beginners, who want to learn how to contribute to a large-scale, long-running scientific census.

The library is partnering with the Diamond Valley Youth Initiative to host the first-ever Diamond Valley Youth Science Fair (DVYSF 2026) — an exciting new event inviting students in Grades 4–12 to explore, discover, and share their curiosity through hands-on science projects. The deadline for registering as a participant has been extended to December 15. Your topic does not need to be selected at this time, but you must have your project registered online by January 9. The fair will take place at the Sheep River Library on Saturday,



March 7th, 2026, providing students the chance to build skills in research, creativity, communication, and critical thinking. Top projects from Grades 7–12 may advance to the Canada-Wide Science Fair, a national showcase supported by Youth Science Canada. Links to the details and registration can be found at sheepriverlibrary.ca/news.

Our program guide for January–June will be in the next issue of the High Country News. Some programs are already on the website such as Self Defense. These sessions will be a combination of lecture and hands-on practice. We have two classes available, one for ages 13+ and one for seniors.



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You can register by phone to hold your spot, but you will have to come in and pay the \$25 fee, within two business days of registration. Spaces are limited so sign up soon.

The staff and board of the Sheep River Library wish you a very merry Christmas and holiday season. Our hours of operation during the Christmas break are:

- December 24: 10 am -3 pm
- December 25 & 26: Closed
- December 27-29: 10 am-5 pm
- December 31: 10 am- 3 pm
- January 1: Closed
- Regular hours resume January 2.

Working hours: 9:00-12:00 or your suggestion.
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Calls from job seekers are encouraged.

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DE WINTON COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Ghastly Ghouls visit De Winton Hall

On Saturday October 18, the De Winton Community Association hosted its annual Halloween Party, which was an outstanding success due to the amazing talents and efforts of our two key volunteers, Victoria White and husband Paul and Raelene Prokopishin with her husband Stan.

The main hall was decorated with all kinds of Halloween themed games and foods. The Witches Hat Toss, Pumpkin Toss, Eyeball Putt, Ghost Bowling and Candy Toss were some of the creative and fun games to play and were always rewarded with candy or glow wands. The basement was turned into a scary Haunted House. It was a fabulous set up and provided lots of surprises and scary moments for those that dared to enter.

Many thanks to all the volunteers (it took 18 outstanding volunteers to make this all work) who turned up to help run the games and keep things moving along. We had close to 200 attendees, families arrived ready for all the action and dressed for the

occasion. So many wonderful costumes, pretty princesses, fabulous fairies, nasty ninja warriors, a whole family dressed up as Ghostbusters (check the Western Wheel), lions, tigers, Waldo's and witches, just to name a few.

Amazing fun for all ages and another wonderful event to pull together our great community. Can't wait to see you all next year!

Here are all the reasons you should become a De Winton Community Association MEMBER

It's time to renew your membership or purchase one for the first time!

October 1 is our annual membership renewal date. Last year we had close to 200 members sign up providing them the opportunity to enjoy the many benefits of being a member of our wonderful community.

What are those benefits?

- 1) You get to attend many of our DCA activities free of charge such as Canasta Night, Bridge, exercise classes, our quilting group and a fun coffee club.
- 2) We host many events throughout the year, Canada Day, Western Dance, Dog Scent classes, a Halloween Party for the kids and more, most at a reduced fee to you, if you have a membership.
- 3) Receive a discount on rentals (requires 24 month minimum membership).
- 4) Connect with your community and stay informed. Receive our newsletters, meet new friends and stay in touch with neighbours.
- 5) Help shape your community; have input into the future of the DCA and the De Winton area.
- 6) Help us support other local non profits by donating free space for their events such as Foothills Hospice, 4H, Girl Guides, Rural Crime Watch, Amaris Adoption, Pine Creek Cemetery Committee, Therapeutic Riding, and the De Winton Pony Club.
- 7) Help us maintain our grounds, playground and sports equipment for the use of the entire community.

The Cost? \$25 a year! That is all! Please note that if you renew or purchase your membership using a credit card, we now have to charge a 2.4% service fee, (to cover our costs) but there is no charge for debit or EFT Payments.

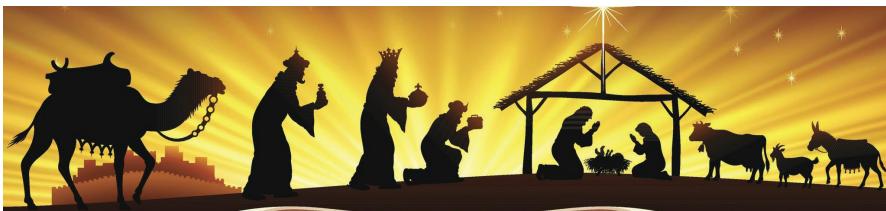
Come and join us! We would love to see you!

HIGH COUNTRY Classifieds

Monthly online and print job listings that reach local community members



Visit HCN online for details



Meota Christmas Services! Join us for the season

Lessons & Carols (Sunday Dec. 21st)

Joint Service @ St. George's 10:30am

Christmas Eve (Wednesday Dec. 24th)

Single Service @ St George's 4:00pm

St. James' 6:30pm

Christ Church 9:00pm

Christmas Day (Thursday Dec. 25th)

Joint Service @ Christ Church 10:30am



FOOTHILLS SCHOOL DIVISION CELEBRATES DIAMOND VALLEY GROCER WITH FLOURISHING FOOTHILLS COMMUNITY AWARD

High River, AB: Foothills School Division is proud to present the Flourishing Foothills Community Award to Country Food Mart - AG Foods in Diamond Valley, recognizing the store's outstanding and sustained contributions to community wellbeing, local partnerships, and support for families across the Foothills.

The Flourishing Foothills Community Award honours individuals and organizations whose actions, leadership, and support place education at the heart of a flourishing community. It celebrates those who lift others up, build connections, and make a difference simply by showing up for students and schools.

Country Food Mart in Diamond Valley was nominated for its hands-on support of the Oilfields School Vertical Farm Initiative. Through donations and selling the greens and produce from the project within the store, the local community builder has made a positive impact on the sustainability of this grassroots project.

