

TELLING OUR STORIES

Volume 11

DECEMBER 2019

Issue 1

HISTORY OF HOSPITALS

ON THE GRANDE PRAIRIE

SMALLPOX IN RIO GRANDE

RED CROSS RECORDS IN THE ARCHIVES

HEALTHCARE

IN THE SOUTH PEACE

A PUBLICATION OF THE SOUTH PEACE REGIONAL ARCHIVES

IN THIS ISSUE

- 4 Letter from the Editor
- 4 Take Note
- 5 Maintaining the Health of Community Memory
This issue's Archiveology
- 6 History of Hospitals
A timeline of hospitals on the Grande Prairie
- 8 A Picture of Good Health
This issue's featured photographs
- 10 Sailing Home
Guest contribution by Kaylee Dyck



- 12 Spanish Flu in the South Peace
"The Alarming Spread of Influenza"
- 13 "No Way to Miss the Dreaded Flu"
From *Memories of Bygone Days*
- 14 Olwen's Own Words
Building the Rockery & Breaking Bones
- 16 Notice
Advertising Health Care and Medicine
- 17 Smallpox in Rio Grande
Dr. Andrew Carlisle's Oral History
- 18 Babies in the Backwoods
Guest contribution by Shelley Calliou
- 19 Just Arrived
Baby announcements from the Postman family fonds

- 20 Extended Care
The Johanna Haakstad Maternity Home Records
- 22 Red Cross
"...mobilizing the power of humanity..."
- 24 Gathering Medicine & Giving Protocol
Guest contribution by Victoria Wanihadie
- 25 HIV North
Organizational records in the Archives
- 26 New at the Archives
- 27 Membership Form



Cover: The hospital float in the County Fair has the Doctors operating on the back of a truck, 1948. (SPRA 2014.024.07)

Note on Photographs: Photographs featured in *Telling Our Stories* are unedited, apart from minimal cropping. In cases where substantial cropping may impact the context of the photograph, this will be noted in the caption.

A Publication of the South Peace Regional Archives

Our Vision: Preserving and Sharing the Past.
Our Mission: The purpose of South Peace Regional Archives is to gather, preserve, and share the historical records of municipalities, organizations, businesses, families, and individuals within the region, both now and in the future.

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Josephine Sallis, Archivist
Teresa Dyck, Administrative Assistant

Mailing Address

Box 687, Grande Prairie, AB T8V 3A8
Telephone: 780-830-5105

E-mail: director@southpeacearchives.org
www.southpeacearchives.org

Letter from the Editor

Flu season is upon us and, here at the South Peace Regional Archives, we wish you continued health and happiness. This issue of *Telling Our Stories* explores the history of healthcare in the South Peace region. In it, we ponder the challenges and barriers faced by those in our region, as well as celebrate the achievements and advancements witnessed here.

Our staff and volunteers scoured the Archives’ collections to bring you articles that span a variety of healthcare-related topics: from Spanish Flu to Smallpox; from medical advertisements to restricted records; and from WWI hospital ships to HIV North. We hope that, as you explore these topics, you will consider learning more by visiting us: on the Archives’ website to consult our finding aids; on *Alberta On Record* to view our digitized photographs; and in-person in our reading room to discover the many materials in our collections.

As always, *Telling Our Stories* looks to the future by looking into the past. As you read this issue, consider the role that Archives play in the health of community memory. As we approach the opening of the Grande Prairie Regional Hospital, consider too the many hospitals that served our communities before it. And, finally, consider what records document your own health journey and how they might serve future generations. Thanks for reading!



Alyssa Currie
SPRA Executive Director

TAKE NOTE:

Limited Holiday Hours

During the month of December, the Archives will be open **limited holiday hours**. During this time, there may be a delay in services.

From **December 6th –20th**, the Archives will be open **by special appointment only**. The Archives will be **closed to the public on December 21st** and **reopen on January 2nd**.

These limited hours allow our staff and volunteers to celebrate the holiday season with their families. It also allows our team to perform essential behind-the-scenes tasks to meet our mission and mandate. Thank you for your patience and...

Happy Holidays

from the Archives

Territory Acknowledgement

We acknowledge with respect that the South Peace Regional Archives is located on the ancestral and traditional lands of many Indigenous peoples. This territory is covered by Treaty 8, signed in 1899. The continuing relationship between Indigenous peoples and this land contributes to the rich knowledge and culture of the South Peace region.

We are grateful to serve the people on this land and honor the Calls for Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Maintaining the Health of Community Memory

This issue’s Archiveology

With our large and diverse holdings of family records, business records, photographs, maps, scrapbooks and more, the South Peace Regional Archives preserves a great deal of “memory.” However, when we consider memory a process, rather than a place, Archives are understood as a crucial component of the memory system— for individuals, organizations, and communities. Community memory systems are composed of multiple parts and processes for storing, managing, and accessing various types of memories: much like the human brain. Damage to one component of either of these systems can lead to devastating results.

Certain memory cues, such as language, habit, and social customs, help us manage day-to-day activities with little thought. Most of us, however, operate on a level deeper than our everyday activities, especially when we function regularly in groups, large or small. Our persistent need for increasingly complex social interactions requires more than these types of cues. Archives have various types of memory cues (documents, photographs, oral histories) and we have processes in place for accessing these cues (arrangement and the creation of finding aids). This access to deeper memory cues allows us to recall significant events, which impact our relationships with each other on a local, national and international level.

Like the human body, communities can suffer irreparable and irreversible damage. Loss or destruction of any part of the memory system such as oral histories

and archives, or the breakdown of access points such as the media and the internet, can effectively cause a societal Alzheimer’s Disease.

Consider how Alzheimer’s leads people to make poor decisions, distorts how they interpret the world, and inhibits their ability to communicate with people. The same thing can happen to communities. “Memory loss” about the contributions of women and Treaty promises, for example, have had profound and devastating effects on relationships within and between communities. Discovering evidence that women have been more than supporting characters and the original understanding of the meaning of treaty in the archival record is helping us heal.

Archives can help prevent this loss. Physical holdings provide original permanent records that can prevent permanent damage and even improve the memory system as a whole. Communities with ready access to their stored memory cues retain the ability to understand themselves and the world they live in, and to learn to create better relationships.

This is, of course, only one example or metaphor for the value of Archives. Archivists often debate what exactly we mean by memory or if records themselves are memory. To read more, check out the following: “Memory, identity and the archival paradigm: introduction to the special issue of *Archival Science*” in *Archival Science*, June 2013 and “Touchstones: Considering the Relationship between Memory and Archives” in *Archivaria* 61, Spring 2006. Both articles are available to read online, free of charge.

History of Hospitals on the Grande Prairie

Sometimes, archival researchers may find themselves frustrated by a lack of readily-accessible records on a given topic. In the case of Grande Prairie hospitals, they might instead find themselves overwhelmed by the sheer volume of records available and the sometimes conflicting accounts of significant milestones in our healthcare history.

