



# Lac du Bonnet & District Historical Society

2019 newsletter

LAC DU BONNET DISTRICT MUSEUM

- **May 18** *Museum Opening*
- **May** *TBA Kevin Brownlee "Hunter and Fisher from Sheltered Waters"*
- **June 1 & 2** *Winnipeg River Rendezvous* 1st annual
- *and Tipi Raising*
- **June 22 & 23** *"St. John's Memories through the Century"*
- **June 30** *celebrating Canada Day*
- **July 27** *Ves Zarins book launch*

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## Lac du Bonnet's Hidden Gem

Winnipeg Electric Railway Co,  
Pinawa Generating Station

## New Exhibits

**Frank and Anna Louisa Waters**  
WERCo and Lac du Bonnet pioneers  
**Snow Plane** skeleton original used  
by Drs. Wood & Dr. Reid

## Bosak Sleigh

restored by  
Gerald Sarapu

## William Duncan Halliday

Lac du Bonnet first registered  
homestead

## Winnipeg River Rendezvous

Fur Trade re-enactment camp

**"Latvian Pioneers, Socialists,  
and Refugees in Manitoba"**  
by Ves Zarins

## Lac du Bonnet Fur Trade

The fur trade emerged as the first major commercial enterprise in the Lac du Bonnet area.

European fashion created the rage for the broad brimmed beaver hat at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century for men and women. The Russian and Baltic beaver became extinct and hat makers in Europe learned the North American beaver under fur could form good felt. The North American beaver would become the main staple of the fur trade until the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century when silk hats ruined the beaver market. It was in the spring of 1733 that La Jemmeraye and Jean Baptiste La Verendrye began trading with the Cree at La Barriere on what became known as the Winnipeg River on their quest to find the Western Sea. Laverendryes established the French presence in the west in hopes of damaging British trade in Hudson Bay by actively building trade posts in the western frontier promoting fur trade and gathering information.

Voyageurs or "cours de bois" were French adventurers who journeyed by canoe from Montreal to trade for furs. In the early 1800,s it is estimated there were five thousand voyagers west of the Great Lakes. They worked sixteen to eighteen hour days paddling and portaging birch bark canoes carrying at least 100 bags of provisions each weighing ninety pounds. Each spring voyageur brigades took bundles of furs from inland

posts east to Fort William and returned with trade goods in late summer.

Competing Montreal fur merchants formed the Northwest Company (NWC) in 1779 to compete with the Hudson Bay Company (HBC). The NWC motto was "Perseverance", the HBC was "Pro Pelle Cutem"(Latin "A skin for a Skin"). The two rival companies established 601 trade posts throughout North America.( 351 Montreal based trade posts and 250 HBC posts)

The Winnipeg River system was the natural highway of the day and its tributaries a source of furs. The placing of trade posts depended on the numbers of Indigenous peoples willing and able to trade and the ease of transportation to and from them. Independent traders, NWC and HBC used this route until the 1821 merger after which the HBC preferred the Hudson Bay supply route through York Factory.

A small post belonging to the NWC was established on the strategic north shore of Lac Du Bonnet in the vicinity of today's McArthur falls about 1800 under the name "Indian Cap Fort". It operated until 1822 when abandoned in favor of the HBC Fort Alexander a short distance downstream. When visited by Nicholas Garry, deputy HBC Governor on August 2, 1821 Cap Fort Post inventory included

13 bags of pemmican and some blankets and cloths.

A rival Hudson Bay Company post "Lac Du Bonnet House" operated for a short time 1807 - 1808 above Grande du Bonnet Portage (Great Falls). Lac du Bonnet House HBC post manager Thomas Miller wintered there and had two of his fishing nets stolen by the "Canadians" (NWC) on October 23, 1807. Miller describes in his post journal that they were catching many rabbits and sturgeon preparing for the long cold winter ahead. A HBC post on Eagle Nest Lake on the Winnipeg River operated later, 1859 through 1872 . Nicholas Garry, the tactful and humane diplomat of the HBC came to Canada to cement the union of the HBC and NWC. He reported a list of furs coming from the southern department in 1821 included 5312 beaver skins, 3102 half or cub beavers, 31528 martins and 30602 muskrats.



Nicolas Garry at Slave Falls by Rex Woods .HBC 1959



William Mackenzie and Donald Mann



WERCo.