Country Food Mart was nominated for its hands-on support of the Oilfields High School Vertical Farm Initiative, a program that blends innovation, sustainability, and learning. Through generous donations and by selling student-grown greens and produce in-store, the local grocer has strengthened both the sustainability and visibility of this grassroots project—helping students experience firsthand how community partnerships make learning come alive.



Speaking on behalf of nominator Cindy Watts, Oilfields High School's Learning Commons Facilitator and CTS Instructor, students Lily Wight and Claire Shaw shared what the support from the team at Country Food Mart has meant to them.

"Whether it's through donations, sponsoring educational events, or providing job opportunities to students, Mark and the staff actively engage with the school to enrich learning experiences and foster student growth," began Wight. "This partnership not only benefits the school

but also strengthens the bonds that make our community truly special," concluded Shaw.

The Oilfields Vertical Farm Initiative began as a Classroom Program Innovative Project (CPIP) funded through a grant offered by the FSD Board of Trustees. Using a converted sea-can to sustainably grow vegetables, herbs, and microgreens year-round with a goal of net-zero impact, the initiative gives students in Grades 7 through 12 hands-on experiences in agriculture, business, sales, environmental stewardship, and entrepreneurship.

The project has earned provincial recognition as the 2023 recipient of the School Board Innovation and Excellence Award at the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) Fall General Meeting, and in 2024 welcomed Her Honour, the Honourable Salma Lakhani, Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, for a special visit and commemoration.

"The Flourishing Foothills Community Award was created to honour those whose actions, leadership, and support place education at the centre of community life," said Theresa Letendre, Board Chair of Foothills School Division. "Country Food Mart has shown what it means to be rooted in community—supporting learning, nurturing innovation, and inspiring



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Dec 26, 12-5 | Dec 31, 9-2 | Jan 1, closed

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others to get involved. Their generosity and belief in young people have become a cornerstone of this shared success."

The Friends of Foothills Community Award was presented to Mark and Rachelle Muller – Owners and Manager, and Scott Porayko, Produce Manager for Country Food Mart, at the Oilfields School Council meeting on the evening of November 5, 2025. Students, school council members, staff, school administration, the Superintendent, and representatives from the Board of Trustees were all in attendance to celebrate the occasion.

To learn more about the Oilfields School and the Vertical Farm Initiative, please visit: www.foothillsschooldivision.ca/oilfields/vertical-farming-initiative

To nominate an individual, group, or organization for the Flourishing Foothills Community Award, please visit: www.foothillsschooldivision.ca/flourishing-foothills-community-award

Photos provided by Theresa Letendre, Board Chair



SQUARE BUTTE COMMUNITY

Greetings from the Square Butte Community Association,

As we head into the holidays, we've got some extra special events coming up!

Sunday, December 7th @ 5:30pm Square Butte Christmas Concert

Celebrate the festive season at this annual, fun-filled family event. Bring your favourite holiday appetizer to share and enjoy some cookies & hot cocoa (and maybe even some eggnog & spiced rum). There will be Christmas carols, storytelling, and other talented performances. A huge part of our concert is a basket draw to support a local family in need. If you would like to donate an item for our raffle baskets, please contact Kristen Coles at (403-874-1943). There will also be a special visit from Santa. If you have kids, please bring a small gift to put in Santa's sack.

**Wednesday, December 31st
New Year's Masquerade Bash @ Square**

Butte Hall featuring Alicyn Campbell
18+ adult event

Hors D'oeuvres – Delicious Drinks –
Dancing + Prizes for Best Disguises

We're spicing things up and adding some mystery and intrigue! Unlock your creativity and explore playful anonymity. From a simple mask to lavish attire and extravagant details, step into some new shoes and dazzle the night away. Round up your friends and make this a New Year's you won't forget! FYI... masks are optional and plain ones will be available, but darn it, do something original and let's have some FUN!!!

For more details & tickets visit
www.squarebuttehall.com

Welcome to our new Board of Directors!

In November, we held our Annual General Meeting and elected our new Board of Directors for 2026. We'd like to thank the following people who've stepped up to invest in our community: President – Shanna Dunne, VP – Loreen Mazur, Secretary – Wanda Vockeroth, Treasurer – Becky Wiens, Directors: Malcolm Carvell, Laura Ball, Alice Nicholls, Don Arkes, Leanna Bridgeman, Serene Bill and Katelynn Woodhead.

Square Butte Community Association

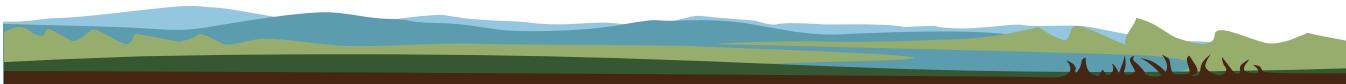
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HELLO DIAMOND VALLEY

Our annual Light-Up is coming up Saturday, December 6. Thank you so much Foothills Lions and Partners for sponsoring this event. There will be a daytime event at the Sheep River Library from 1-3 with cookie decorating, a storyteller, hay wagon rides, and fire pit to keep you warm. Also, a Family Shiny at the Scott Seaman Outdoor Rink from 3:30-4:30. Then head to Main Street and Government Road in Black Diamond for Light-up festivities in the evening from 5-9. The lions are also sponsoring our New Year's Eve Celebration on December 31 from 5-8 at the Flare and Derick in Turner Valley. Stay tuned to the Town's website for full details on these events.

The Foothills Philharmonic is pleased to present their Junior Singers "Winter Wonderland" with special guests Ensembles Men's chorus and Ladies' Vocal Jazz. This show is on December 6. Then on December 12 at 7:30 they are presenting the Philharmonic Chorus and Orchestra "Northern Lights and Sounds of Joy". There will also be an afternoon matinee December 13 at 3:00. Tickets are very reasonable, and kids 12 and under are free. To find out more and to get your tickets, go to footphil.com.