Historical records, especially those that mark community “firsts,” often present such challenges. If multiple sources claim to document the “first hospital,” for example, how do we decide which of these is correct? Archives maintain a responsibility to preserve the original records as they are presented, even if their accounts may conflict with others in the collections. It is the job of archival researchers to critically interpret the records available and draw their own conclusions. For some, this process may include examining multiple sources to verify or better understand a topic,

date, or account of an event. So, when did the “first” hospital open on the Grande Prairie?

In January 1906, Harry and Maude Clifford travelled by train and overland by caboose for 31 days before arriving on the “grande prairie.” The Cliffords rented log buildings from the Indigenous families at Flying Shot Lake until their own homestead was completed. That year, Maude provided care to a local patient and thus was dubbed the prairie’s first nurse and their home the first hospital. Their homestead also served as the temporary home of Presbyterian missionaries Alexander and Agnes Forbes when they arrived in the area via caboose. Many consider the Forbes caboose to be the first travelling hospital of the region.

When the Forbes arrived in 1910, they were accompanied by members of the Argonaut Company: the

development company responsible for laying out the Grande Prairie townsite. In the fall of 1910, Alexander filed on a homestead near Bear Creek. The Forbes built the first dedicated hospital before completing their adjoining home on the site. A larger hospital facility was constructed in 1914 to replace the hospital at the Forbes’ house. This facility was later dubbed the Kathryn Prittie Hospital, named after the daughter of a donor who helped finance its construction.

The first municipal hospital was built nearby in 1929. Local funeral-home owner J.B. Oliver utilized his flat-bed vehicle to take coffins to the cemetery, and often acted as an ambulance by taking patients to hospital. This hospital was expanded several times over the years, including a second floor addition in 1960 that nearly doubled the number of available beds. In 1961, the first auxiliary hospital in Alberta opened in Grande Prairie, as an expansion of the municipal hospital. Nora Shields, having spent many years nursing in the community’s hospitals and doctors’ offices, was appointed Matron of the auxiliary hospital.

In August of 1978, construction began on a newer,

even larger hospital for the region: Queen Elizabeth II Hospital. The Queen herself visited Grande Prairie to turn the sod on the new facility. QEII Hospital officially opened to the public in 1984 and has serviced thousands of patients since then. The facility is currently home to a range of healthcare services that benefit the Grande Prairie region. Now, the community is looking to the future.

In 2007, Alberta Premier Ed Stelmach announced \$250 million in spending on a new Grande Prairie Regional Hospital. Once completed, this hospital will serve as an acute and specialized care hub. The project has met a series of challenges during its design and construction phases, including a public dispute between the Alberta government and contractors in 2018. According to most recent estimates, the hospital is expected to reach completion in 2020 with a total budget of \$763 million.

Interested in learning more about the first hospitals of Grande Prairie? Visit Alberta On Record to view digitized photographs online or visit the Archives’ reading room to consult our extensive reference files.

1906 Harry and Maud Clifford secure land at Flying Shot Lake. Their homestead serves as the first makeshift hospital.



SPRA 1969.39.960.09

1914 The Presbyterian Mission opens the Pioneer Hospital. They later rename the facility Kathryn Prittie Hospital.



SPRA 1969.39.960.13

1960 Grande Prairie Municipal Hospital adds a second floor, nearly doubling its available bed spaces.



SPRA 1969.42.01.6

1978 Queen Elizabeth II breaks ground on a new hospital. QEII Hospital officially opens to the public in 1984.



SPRA 002.05.03.594



SPRA 2001.01.213

1910 Rev. and Mrs. A. Forbes arrive in Grande Prairie. Their home serves as both the hospital and Presbyterian manse.



SPRA 0193.02.07.42

1929 The new Grande Prairie Municipal Hospital opens. J.B. Oliver provides the first regional ambulance service.



SPRA 1969.42.01.8

1961 Grande Prairie Municipal Hospital expands to include an Auxiliary Hospital. Nora Shields is named Matron.



© Alberta Health Services

2007 Alberta Premier Ed Stelmach announces \$250 million in spending on a new Grande Prairie Regional Hospital.

A Picture of...
Good Health



Above: Mrs. Agnes Forbes, Nurse Agnes Baird, and Dr. Annie Higbee lay the cornerstone for the Presbyterian hospital (Kathryn Prittie Hospital) in Grande Prairie, 1913 (SPRA 032.08.08.1067)

Below: Nora Dionne (left) on the steps of the Kathryn Prittie Hospital with a fellow nurse. 1928 (SPRA 627.04.026)



Above: Dr. Annie Carveth Higbee, first doctor in Grande Prairie, with her husband Charlie, 1909 (SPRA 2001.01.001a)

Right (facing page): Intermittent Positive pressure respirator donated by the I.O.D.E. to Grande Prairie General Hospital, 1975 (SPRA 111.04.085a)

Below: Nurse Elfrieda Homme administers medicine to a young boy in the Hythe hospital, ca. 1955 (SPRA 2009.044.01)



Top left: Two girls in front of the Kathryn Prittie Hospital. One girl is wearing braces on her legs as a result of polio. 1927 (SPRA 2003.05.03)

Top right: A woman and man behind the prescriptions counter in an unidentified pharmacy, likely located near Panda Camera, 1970 (SPRA 190.02.01.0142.14)



Bottom Left: Holy Cross Hospital, Spirit River. 1942 (SPRA 394.07)

Bottom right: Marie Trelle and several classmates in uniform while training to become nurses, ca. 1945 (SPRA 193.02.03.04)



Sailing Home

This article was contributed by Archives volunteer Kaylee Dyck. Kaylee researches First World War veterans of the South Peace in order to write biographies for the Archives' online Soldier's Memorial.

The outbreak of the First World War brought about the need for much change and innovation in the medical field. Ambulances, antiseptic, and anesthesia were all crude (or non-existent) elements of medicine prior to the war, but became sophisticated, indispensable instruments in the saving of millions of lives.

Transporting and caring for such masses of wounded soldiers was something the world had never dealt with before. Through trial and error, a system was established: a network of ambulance wagons, trains, and ships; dressing stations, clearing stations, and general hospitals. This system was dubbed “The Ladder of Good Progress.” For Canadian soldiers, the journey did not end at the hospitals in England. Between March 1917 and November 1918, more than 30,000 Canadians were invalided home via hospital ships and ambulance transports. Among these numbers were at least 70 men from the South Peace, along with a local nurse who served aboard a hospital ship.

A journey across the Atlantic was a risky endeavor.

Right: “Burton, Barton, and Grimco.” [Likely taken at the 28th Casualty Clearing Station at Karasouli, Greece, ca. 1917] (From William Pizzeys military service photograph album, SPRA 2018.004.138)

Hospital Ships in the First World War

our. The German navy had declared unrestricted submarine warfare in January 1917, intentionally targeting hospital ships. Diseases such as scurvy, cholera, and—of course—the flu were also a potential threat. However, as a result of the careful screening that took place before a patient was cleared to board a hospital ship, only one patient died of illness while en route to Canada.

Of the 70+ South Peace soldiers who were transported home while the war was still on, all returned safely without notable incident. However, a few journeyed on ships that would sink later in the war. Private Riley LeRoy Gill, who homesteaded near La Glace, was one of the men who experienced such a “near miss.”

