



Into the Wild with Leon Lorenz

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ROCKY MOUNTAIN GOAT

Your weekly source of news, views and entertainment

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\$1.5M needed for Valemount business recovery: report

By ABIGAIL POPPLE, LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER, RMG

The knock-on effects of the Jasper wildfire have dug a \$1.5M hole for Valemount businesses, says consulting agency Strategies North.

The Village hired the agency in November to evaluate the economic impacts of the three-week closures of Highway 93 and Highway 16 following the evacuation of Jasper. Soon after, Strategies North consultants held a

meeting in Valemount to talk with local business owners about their concerns and potential solutions. These conversations – along with 11 one-on-one conversations with business owners, a survey distributed by the Village in August, and a second survey made by Strategies North in December – culminated in the agency's Economic Recovery Strategy, presented to Council on January 14th.

The report recommends promoting tourism in Valemount to wider audiences – and pitching

Valemount as an alternate location to would-be Jasper visitors – to strengthen the village's tourism sector. Additionally, consultants recommended working with the provinces of B.C. and Alberta, as well as the federal government, to create a funding stream that would allow businesses to apply for grants to cover their losses from the highway closures.

Average losses over \$35K
The initial business impacts

CONT'D ON P2

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Morning Glow

The morning sun shines bright and has created some picturesque skies with the colder weather. / SANDRA JAMES

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Valemount business recovery ..Cont'd from A1

survey circulated by the Village from August 13th through the 19th found that the 64 respondents saw an average loss of \$35,000 and a median loss of \$15,000 due to the highway closures, according to the Strategies North report. The second business impacts survey, developed by Strategies North and distributed from December 6th through the 16th, found higher numbers: an average loss of \$46,520 and a median loss of \$35,000.

However, this survey had 16 respondents – one quarter of the amount that responded to the initial survey – which made the average more sensitive to outliers, such as one business that reported a \$250,000 loss, according to the report. The numbers may also be higher because the August survey circulated while both highways were still closed, so businesses have incurred more losses since then, the report says.

Consultants also estimated the total revenue lost from a reduction in tourism. In summer 2023, Valemount saw 8,494 tourists, according to statistics the firm obtained from Destination BC – in summer 2024, that number fell to 5,738. Based on estimates of how much money is spent per visit – somewhere from \$380 to \$700, according to Destination BC and Tourism Valemount – that puts the revenue loss from the lack of tourists at \$1,041,768 to \$1,929,200, the report says.

Loss of revenue isn't the only factor hurting Valemount businesses. Half of the respondents to the December survey said they incurred additional expenses during and immediately after the highway closures. Those with the highest additional expenses attributed the costs to support they provided to Jasper evacuees, according to Strategies North.

"When the evacuation order was given, Jasper and Alberta directed people to British Columbia," the report reads. "The fact that the businesses and organizations in Valemount opened their doors at their own expense should not disproportionately burden them for their generosity."

Besides additional expenses, businesses also suffered from cancellations and delays in shipping or receiving items. This could create further problems for businesses that may now be seen as unreliable due to shipping delays, and clients may have found new suppliers during the highway closures, according to the report.

These losses resulted in several layoffs, the report says. According to the survey, business owners reduced hours for 33 positions total, and five positions were laid off entirely.

To recover from these losses, respondents suggested an average of \$33,340 in funding assistance. Respondents suggested increased tourism marketing efforts and a low-interest loan as other potential solutions.

Threat of a downward spiral

The village's biggest threat is a spiralling economic decline, the report says. "In a small town, losing one business means potentially losing the ability to buy a good or service within the community," the report reads. "This can mean less money being spent in the community ... potentially creating a cycle that challenges recovery and eliminates job opportunities."

This vicious cycle would be difficult to end, according to the report. Residents who lose their jobs may move away, investors may be reluctant to support businesses, and the community will have difficulty attracting tourists and new residents, it says.

However, an early recovery from the highway closures could prevent this worst-case scenario, the agency believes. It suggests promoting the community to a broader audience: in the past, the village has relied on neighbouring communities for most of its visitors, but promoting Valemount to would-be Jasper visitors internationally and in other parts of Canada may expand the village's tourism market.

