

Plain & Valley

Covering Southeast Saskatchewan and Southwest Manitoba

February 2018 • Page 25

Apshkrums will be cheering hard this Winter Olympics

BY KEVIN WEEDMARK

Moosomin's Greg and Nancy Apshkrum will be watching the Winter Olympics more closely than most.

Their niece, Brooke Apshkrum, will be competing in the women's luge competition February 12 and 13 in Pyeongchang.

At age 18, Brooke is extremely young for an Olympic luge team. Her teammates are Kimberly McRae, 25, and Alex Gough, 30.

Her father Mark grew up in Carlyle and lived in Moosomin for a few years in the 1980s before the oil industry took the family to Calgary, then back to Saskatchewan from 2003-2008, then back to Calgary.

Brooke started school in Saskatchewan, and completed high school in 2017 at the special sports school at Canada's Olympic Park in Calgary.

"She was always athletic," Mark says. "While we were in Saskatchewan she was always taking dance classes and martial arts like Kung Fu. When we moved back to Calgary then she really wasn't crazy about dance. We had some neighbors who were good friends of ours and some of their children started (luge). The magic age to do it or try it out was 10 years old and when she was nine she said 'okay I want to do this.' We told her alright but you have to be 10 and we were actually kind of hoping she would forget about it when she did turn 10. But once she turned 10 she said 'I can go to luge now, eh?' And so she tried it out and that was it. She said this is what I want to do. She has been doing it since she was 10.

"She joined a team here with the Calgary Luge Club. They have a development squad. She progressed very quickly. By the time she was in development she obviously had some talent in it that was spotted pretty early and by the time she was 13 or 14 she had already made



Brooke Apshkrum at a recent luge event.

the Junior National Team at quite an early age and by the time she was 17 she was on the Senior National Team."

Becoming part of the Senior National Team at such a young age is unusual, but not unheard of.

"Alex Gough, our top luger—she is the one that has the most medals in Canada for luge—she started at that age also, but usually they are at least 20 years old before they are on the national team in Canada," says Mark.

"Brooke has shown promise and she has gone through the development quite quickly and made the National Junior team and from there proceeded to do quite well in it.

"She won gold in the Youth Olympic Games in Lillehammer, so she was 16 at that point.

"That was quite something to see her do so well.

"We were in Lillehammer when she did that and we've been to Austria to watch Junior World Championships.

"We travelled all the way there to watch her crash on her second run but that's the sport," Mark says with a laugh.

"We got to watch her train. Whenever we have the opportunity we will go out there and watch."

Brooke's parents are looking forward to watching her at the Pyeongchang Olympics.

"We wouldn't miss it," says Mark. "I think we might be on the finish dock—the place where you can cheer your athlete on—for maybe one run so far."

Luge as a spectator sport consists of watching athletes fly by at 140 km/h, but many venues have stands set up close to the finish line.

"For most of the big events they have big screens everywhere and you can watch them at any place of the track usually and then from that point you can watch them on the screen."

Continued on page 33



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Burrowing owl visits MacLeod



Cricket the burrowing owl.

Students at MacLeod Elementary School in Moomsomin got a chance to get up close and personal with an endangered species—a burrowing owl—on Tuesday.

Lori Johnson, the Owl Co-ordinator at the Saskatchewan Burrowing Owl Interpretive Centre in Moose Jaw, visited the school with Cricket, one of the centre's 10 burrowing owls. Children got a chance to learn more about the owls, and ask questions.

The Saskatchewan Burrowing Owl Interpretive Centre was created to help promote the conservation of the endangered Burrowing Owl and their prairie habitat through education, stewardship and eco-tourism. Part of that includes a travelling educational program.

One of the main problems facing burrowing



Lori Johnson lets students take a close look at Cricket during his visit.

owls is the loss of habitat that they need to survive,

and Johnson pointed out to students that the biggest threat to that habitat and to the species is human activity.

Over the past 10 years, Saskatchewan has been losing burrowing owls at a rate of about 22 per cent per year.

Burrowing owls live in open grassland areas in western North America. In Canada they are currently restricted to the southern areas of Saskatchewan and Alberta. Since the early 1900s, much of the western Canadian prairie has been cultivated for agriculture.

Agricultural crops don't provide the habitat that burrowing owls require, so the owls are restricted to the small fragments of prairie that remain as cattle pastures. In much of southern Saskatchewan, these small cattle pastures are

the last remaining refuge for burrowing owls.

In addition to grasslands, burrowing owls also need burrows to nest in. Since they don't dig their own burrows, they must rely on animals like prairie dogs, badgers, and gophers to dig holes for them. However, these animals are often seen as pests and are killed—sometimes with poisons that can kill the owls.

Some of the burrowing owls at the Burrowing Owl Interpretive Centre have been born in captivity there, while others were born in the wild and can not be released back into the wild due to injuries.

Children could not touch Cricket when he came to visit last week, but at the end of the presentation they were allowed to take a close look at him.

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Bonk says proposal would harm Sask economy

Feds to impose carbon tax, give funds to individuals

BY KEVIN WEEDMARK

The federal government came up with a new policy on its carbon tax, saying that if Saskatchewan and other provinces don't come up with their own form of a carbon tax, the federal government will impose a carbon tax on them and redistribute the proceeds to individuals, with the feds giving provinces until March 31 to have a plan in place.

Ottawa has promised that revenue from a federal backstop carbon price will go back to the provinces it comes from. But a draft legislative proposal released Monday indicates that the money could go either to the provinces like Saskatchewan that don't have their own carbon tax, or to individuals.

This isn't the first time the federal government has suggested it could distribute carbon tax revenue to individuals, but the first time the proposal has been included in draft legislation.

"We're evaluating how best to return the revenue—for example, by giving it directly back to individuals and businesses in the province," Environment Minister Catherine McKenna told reporters last May. The federal carbon tax will apply to those provinces that don't have their own. Quebec, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia already have carbon prices in place. Manitoba has announced it will levy a \$25-per-tonne carbon tax this year, while Nova Scotia is planning for a cap-and-trade system.

But Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall said he will take the federal government to court if it tries to impose a carbon tax.

Environment and Climate Change Canada estimate that the federal backstop would generate \$260 million in revenue from Saskatchewan if applied in 2018, rising to \$1.3 billion in 2022 (more than \$1,000 per resident). A document from Environment and Climate Change Canada, dated April 2017, estimates that total revenue from the federal carbon tax would equal nearly \$3 billion in 2022, if it were applied to all six provinces that don't yet have their own.