For over 20 years The Magic of Christmas Foothills has helped families in our towns of Diamond Valley, Okotoks, and High River. The families in need that we serve each holiday season are referred to us by

various agencies in the Foothills. Each family receives gifts, gift cards for groceries, a family stocking, and backpacks filled with useful items. Santa and his elves meet each family the Saturday before Christmas to give out the gifts and have their pictures taken. Please help by donating new and unwrapped toys and other gift items, fit cards, and monetary donations. The donation deadline is December 11 and to find out where you can drop off donations, email the wonderful Hazel at duffyisaac@shaw.ca or call 403-819-7628. There are also gift boxes at various businesses around our towns.

The Turner Valley Legion also has a drop box for the Christmas Hamper Program through the Salvation Army. New unwrapped gifts can be dropped off there. Some wish list items include camping gear, ear buds and head phones, watches, perfume, girls/ boys hygiene kits, comic books, hair tools, sporting gear, room décor, and throw pillows, and crafting supplies and kits. Please drop off before December 13.

The Sheep River Library is hosting Gingerbread junction on December 6 from 10-2. This is a whimsical workshop full of seasonal cheer, perfect for little makers who love the holidays, crafting, and all things cozy and cute. They will make gingerbread houses and other holiday things. There is a charge for this junction which includes all suppliers, for more information or to register, please go to the Library's website or drop by.

There is a drop box for gently used clothing in the AG parking Lot, and others in Okotoks. These boxes are for clothing only!

Larger items can be dropped off to either the Okotoks Recycle Centre, located on the Landfill lot, or Missions for Bibles in Okotoks. They will sort and sell your donations and the proceeds go towards close to 30 different charities, including the Foodbanks, the Mustard Seed, Foothills FAIM, Rowan House, or many other local charities. Leaving larger items outside of the box greatly increases volunteer time and costs in the disposal and clean-up process. It also creates a very unsightly mess.

Did you know that December 1 marks the date that twelve countries signed the Antarctic Treaty, declaring the continent a scientific preserve and banning military activity. This Treaty was signed in 1959. The Antarctic Ice Sheet covers approximately 98% of the area with ice 1.6 km thick and contains about 90% of the world's ice, and therefore about 70% of the world's fresh water. Eight species of penguins make their home in the Antarctic, and you cannot visit there without special permits. Sounds pretty cold so I'll just be an armchair visitor.

Just a reminder, the High Country SPCA's Christmas Market is held on December 6 at the Flare and Derrick, if you got to any markets this season, make sure you go to theirs!

If you have an events or news for January, please drop me a line at elaine.w@telus.net before December 15.

Happy Holidays Everyone!

Elaine Wansleeben

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COUNCILLOR UPDATE FOOTHILLS COUNTY By Suzanne Oel - Division 4

Greetings! Sharing my News Update...

West Foothills Fires on November 13, 2025: Around 3:40 p.m., blasting wind conditions led to two fires igniting, near Plummers Road and 304 St W, and power outages throughout the Highway 762 area. Foothills Fire Department and mutual aid partners responded immediately and worked to fight the fires. With multiple ground apparatus and aerial support supplied by helicopter, loads of water were poured on the active fire. Burning smells and smoke were experienced miles away as the wind raged for hours. Foothills County crews, apparatus and water supplies were in full force on scene until the fires were under control around 8:00 pm. Crews stayed over night to keep an eye on the sites and attended to hot spots later. A welcome snowfall came in on the 14th to dampen the area. Thank you to Foothills Fire Department and all who responded to the fires, for helping us on this day and every day you serve us!

9-1-1 Calls on November 13, 2025:

What a day! This is a summary of events related to the high winds: Traffic collisions: 4 day shift, 1 night shift. Alarms: 2 day shift, 1 night shift. Outside fire: 1, night. Gas leak: 1, day. Vegetation fires: 6 Foothills County/Diamond Valley Fire Departments, day. Vegetation fires: 4 MD Willow Creek Fire Department, day. Vegetation fires: 5 Vulcan County Fire Departments, night. A big thank you to Foothills Regional 9-1-1

for your efforts on this day and every day you serve us!

Wildfire Reporting: You could be the FIRST to see a FIRE! If you see an active fire flame, and you are concerned that the fire has not been reported, please call it in to 9-1-1 and report it to 310-FIRE (3473) if it appears to be coming from Kananaskis. 9-1-1 dispatches our local fire departments. Reporting the fire to 310-FIRE gets Alberta Forestry involved. They are responsible for wildland fire response in neighbouring Kananaskis and coordinate response along the Foothills County/Kananaskis boundary with Foothills Fire Department and our partners. View the active wildfire map here: www.alberta.ca/wildfire-status

Be Prepared for Wildfire: Consider planning for yourself, your family, animals and property. Learn more here: firesmartalberta.ca + firesmartcanada.ca

Balanced Development: On another topic ... Foothills County residents value the benefits of country living, so a balance must be achieved in protecting agricultural land and maintaining our rural character, watershed integrity, wildlife habitat, and valued assets, while accommodating development and providing housing choices. Foot-hills planning documents, which were written in consultation with residents, indicate a tolerance for minimal to moderate development in Division 4. First parcels-out, in-filling of Country Residential parcels where appropriate, with resident input, and the currently-approved Secondary Suites development option, fit within this planning/resident direction. Secondary Suites provide a solution for increasing the housing density within all land-use zones, and allows for affordable living, aging in place and income options.

Checking in: Regarding larger-scale developments, it is essential that Foothills residents be included in the decision-making, whether it be County plans or through the public hearing process. Upcoming, you will be invited to the review of the County's Municipal Development Plan to present your perspectives. I look forward to hearing from you about the level of development and density you would like to see in Division 4 and the County. I believe the timing is right to also initiate a deep dive into the growth strategy of the central corridor where there's the most pressure for development, and to re-examine the Northwest area of the County. A check-in with residents and stakeholders will keep these decision-making resources relevant and current.

Participation: In addition to planning, of course, residents are always invited to participate in the public hearing processes regarding developments. As your local councillor, I am happy to provide information on municipal resources and practices to help residents with proposed projects and guide impacted neighbours on participating in the public processes regarding development.

Christmas Greetings! Sending you best wishes for your celebrations with family and friends!