## Winnipeg Electric Railway Co. Pinawa Generating Station

"Lac du Bonnet's Hidden Gem"

Construction of the first year round hydro electric generating station in Manitoba began in 1903 in the unorganized territory of Nepahwin on the Pinawa Channel in what is today the RM of Lac Du Bonnet. William Mackenzie and Donald Mann under their private Winnipeg Electric Railway Co. (WERCo) financed the \$3,000,000 development to supply the growing demand of electricity to the city of Winnipeg. On June 9, 1906

the first generator was placed in service and 60,000 volts of electric power were transmitted to Winnipeg. The Pinawa Generating Station was constructed by the areas first Scandinavian immigrants at an average wage of ten cents an hour for a ten hour day (minus room, board, and medical). Bricks manufactured in Lac du Bonnet were used to construct the power house, four management houses, store, and staff house. Pinawa was a totally self sufficient company town in the wilderness with its own

farming operations, the "Company Store", and one room school house. Recreational facilities included tennis courts, a skating rink, curling rink, and a community hall used for movies, church, and dances. The population of Pinawa never exceeded one hundred which was predominantly of Swedish and English descent. In 1951 after only forty-five years of service, Pinawa Generating Station was shut down to provide more efficient use of the Seven Sisters Generating Station.

photo credit Robin Whetter



## May 18 Museum Open House new exhibits

**Frank Waters** born in Whycocomaugh, Cape Breton, N.S. married **Anna Louisa Peterson** from Jautland, Sweden at St. John's Church in Lac du Bonnet January 3rd, 1913. Both Annie & Frank lived in the original Pinawa Townsite- later moving to Great Falls and Lac du Bonnet. They had two children Edythe Millicent (Brown/Ehrlich) and Russell Philip Waters.

**SNOW PLANES** were work horses of the day for winter emergencies. They passed into history in the 1950s. Pioneer doctors visited patients, accidents, and delivered babies on isolated homesteads day and night, summer and winter, by horse and buggy, sleigh, horseback, railway handcar, canoe, bush plane, and snow plane. The serviced area was vast from the Ontario boundary to Brokenhead Municipality

including all the power plant towns along the Winnipeg River as well as rural districts. Dr. W.J. Wood & Dr. W. B. S. Reid used this snow plane during their practice years.  
**OPEN HOUSE**  
**Saturday May 18**  
**10:00 - 4:00**  
**Refreshments served.**  
Everyone welcome

## 1960's Bosak Sleigh restored by Gerald Sarapu



In the Brokenhead district, about 50 minutes northeast of Winnipeg there was a carpenter and cabinet maker with an inventive mind. His name was Mike Bosak. In 1947-48 "power toboggans," were being made in the U.S. and shipped to Canada. Mike came across a drawing of a power toboggan in a well-known mechanics magazine. He decided to see if he could build one with a few improvements of his own. He also wanted the sled to be of use by his trapper friends who had a hard time going through the bush with loads of furs in the winter. The first attempt Bosak made at developing a Power Toboggan used

one ski with the motor up front. The second generation toboggan had a steering wheel with the motor in the back for more pulling power. The fledgling Bosak Power Toboggan plant at Brokenhead employed three men full time in addition to its inventor/owner. Mike was particularly proud of his toboggan's rugged construction. Like many inventors, many of his ideas were tested by trial and error. Mike didn't just make Power Toboggans at his plant, he also made them durable enough to be used by trappers, fishermen and hunters alike. The last Power Toboggans were built by Mike in the early 1960s.

Gerald Sarapu

## William Duncan Halliday married Francis E. Sutherland

### **W. D. Halliday 1874 – 1962**

Leaving Whitemouth at the age of 26 by birch bark canoe, William took out the 1<sup>st</sup> registered homestead 3.5 miles NE of Lac du Bonnet. (where the museum stands today)

W. D. Halliday managed the boarding house for the Lac du Bonnet Mining, Developing, and Manufacturing Company and Lac du Bonnets' first store in 1900 for Walter Wardrop.

On July 19<sup>th</sup>, 1904, William was appointed Secretary Treasurer for the Lac du

Bonnet School District # 1235 and was appointed Secretary Treasurer for the RM of Lac du Bonnet at its first meeting on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1917. These positions he held for many years. William Halliday owned a livery barn on 3<sup>rd</sup> St. and would rent out horses, wagons, and cutters for freighting to mining areas near Long and Gem Lake. In 1933 he issued marriage licenses and later became the police magistrate.