Riley was originally from Nebraska, but came to the area in 1915, which was also when he enlisted. Less than a month after arriving at the front lines, Riley was shot in his left leg, fracturing his tibia. Two operations were performed at a hospital in Boulogne before he was transported to England, where he underwent many more surgeries in attempts to save his leg.



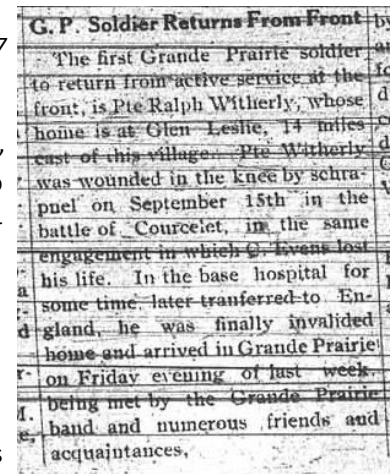
NAME <i>Thorsteinson Stanley</i>		H. Q. FILE NO. <i>472689</i>
RANK AND CORPS <i>Pte 54th Bn.</i>		REG'T L. NO. <i>472689</i>
CABLE		NATURE OF CASUALTY
No. <i>05614</i>	DATE <i>29-11-16</i>	<i>Admitted to No 12. Gen. Hosp. Rouen Nov. 22, 1916</i>
<i>06348 13-12-16</i>		<i>48 M. Knee + Head severe</i>
<i>06348 16-12-16</i>		<i>Improving</i>
<i>T 321 15-1-17</i>		<i>Sailed from Liverpool per the Hoop Sp. Letitia March 12th 1917 Sharpshoot Wound</i>
L. L. July 8907-M. & D. 1908.		M. F. W. 12-30m-10-15. H. Q. 1772-30-505.

While in a convalescent home in Uxbridge, doctors found Riley to be suffering from shell shock; they decided that he would be invalided home to Canada. On June 18, 1917, he departed from Liverpool aboard the *HMHS Letitia*, which was staffed with a Merchant Marine crew and Canadian Army Medical Corps officers. They arrived in Halifax on June 29, the final time the *Letitia* would dock in Canada. On her next voyage, the *Letitia* was caught in a thick fog and ran aground near Halifax. All patients were rescued, but one crew member drowned. In total, the *Letitia* had transported 2,635 patients over the course of five voyages. As for Private Gill, he had been safely transported to the Strathcona Military Hospital in Edmonton, where he would spend a year and eight months. Unfortunately, he was in a car accident while a patient there, and suffered a fractured left femur, shortening his leg by more than two inches. Riley was discharged from the army in May of 1919, and died on January 1, 1955.

Private James McGovern, who had received gunshot wounds to his head and thigh at the Somme in October 1916, experienced an even closer escape. Though the wounds healed, Jim began to suffer from anorexia, fevers, and general weakness. No longer fit for service, he was invalided home in 1918. He left Liverpool on June 6 aboard the infamous *HMHS Llandovery Castle*, and arrived in Halifax on June 17, 1918.

Left: A casualty card from Stanley Thorsteinson's service file. Stanley sailed home on the HMHS Letitia after having been wounded at 6:30am on November 18, 1916, the final day of the Battle of the Somme. Source: Library & Archives Canada

Right: Grande Prairie Herald, April 17, 1917



Only ten days later, on its return trip to England, the *Llandovery Castle* was torpedoed and sunk by a German sub off the Irish coast. Out of the 258 crew members and medical personnel on board, only twenty-four survived; some had drowned, and others had been gunned down by the German navy whilst awaiting rescue in the lifeboats. The world was incensed at these atrocities, but the enemy showed no remorse. Desperate to prevent this from happening again, the Allies revoked the commissions of hospital ships and rather called them “ambulance transports,” which, by the rules of warfare, allowed them to be painted as troop ships and armed with guns. Following these changes, only one allied ship was lost due to enemy activity. Private McGovern, safe in Canada, was discharged in October 1918 and returned to his homestead at Red Willow. He passed away in 1938 at the age of 59.

When the war ended and hospital ships were no longer needed, many of the surviving vessels were returned to their former careers as passenger liners, mail ships, and cargo transports. Sadly, it would not be long before they would again be called upon to carry troops to war and back again.

Spanish Flu in the South Peace

“The Alarming Spread of Influenza”

The Spanish Flu first struck the South Peace in the fall of 1918. Spread by incoming settlers and returning soldiers, the Flu consumed many in its path. By the time it arrived via the railway, nearly 1,000 cases of the Flu were already reported in Edmonton.

The Grande Prairie Herald reported that “the disease shows no signs of abating and the compulsory face mask protection is being enforced in every part of Alberta... Winnipeg health authorities, as a result of the alarming spread of influenza... admit that the malady has got beyond their control” (5 Nov 1918).

As the number of Flu cases grew, the Board of Health took over the Grande Prairie Immigration Hall to use as a makeshift hospital. The newspaper reported that “they have secured the services of a competent nurse who is in charge, and anyone having cause to go there can rest assured they will be well taken care of” (5 Nov 1918). Another hospital was established at Lake Saskatoon. Despite mandatory masks and cancellation of public gatherings, the Flu claimed more than twenty victims within a month of its arrival.

In late November, the Grande Prairie Herald reported more victims of the Flu: “In nearly every case which has proven fatal, a setback has been the direct cause coming as a result of too sudden exposure after the first recovery was well on the way. After this dangerous feature of the disease is thoroughly understood, it is likely that the fatalities will cease” (26 Nov 1918).

Despite these hopes, the death toll continued to grow and the area was faced with a growing number of



Above: Exterior view of Grande Prairie's Immigration Hall in winter. (SPRA 032.08.08.1038)

bodies. The local undertaker, J.B. Oliver, was serving overseas at the time and the man he left in charge succumbed to the flu almost immediately. Hotelier Frank Donald stepped in to fill the position. The Bear Creek Cemetery was established that winter; its location was chosen because the sandy soil facilitated easier digging in the winter months.

Many of the victims buried in the Bear Creek Cemetery were later reinterred in the City of Grande Prairie cemetery. At its height, the Spanish Flu consumed more lives than the First World War: the worst pandemic since the Black Death. It claimed between 20 and 100 million people, nearly 3% of the world population. The province of Alberta reported at least 4300 deaths from the Spanish Flu.

Previous versions of this story have been shared at the Grande Prairie Cemetery Walking Tours and Heritage Village Folktales Tour.

“No Way to Miss the Dreaded Flu”

From *Memories of Bygone Days*

John Thomas Stewart was only five years old when the Spanish Flu first arrived in the South Peace. Seven decades later, John compiled a book of poetry called Memories of Bygone Days. A copy of this book is preserved in Fonds 125: John T. Stewart fonds. This untitled poem appears to document John's memories of the Spanish Flu.

A naked fear had struck the land
A blight we could not understand.
The plague has ravaged far and wide
Caused death through the countryside.
And round about no one was seen,
It was a sort of quarantine.

A man we know, he boldly claimed
He healed the sick and cured the maimed.
No one his efforts could deter
He claimed to be the coroner,
And not the least of all his skills
Were burials and filing wills.
Twas sometimes said by those about
That this mans credit was in doubt.