For Other News & Updates:

Facebook: www.facebook.com/CouncillorSuzanneOel/
Email: Suzanne.Oel@FoothillsCountyAB.ca

Visit High Country News online for my previous articles.

With Best Regards, Suzanne

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DUANE HARDER

A Christmas Reflection

I came across this in my Christmas file and thought it was worth sharing.

1 Corinthians 13 Christmas Style ©By Sharon Jaynes

"If I decorate my house perfectly with lovely plaid bows, strands of twinkling lights, and shiny glass balls, but do not show love to my family – I'm just another decorator.

If I slave away in the kitchen, baking dozens of Christmas cookies, preparing gourmet meals, and arranging a beautifully adorned table at mealtime, but do not show love to my family – I'm just another cook.

If I work at the soup kitchen, carol in the nursing home, and give all that I have to charity, but do not show love to my family – it profits me nothing.

If I trim the spruce with shimmering angels and crocheted snowflakes, attend a myriad of holiday parties, and sing in the choir's cantata but do not focus on Christ, I have missed the point.

Love stops the cooking to hug the child.

Love sets aside the decorating to kiss the husband.

Love is kind, though harried and tired.

Love doesn't envy another home that has coordinated Christmas china and table linens.

Love doesn't yell at the kids to get out of your way.

Love doesn't give only to those who are able to give in return but rejoices in giving to those who can't.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.

Love never fails. Video games will break; pearl necklaces will be lost; golf clubs will rust. But giving the gift of love will endure."

Christmas is about Christ — the full and complete embodiment of love. He gave fully of Himself without any expectation of something in return. He identified with the downcast, downtrodden and despised. Even at His brutal crucifixion He gave attention to the needs of His mother, spoke hope to the condemned criminal and offered forgiveness to those who unjustly put Him to death.

Knowing what was wrapped up in the gift of love God gave us makes me ask the

question, "How can demonstrate love to the people I encounter?" Furthermore, are their activities that I need to eliminate from my schedule to make more time for those I love?

This Christmas join me in lifting your voice with joy and thanksgiving for the marvelous gift that was given to us in the person of Jesus Christ, the personification of love, the perfect atoning sacrifice for our sin, and the promise of a glorious eternity with Him. Accept His gift of love, forgiveness and salvation, and I'll see you at the top.

Duane Harder

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THE ART OF THE POUR: A THOUGHTFUL GUIDE TO HOLIDAY WINES

by Stephanie Gilker

Holiday entertaining is not about perfection. It's about bringing people together, creating warmth, and using food and wine to spark connection. I love adding those extra touches that make guests feel something. A thoughtful wine plan guides the evening, supports the food, and adds intention without any stuffiness. The goal is not to impress for the sake of it, but to make people feel comfortable, curious, and excited to share the table.

When planning wines, think about flow. Start bright and refreshing, move into wines with a bit more texture and comfort, and finish with something sweet or sparkling to wrap up the night with a little celebration. The best pairings feel effortless, not formal.

I like to begin with energy. Guests are arriving, catching up, and grazing on small bites. Sparkling wine is always the perfect opener. The bubbles wake up the palate and pair beautifully with anything from smoked salmon to cheese boards, olives, or pastry bites. I love a dry French sparkling, labeled extra brut or brut. If you prefer still wine, look for crisp whites or something aromatic like Muscadet or Chablis. The first pour should feel fresh, fun, and inviting.

Holiday mains can be all over the map with various sides and sauces, so focus on structure and flavour instead of strict pairing rules. Think richness, herbs, and those cozy roasted sides.

For roast turkey or chicken, go for medium-bodied wines with bright acidity and gentle oak.

White wines with texture, like Pinot Gris from Alsace, or red wines with soft tannins, like Pinot Noir from Sancerre, work beautifully with herbs, roasted vegetables, and gravy. They bring lift to the plate and keep things balanced. My personal favourite is oven baked glazed ham, that perfect mix of salt and sweetness. A fruit-forward Beaujolais is magic with it!



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With roast beef or prime rib, reach for structure. Look for red wines with tannin and depth to stand up to the richness but skip wines that feel heavy or tiring. You want power with polish so guests stay comfortable and the meal still feels celebratory. I love a Cabernet Franc for its red fruit, herbaceous notes, and freshness. If you want to really impress, a Brunello di Montalcino is your move. Sangiovese's natural acidity and earthy cherry tones cut through those rich gravy sides while its fine tannins add elegance and lift.

Then there is dessert. Whether you go off dry Riesling, Tawny Port or sweet Moscato d'Asti, the key rule is simple: the wine should be as sweet or sweeter than the dessert. That balance keeps everything in harmony and ends the meal on a high note instead of a sugar overload. I'm a sucker for demi sec rosé champagne and sugar cookies.

Holiday wine service at home is not about perfection. It's about creating a space that feels inviting, thoughtful, and just a little

indulgent. When the atmosphere feels easy and the company is good, the wines naturally shine brighter. Wine brings people together. That is the true art of the pour.

If you would rather host without the planning, Saint Wine Society offers Champagne service, menu pairing, and bottle selection. Send us your dinner menu two weeks before your event and enjoy a seamless, luxurious pour without lifting a finger. We handle the bottles, you handle the in laws.

*Cheers!
Stephanie Gilker*

Stephanie Gilker is the founder of Saint Wine Society, curating polished wine tasting experiences and Champagne service across Alberta. She holds WSET Level 3, French Wine Scholar, and Master of Champagne certificates, bringing expertise, creativity, and elegance to every glass.

*Article Sources:
Wine Folly*

Photo Credit: Stephanie Gilker



Stephanie Gilker

saint wine society

saintwinesociety.com

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Website



Instagram





GET RIPPED by Jari Love

Screened In: How Excessive Netflix & TV Time Hijacks Your Hormones, Health and Happiness

During the height of COVID-19, Hallmark Channel made an unusual move — it began airing Christmas movies in the middle of summer. Viewers across North America were suddenly watching snow-filled romances while the world outside sweltered. It wasn't random programming. Hallmark executives knew that their cheerful, predictable holiday films offered more than entertainment — they triggered comfort. At a time when anxiety was peaking, "Christmas in July" gave people a familiar emotional escape.