The government also released new details Monday about how it intends to price pollution from industrial emitters. According to a regulatory framework, major facilities in sectors like oil and gas, mining, and food processing will pay a carbon price only if they emit above a certain threshold—an attempt to preserve their competitiveness.

"This approach thus minimizes the risk that businesses could move from Canada to jurisdictions that do not price carbon," the framework says.

But Conservative environment critic Ed Fast said the framework shows the government is listening to big emitters, but is doing little to protect small- and medium-sized businesses.

"They'll be facing very similar challenges to some of the big emitters. It's just that their size isn't significant enough to the point where the federal government is prepared to go to bat for them," he said. "We have a government in the United States that is very much focused on reducing the tax burden on business, that's

very much focused on reducing energy costs. In Canada we're going the opposite direction."

Moosomin MLA Steven Bonk said the provincial government still plans to challenge the feds in court, and he doesn't believe the federal government will be able to impose a carbon tax on Saskatchewan.

He said the reasoning behind the carbon tax, and the latest government announcement that it will give the taxes raised to individuals, doesn't make any sense to him.

"For one thing we just don't understand the whole concept behind this," he said. "Carbon tax has been proven to not reduce emissions and if you're going to just turn around and give the money back, what is the point in the first place? And we already have a made-in-Saskatchewan plan that will seriously address the problems of climate change, boost our technological sector, agricultural sector and not involve a tax, so that is a position of our government. We are willing to take this matter to court if we have to."

Bonk said the provincial government is looking at the draft legislation released.

"Our justice officials are reviewing the draft federal legislation right now and we're not even sure they can impose a tax on the province of Saskatchewan, that is step number one. Further to that we have a made in Saskatchewan climate change program which we know will reduce emissions while not hurting the economy, so that is what we are focused on in the moment."

Bonk doesn't expect the outcome of the Saskatchewan Party Leadership race to affect the province's stance.

"Any common sense person knows that a federally imposed carbon tax on the province of Saskatchewan doesn't make sense," he said.

Bonk said the province has made its position clear to the federal government.

"We're in constant communication with the federal government and on this issue we just simply disagree and the federal government asked each province to put together a climate change plan. We have done so. We think we have a great plan. Like I said, it will reduce emissions without hurting our economy and it is actually a results-oriented plan opposed to a flat carbon tax. We're confident in our position and we're willing to take the federal government to court over this."

Does Bonk think the dispute will actually end up in court?

Continued on page 31



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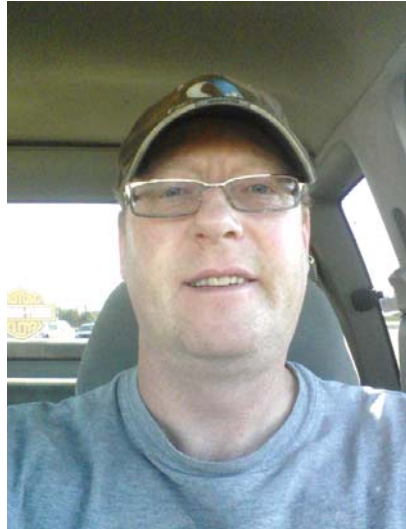
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Breach of Conditions: Byron Harpold arrested, held in custody



Photos of Byron Harpold from two separate Facebook accounts.

BY KEVIN WEEDMARK

An ongoing investigation into an individual breaching his conditions not to access the internet or possess a phone resulted in the arrest of a 53-year-old man in Moosomin last week.

Byron Douglas Harpold has been charged with five counts of Breaching his Undertaking and remains in custody.

Harpold was arrested Tuesday on Main Street in downtown Moosomin.

Harpold had been released from prison after serving his latest sentence—three years for committing indecent acts—and returned to Moosomin.

Moosomin RCMP received a complaint against him in the time since he has been out of prison.

"We received a complaint from a member of the public we were following up on," said Cpl. Brian Fleming of the Moosomin RCMP.

Harpold has served prison sentences and has been subject to various conditions due to previous convictions for indecency and possession of child pornography.

By court order, Harpold is banned from using a computer or being near children for the rest of his life.

He is not permitted to be in any public place where children are expected to be, and is not allowed to work with anyone under the age of 16.

He is not allowed to access the internet or have a phone.

Harpold grew up in Whitewood, where his first criminal activity was trashing a library, and worked in Alberta where he had his first convictions for possession of child pornography.

He returned to the area several years ago and worked for a construction company in Kipling. He currently lives in Moosomin, where his parents had retired.

His most recent conviction was in 2014, when he was convicted of flashing customers at a Wal-Mart in Weyburn

on multiple occasions. On one occasion he exposed himself to two teenage girls in the store. He pleaded guilty to committing indecent acts in that case. He was arrested at the store after a struggle with police.

During his sentencing in that case, Harpold told the court he was remorseful and embarrassed for his actions.

He said exposing himself was a problem for 15 years, and he wanted to understand the overpowering urge.

He told the judge he had not received counselling for the problem when he had been incarcerated on previous occasions, but he wanted to pursue counselling. He was sentenced to three years in prison for the Wal-Mart incidents.

He had previous convictions for indecent acts, as well as for possessing child pornography.

In January, 2004, Harpold was charged with possessing child pornography in Rocky Mountain House, Alberta.

On February 15, 2006, Harpold was arrested in Hinton, Alberta, after several people came forward and indicated they had seen a man performing sexual acts in a car by himself.

Police in Hinton got a search warrant against Harpold and found 16 videos and 90 photos of children in sexual situations.

He was released on bail, but breached his terms by moving to Edmonton and renting a trailer across the street from the Wild Waters Park, where children regularly play.

Police searched his new residence and found a digital camcorder, a laptop, and hundreds of photos and videos showing children in sexually provocative poses.

In 2007, Harpold pleaded guilty to breaching the conditions of his recognizance, when he failed to report to RCMP and failed to reside within Drayton Valley, Alberta, as directed by his probation officer.

Instead, Harpold moved to Fort McMurray and claimed

he had no cell service in the work camps, so he couldn't inform his probation officer.

Alberta provincial court judge Marilyn White noted at that time that Harpold had probationary breaches on his record from 1988, 1999, 2000, and 2004. She sentenced him to 180 days in custody at that point.