A pudgy man, the fiery skin
Was kindled by quart of gin.
A moleskin shirt, and wrinkled coat
A pointed beard, much like a goat
And pince-nez glasses wrapped with tape
Caused all of us to sit and gape.

Our faithful nurse a priceless friend
Her foremost thought the sick to mend.
No modern cure the frontier knew,
What was at hand it had to do.

A heavy coat your main attire
The heated stove, you faced the fire,
Your fever reached a dangerous high
You kept it up t'was do or die.

With extra clothes and heavy dress
Around the head a hot compress,
With heated powerful blackstrap rum
You chose to live or just succumb.

The isolation gave no clue,
No way to miss the dreaded flu.
The stiffened forms, the pain untold,
No refuge from the biting cold.
A backwoods settlers body found
Located by a baying hound
The frozen body like a log,
Astride the form a faithful dog.

A visit to the trading post
It seemed a trip we loved the most.
And warned by parents not to stray,
For us a happy carefree day.

The general store with flight of stairs
Direction to assorted wares.
The loft which showed a vacancy
Became a makeshift mortuary.

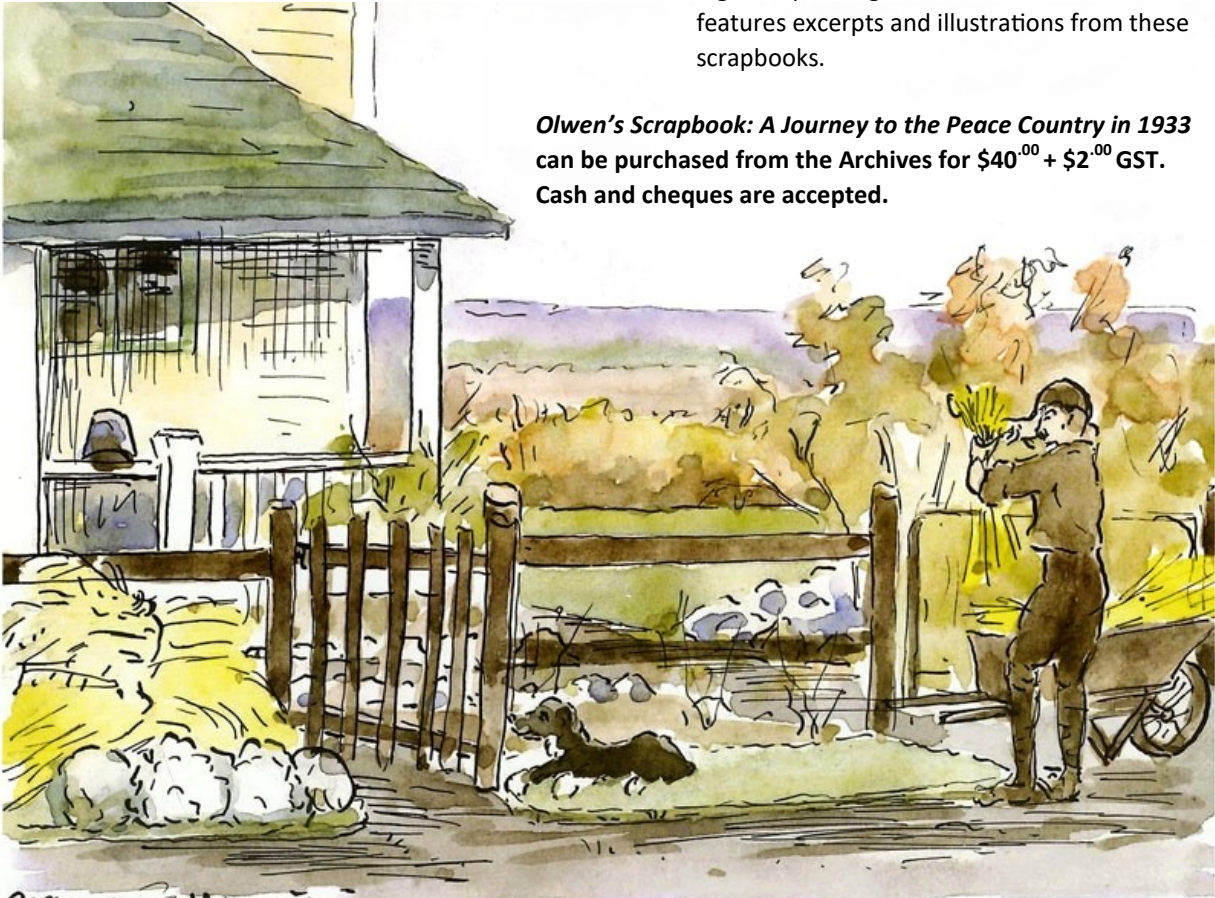
The mortuary was a sight
Enough to give a ghost a fright.
Up creaking stairs with ankles led
The undertaker dragged the dead.
In shallow earth the bodies laid
Some burlap bags a coffin made.

Olwen's Own Words:

Building the Rockery & Breaking Bones

In 1933, Olwen Sanger-Davies travelled from East Sussex, England to the Peace Country to visit her younger brother, Morgan. Olwen documented her visit in two personal scrapbooks, containing approximately 500 drawings and paintings. "Olwen's Own Words" features excerpts and illustrations from these scrapbooks.

Olwen's Scrapbook: A Journey to the Peace Country in 1933 can be purchased from the Archives for \$40⁰⁰ + \$2⁰⁰ GST. Cash and cheques are accepted.



Gifts for Harvest Decorations
Improvements outside the Back Gate
Sam
Rockery
Morgan arranging Mother's Sheaf.

September 25th -28th

While waiting for the outfit to come and thresh us Morgan got on with the rockery, he had already unturfed the spot, and put some of the turf outside the back gate.

Unfortunately, on the Wednesday he squashed his little finger and broke the top bone, which led to many visits to Dr. Little, who put it in a splint....

Thursday, October 5th

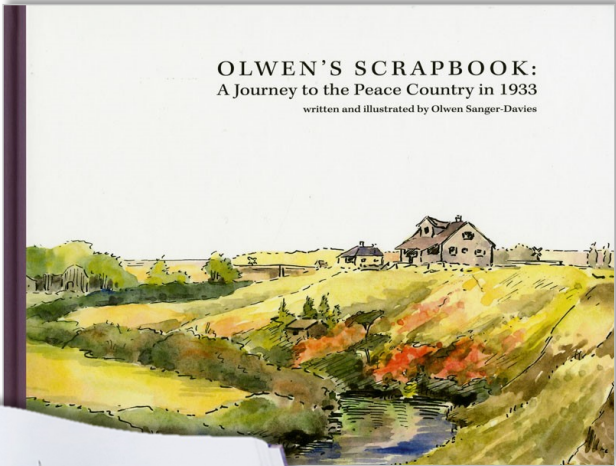
As we had to go into the doctor to have the little finger seen to, we took in the sheaves of wheat and oats, two cauliflowers, and two cabbages for the Harvest Thanksgiving decorations. The

squirrels had spoilt the original sheaves which Morgan had put into the big granary.