Psychologists later noted that nostalgic, uplifting content releases dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin — the same hormones linked to happiness, bonding, and calm. In short, Hallmark was serving hormone therapy through storytelling.

Fast-forward to today: Canadians still spend about 3 hours 25 minutes daily watching streaming or linear TV and more than 6 hours online. Yet unlike Hallmark's temporary lift, our modern screen habits are rewiring hormone patterns in ways that leave us more tired, anxious, and restless than ever.

To understand what's really happening inside the body — and how to regain balance — I spoke with Dr. Peter, Medical Director of Family & Aesthetic Medicine.

1) What actually happens inside the body when we sit and scroll for hours?

Dr. Peter: "Long, uninterrupted sitting is like putting your body on airplane mode. Systems stay on, but performance tanks."

- Metabolism slows: muscles switch off and calorie burn drops within minutes.
- Insulin resistance rises: glucose clearance slows, insulin spikes, and visceral fat storage increases — raising risk for obesity, diabetes, and heart disease even in fit people.
- Fats circulate longer: triglycerides rise while good cholesterol (HDL) drops.
- Inflammation and poor circulation set in as the calf "muscle pump" naps.

2) How does screen time influence dopamine, attention, and mental health?

Dr. Peter: "If your appetites are wired for speed and surprise, your brain starts craving speed and surprise — often at the cost of focus, sleep, and appetite control."

Every scroll or like creates a micro-burst of dopamine, teaching the brain to chase quick hits instead of sustained focus.

- Attention fragments: constant pings erode boredom tolerance.
- Mood swings: comparison scrolling and late-night use boost anxiety and low mood — especially in winter, when Seasonal Affective Disorder peaks.
- Eating habits shift: dopamine-driven snacking dulls fullness signals and adds extra calories.

3) Does a daily workout erase the risks of sitting all day?

Dr. Peter: "Keep the workout. Add motion snacks."

A 45-minute gym session helps but can't undo 8–10 hours of sitting. The solution is movement throughout the day:

- Stand or walk for two minutes every 30 minutes.



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4) What does screen time do to sleep and energy hormones?

Dr. Peter: "Late screens steal tomorrow's willpower. Protect sleep to protect appetite, glucose, and energy."

Blue light delays melatonin, pushing bedtime later and shrinking deep sleep.

After a poor night's rest:

- Ghrelin rises (more hunger).
- Leptin falls (less fullness).
- Insulin sensitivity drops, spiking blood sugar.
- Cortisol lingers, promoting stress eating and fat storage.

5) What simple daily habits undo the damage fastest?

Dr. Peter: "Small hinges swing big doors. Ten two-minute breaks beat one giant workout for glucose."

- 30-2 Rule: every 30 minutes seated = 2 minutes of movement.
- Anchor walks: 5-10 minutes after meals or between episodes.

- 3-2-1 Sleep: 3 hours no heavy meals/alcohol, 2 hours no work, 1 hour no screens.

- Eat screen-free with protein and fiber (25-35 g protein + vegetables).
- Tame tech: disable non-essential notifications and move high-dopamine apps off your home screen.
- Train smart: 150-300 minutes weekly cardio plus 2-3 strength sessions.

6) Can what we watch affect our mood?

Dr. Peter: "Your screen is a hormonal switchboard."

Yes. Content directly shifts brain chemistry.

- Positive shows boost feel-good hormones (dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin).
- Stressful or dark content raises cortisol and can increase anxiety or low mood.
- Too much passive viewing is linked to higher depression and anxiety.

Dr. Peter: "It's not just how much you watch — it's what you watch and what you skip to watch it."

Hallmark's "Christmas in July" proved that content can heal — but our screens can also harm when used without balance. Every scroll and binge carries a hormonal

cost, yet mindful movement, purposeful content, and sleep protection can restore the chemistry that keeps us healthy and happy.

Move more, watch wisely, and choose what lifts you — because your hormones, health, and happiness depend on it.

Jari Love is a certified trainer and creator of the successful scientifically tested Get RIPPED!® series. You can learn more about Jari Love at www.jarilove.com. You can follow her on Facebook at @JariLoveFitness and at @rippedjari on Instagram.

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SELLING YOUR BUSINESS by Bill Stemp

(Sale of Your Shares Versus the Corporation Selling its Assets)

At times we are asked by our clients if we can assist them in the sale of the business. The first question we always ask, is the corporation, assuming they have a corporation, selling its assets or are they, the shareholders selling their shares in the corporation? There is a very large difference between the 2 particularly when it comes to payment of income taxes.

If the corporation sells its assets, the corporation will be subjected to payment of capital gains taxes on the assets. You will need to take the value of the assets upon sale, subtract the initial value of those assets, subject to any adjustments which may have been made over the years that you own to the assets and then the corporation will need to pay capital gains tax based on the increase in value.

One half of that increase in value will be tax-free and you must pay tax on the remaining 50%. The corporation will pay

tax at its usual taxable rate on the 50% of the gain which is taxable.

If you have claimed the maximum capital cost allowance also known as depreciation allowed by the Income Tax Act of Canada, you may have depreciated the book value of the assets down to zero. The assets of course will not be worth the zero but on your books the value may be zero.

When you sell the assets you may be subjected to what is called "recaptured depreciation" which means the corporation must pay income tax on all of the recaptured depreciation. For example, let's say you have an asset that cost you \$100,000 and over time you have claimed depreciation or capital cost allowance (CCA) such that on your books that asset has a nil value. Now let's say you sell that asset for 200k. The company must pay income tax on the recaptured capital gains of 100k (from the book value of zero to the original cost of 100k) and then in addition the corporation must pay capital gains tax on one half of the gain between 100k and the current 200k of value for which the asset is being sold.

So in this example the corporation must pay tax on 100k of value and capital gains tax on 50k being one half of the gain in value from the initial cost of 100k to the current value of 200k.

Payment of recaptured capital depreciation or recaptured capital cost allowance is the government's way of taxing you for all of the benefit that you've claimed over the years by claiming the maximum capital cost allowance. You've taken the benefit of claiming the maximum capital cost allowance and now you must pay a large tax bill for having done that.