In an email to The Goat, president of Strategies North Grant Barley said he believes \$1.5M, along with enhanced marketing, could provide sufficient funding for recovery. When asked how the firm calculated the figure, Barley said consultants engaged with businesses and community groups to assess losses and determine what businesses' financial needs were. The firm also examined recovery support provided to communities in similar situations, according to Barley, though he did not specify which communities these were.

Next steps

Financial support will likely have to come from the B.C., Alberta and federal governments, according to Strategies North.

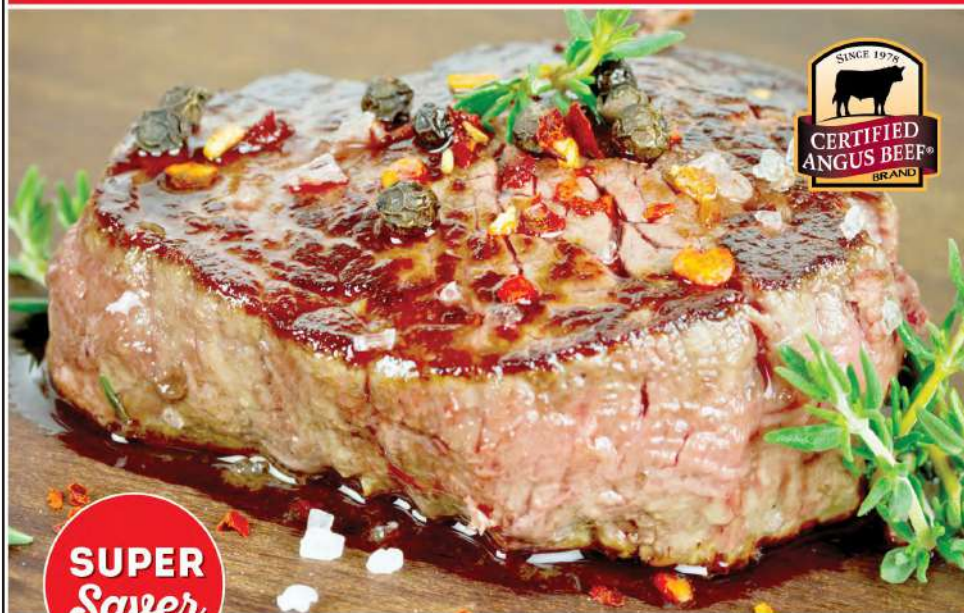
"As a municipality, Valemount cannot provide direct support such as grants, loans, or tax breaks to businesses," the report reads.

Instead, it recommends working first with the B.C. government to procure funding for a grant program geared towards businesses suffering from the financial impacts of the Jasper wildfire.

As of writing on January 20th, the B.C. Office of the Registrar of Lobbyists did not have any recorded lobbying activity on behalf of the Village of Valemount. However, Strategies North registered with the federal lobbyist registry on January 14th. According to the registry, the firm has not filed any communication reports with the federal government so far.

Consultants will also discuss the report and their next plans with Valemount Council, Barley said. He declined to comment on the agency's plans to work with provincial and federal levels of government.

"The people and businesses of Valemount deserve immense praise for their generous response to the Jasper fire," Barley wrote. "Our aim is to ensure that their support does not result in an unfair burden on the community."



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FRIDAY, JANUARY 24, 2025 - THURSDAY, JANUARY 30, 2025

Valemount Council: staff compensation, water meter program, byelection policies

By ABIGAIL POPPLE, LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER, RMG

Valemount Council discussed staff compensation, applying for a water use measuring system and how to finance byelections during their January 14th meeting.

Mayor Owen Torgerson called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

After adopting minutes from Council's December 10th meeting and the December 12th Committee of the Whole meeting, Council heard from the evening's delegation.

Delegation: staff compensation review

Village staff are preparing to review the Village's compensation practices for staff and Council. To get an overview of the goals and process of a compensation review, CAO Anne Yanciw asked Julie Case – a consultant with Drive Organizational Development, a consulting agency that specializes in compensation reviews – to give a presentation on the proposed review process. She selected 12 communities close to Valemount's size which will be used to gather data on how government staff are paid in similar communities.