Purchase your copy of Olwen's Scrapbook today

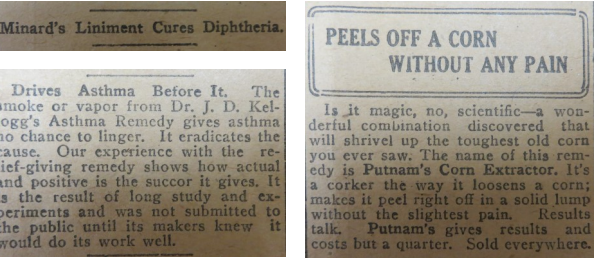
ONLY \$40.00 +GST
while quantities last



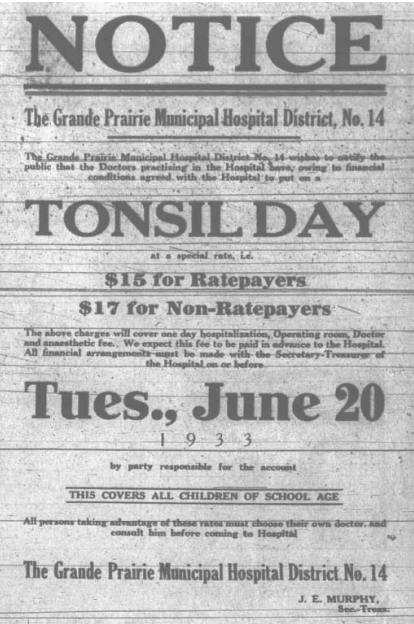
Limited copies!
Cash and cheques are accepted.

NOTICE

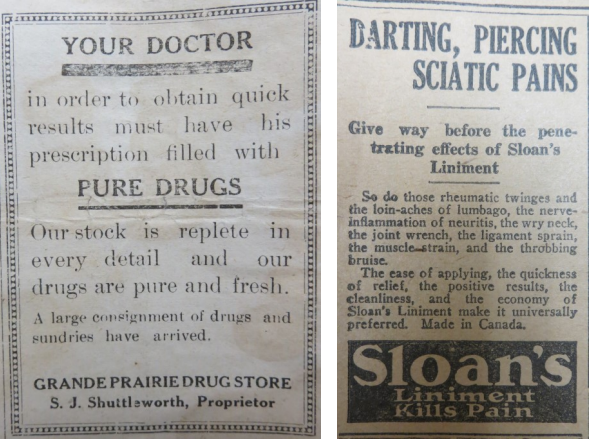
It's hard to know what to believe when we see advertising for medical supplies and medicines. These are not new concerns. Like today, "news" sometimes functioned as advertising in newspapers of the past. Many of these local ads demonstrate the often blurred distinction between news and advertisement.



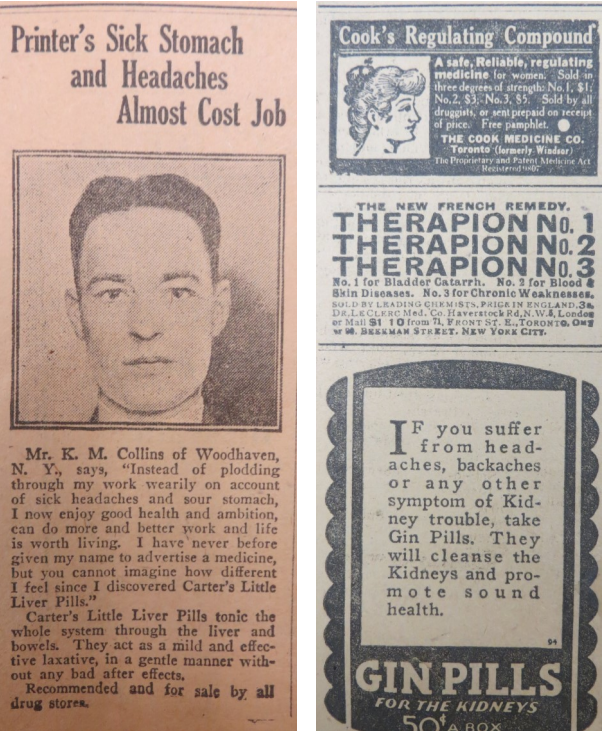
Above: These ads from the 7 January 1919 Grande Prairie Herald are interspersed within the war news on page 3. Note how they look remarkably like articles.



Advertising Health Care and Medicine



Above: Both these ads were posted in the 4 January 1916 edition of the Grande Prairie Herald. They are to-the-point and clearly advertising.



Left: This ad from the 6 June 1933 Grande Prairie Herald was considered "a great lick for science" by the editors of the Vancouver Sun.

Right: These ads from 4 January 1926 Grande Prairie Herald blend advertising and "articles."

Smallpox in Rio Grande Dr. Andrew Carlisle's Oral History

Dr. Andrew Murray Carlisle moved to the Grande Prairie area in 1921 and had many fascinating stories to tell about his early years as a country doctor in this region— including the following excerpt from an oral history recording Dr. Carlisle made in the 1960s-1970s. If you wish to listen to the whole recording, you can find it on our YouTube page. The complete transcript is available on the Archives website. Note: Dr. Carlisle refers to "Indians:" terminology which is now considered by many to be outdated.

In 1927 we had a large epidemic of a very virulent smallpox. There were 35 deaths from it in the area from Grande Prairie to the border. The young wife of our provincial police sergeant, Sgt. Purdy, was one of the first. My wife and I went to all the schools from Wembley to the border and vaccinated all the children. The government paid nothing for this, just supplied the vaccine. My \$100 dollars a month had stopped when we went east. The teachers had asked the children to bring 50 cents apiece for their vaccination. Some did, some didn't, and some just brought the rest of their family with them. All were vaccinated. The Indians had the least resistance to smallpox. Almost none at all. There were a lot of Indians on the reservation at Rio Grande

thirty or more miles west of Wembley that I looked after. A big Indian Agent, Leo Ferguson, half French and half Indian, a good friend of mine, always came with me. To protect the Indians, we went first thing out to the reservations. Leo would send nine or ten horseback riders out in all directions and gather the tribe together and all the Indians were vaccinated except two families and two teenage boys. They had hid under a little bridge or culvert and were not vaccinated. They all got black smallpox and they all died, all 16 of them. I have often thought that the whole reservation might have been wiped out if we had not gone out there early. Black smallpox is hemorrhagic smallpox showing no resistance. The pox fill with blood and the patient bleeds from all orifices of their body and it was always fatal in those days.



Photograph: Rio Grande School opened in 1918. This photograph shows the student body in 1923-1924. Student row: ? Hatton, Albert Hill, Vern Hill, Tom Hill, ? Hatton, Eileen Hill, Mildred Hill, Rita Hill. Adult Row: A.J.Hill, Roy Cleland, Edna Fraser (teacher), Verna Ramsay, Mayme Hill holding Olive, Mrs. Duteau, Mrs. Hatton, ?, Pearl Cleland. Photograph from Ellen (Camplair) Hatton and given to Jeanne Smith. (SPRA 502, 2008.090.13)

Babies in the Backwoods

The earliest female inhabitants of the South Peace Region gave birth in often remarkable circumstances. Many of these women were supported or influenced by Indigenous birthing traditions. While many of these practices have declined, some have endured. Others have experienced recent revivals, such as the presence of a midwife or the use of baby sleep sacks.