When you sell the business, you as the seller want to minimize the tax payable. This means that you would want the allocation of value as between hard assets and goodwill also known as a soft asset which include the value of your trademarks or patents such that as little value as possible would be allocated to the hard asset and the maximum allocated to the value of your trademarks or patents or other intellectual property. This is because you want to minimize the recaptured capital cost allowance so that you pay minimum income tax on the recaptured capital cost allowance or recaptured depreciation.

For example, if you are selling a building, you as the seller would want the value of the building to be minimized in the value of the land to be maximized. This enables you to claim as little as possible of the gain value on the building so that you're hopefully minimizing the recaptured

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capital cost allowance on the building. You cannot claim capital cost allowance or depreciation on the land component. So you want the gain in value of the property to be allocated as much as possible to the gain value of the land so that you're only paying gains tax on the increase in value of the land and paying as little tax as possible on the building due to recaptured capital cost allowance.

The purchaser of the building of course has the opposite viewpoint and would want the value of the building to be maximized and the value of the land to be minimized. This is so that the buyer can begin to depreciate the building at a higher initial value and claim the maximum capital cost allowance over the number of years that the buyer would own the building. So the allocation of the value as between the land and the building must be negotiated between the buyer and seller.

You absolutely want to have a written agreement on this allocation so that Canada Revenue Agency does not decide the allocation in their favor, which they would do by allocating most of the gain as applicable to the building and as little as possible to be applicable to the land.

SALE OF THE SHARES OF YOUR CORPORATION

If you have a corporation it is far preferable for you as the seller to sell your shares of the corporation rather than the corporation selling its assets. Under the Income Tax Act of Canada, you are allowed a lifetime capital gains exemption of \$1,250,000 applicable to the sale by you of the shares. This can be a huge advantage to you but to take advantage of this you must have a corporation and you must be selling the shares of the corporation rather than the corporation selling its assets. Of course when you sell the shares of the corporation, all of the assets owned by the corporation go to the buyer. You cannot pick and choose which assets go to the buyer and which don't unless you sell some of those assets before the transaction involving the sale of the shares is to occur.

For example, if the corporation owns a number of trademarks and patents, all of the trademarks and patents will go to the buyer when the buyer purchases the shares of the corporation. For this reason we often recommend that the owner of several patents would have several corporations, each corporation owning one patent or trademark so that when you sell the shares of one corporation the ownership of the patent or trademark owned by the corporation will go to the buyer but you

will retain the ownership of the other patents or trademarks that you own.

If you own a building and you are operating a business out of the building, you can sell the shares of the business but not sell the building only if you have 2 corporations, one of which operates the business and one which owns the building. The corporation owning the building would be the landlord and the corporation operating business would be the tenant of that landlord. In this fashion, you can sell the shares of the corporation owning the business but retain the ownership of the building.

Certain conditions apply to the lifetime capital gains exemption which include:

1. 50% of the assets of the company must have been used in the active business of the company for 2 years prior to the sale;
2. 90% of the assets of the company must have been used in the active business of the company at the time of the sale;
3. The company must be a CCPC Canadian - controlled private company meaning the majority of the shares must be held by Canadian residents or citizens.

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MORTGAGE MATTERS by Candace Perko

Mortgage Professionals Canada 2025 Budget Update

On November 4th, the Government of Canada tabled its federal budget titled “Canada Strong”. Announced as “Our plan to Build, Protect, and Empower Canada. A plan to spend less to invest more through generational investments that will build Canada’s economy to be the strongest in the G7.”

Starting with this budget, the government will move the federal budget to the fall cycle and adopt a new capital budgeting framework intended to provide certainty for major infrastructure investments.

Federal Budget – Key Housing & Mortgage Measures

- Elimination of GST on new homes for first-time buyers under \$1 million
- \$13 billion initial capital for Build Canada Homes to accelerate affordable housing construction and reuse of federal lands

- Increasing Canada Mortgage Bond (CMB) annual issuance limit from \$60 billion to \$80 billion, starting in 2026. The increase will apply exclusively to multi-unit housing. The government will maintain the current pace of its purchases of CMBs, up to \$30 billion annually

Advancing Consumer-Driven Banking

- Supporting the launch of Real-Time Rail, a payments system that will enable funds to move instantly between accounts and eliminating wait times in 2026
- Legislating the ability to direct actions, such as switching accounts or making bill payments, or “write access,” by mid-2027
- Proposing legislation to complete the Consumer-Driven Banking Framework, transferring its governance to the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada (FCAC) to the Bank of Canada
- Committing to a legislative amendment to the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act that will grant Canadians a right to data mobility, promoting competition and reducing risks in the financial services industry by regulating financial data sharing

Promoting Competition in the Financial Sector

- Working with banks to develop a voluntary code of conduct to strengthen smaller financial institutions’ access to distribution channels for brokered deposits
- Tasking the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada (FCAC) prepare a report on the structure level and transparency of fees charged by Canadian banks

Fighting Fraud

- Creating a new Financial Crimes Agency that will be Canada’s lead enforcement agency on complex financial crimes
- Developing a whole-of-government National Anti-Fraud Strategy, bringing together financial institutions, technology, and telecommunication companies to develop a cross-sectoral approach to protect Canadians from evolving and highly complex fraud schemes
- Strengthening the RCMP’s response to transnational organized crime, financial crimes and money laundering

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Mortgage Professionals Canada (MPC) Advocacy Achievements

- Thanks to our ongoing engagement, housing affordability, mortgage accessibility, and homeownership remain central priorities for federal decision-makers. Together, we have already secured several significant national policy wins:

- Elimination of GST on newly-built homes for first-time buyers under \$1 million
- Return of 30-year amortization for insured mortgages on newly-built homes for first-time buyers
- Increase of the insured mortgage cap to \$1.5 million
- Increase of Home Buyers' Plan RRSP withdrawal limit to \$60,000
- Exemption of the stress test on renewals between federally regulated financial institutions
- Consultation on a CRA-enabled income verification tool

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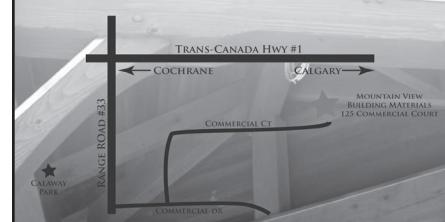
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MARY by Andrea Kidd

Mary stood on the flat roof of her home in Nazareth. The newly-washed clothes were dry and she was enjoying the fresh scent of linen and wool, still warm from the sun.