In 2008, he was sentenced to 43 months in prison for possessing child pornography, breach of recognizance and theft.

He only served 25 months of the 43 month sentence after receiving credit for time served in pretrial custody.

Provincial court judge Darlene Wong, in addition to handing down the 43-month sentence at that time, ordered that Harpold be monitored by the sex offender registry for 10 years after his release from prison, and that Harpold supply DNA to the authorities.

As of press time, Harpold remained in custody in Yorkton following his arrest.

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Bonk says proposal would harm Sask economy

Feds to impose carbon tax, give funds to individuals

Continued from page 29

"So far, the federal government does not have legislation in place at all regarding their climate change plan, so we will see what happens. We are definitely prepared to go if we have to.

"It (the carbon tax) would definitely hurt our economy," he said. "It would take over two billion dollars out of our economy every year. That is something that hasn't happened yet and we feel quite strongly about our proposition, and we will keep fighting for the people of the province."

The proposed output-based standards would apply to facilities that emit more than 50,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide annually. Within each industrial sector, the gov-

ernment will come up with a national average of emissions intensity. Facilities that emit less than 30 per cent below the national average will receive a credit from the federal government. All those above that threshold will pay the federal carbon price on emissions that exceed the threshold.

Erin Flanagan, director of federal policy with the Pembina Institute, said the approach is similar to the system in place in Alberta. "There'll be questions over the next year about where exactly the rates are set and what's the magic number," she said. "But from a principles perspective, I think they're getting a lot of it right."

Patrick McDonald, director of climate and innovation with the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers,

said output-based standards can help protect trade-exposed industries like oil and gas, but added that many details of the federal plan have yet to be worked out. "Implementation of these must be done in a manner that has full consideration of competitiveness," he said.

Ottawa has given the provinces until the end of March to decide if they want the federal backstop rather than their own carbon prices. All provinces have until September to release the details of their own carbon pricing plans, and the federal carbon tax will be imposed on any outliers by Jan. 1, 2019.

The draft legislative proposals are open for comment until Feb. 12, while the framework for industrial emitters is open for comment until April 9.

Govt approves reduced rate increases for SaskPower in 2018

After a thorough review, the Government of Saskatchewan has decided to accept the recommendation for a 3.5 per cent rate increase for SaskPower, compared to the original request of five per cent. The government thanked the Saskatchewan Rate Review Panel for their work.

As planned, the increase will come into effect March 1. This represents an increase of approximately \$4 on monthly residential power bills.

"Every year, SaskPower is keeping up with new records of power consumption,

while working to keep power rates as low as possible," Minister Responsible for SaskPower Dustin Duncan said. "They face an important challenge to maintain and grow our power grid. With their revised fiscal forecasts during the rate review period, government agrees with the Rate Review Panel that SaskPower can meet this challenge in 2018 with a lower increase. We will continue to challenge SaskPower, and all government agencies, to do more with less, and compromising service to Saskatchewan homes and businesses."

In its rate application, SaskPower outlined the investment of the rate increase in major maintenance and growth projects to reduce the number and duration of power outages; modernize the power grid; meet the growing demand for more power; and help SaskPower reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 40 per cent from 2005 levels, by 2030.

"It's a balancing act that we take very seriously," SaskPower President and CEO Mike Marsh said.

"Electricity is vital in all our lives and for

our economy. The power has to be on when and where we need it. SaskPower also has to be financially responsible with its operations. That's why we've optimized our processes, reduced administrative costs and we plan to reduce this spending by an additional \$142 million in the next three years using various restraint measures. This 3.5 per cent will allow us to continue investing in the grid and we will investigate additional ways to save money to compensate for this lower-than-planned increase."

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Brooke Apskrum on the track.

Apskrums will be cheering hard this Winter Olympics

Continued from page 25

Mark says it was difficult to arrange the trip to the Winter Olympics.

"It's been quite a challenge arranging travel. We were trying and trying to book something but you couldn't get through to anyone to book trains or anything like that and we couldn't understand what was going on at that point," he says.

"No one was available to answer our questions and you couldn't book online so we were kind of panicking thinking is it booked up. We finally got through to someone who said there was a big holiday and everything was closed for a whole week, but we could try again after the holiday."

"Yesterday my wife was finally able to arrange the transportation to and from the airport and out to the Olympic facilities."

Mark said the family is fortunate to have the Canada Olympic Park facilities in Calgary.

"We're quite lucky that when it became obvious that she was good at the sport and she was going to be travelling overseas all the time she had the facilities here where she could train. We enrolled her in the National Sport School which is at Canada Olympic Park and they basically arrange the classes to suit



Brooke Apskrum with her gold medal at the Junior Olympics in Lillehammer in 2016.

the athlete, depending on their schedule for training and competition.

"She was away well over half of the year, so they arrange work, and things like that can be done while she was away, or else they postpone a lot of exams and a lot of courses for the time she was at home."

"When she got home she was very, very busy and

still having to train. When she was home during her high school years she was pretty busy, her life was busy all the time. When she was away she was racing and training and when she was home she was training and catching up on school."

Brooke told JustSports in an interview last week that she is looking forward to competing at the Olympics.

"It's really exciting," she told JustSports. "It's kind of weird because a lot of our team is older and you'll have Alex (Gough) and Kim (McRae) who are already established athletes and at their peak. Then they have someone like me who's still developing and gets this wonderful opportunity to do this at the Olympic Games, which is

crazy. "I'm really hoping to see where my best performance in that environment would place me," she explained. "I haven't been to a Games before so I don't know what to expect out of myself. I think it's best to focus on my performance, the best that I can do and build from there."

"The good thing with luge is that our event is

early on, so we have the rest of the time we're there to enjoy it. Also, with any competition environment, you make choices as to what is a positive influence, what's a good distraction at times and then what are the things that are a distraction in a bad way, that would bring you down. So I think it's putting that into practice."



The Vancouver Games in 2010 took place around the time Apskrum took up Luge. "There was a whole buzz around Jon Montgomery and skeleton and stuff and people didn't know what luge was," she began. "I was like, oh this (skeleton) is a sliding sport, maybe I'll do this for a while. But then I tried luge and I really liked it. I watched skeleton in person and I thought, no, I'd rather not do that. So I stuck with luge."