For more information on Case's presentation, turn to P8.

Economic Recovery Strategy

Valemount Council hired Kamloops-based consultancy firm Strategies North in November to create a business recovery plan in the wake of the nearly month-long closures of Highway 16 and Highway 93 during the Jasper wildfire. The \$56,500 contract was paid for with a grant from the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness, according to a staff report from the November 12th Council meeting.

Since then, consultants from the company have visited seven businesses in town, consulted with 11 via email and phone and held one community meeting with business owners, according to the report the firm submitted to Council. These conversations, along with two surveys – one created by the Village, and another created by Strategies North – have culminated in an economic recovery strategy which outlines the economic impacts of the highway closures and makes recommendations for recovery.

Strategies North estimates that \$1.5M must be raised to meet the community's recovery needs. The firm recommended that the Village work with the B.C. and Alberta governments, as well as the federal government, to access funding.

Comparison communities for Council remuneration

Council approved of using the 12 communities Case suggested as comparisons for a Council remuneration review.

Staff compensation review

Council approved a \$16,000 contract with Drive OD Ltd, Case's consulting agency, to carry out a compensation review. Councillor Pete Pearson raised concerns about the additional workload Village staff will incur during the review, and Councillor Hollie Blanchette said she was worried about the comparison communities, many of which are bigger than Valemount. Yanciw said most of the work will be carried out by Case. Additionally, Case chose larger communities because smaller communities may not have appropriate positions to compare to Valemount staff, according to Yanciw.

Community Foundation Board

The Village raised \$150K for a community foundation fund through a partnership with the Prince George Community Foundation from 2008-2010. While the fund was intended to be distributed for grants, it has not been used due to a lack of volunteers for a board. Since being created, the fund has accrued interest and currently has about \$395K total, about \$230K of which is available for grants.

Staff asked Council to approve the development of a Community Foundation Board, and to allow staff to advertise for board members. Similar boards are found in municipalities throughout Canada, organized under Community Foundations of Canada, the national leadership organization for these community funds.

Pearson said he has seen other communities with similar funds, and was happy to

find that Valemount has one as well.

"I'm curious what we're looking at for the makeup of the board, [and its] size," he added.

Staff still doesn't know what the size of the board will be, Yanciw said. She added that she is unsure whether board size and makeup can be determined by Council, or if it needs to be approved by the Community Foundations of Canada or the Prince George Community Foundation.

"We'd like to bring back some terms [for board development], but we'd like to start advertising while we do that," she said. "I just received information for the last quarter in 2024 and we accrued another \$15,000 on top of what is reported here. It would be nice to get going with creating a board so this money can be dispersed."

Pearson said he was impressed with the amount of money accrued and thanked Yanciw for her response.

Councillor Donnie MacLean asked how the grants would be used. Yanciw said local community foundations can set their own criteria, but Community Foundations of Canada requires the grants to be given to nonprofits rather than individuals – for example, the grant money could not be used to create a scholarship. MacLean thanked Yanciw for her response.

Council approved staff to begin developing a board and advertising open board positions.

Water Meter Pilot Program

The Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs recently sent staff an email about a water meter pilot program, an up to \$5M fund to cover the cost of measuring water use in

CONT'D ON P6

DEVELOPMENT OF A PEST MANAGEMENT PLAN

APPLICATION NUMBER: FOR-N-PMP-2025-2030

Applicant:

Ministry of Forests, Range Branch
441 Columbia Street, Kamloops, B.C., V2C 2T3

Contact:

Email: invasive.plants@gov.bc.ca | Phone number: 250 219-3349

Members of the public are invited to comment on a multi-agency Pest Management Plan (PMP) for Northern B.C. The purpose of the proposed PMP is to manage invasive plants on provincial public land under the jurisdiction of the Ministries of Forests; Transportation and Transit; Water, Land and Resource Stewardship and Environment and Parks in Northern B.C. The proposed PMP applies to areas located in the Regional Districts of: Bulkley-Nechako, Fraser-Fort George, Kitimat-Stikine, North Coast (excluding Haida Gwaii), Peace River, Stikine and Northern Rockies Regional Municipality.