She peered behind, thinking someone was there. The nape of her neck pricked. She heard, "Shalom, highly favoured one!"

Why call me highly favoured, she thought.

Instinctively, she pulled her veil over her face, lowered her eyes and backed away. "Shalom," she stammered.

The angel, for it was Gabriel, respectfully stayed his distance. His voice was low and clear. "Don't be afraid, Mary. You have found favour with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus."

But that's impossible. I know how babies are conceived. I'm not pregnant.

Mary looked up and asked, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

"The Holy Spirit will come on you," Gabriel explained, "and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elisabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month."

Mary's eyes opened wide and her hands covered her mouth.

This is unbelievable! I am going to have a baby without sleeping with Joseph or any other man? And the little one already has a name, Jesus? Could this be the king we have been waiting for? And Cousin Elisabeth? She is too old to be pregnant!

Trembling, Mary gazed in astonishment into Gabriel's eyes. Truth and love emanated from him. She sank onto her knees and bowed.

Softly, firmly, she said, "I am the Lord's servant."

Looking up, she saw she was alone once more. A rush of warm blood coursed through her veins, and a blush of pleasure flooded her cheeks. God had chosen her to bear His Child!

"Mary seems quiet this evening," remarked Anne, Mary's mother, to her husband.

"Is everything all right, Mary?" asked Joachim.

"Yes, Abba," replied, Mary, "but I would very much like to go and visit Cousin Elisabeth."

Mary's parents lifted their eyes in surprise and reflected as they studied their daughter. They had learned to trust her intuition; she was not given to hasty decisions.

Finally, her father said, "I'll talk to your Uncle Reuben tomorrow. He'll be traveling with the caravan to Jerusalem soon to sell his dried fish. You can travel with him."

"Thank you, Abba!" Mary's eyes shone with love and gratitude.

"Cousin Elisabeth and Zacharias are getting old," said her mother. "I'm anxious for news of them. I'll prepare some dainties for you to take."

During the long miles of walking, Mary pondered Gabriel's words.

Is Elisabeth really pregnant after all these years? What will people say when my body begins to bulge? Will they believe my outrageous story? Oh! Joseph, what will you think of me?

When Mary arrived her face was lined with her concerns, but Elisabeth laughed and exclaimed, "Your baby is exalted by God, and you are blessed among women! Why am I so honoured that the mother of my Lord visits me?"

"So you already knew that God has honoured me with His Son?"

"Oh, yes, my dear," chuckled Elisabeth. "The moment the sound of your greeting entered my ears, the babe in my womb skipped like a lamb for sheer joy. And look at me! Bearing fruit like a melon in winter!"

The two women, one wrinkled and bulging, the other pristine and smooth, but both in the flush of pregnancy, talked, laughed, worked and encouraged one another for three months. Silent Zacharias watched, a gleam of joy and wonder in his eyes.

When Uncle Reuben returned to take Mary home, he shook his head in disbelief. "A child for Elisabeth and Zacharias at their age?" he muttered. "Impossible! Yet, anything is possible for the Almighty One!"

He laughed heartily, thrust his hands to the sky, and praised God.

Then, remembering Mary's thickening waistline, he grew sober. "What does this all mean? And what shall I tell Joachim and Anne?"

From Luke 1: 26 - 56

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OUT OF THE RUT

Chapter 184

Merriness, Happiness, Togetherness, Kindness... do it all! Make someone else happy in this season of the darkest days, the longest nights. Celebrate the turning of the season as we drift through December 21st, the Winter Solstice. Allegedly this marks the beginning of winter, but we often greet winter here much earlier than the third week of December. Many of you will be deep into winter activities and festivities by the time the solstice rolls around.

Historically, celebrations around this time were centered around communal gatherings giving offerings to the gods in thanks and for protection through the coming seasons. Honouring the sun was the focus for most people for many centuries. The solstice celebration at Stonehenge in England is still a phenomenon that is stunning to behold. People celebrate the passing of the shortest days and the return of the sun, as from this day forth the days get longer – yaay!

In the slightly non-conformist household of my youth, we used to observe old traditions, it was a pre-Dickensian Christmas affair. The majority of the Christian globe now thinks of Dickens' turkey, mistletoe, goodwill to all (and Scrooge) as "old tradition". Dickens homogenized and reinvigorated a bunch of traditions from various times in history to create his "A Christmas Carol" a mere 182 years ago. Prior to that, Victorian Christmases were fairly nondescript single-day affairs. Back in the middle ages, there were feasting and prolonged celebrations aplenty.

I remember an assortment of interesting recipes making appearances around Christmas-time, including slow-roasted goose and salt beef. I don't believe a turkey ever graced the table in our household. The pudding, on the other hand, did owe much to the Victorians. From a Medieval version of sausage with spices, fruits were added and meats eventually disappeared. The preparation of the pudding took place a month or two earlier...silver sixpences were secreted in a pudding made almost entirely of alcohol-marinated dried fruits



with a smattering of fat and flour to hold it together. Our puddings were stirred in a giant terracotta pantheon – in itself a rather ancient piece of kitchenware – before steaming for hours and then packing away in the back of a cupboard until the great day arrived.

As a child, before the installation of fridge and freezer was ubiquitous in all households, before the shipping of various exotic fruits and vegetables around the globe was considered the norm, we were delighted to wake on Christmas morning to find a sock at the foot of the bed, filled with coloured paper, pencils, string, chocolates, nuts and... an ORANGE! The orange or tangerine filled the toe of the sock and was considered a great delicacy.