"I've always been a thrill seeker and I've always been the person to take my toboggan to the top of the hill and go down as a kid. I was also a dancer four years before then and it was really neat how it was similar, co-ordination wise, how your body moves, plus the adrenalin factor and the speed and the quick-thinking put together—it seemed right. It feels like everything that I enjoy in sport and movement in one thing."

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Bernard Pranke of Superior Ag and Auto and Adam Brehaut with Hat Creek Welding completed the frame for a miniature steel version of the Fleming Lake of the Woods grain elevator recently. Bernard said it is one of the largest projects he has worked on, using about 4,000 pounds of steel. The replica is about one third the size of the real elevator, which was destroyed by fire. The miniature elevator will be located at the site of the real elevator in Fleming. **Below:** Adam Brehaut welding the frame. **Inset below:** Bernard Pranke with a mini paper replica of the elevator, from which he drew the design for the steel replica.



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After running across Canada to raise money for children's hospitals:

Jamie McDonald returns to share his story



Above, Elkhorn School students crowd around to purchase copies of Jamie McDonald's book after he spoke about his run across Canada.

Continued from page 3

"Right here in Elkhorn I've reconnected with Jolene and Chance and her family and Tawnis so now I'm seeing these same faces again. The run comes back like it happened yesterday once you start meeting everyone again."

McDonald says he has high hopes for the book.

"After the run I ended up spending two years or more writing the book, and I've got dyslexia, and it was one of the biggest challenges of my life. It's now a best seller in England, and what I've done is put 100 per cent of the royalties to charity. And I'm really lucky—since the run I've become a motivational speaker, so I get flown around the world and I get paid really well. So for me the book is about giving back again and kind of saying thank you to Canada as well. I am out here volunteering my time and I just want to say thank you. It is weird, I'm seeing all these Canadians and they are saying 'thank you for what you gave us for doing the run' and I'm like 'no, no, no, you don't understand—I couldn't have made it with out you.'"

Why does he think the book has become so popular?

"Because I have got dyslexia there are no fancy words—it's just my voice, it is really simple. So that is the common messages I keep getting—that they felt as though they could run across Canada with me."

The book was a challenge for McDonald.

"It took two and half years. It was brutal. Running across Canada was easy, writing a book not so much."

He says writing the book helped put his life in perspective.

"When people ask 'so how did you end up running across Canada?' my answer was always 'it just kind of happened' which is kind of true. It was kind of an accident how it came about, but once you start diving in a bit deeper you see all the stepping stones of how you actually get to where you get to in life. Then I realized I was in-

spired a long the way so I share stories of those important stepping stones."

What did McDonald learn about himself while writing the book?

"I found out I'm a better writer than I thought I was," he says with a laugh. "It makes you reflect when you write, and it makes you appreciate actually what you achieve. Because I am a bit of a hungry hippo, I just keep going at always striving forward to just keep on going. What the book has done was make me stay still and stop to reflect on the achievement. And so when I'm writing about my frost bitten nose and losing a bit of it I'm like 'did I really do that?'"

What was his approach to writing the book?

"I pretty much just dumped out my thoughts and my feelings from my heart. So a lot of it was about the people that helped me through. And that is partly my message that the world is just incredible, the human spirit is just out of this world. I've put myself out there in Canada and I was vulnerable and I got to see how incredible the Canadians were helping me through."

McDonald says inspiring children helps motivate him to do what he does.

"There was a little kid that we have just done a classroom talk with, and I gave him a high five and then cheekily told him he now has a super hero power. And I just watched his eyes light up and he said 'does that mean I can fly now?' I just kind of left him to it."

Once he completes his book tour in Vancouver, McDonald plans to do another run—this time across the United States. He will head south from Vancouver, down the U.S. west coast, across the southern States, and up the East Coast.

"When I finish the book tour in Vancouver I'm going to launch the next adventure. I'm going to run the equivalent of 230 marathons across the United States. I've got a year on the Visa, so it's much longer this time around—so

hopefully I can make it to the other side.

"It should be a lot warmer than Manitoba. Before I did the run I didn't know what was going to come, and that kind of blind naivety probably really helped. Now I know what I've got to go through and so I'm weighing up whether that is a good or bad thing. When you have an experience you learn a lot from it, so hopefully that will help me through, but it is an adventure. You don't know what is around the corner. Anything could happen. I could be taking a selfie a mile into the trip and my ankle is broken and that's the end. That happened to my friend before, so you just never know."

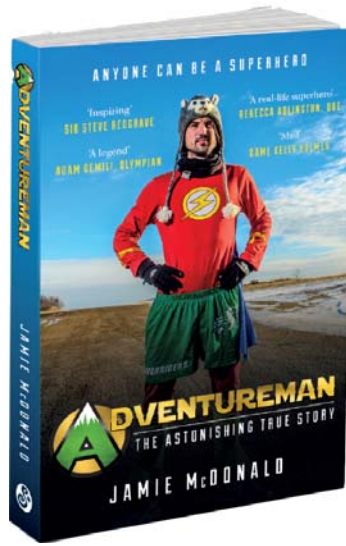
What are his future plans after the American run?

"I set up a charity called the Super Hero Foundation when the run was over and we've been helping families and I have helped them with their fundraising," he says, "so once this run is completely done it will be back to helping those families again. I will be writing another book—why not—and then I guess it's the never ending journey. I guess I will be doing this until about... well, 'til I'm dead."

McDonald says he never would have imagined a decade ago the life he is living today.

"I never thought in a million years this would be my life. If you would have told me when I got on my bike to start my very first adventure cycling around the world, I would have never in a million years told you that I would be here in Elkhorn giving a talk to kids."

"What I realize now is that all I need to do is just focus on here and now. I focus on our talk in Elkhorn and not worry about whatever is going to come next, or plans, because we can't change that really, and we don't have control over that, but this very moment you can. And that actually seems to help in the long run as well."



Jamie McDonald's book, Adventureman.

McDonald says he will consider himself a success as long as he can help people.

"My dad ended up being a bricklayer all his life, and after 40 years of doing it he came through the door and he said 'I really don't like what I do.' And me my mom are like 'well don't do it.' He ended up getting a job for minimum wage. He

started helping people with learning difficulties, with mental health challenges, and on his very first day he got punched in the face, and he got a black eye. And he came through door and just said 'I have had one of the best days of my life.'"

Before he started on his adventures, McDonald was making a living teaching tennis.