The following story was submitted by guest contributor Shelley Calliou. Shelley is a member of the As'in'i'wa'chi Ni'yaw Nation, also known as the Kelly Lake Cree Nation, and is a volunteer member of the Indigenous History Committee.

Since time immemorial the knowledge of midwifery existed in First Nations way of life. Shown by women before them who passed down the knowledge of ceremony, midwives utilized songs and medicines that assisted in the arrival of a new life.

Veronique Calliou nee Gladu was born in 1861 in Lac St Anne to Paulette Gladu and Marie Beaudoin. She married Xavier Hamelin and had a son Francis Hamblen. Both joined her when she arrived in the Grande Prairie area. In 1883 the recently widowed Veronique married Adam Calliou. This marriage produced 5 children. In the Flyingshot Lake district Veronique was joined by her Gladu relatives and Adam's relatives.

Adam and Veronique farmed at Flyingshot Lake and her husband trapped in the foothills west of Grande Prairie. Veronique Calliou acted as a midwife and nurse to her people but also assisted the growing white settlers who migrated to the area.

The following excerpt originally appeared in an article published in the Grande Prairie Herald, 13 May 1948:

When the birth of [Mrs. Florence Calliou's] fourth child was due, this plucky pioneer woman, living in the bush country far from medical help, decided to go to Grande Prairie for the event. She loaded a dog sled with food and bedding and set out, walking behind the outfit. It took her eight days to walk 120 miles, with overnight stops, when she camped in the open. Arriving at Fort Nelson she boarded a plane which took her to Grande Prairie in less than an hour.

The baby was born soon after her arrival. Both mother and baby are in fine shape, according to Dr. A. M. Carlisle, who attended the case....

Born at Rio Grande, west of here, Mrs. Calliou was educated at the Catholic Indian Mission School at Sturgeon Lake. Her husband was born near Grande Prairie where his parents had homesteaded in the pioneer days of 1907.

Right: "George and Eunice Holmes, children of Robert and Jessie Holmes, at St. Peter's Mission on Lesser Slave Lake in 1904. Eunice is in a traditional native baby bag." (SPRA 0157.13)



Just Arrived!

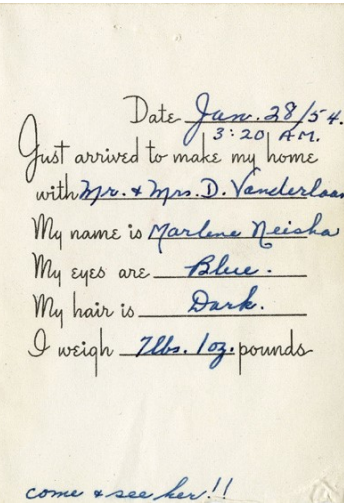
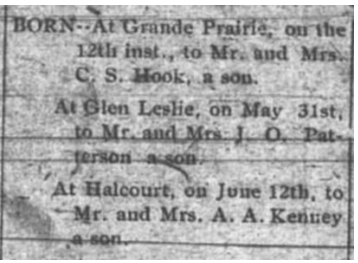
Announcing...

Early Grande Prairie newspapers were dotted with birth announcements like the ones below. Proud new parents and gift-laden family and friends were eager share and see reports of the new arrival. Simple statements informed the community of recent births: "Born: at Glen Leslie, on May 31st, to Mr. and Mrs. J.O. Patterson, a son" and "At Halcourt, on June 12th, to Mr. and Mrs. A.A. Kenney, a son." Colorful printed cards like those found in the Postman family's correspondence had space for parents to include handwritten details, like baby's name and weight, or maybe an invitation to visit. These cards were a more personal way to share their exciting news with family and friends.



Left: Three birth announcements in the June 25, 1918 issue of the Grande Prairie Herald.

All other birth announcements from Fonds 515, the Postman Family fonds, ca. 1950



Extended Care

The Johanna Haakstad Maternity Home Records

The name “Johanna Haakstad” often elicits smiles and nods. For many of Johanna’s “grandbabies,” this kind woman not only presided over the birth of their parents, she also documented the first part of their lives.

“Aunt Jo,” as she was often called, was born in Norway in 1885 and immigrated to Minnesota with her family in 1888. Along with her daughter Thelma and other family members, she immigrated to Canada in 1906. Johanna worked a number of jobs but midwifery was her calling. She carried out her training with Dr. McPherson and, for over 15 years, assisted local doctors or practiced on her own at home births. Johanna usually remained with her patients for several days to run the home while the mother rested.



Above: “Aunt Jo” Haakstad, 1956.
(SPRA 001-2009.122.03 Part of South Peace Regional Archives Photograph collection.)

showed her patients never wavered. It grew from a small three room shack in 1928 to a six-bed hospital in the 1940s. The Hospital was known variously as Sexsmith Maternity Home; Stork Hospital; and Johanna Haakstad Maternity Home. Over the years, it received support from local community organizations such as the Anglican Women’s Association and the Sexsmith Women’s Institute. In the course of her thirty year career, Johanna “Aunt Jo” Haakstad delivered 3,100 babies in the South Peace region. At her retirement in 1958, the Maternity Home was also retired. Johanna died in 1963, at the age of 78.

Despite the importance of the Maternity Home, the Archives has only scattered records about Johanna and the Home. Most of what we know comes from our reference file collection and a lengthy story in the community history book, *Wagon Trails Grown Over*. Johanna and the maternity home are mentioned in several pioneer stories, including the Bentrer, Haukedal, and Sandboe families in La Glace, but often only to note that babies were born under her care.

There are a few photographs of Johanna posing with “her” babies in SPRA 001 Pioneer Museum of Grande Prairie & District fonds, but she left little of herself for us to discover. It may not be surprising, though, to learn that this giving woman took great care in documenting the women and children she nurtured.

The Johanna Haakstad Maternity Home fonds contains several loose notebook pages. In her article for the 24 October 1985 *Western People* magazine, Gertrude Bryan wrote, “Johanna’s simple record book lay on the little table inside the door—an exercise book with a heavy black cover. Date of entry, name of mother, and sex of child, date of discharge and, then, ‘Both Well.’ Dear Jo.” This little record book records all the births at the maternity home up to 1949, though it has since lost its black cover.

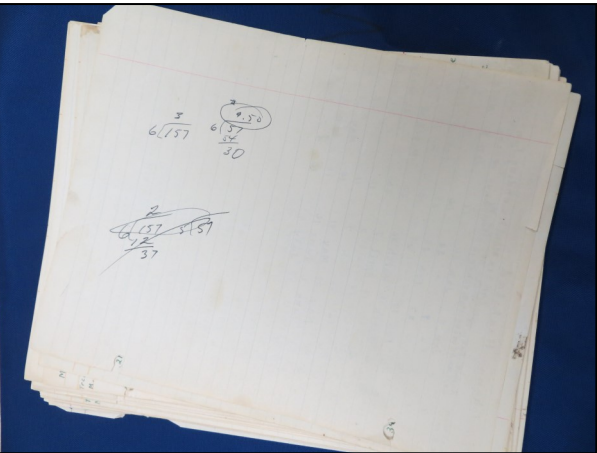
Despite its homespun appearance, the notebook is a medical record. As a result, the Archives is responsible for managing restrictions on access. The personal information contained in any kind of medical record, even the plain black scribbler Johanna used to record her patients’ information, is governed by the Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP). Part 3 of the FOIP Act, “Disclosure of Information in Archives,” states that archives of a public body— such as the South Peace Regional Archives— may only disclose personal information if it has been in existence for 25 years or more and if the disclosure would not be an “unreasonable invasion” of a third party’s personal privacy. The release of medical information is considered an unreasonable invasion of personal privacy.