## June 1 & 2 “Winnipeg River Rendezvous”



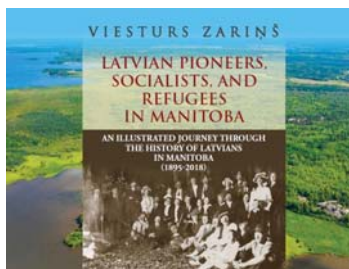
Come experience life during the **Fur Trade era** - See our heritage come alive, with living historical camps, traditional skills and demonstrations.

Bannock & wild rice will be served  
\$5.00/plate



“Rendezvous” took place for the purpose of transferring furs and trading goods amongst voyageurs. A rendezvous was also a time for rest and revelry”.

## July 27 Book launch with Ves Zarins



Although small in numbers, Latvian (Lettish) settlers helped form the fabric of Lac du Bonnet, where third and fourth generations still reside.

Latvian settlers arrived in the early 20th century fleeing the failed socialist inspired 1905 revolution. Author Ves Zarins from Toronto has spent six years of research and has compiled 240 pages with over 460 photos & illustrations in his newly published book.

On July 27th visiting with Ves and his wife will be

**H. E. Kārlis Eihenbaums**

Ambassador of Latvia to Canada.

- **1:30 pm at Lettonia Cemetery** unveiling of Latvian dedication plaque (MHAC)

- **2:30 pm at St. John's Heritage Church** book presentation by Ves Zarins and book signing

- followed by a small Latvian inspired reception in the hall.

Lac du Bonnet & District Historical Society members **free**

Non members \$5.00 at the door.

For more info :345-6329

(Everyone is welcome to attend)

“Latvian settlers homesteaded in Libau, Lettonia, Lee River, and Bird River”

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& DISTRICT  
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SOCIETY

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*"Working in the present while  
preserving the past for now  
and the future"*

Facebook page:  
Lac du Bonnet District Museum

brochure created by  
Marlene Tottle  
Museum Operations

St. John's Heritage Church & Arts Centre



St. John's Anglican Church deconsecrated in 2018 .

*The Lac du Bonnet & District Historical Society upon hearing of the deconsecrating of St. John's Anglican Church, formed a preservation Committee.*

*The focus of this committee is to preserve the St. John's historical building, promote its history & celebrate it as a community space through arts & culture.*

*Follow updates on facebook pages:*

**St. John's Heritage Church & Arts Centre**  
**The Listening Room**

**The Lac du Bonnet & District Historical Society welcomes your support by becoming a member, volunteering, or with a donation.**  
Email: [info@ldbhistorical.ca](mailto:info@ldbhistorical.ca)

**MEMBERSHIPS:**

Individual	\$20.00
Family	\$35.00

**DONATIONS:**

Patron	\$100-\$499
Sustaining	\$500-\$999
Sponsor	\$1000-\$4999
Benefactor	\$5000+

**Note:** Income tax receipts will be issued for Donations over \$25.00.

President's Message

*As most people in Lac du Bonnet already know the Lac du Bonnet & District Historical Society has taken on a significant commitment by securing the former St. John's Anglican church.*

*Now the real work begins. How do we pay for it and make it an ongoing part of our arts & culture community?*

*Many ideas have been put forward already and are being considered.*

*We all recognize its historic importance in the community but we need your help to keep it for our future generation.*

*By donations and hard work we can make this happen. We encourage you to donate and help keep St. John's spire standing tall in Lac du Bonnet.*

Gus Wruck

"Memories of St. John's through the Century" June 22 & 23

A memorable exhibit / tea and cake will be held at the "St. John's Heritage Church & Arts Centre".

Tickets are \$20.00 will be available at the

museum or Ingham Pharmacy.

Our pop up exhibit will feature weddings, confirmations, baptisms, & various church groups that took place at the former St. John's Anglican

Church.

This exhibit is on view for 2 days only.

**More info: 345-6329**



Volunteering

**Volunteers** are the driving force for the LdB & District Historical Society, a not-for-profit organization, which operates the Lac du Bonnet District Museum and the former St. John's Anglican Church.

Would you be willing to help out with any of these activities planned throughout the year?

- Part of a work bee for Museum / Church (painting - moving materials - special projects - church baking)
- Artifact restoration
- For clerical assistance on projects ( working with artifacts - donated material - preparation)
- Part of Fundraising events (Museum / Church - openings - exhibits - July 1<sup>st</sup> parade - Heritage day - Winnipeg River Rendezvous
- Help on research projects
- Part of a phone calling team for special events

Contact us: [info@ldbhistorical.ca](mailto:info@ldbhistorical.ca)