"When I was kid I wanted to be the next Roger Federer. That was my big dream. But I was terrible at tennis so it was quite a bad dream to have. I was teaching tennis, which I enjoyed, but there was something inside me that was just like 'this just isn't quite cutting it,' and I felt like there must be more—like I'm put on this earth to do more, and I didn't know what that was."

"When I got on the bike I just thought I'd give back to the hospital that helped me. It was just an idea. And then of course when you start it, I realized I'm born for this. This is my thing, this is what I should be doing."

What's the moment of his run across Canada he will always remember?

"When the whole world was telling me not to cross the Rocky Mountains—the police, the rangers, everyone. But then a mom sent me a message to say that her son, who I had met, was going to pass away because his cancer had returned and he was out of treatment options. And as a mom she said 'I am so scared for you to go through the Rocky Mountains. You probably shouldn't go.' But you know what—for that mom who was about to lose her beautiful son's life, I had to keep going. That inspired me to push on."

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How birds survive Sask winters and how you can help

Winter on the prairies is long and cold, often lasting from November until March, and with temperatures falling to -20 °C or -30 °C, it's a wonder that anything can survive here at all.

However, a walk around any residential neighborhood or out in the country will show it to be an active landscape. Of course, many bird species don't try to brave the prairie winter and instead migrate hundreds or thousands of miles to warmer climates. The species that do stay have adapted differing strategies to survive the cold months.

Black-capped chickadees (hereafter, chickadees) are among my favorite birds. Chickadees, found everywhere in Saskatchewan, are distributed across North America and are residents of wherever they're found, which means they don't migrate. I've always been amazed that chickadees are able to survive winter on the prairies, as they are such small birds, weighing only nine to 14 grams (roughly the same weight as a triple-A battery).

So how do they do it? One of the key factors for any species to be able to survive an extreme drop in temperature is by staying warm. Bird feathers are among the best insulators in the natural world. Their insulating properties are due to their structure, which allows air to be trapped close to the bird's body. On cold days, birds puff up their body feathers, trying to maximize this layer of warm air. The result of this feather fluffing in chickadees is adorable little puff balls adorning the tree branches.

Good insulation is useless without a supply of food to consume to generate heat. The primary food source available to birds in the winter (especially on the frigid prairies) are seeds and other plant matter, as temperatures are much too cold for insects to survive. Therefore, songbirds that rely on seeds are able to survive the winter, while those feeding on a diet of insects migrate to warmer climates.

A third factor impacting winter survival is predation. Chickadees form winter flocks for protective, as well as social, purposes. Being together in a flock means that there are more eyes on alert for danger. Also, the larger the group, the lower the odds that any one individual will become victim to predators. It would be reasonable to think that being in a group would allow members to



Sarah Ludlow



Photo by Sarah Ludlow

cluster together for warmth (known as social thermoregulation to scientists). On some cold days, chickadees can be observed sitting close together, presumably for this purpose.

Chickadees are amazing little birds with feisty attitudes, and I enjoy watching them at my feeders over the winter. I've come to expect their boisterous "chicka-dee-dee" calls whenever I'm replenishing the feeder. This winter will mark my eighth year participating in the

Project Feederwatch program, a citizen science project that includes documenting and reporting the different species and number of individuals visiting your feeder.

Studies have found that black-capped chickadee winter survival is higher when supplemental food is provided, particularly when temperatures reach the frigid lows like those experienced on the Canadian prairies. This highlights another factor that influences winter survival: humans. In this case, it's a comfort to know that I, and many others, are having a positive effect on black-capped chickadees.

Keeping intact nature is one way we help the chickadees survive the winter. The Nature Conservancy of Canada has conserved more than 150,000 acres (60,700 hectares) across Saskatchewan. Much of this is through the help of the Government of Canada's Natural Areas Conservation program which provides a funding match. Chickadees are found in every corner of our province, and rely on these habitats for shelter and for those tasty seeds.

Sarah Ludlow is the Conservation Science Coordinator-GIS for the Nature Conservancy of Canada in Saskatchewan.

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Why it's too early to worry about soil moisture

Despite dry conditions last summer across much of the southern Canadian Prairies, crop production through 2017 turned out better than expected. Soil moisture reserves carried over from a wetter 2016 managed to save the day.

But heading into the 2018 growing season, soil moisture reserves are low across much of Western Canada, raising concern about the impact on crops and market pricing.

SPRING RUN-OFF

Winter precipitation across most of Western Canada has been markedly below average over the past two months. The current lack of snow obviously leaves little opportunity for significant run-off in the spring. The bigger concern for Prairie producers may be the fact that conditions have remained stubbornly dry now for months, a fact meteorologist Drew Lerner of World Weather Inc. alluded to in his recent Weather Prognosticator.

"Some of the areas with lowest snow cover are a part of the long-term drought pattern that began early last summer, suggesting the drought pattern has not end-



ed," Lerner says, adding that the same weather pattern that limited summer precipitation last year is keeping snowfall away now.

Although ample subsoil moisture reserves allowed most Prairie crops to yield relatively well in 2017, a number of farmers have

already expressed concerns about 2018 crop prospects in the absence of good spring rains.

STILL EARLY

Admittedly, a lot can change in the months ahead of seeding 2018 crops, but dryness concerns will

undoubtedly carry into the spring ahead.

The Commodity Weather Group says, "There is rarely any good correlation (in Canada or elsewhere) between precipitation in the fall-winter and the following season. Of seven other years

since 1979 that were as dry or drier from November to January on the Prairies as a whole, only three were dry on a widespread basis in the spring as well (two of which were much drier than the current case over the winter). None really stood out as more than regionally dry in the summer."

Also worthy of note, snow that falls between November and January normally accounts for only a relatively small portion of total annual precipitation. More important is what precipitation is still to come. Late winter snow and spring rain-snow are the most important factors for soil recharge prospects.

BOTTOM LINE

With little snowfall this winter, concerns are rising about soil moisture levels for the 2018 planting season, and ultimately, crop market prices. However, there's still time for more snow and therefore, increased soil moisture levels.

Mike Jubinville of Pro Farmer Canada offers information on commodity markets and marketing strategies.

Risk of Manitoba spring flooding remains low

The risk of significant spring flooding remains low for most locations across the province at this time, Manitoba Infrastructure Minister Ron Schuler announced on Jan. 31. "As Manitobans know, weather conditions in our province can change on a moment's notice. Our government will remain ready to act if heavy winter precipitation, a fast snowmelt or heavy spring rainfall occurs," said Schuler. "For now though, we have reason to be cautiously optimistic about what's ahead for most parts of Manitoba this spring."