Of course, it’s not just medical records that have restrictions; school records do as well. A former straight-A student may not mind having their records perused 10 years down the road but a D student probably would. They may experience embarrass-

ment over attendance or health issues recorded in school records, such as visits to a school counselor.

These regulations do not necessarily mean the records are unavailable. It does mean that the Archives needs to practice special care in how we make them available. When a record is part of a form that includes multiple names, we may not provide the original physical copy for viewing. We would locate an individual’s information and copy or transcribe it in a way that protects everyone else.

Based on Gertrude’s account, Johanna’s book may well have been in view for all to see. In a small community, it would have been difficult to maintain a high level of privacy for something as noticeable as a new baby or mother returning home childless. But that kind of community engagement did not envision the rapid dissemination of information on the internet. Word of mouth has some limits: the internet, less so. Johanna cared very much for the patients in her care. We extend that care by respecting the privacy of their personal and perhaps painful moments.

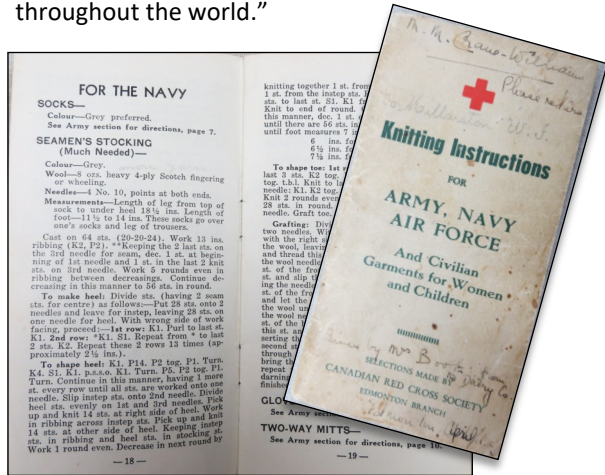


Above: The unassuming medical document within the loose pages of Johanna’s hand-written record book.
(SPRA 655 Johanna Haakstad Maternity Home fonds)

Red Cross “... mobilizing the power of humanity...”

In 1864, the First Geneva Convention mandated Red Cross Societies to “alleviate suffering on the battlefield, have neutral status and adopt a red cross on a white background... as a protective symbol.” Three decades later, in 1896, the Canadian Branch of the British Red Cross Society was formed— later called the Canadian Red Cross. In Alberta, the Red Cross was organized at the outbreak of the Great War to facilitate war-time assistance and alleviate the suffering of the needy in the province.

While the Great War spurred the initial organization of societies in the region, they were quick to respond to the Spanish Flu outbreak as well. The Flu brought Red Cross officials to the Peace Country. Having assessed the region for medical services, the Society adopted the Peace Time Policy of the League of Red Cross Societies: “Improvement of Health, the Prevention of Disease, and the Mitigation of Suffering throughout the world.”



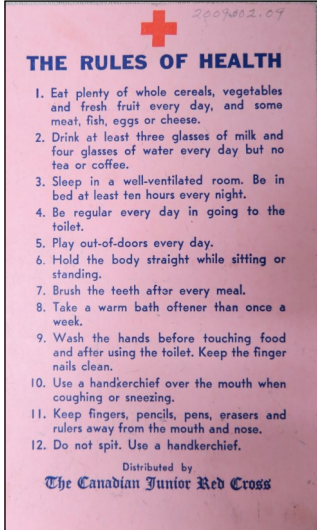
Above: Instruction booklet provided by Red Cross during World War I. (SPRA 197.04 Part of Paulette Hrychiw fonds)

The Red Cross implemented these policies in two ways: through radio broadcasts on health education and the organization of Junior Red Cross Societies. In the interwar period, the focus of relief and education efforts were for returned soldiers, new immigrants, and victims of the Great Depression.

With the advent of World War II, local organizations met throughout the South Peace to discuss how they would support the

Red Cross. This was largely women’s work – knitting and sewing garments and useful items, and preparing for men and women overseas and in POW camps; for civilians displaced by war, and orphaned children.

After the war, Red Cross staff and volunteers across the Peace Country continued to knit, sew, operate blood services, and provide assistance during times of trouble, at home and around the world. If you want to learn more about the Red Cross in Northern Alberta, read *Across the Years: The Story of the Canadian Red Cross in Northwestern Alberta*, available for in-person consultation in Archives’ reading room

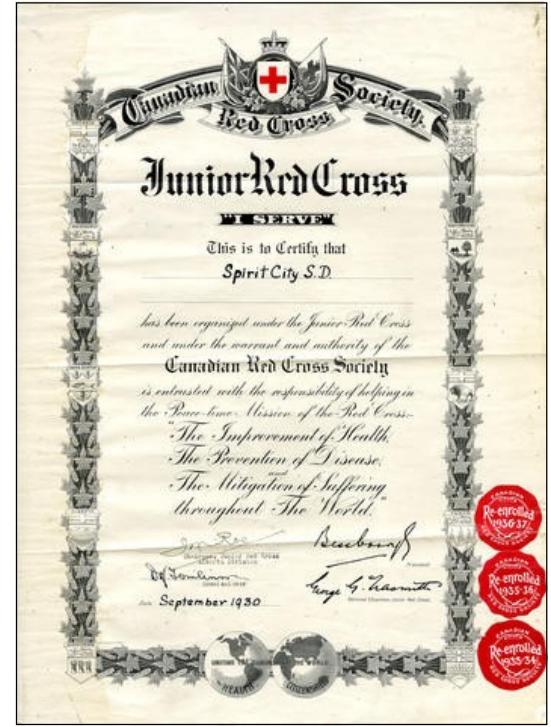


A card listing 12 rules for boys and girls, produced by the Canadian Junior Red Cross. (SPRA 501, 2009.002.09, Part of SPRA Paper Artefacts collection)



Above: Torun School Junior Red Cross. Peggy Mair's class create a quilt to raffle for the war effort in 1943. (SPRA 0168.01.02)

Right: Junior Red Cross Certification Document for the “Spirit City SD” [Spirit River School District 3361]. The document is dated September 1930, but re-enrollment seals attached to the document certify the school until 1937. (SPRA 235.05.01)



Featured Fonds

Fonds 010 Canadian Red Cross, Wanham

1939—1976, 11cm of textual records

Agency History

The Wanham Branch of the Canadian Red Cross Society was formed in 1939, at the beginning of World War II. Its purpose was to raise funds and make supplies for hospitals, soldiers and victims overseas. The society campaigned yearly in the Wanham, Belloy, Codesa, Eaglesham, Watino, Heart Valley, Tangent and Woking area.