The pest management methods proposed for use within the area to which the PMP applies include mechanical and biological control, and the use of herbicides. The active ingredients and examples of trade names of the herbicides proposed for use under this plan include: aminocyclopyrachlor (Truvis, Navius VM); aminopyralid (Milestone, Restore II, Restore NXT, Clearview and Reclaim II A); chlorsulfuron (Truvis); clopyralid (Lontrel XC); dicamba (Dyvel, Vanquish, Banvel); diflufenzopyr (Overdrive); flazasulfuron (LongRun); flumioxazin and pyroxasulfone (Torpedo); fluroxypyr (Starane, Pulsar); glyphosate (Roundup WeatherPro, Vantage Plus Max/VPM II, Vantage XRT, Roundup Transorb HC); 2,4-D (2,4-D Amine 600, Reclaim II B, Restore B, Grazon XC); halosulfuron (Sanda WG); imazapyr (Arsenal, Arsenal-Powerline, Habitat); indaziflam (Esplanade SC); MCPA (DyVel); mecoprop-p (Dyvel DSp); metsulfuron-methyl (Escort, Clearview, Reclaim A, Navius VM); picloram (Tordon 22K, Grazon XC, Tordon 101); propyzamide (Kerb SC); fluroxypyr-benzyl (Rinskor, Milestone NXT, Restore NXT); rimsulfuron (Prism); and triclopyr (Garlon RTU, Garlon XRT, Triclopyr 480).

Herbicides will be applied using selective application methods such as wick/wipe-on, stem injection, ground vehicle mounted sprayers and backpack or handheld sprayers. Aerial application is not permitted under this PMP.

The proposed duration of the PMP is from May 12, 2025 - May 12, 2030.

A draft copy of the proposed PMP is available at gov.bc.ca/invasive-species.

A person wishing to contribute information about a proposed treatment area, relevant to the development of the pest management plan, may send copies of the information to the applicant at the address or email address above within 30 days of the publication of this notice.



REGIONAL DISTRICT
of Fraser-Fort George

NOTICE OF MEETING

2025 Budget Deliberations

The Board of Directors start **2025 budget deliberations** on **Friday January 24, 2025 at 9 am**. The Committee of the Whole agenda with budget details will be on rdffg.ca by January 16. Individuals and organizations can comment on this budget by:

- addressing the Board of Directors at the January 24 meeting (register in advance at 250-960-4444 or 1-800-667-1959)
- emailing budget@rdffg.bc.ca

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Editorial

So much for the pump track...



By Spencer Hall
Editor & Owner
goatnewspaper@gmail.com

After reading the Valemount Council report published in The Goat's Dec 19th issue, I was incredibly disappointed to learn that VARDA is unable to move forward with its pump track project.

In a letter to Valemount Council, executive director of VARDA Curtis Pawliuk said after "several rounds of back and forth" with Village staff, the association determined that options proposed by the Village were not viable for the association.

Significant barriers highlighted by Pawliuk were VARDA having to cover annual property taxes and surveying costs, as well as the price of insurance and planning for the asset's management lifecycle.

Valemount is a mountain biking village and for those not quite confident in their mountain biking abilities, pump tracks are a fabulous way to work on those crucial beginner skills before hitting the trails. They build confidence in beginner riders, which can help to prevent injury. They also provide a no-cost child and youth friendly space. You don't need an expensive mountain bike to use a pump track, you can use a basic bike to hone your skills. This would make Valemount more accessible to those who don't usually mountain bike, but want to learn.

I understand the Village has a legal obligation to plan for the replacement of its assets, but in my opinion assuming each asset will need replacing within 20 years is a bit silly and not grounded in reality. In a March 26th staff report, Village Land Use Planner Krista Ety estimates the cost of amortization at \$47.5K per year, coming to a total of \$950K after 20 years. She recommended to council that they decline to take ownership of the proposed pump track due to "financial implications."