Manitoba Infrastructure's Hydrologic Forecast Centre is continuing to monitor the impacts of weather conditions across the province. The centre works in collaboration with weather services and flood forecasters in neighbouring states and provinces to monitor the winter precipitation patterns throughout Manitoba watersheds, said Schuler.

The 2017 fall conditions report issued early in December indicated soil moisture levels before freeze-up were normal to drier than normal in most of Manitoba. At this time, winter precipitation in most areas of the province remains average to below average, with some areas indicating well below average precipitation records.

Along some streams, possible ice jams could affect the flood risk. Current river ice assessments indicate above-normal thickness for this time of the year. This is a result of below-normal temperatures this winter and the lack of sufficient snow cover to insulate the river ice from the cold air temperatures. Above-normal thickness increases the risk of ice-jam flooding in areas that are historically susceptible to ice jams. The province will conduct detailed ice thickness measurements in the coming months, and ice-cutting and icebreaking programs in the areas most prone to ice jamming.

"The first detailed flood outlook will be released in the

latter part of February," said Schuler. "Floods are caused by a combination of unique circumstances and there is a risk of over-estimating or under-estimating the flood potential too far in advance."

Early spring outlook information can help prepare for potential spring flooding, allowing time to acquire temporary flood mitigation equipment based on projected

flood conditions. The province also maintains an inventory of temporary flood-fighting equipment, which includes over two million regular sandbags, six sandbag-making machines, 18,000 super sandbags, 43 kilometres of cage barriers into which sand or other heavy material is placed, 50 km of water-filled barriers, and 59 mobile pumps and heavy-duty steamers to open clogged drains.

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For further information contact Stephen J. Orlowski at:

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FEBRUARY/MARCH 2018 SALE SCHEDULE

FEBRUARY 2018		
1	THURSDAY	SHEEP & GOAT SALE 12 NOON
5	MONDAY	BUTCHER SALE 9 A.M.
7	WEDNESDAY	REGULAR FEEDER SALE 9 A.M.
9	FRIDAY	BRED COW SALE 11:30 A.M.
12	MONDAY	BUTCHER SALE 9 A.M.
14	WEDNESDAY	PRESORT FEEDER SALE 10 A.M.
18	SUNDAY	BONCHUK FARMS SIMMENTAL BULL SALE 9 A.M.
21	WEDNESDAY	REGULAR FEEDER SALE 9 A.M.
23	FRIDAY	BRED COW SALE 11:30 A.M.
26	MONDAY	BUTCHER SALE 9 A.M.
28	WEDNESDAY	PRESORT FEEDER SALE 10 A.M.

MARCH 2018		
5	MONDAY	BUTCHER SALE 9 A.M.
7	WEDNESDAY	REGULAR FEEDER SALE 9 A.M.
9	FRIDAY	BRED COW SALE 11:30 A.M.
11	SUNDAY	REBELS OF THE WEST SIMMENTAL SALE 9 A.M.
12	MONDAY	BUTCHER SALE 9 A.M.
14	WEDNESDAY	PRESORT FEEDER SALE 10 A.M.
15	THURSDAY	SHEEP & GOAT SALE 12 NOON
17	SATURDAY	PLEASANT DAWN CHAROLAIS BULL SALE 9 A.M.
19	MONDAY	BUTCHER SALE 9 A.M.
21	WEDNESDAY	REGULAR FEEDER SALE 9 A.M.
23	FRIDAY	COWBOYS ANGUS BULL & HEIFER SALE 9 A.M.
26	MONDAY	BUTCHER SALE 9 A.M.
28	FRIDAY	PRESORT FEEDER SALE 10 A.M.
31	SATURDAY	TRI N CHAROLAIS & GUESTS BULL SALE 10 A.M.

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Red tape putting the squeeze on farmers

Confusing forms, bad customer service and excessive government regulations are leaving Canadian farmers feeling burnt out, and the problem is getting worse according to findings released Thursday by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB).

Notably, nearly 40 per cent of agri-business owners would not advise their children to start a business given the burden of government red tape—a four point increase from just three years ago.

“Canada has a proud farming tradition, and red tape shouldn’t be allowed to hold back the next generation from wanting to take over,” said Marilyn Braun-Pollon, CFIB’s vice-president for Agri-business.

“While governments are great at celebrating agriculture, which is important, what farmers really want is for governments to set them free from excessive red tape.

“At the provincial level, Saskatchewan’s Ministry of Agriculture has taken important steps to reduce red tape at the farm gate,” stated Braun-Pollon.

“Over the years the Ministry has improved its customer service, as well as implemented modern service delivery tools and techniques to better serve their clients.

“We are also pleased the Ministry is committed to focusing on utilizing technology to further improve the way clients access the broad range of programs and services. We look forward to working with the Ministry to



Government red tape is getting worse for those in the ag industry, according to CFIB.

find additional ways to cut red tape for farmers.”
 “We commend the Government of Saskatchewan for walking the walk by cutting unnecessary red tape for en-

trepreneurs. In fact, Saskatchewan’s grade improved to an ‘A-’ in CFIB’s 2018 Red Tape Report Card for its strong leadership in making red tape reduction a priority,” added Braun-Pollon.

Agri-business owners say that red tape adds significant stress (83 per cent), significantly reduces the productivity in their business (73 per cent) and discourages business growth (70 per cent).

Farmers continue to be among the hardest hit businesses in Canada, with 64 per cent saying their business has been negatively affected by delays caused by red tape, compared to 56 per cent of small business owners generally.

A full 93 per cent of farmers believe their regulatory burden is growing.

“Red tape hits home the closest for farmers,” added Braun-Pollon.

“A farmer just doesn’t have time to sit on the phone waiting for government to answer questions or fill out piles of confusing paperwork in the middle of calving. The work they do is too important to be tied up in red tape.”

CFIB is Canada’s largest association of small and medium-sized businesses with 109,000 members across every sector and region, including 7,200 agri-business members. Learn more at cfib.ca.

New Agri-Food Innovation Centre opens

On January 25 Saskatchewan’s agri-food industry celebrated the grand opening of the new Agri-Food Innovation Centre (AFIC), a 43,000-square foot facility that will diversify the Saskatchewan Food Industry Development Centre’s (Food Centre) capacity to develop and process products from concept to commercialization.

Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale, on behalf of Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Lawrence MacAulay and Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development Navdeep Bains, and Premier Brad Wall joined representatives of the Food Centre in officially opening the \$17.5 million facility in Saskatoon.

The Food Centre is the primary source of food product development and commercialization for the Saskatchewan food industry. The creation of the AFIC supports the expansion of Saskatchewan’s agri-food processing sector and introduces a dedicated multi-tenant food processing incubator, extrusion line, expanded drying capabilities and fermentation technologies. It will also house new labs, a pilot plant for product and process development, and expanded capacity for pulse and cereal processing. The Food Centre will continue to operate the federally inspected pilot plant housed on the University of Saskatchewan campus.

“The Government of Canada is committed to growing a strong economy,” said Goodale. “Centres of innovation, like this one in Saskatoon, will play a key role in creating jobs and new opportunities for Canadian farmers and agri-businesses, growing the economy and the middle class.”

“Over the last decade, Saskatchewan has been either the number one or number two Agri-food exporter among the provinces, and the Food Centre helps us diversify what we export,” Wall said. “The Centre already produces ‘meat’ products made from plants, like ginger

beef and chicken fingers, and through the years has helped Saskatchewan companies like Three Farmers and Zak Organics commercialize their products. This expansion will mean the development of even more products, the creation of more jobs and the further diversification of our economy.”

Saskatchewan’s value-added food processing sector has grown tremendously in the last decade and now includes 300 companies that export \$4 billion worth of goods annually and employ 5,000 people.

“The new Agri-Food Innovation Centre will broad-

en the capabilities of the current Food Centre and open new opportunities for Saskatchewan’s agri-food sector.” Food Centre President Dan Prefontaine said. “It will assist Saskatchewan producers and processors to bridge the gap from development to commercialization and introduce higher value-added agricultural products into the global marketplace. With support from our industry and these enhanced services, the Agri-Food Innovation Centre will position our industry to be strong leaders in innovation and technology for the food processing sector.”

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22c

Canadian farmers hungry to enter China oat market

BY RICHARD KAMCHEN

Prairie growers hope to benefit from China's projected voracious demand for oats.

"Chinese demand will probably double every five years and rival the United States within 15 years if the trends remain in place," says Randy Strychar, president of Ag Commodity Research.

The U.S. is the world's largest importer of oats, estimated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to take about 1.7 million tonnes in 2017-2018.

The USDA predicts China's oat imports to reach 300,000 tonnes in 2017-2018, a huge increase from 87,000 tonnes in 2012-13.

"The new Chinese middle class is looking for healthier food and more nutritious products to complement staple traditional foods, such as rice and wheat noodles," explains Prairie Oat Growers Association's executive director Shawna Mathieson. "Oats fit well into that diet."

Snack bars and breakfast cereals, in particular, are fuelling China's growing oats appetite, adds Strychar.

"We can see breakfast cereal and snack bar trends out to 2022, and the largest growth globally is in the



Asia-Pacific market, and that's China," he says.

But it's Australia that's benefitting as it comprises about 97 per cent of China's oat imports.

"Right now, [raw] oats for food and feed consumption are simply not allowed into China from Canada," Mathieson points out.

The Prairie Oat Growers Association submitted a request through the federal Market Access Secretariat in 2015 to get restrictions lifted.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency and its Chinese counterpart AQSIQ signed a 2018 work plan in which oats are included, which POGA calls the first milestone toward a phytosanitary agreement and market access.

"The fact that the protocol is taking so long to put in place, it doesn't seem

like the Chinese are in a hurry to look for alternative sources or for any increased competition," Strychar notes.

"If Canadian oats are allowed into China, it will increase demand and therefore increase seeded acres of oats in Canada," Mathieson says. "In addition it will provide another significant market for oats, as right now nearly 90 per cent of Canadian oat exports go to the USA."

Strychar cautions Australia could remain China's dominant supplier. "Australia's got a very flexible market... Pay them to grow the oats, they can grow all the Chinese would need."


Chinese oats demand could rival that of the U.S. and present a huge boon to Prairie growers if trade access is granted.


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21c

Paige Hutchinson raising money for Malawi trip

BY KEVIN WEEDMARK

It's a long way from the Saskatchewan Prairies to Malwai in southern Africa, but Paige Hutchinson, who grew up in the Moosomin-Rocanville area is heading to Malawi later this year as part of her studies at Lethbridge University.

Hutchinson grew up on a farm between Moosomin and Rocanville and was involved with projects such as Feed The Children. "We would do fundraisers to raise money for families in Africa or India and they always had trips where you could go to those places. I kind of looked into it then and had thought about doing a volunteer trip, but never did," she says.

Now that she is studying anthropology at Lethbridge University, she has the opportunity to take a trip to help make a difference in a developing country.

"The Malawi Field Study is a field study trip to Malawi, Africa that they do every two years," explains Hutchinson.

"I had heard about the trip last year at a talk. One of the girls that had gone before came to speak with us and tell us about it and I immediately fell in love with the idea. I was like 'this is amazing. I want to be a part of this.'"

The trip is also a university class.

"This trip is actually a public health/finance class so this will actually go towards my degree and is part of my education," said Hutchinson. "It is definitely a very practical and hands-on sort of education. There is a group of 15 of us. It is all girls on our trip."

The group will head to Africa in May.

"We fly out May 7 and get there May 9 and I will be there for 28 days. We will be in the southeast part of Malawi. We will be traveling around to rural communities and towns, going from school to school."

What will the group be doing in Malawi?

"Malawi borders a very large lake. It is one of the world's largest lakes and because of that they have so many mosquitos, and with that comes malaria, which is a preventable and treatable disease. But with so many people living in poverty they don't have access and knowledge of the medication and they don't know how to prevent it or have the means to prevent it."

"We will be going from school to school in the little communities and will be working with the kids to teach them about malaria. But the really cool thing is that since we can't speak Chichewa, which is what they speak, we have to use our bodies in theatre and action, so that is where the fine arts comes in. We will be doing lots of songs and dances—interpretive drama and interpretive dance with them. We will have to be pretty creative and use our thinking caps. There probably will be a few mosquitos that we will be acting out and things like that."

The area the group is heading to is one of the more underdeveloped parts of Africa.