Custodial History

Helen Harrington, a long-serving community nurse and the driving force behind the Wanham Red Cross, preserved these records. When she moved from

Wanham, she deposited them with Wally Tansem, who later donated them to the Archives.

Scope and Content

The fonds consists of minutes, correspondence, a financial ledger recording all campaign donations, receipts and bills, and publications such as pamphlets, annual reports and magazines from Canadian Red Cross.

The full finding aid for this fonds is available online at SouthPeaceArchives.org. The material is available for in-person consultation in the reading room at the South Peace Regional Archives.

Gathering Medicine & Giving Protocol

Jim Nelson (JN): There are a lot of medicines out there isn't there?

Pete McCullough (PM): I know a lot of them.

JN: I bet you do.

PM: Old Paul he was a medicine man.

JN: Paul?

PM: Paul Wanyandi [Wyniandi/Wanihadie]

JN: Oh, yeah

This exchange occurred in a 2002 oral history interview with Pete McCullough. The full interview is preserved in the Folk History Project (Kakwa/Two Lakes Oral Histories) collection (SPRA Fonds 133). It is also available on the Archives' YouTube channel.

Below, guest contributor Victoria Wanihadie shares her connection to Paul and her perspective on "giving protocol." Victoria is a volunteer member of the Indigenous History Committee. She is a student and educator of traditional Indigenous knowledge.

The picture given, is of my great-grandfather. The medicine that he is showing is from a place that he has gathered from for many years. I recently learned that the land that this medicine came from has since been extracted and sold. I was upset when I learned that people had abused this medicine for personal gain. This incident made me consider whether or not these people had been given the proper teachings for picking medicines on the land.



Above: Paul Wyniandi shows the Schenk children his rat root, a highly regarded native medicinal plant root [1975] (SPRA 0256.03.50, Part of the Schenk family fonds)

The proper teachings for gathering medicines, is also referred to as "giving protocol." I am grateful to have received a teaching from one of my elders about giving proper protocol, prior to gathering medicines. The protocol is the offering of the tobacco and prayer, to show respect to the creator, mother earth, the ancestors, and to the plant. We are leaving tobacco in respect for the plant that is offering its life, as medicine for healing or prayers. Plants are alive and have feelings, they are spirit. When I leave tobacco, I make this agreement that I will use the medicines in a good way. I will not take too much of the medicines, only what I need and I will also share with others.

I shared a teaching regarding protocol, not all of our teachings are the same.

HIV North

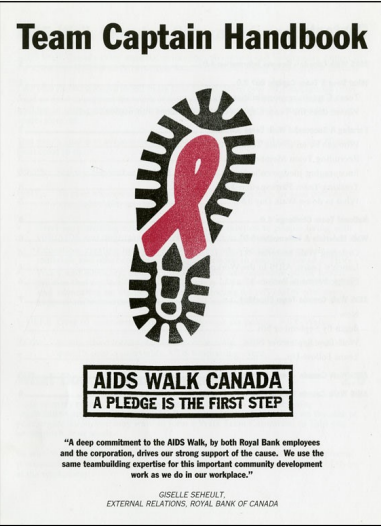
Organizational
Records in the
Archives

The archival records of an organization are the heart of its history. These original records—minutes, reports, photographs, letters, publications, and more—document an organization's heart and spirit. They can also be extremely useful legal, administrative, and fiscal resources in years to come. By donating their records to the Archives, organizations can ensure their long-term preservation and accessibility— for both themselves and the communities they serve.

In 1987, members of the Grande Prairie Health Unit, the Gay and Lesbian Association, and other health and educational agencies established the South Peace AIDS Council to meet the challenges and issues around the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In 2002 its geographic boundary expanded and the name of the organization was changed to HIV North Society to reflect the new region and the emphasis on the prevention of the spread of the HIV virus. In 2007, the HIV North Society donated their organizational records to the South Peace Regional Archives.

Fonds 426 HIV North (South Peace AIDS Council) fonds consists of two decades of records related to the operations of the South Peace AIDS Council and, later, HIV North Society. It contains a wealth of material from the organization's earliest days to 2006, including: executive records; records related to educational material and events; news clippings detailing the local attitudes and response to AIDS issues; subject files from the administration of the organization; project files regarding short-term and long-term projects; and documents showcasing relationships with

Right: A Team Captain Handbook from the first AIDS Walk in Grande Prairie, 2011. (Part of SPRA 426.02.01)



associated organizations at the local, provincial, and national level. The South Peace Regional Archives meticulously processed all of this material and has made it available for consultation in our reading room. Meanwhile, HIV North recently began a rebranding process that culminated in changing their mission and corporate name. During this process, their staff visited the Archives to explore and reflect on the history of the organization. For any organization, there is no better time to explore the past than when you are looking to the future. The Archives can provide research access and support in this journey.

In 2018, HIV North officially changed their mission statement to encompass their expanded focus beyond HIV and expanded services. In 2019, they officially changed their name to Northreach Society. While the rebranding will bring the organization into the future, the preservation of their archival materials will ensure that their past is remembered.

New at the Archives
Thank You Donors!

This quarter has seen some great donations from organizations in the region including accruals from the Art Gallery of Grande Prairie and from the Grande Prairie Golf and Country Club. An accrual is a donation that adds to an existing fonds in the Archive. The Art Gallery donation includes programming records while the Club records are a collection of posters created for their recent anniversary celebration.

Fran Moore and colleague, Lou Huruska, donated their working files from their decade of work for Cansurmount, a local organization that supported individuals and families affected by cancer. These records include scrapbooks like the one pictured below.



Right:
Cansurmount
Scrapbook
from accrual
2019.067

Another wonderful donation which adds to our growing collection of art related records was the accrual of Grande Prairie Guild of Artists records from 2009—2016. This accrual includes records related to the 30th Anniversary of the organization. Celebration records are a wonder archival source as members often research and compile histories for their event. These records go on to become valuable historical information.

Hello,
my name is
Fred Fonds

I am the resident Elf on the Shelf at the South Peace Regional Archives and I am back from the North Pole for another holiday visit. Last year, I had a holly jolly time learning about the Archives and the services they provide... as well as getting into some naughty and nice holiday mischief! What adventures will this year bring?



“Like” and “follow” the South Peace Regional Archives on Facebook to stay updated on Fred’s adventures throughout the month of December!

South Peace Regional Archives Society
Membership Application/Renewal Form

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

I would like more information about becoming a: _____volunteer _____board member

Select your membership:

Yearly membership: receive communications to stay informed about issues and happenings at the Archives, get involved in the society, attend meetings, vote on issues, and run for office.

Lifetime membership: receive all of the benefits of a regular membership, without the hassle of yearly renewal, and know that your membership could have a greater immediate impact.

This membership is _____ new _____ renewal

Yearly Membership
\$20.00/person or \$30.00/couple _____

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\$500.00/person _____

I wish to donate to the
South Peace Regional Archives _____

Total Membership and Donation _____

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Phone: 780-830-5105
Fax: 780-831-7371
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