

September 23, 2005

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### Home on the Range

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Wednesday June 01, 2005

Inevitably, the topic of conversation sure to dominate my travels to Saskatchewan this weekend will be the weather.

It is a given. Forget the tales of romance surrounding either the newlyweds or the bride's parents, who celebrate 40 years of wedded bliss on Thursday. No, the conversation holding up the back of the hall will be how everyone was worried spring and summer were going to completely pass us by until the sun came out Monday.

Yes, as long as there is a dry summer wind blowing or May has felt more like fall than the introduction to summer, the Mack family will have something to talk about.

I've resigned myself over the years to the fact the weather -- good or bad -- will be at the centre of attention during family get-togethers or phone calls home.

The majority of the senior Macks are -- no matter what their profession -- farmers at heart. They grew up with an affinity for the importance of weather on their general well being.

I can assure you that every one in the younger generation which has, for the most part, moved off the farm land, has heard the folklore.

In drought years, for example, they've been reminded at some point in time of some age-old, wise relative once saying that if there are no mosquitoes, there is no crop. And, just to make sure they get the point, it would be pointed out that the mosquitoes were particularly noticeable by their absence.

But it is no wonder weather is the most talked about topic in any prairie family circle. It is by far the most unpredictable, yet important element in the business of farming.

Come to think of it, there are a more parallels than one might expect between the windswept Prairie and life on the lake. Don't fool yourself, people have an eye on the weather here too. The smiles started to appear about the same time as the sun peaked out from behind the clouds on a couple of occasions last weekend and the attitudes could only have been more upbeat if John, Paul, George and Ringo appeared to lead a rendition of Here Comes The Sun.

The weather -- as everyone more than likely realizes -- plays just as important a role in ensuring a successful tourism year in Kenora as it does in my Prairie relatives harvesting a good crop. It is just a different commodity we're dealing with here.

And, as farming has an influence on the rest of Saskatchewan's economy, so too does tourism play a very, very important role in our



*Lloyd Mack is managing editor of the Daily Miner and News*

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local economy. There is economic value in the life of leisure. Seasonal residents, just one sector of the tourism industry, spend approximately \$85 million annually in the Kenora area, according to a Lake of the Woods District Property Owners Association study conducted in the winter of 2002-2003.

The economic impact of tourism in Sunset Country, according to a study prepared by PKF Consulting in co-operation with the Canadian Tourism Research Institute, is \$306 million.

Weather is the glue that bonds. And, yes, it has its downfalls in that when there is a bad year -- like last year when summer never seemed to blossom -- people mope around instead of remaining resilient and upbeat.

Honestly, without the weather, we'd look for another crutch to hold up the conversation with either relatives at a family get-together or our next door neighbours over the back fence. The risk there might be striking on a subject like politics.

Even though none of my relatives wear their politics on their sleeves, I suspect I'd be right in suggesting those with rural roots still reflect a western Reform sentiment I left almost eight years ago and doubt Paul Martin and the Gomery inquiry have done much to secure support for the Liberals in the next federal election.

On the other hand, with the right prodding, particularly with my citified in-laws, I think I could start a good feud in asking what was with the New Democrats making their bed with the Liberals last month in order to keep things going on the federal budget.

Perhaps I best remain on cordial terms with everyone and focus on our children's activities and the weather.

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**Mayor Canfield & Members  
of Kenora City Council**

extend thanks and appreciation to this very diverse group for their financial support to the fundraising Capital Campaign for the new facilities at the Kenora Recreation Centre.

It is support such as this that instills a sense of pride in our community which is matched by none other. This project would simply not be a reality without your dedicated support and hard work!

**To the Volunteers of the Committee  
and Administration involved -  
*Congratulations on a job well done!***

**To Kenora and our community.....  
*Welcome to Wellness!***

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