"Where we're going to be it is a very much underdeveloped area," says Hutchinson. "Lots of the people we will be working with will be living in huts where they have to get water from a well."

In addition, the students will work with health care providers in the area.

"We will be setting up clinics working with the health care providers there and set up HIV clinics where people can come and get tested. We will be taking names and helping run these clinics. Also on our trip there is a lot of nurses, so anybody that is in nursing is going to bring their stethoscope and they will be taking heart rate and blood pressure and things like that."

There is also an academic side to the trip.

"The academic portion of it is before we leave we have nine days in class where we will be learning about the culture, the people, the public health side of it and also the fine arts side of it, the drama side, which is really interesting to me. Then while we're there we will be picking a topic to study. We will be making journal entries, breaking down what we have observed and what we've learned and taken away from it. There are a wide variety of topics—anything we want to research. I'm thinking I'll take a cultural stance on it and look at their culture and how to relate that to my anthropology degree."

The students have received some briefings on Malawi.

"We have two professors who have done the trip five or six times and they have told us all about it, what to expect, what to wear, what not to wear, what to bring, what we will be eating, just giving the background on it. They have been a big help. It is definitely going to be a pretty big experience and there are lots of things that come with it, like we've taken care of personal directives and the insurance part of it. There are definitely a lot of things to consider when travelling over seas especially to a place like Africa."

What kind of place is Malawi?

"I've heard two sides of it. I've heard from some people there is high crime and people will steal things and you have to watch out for that. I've also heard from people who have been there before that you can leave your backpack on the street and no one would touch it and that people are very kind and generous. There was a story from

Malawi Matters Tea Fundraiser
A Mad Hatter Themed Fundraiser! Wear your oldest, silliest or favourite hat! There will be prizes!
What? To raise money for Mosquito nets for families in Malawi, Africa.
Where? St. Alphonsus Catholic Church, Rocanville Sk.
When? Friday, February 23rd from 2-4pm
Cost: \$6 with a hat or \$8 without a hat
**Tax receipts for donations can be made*



their sustainability and access to water. I also want to learn more about malaria and what people there are experiencing.

"We will be raising money for the mosquito nets that we will be handing out to the pregnant mothers and families and people that are at risk of getting malaria. It is a treated insecticide net that they put over their bed at night or whenever they are in their home. I'm just wanting to learn more about what people go through when they do have malaria and what access they have to health care.

"For us, if we were to get malaria we would go to the hospital and deal with it there and be given pills and for the most part be okay. Whereas there, the children that are at high risk and pregnant mothers that are more vulnerable can't beat a disease like malaria. Thousands of people in Africa, Malawi specifically, die because of malaria every year."

Hutchinson is putting her fundraising focus on mosquito nets because she has already covered the cost of her trip.

"There are lots of things that we have been collecting and fundraising for. The first thing that I did was fundraise for my trip and I've had amazing generous people—friends, coworkers, family—that have donated towards my trip cost. I also received a scholarship from the university to go on this trip and I am so grateful. My trip is basically covered and that is really amazing. Because my trip is covered, I took the initiative to raise money for the mosquito nets—that is the biggest thing we are fundraising for. We have also been collecting soccer balls to take over, and school supplies to hand out while we're in Africa. But the main portion of our fundraising is for the mosquito nets. The fundraising we are doing in Lethbridge and the fundraiser I'm holding back home is all going directly to the mosquito nets."

Hutchinson is planning a fundraiser for Rocanville for Friday, February 23. How did the idea come up for the fundraiser in Rocanville?

"My grandma, Marilyn Paul, suggested I do a tea fundraiser, so I was like 'perfect, you have obviously done teas before.' I wish I was in Rocanville doing all my fundraising because I cannot express how generous people in Moosomin and Rocanville have been towards my trip. I've had people donate towards my trip, mosquito nets, towards the tea. I'm thinking it is going to be a huge success, and everyone back home is so generous and understanding and wants to help."

"I think sometimes there is not always that outlet to help. I think that is also why so many people are willing to help out, because they know me and they know I'm going to go there and definitely have an amazing experience and make a difference. So I think it is going to be such a success doing it in Rocanville but also with Moosomin people going to the event."

Hutchinson is hoping for a good turnout.

"We are aiming for about 75 people. We also have a crowdfunding page set up. Anyone can google Malawi Field Study 2018 Crowd Funding (<https://secure.e2rm.com/registrant/EventHome.aspx?eventid=234149&langpref=en-CA#&panel1-2>) and it should be the first link that comes up and it has information on how to donate. Anyone who donates will get a tax receipt. The really nice thing about that website is 100 per cent of that money that people donate goes towards the mosquito nets, whereas with other pages like gofundme, they take a percentage of it. One mosquito net is \$15. That is a way to judge how far your donation is going."

Hutchinson says she is not nervous about the trip at all. "I've always wanted to do something like this and there is not too much that scares me," she says. "I'm really looking forward to it. I thinking it will definitely be an eye opener and a bit of a game changer that might help me decide where I want to go in life and what my passion is."

one of the trips to Malawi that someone had lost a camera and someone had stole it because they wanted this camera because it could get them some money, and so they just approached the group of people and they said 'someone has stolen this, if you have taken it just please return it.' And I think the person felt so guilty they returned it right away. I heard it is a very peaceful, welcoming country from the people that have been there. I have heard very good things about the people and the place."

What is Hutchinson doing to prepare herself for the trip?

"I'm totally obsessed right now with Africa in general and Malawi and I've been googling lots of things about it. They eat lots of fish, that is one their staple foods, and I have also been learning Chichewa which is a very hard language. So some of the girls on our trip have made flash cards and things like that. Others have been studying up on it. I definitely have been googling lots of things to see what the place looks like—the culture side of it, the religion and the food and things like that."

"I think I'm going to experience culture shock—I've never travelled anywhere overseas. I'm aware that this is going to be a lot different from our lifestyle. It is going to be hard to see kids who don't have very much or kids that may not have opportunities or may be struggling with disabilities and they don't have access to education or health care."

What is she hoping to learn from the trip?

"I'm really hoping to learn how to make a difference and how to be understanding of other cultures," says Hutchinson. "I think I'm going to learn and have my eyes opened. I'm really hoping to learn about the access they have, whether it be education or health care. There are other projects that go on there too. One is called the Malawi Water Project and I'm really hoping that I run into some people that are doing that project and learn about

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