Visiting family over this season usually involved a long journey by road from one end of England to the other. Prior to construction of all the motorways, the journey was generally of several, to many hours, in length... brightened by the game of Christmas-Tree-spotting in the living rooms we could see along the roadsides. I remember a Monkey Puzzle Tree in a garden somewhere, followed shortly thereafter by a stretch of stone wall and a cluster of Red Hot Poker Plants which represented an exciting milestone, indicating that the end of the journey was coming close.

Gathering with our family, we were entertained by good old parlour games, including some sort of a ghost game that I never fathomed and now never will as those family members who held the secret of how it worked are now dead and gone.

Such traditions can pass from knowledge so simply. Talk to your friends and family, make a record of things. Share recipes and games. Pass them on.

We are the past, the present and the future. Long may it continue in harmony and light.

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SANTA DEER by Laura Griffin

I'm not sure if my parents would have been pleased or disappointed that for as long as I can remember there was only one item on my Christmas wish list. It was as though I had been smitten by Cupid, it wasn't toys, elves, Santa, or snow that I desired, it was a reindeer. A marvellous beast that would be hearty enough to Prance-r a sleigh through blizzards and by all of the accounts known to my young mind have the ability to fly. For many years I wished and hoped and left carrots out so that I might glimpse these splendid animals. To the credit of my creative parents after years of asking I finally got my wish of a real live reindeer in the form of a caribou sponsorship at the Calgary Zoo.

Yes caribou and reindeer are considered the same species *Rangifer tarandus*. There are seven subspecies in the world, but what is it that makes them fit for work with Santa? Perhaps it is their ability to Donn-er I mean, grow thick woolly winter undercoats and long hollow insulating overcoats. This not only allows them the ability to stay warm in the cold but also helps them stay afloat when they are Blitzen through frigid river crossings. A perfect fit for arctic life.

Maybe Santa saw the potential of their adaptive hooves. In summer they are soft and widespread but in the winter months they thicken, hollow out, and grow insulated hair between the toes. This protects the hooves and stops them from slipping on those icy rooftops. More importantly the hardened toes help them Dash-r through snow and ice to get at their lichen food source below. Caribou have an



Photos by Laura Griffin

amazing sense of smell and can smell lichen through up to five feet of snow. If you are a jolly old man who lives at the North pole lichen might be the only food source available to your livestock.

Or maybe Santa wished on a Comet for a herd animal that would be able to scare robbers away from his unattended sleigh with a defensive system? Caribou are the only successfully domesticated member of the deer family, and the only ones where both males and females can grow antlers. The males grow their larger antlers to impress the females, so they fall off after the autumn rut to help them survive winter. The females, being Vixens in their own right, don't grow antlers to impress males but to defend their winter food, which

technically means Santa's reindeer are all females, yes even Rudolph.

But there is one last fact that I am Dancer-ing around about my beloved caribou. Our woodland caribou in Alberta are on the threatened species list. So, its back on my Christmas wish list for the reindeer so that I might one day see them in the Alberta wilderness. However, I can do more than wish; I can also go to the CPAWS website to learn of the threats to Santa's caribou friends and ways I can help. cpawsnab.org/our-work/wildlife-species-at-risk/caribou-in-alberta/

PS Did you find all nine of Santa's reindeer in the article? Merry Christmas to all and to all a good night.

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SMILE IF YOU HAVE ADHD by Roche Herbst

WHAT IS ATTENTION DEFICIT?

Well, what is it and why is it so misunderstood? When you feel comfortable with yourself, it means you can change how society perceives Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and recognizes its strengths. Once a person accepts their diagnosis, they can start living well in going forward.

A SQUARE PEG IN A ROUND HOLE
Recall that little kid in elementary school who raised his hand and blurted out the answers. The boy with his backpack unzipped, papers spilling out everywhere, while being a master at Lego. The girl who daydreamed about everything else that was way more interesting than what the curriculum taught. Many individuals don't fit into an environment that seems determined to confine their natural energy and curiosity. For some, the system 'denied them recess' (the one time they could freely express themselves) as punishment for their classroom misbehavior. Others blossomed the moment they left the academic system.

HOW TO HELP SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT

You find an environment that works for your ADHD. A place where you are able to direct your own play and study; where you can follow your passion in environments that tolerate and support your differences. You build a support network to help in your areas of weakness. By peeling back the layers of hurt and 'failure', you begin to discover the challenges and opportunities for growth. Now the world can value your creativity and energy in a new way. Sitting still doesn't matter anymore. For many, it is the antithesis of success!

A SENSE OF HUMOUR IS POSSIBLE

Pat yourself on the back for sticking to a new routine which means you didn't misplace your keys or wallet or remembered to take your card from the ATM. Let yourself laugh to take the pressure off being perfect or for being so hard on yourself.

True friends will laugh with you and celebrate your successes along the way. They don't sweat it when you're 10 minutes late. They appreciate your personality, values and how you see the world. They see the big picture.

BE A ROLE MODEL

Others look up to you and depend on you (although it may not always feel that way). Children especially, who learn best by example. Teach them that everybody's brain works differently. Tell them how yours work. Be open about your strengths, weaknesses and coping strategies. It will teach them to be positive, that adults face and can overcome similar challenges.

This telltale knowledge will relieve their fear of failure, encourage them to take chances and help build self-confidence.

Celebrate your trials and tribulations together. Today, society has a whole new understanding and acceptance of ADHD than when you were a child. Don't assume that children have the same roadblocks as you did. You are somebody who now understands the condition and can help advocate for them.

ADVOCACY AT WORK

Before you quit your job to join the circus

or go save the sea turtles, think about what's going well at work. Consider the things you love and what you bring to the table. Perhaps you could help making 'cognitive differences' part of the diversity policy. Also, consider whether you will talk to your boss about your ADHD and how to approach the conversation.

LAST WORD

Remember that 'normal' is socially, culturally constructed. Our differences make us who we are. When you can celebrate your strengths, you will encourage society to re-evaluate this so called "deficit disorder" that appears to define you.

Sources: Huff, T. *Living well with ADHD* (2016). Florida: Specialty Press. Dawson, P. & Guare, R. *The smart but scattered guide to success* (2016). New York: The Guilford Press.

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Contact Mark Farris Phone: 4035544747
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