In her report, Ety included a budget plan that outlined the estimated costs for the project, which included replacement insurance, track maintenance, washroom costs, amenities, and amortization. In total, Ety estimated the total cost of the track to be about \$1,629,269 over 20 years, equating to an 8.4 per cent tax increase for residents.

Another option presented by the Village was that VARDA lease the

land from the Village to the tune of about \$169,882, which includes a \$10K surveying cost. While Yanciw says the Village understands the association not wanting to take the pump track on as an asset, VARDA Committee Chair Sean Kelly told The Goat the association didn't have a problem taking on the asset, but had trouble getting land designated and allowed for the placement of the track.

I don't believe it's fair for the Village to demand a non-profit to cover property taxes on free community assets built on village-owned land, especially on a non-revenue generating asset that is being built to enhance the lives of those who live in Valemount and those who visit our community. These are the same principles the Village was founded on: to facilitate village-wide assets that make Valemount a better place to live.

In her report, Ety said feedback from one community estimated its annual maintenance costs for its pump track at \$25-30K. However, according to feedback collected by Maggie Inrig and Sean Kelly on behalf of Project Pump It Up, only a small percentage of this figure is used on track maintenance. In fact, those who provided feedback from all five communities Kelly and Inrig spoke to said that the asphalt tracks required very little maintenance. This research was shared with Village staff.

Ety estimated the annual maintenance cost of the proposed Valemount pump track to be \$15,000, though it's unclear how much of this figure would go toward maintaining the track itself.

Another factor adding to my disappointment is that Project Pump It Up was a resident-led initiative with a significant amount of community support. I hope this isn't how the Village intends to treat all possible projects brought forth by the community. In this case, the Village should've offered more opportunities to negotiate terms of the potential lease agreement and asset management plan. I feel that if this had been done, it could have made a difference in the outcome of this project.

Global Thoughts

BY GWYNNE DYER



Gwynne Dyer is a Canadian-born independent journalist whose column is published in more than 175 papers in 45 countries.

The Middle East: Where Next?

In the eighty hours between the announcement of the Gaza ceasefire agreement on 16 January and the day when it went into effect, 19 January, Israeli air strikes on the Gaza Strip killed 123 Palestinians including dozens of women and children. The Israel Defence Force (IDF) said it tried to avoid civilian casualties, but it had to kill the 'terrorists' of Hamas wherever they were.

Now it has to stop killing them, at least for a while. 33 Israelis will be freed by Hamas over the next few weeks in return for 1,890 Palestinian prisoners. However, much of the IDF and even members of Prime Minister Binyamin 'Bibi' Netanyahu's own cabinet expect to go back to war after the first phase of the hostage exchange.

The second phase requires complete withdrawal of the IDF from the Gaza Strip and the use of Hamas members as a sort of police force (mostly unarmed) to help more than a million Palestinians return to their wrecked homes in the northern part of the territory. That is unthinkable for many Israelis.

The cynics were therefore convinced that Netanyahu would first take credit for the hostage exchange to reduce the domestic political pressure on him, then use a real or faked violation of the cease-fire by Hamas as an excuse to restart the war. After all, he needed a war to stay out of

jail.

Just staying in power and out of jail drove Netanyahu's behaviour until quite recently. Only the war spared Netanyahu from a devastating inquiry into his failure to foresee and prevent the Hamas attack in October 2023, and it also stalled his ongoing corruption trial. But that logic may no longer apply.

"We changed the face of the Middle East," Netanyahu said last week. He's right, and it may give him a new lease on power.

Hamas is leaderless and has lost its Iranian patron. The IDF has devastated Hezbollah in Lebanon and killed its leader. Iran's formerly dominant position in Syria was swept away together with the Assad regime. Even Iran itself has been revealed as a paper tiger in terms of its missiles and its air defences, and there are serious questions about its internal stability.

And now Netanyahu has Donald Trump on his side. Not under his thumb – Trump's people put huge pressure on Netanyahu to get his final assent to the cease-fire – but the Israeli leader will have been quick to grasp that new opportunities are opening up for him as the Middle Eastern constellation of powers shifts.

Could he get the United States to apply even stronger sanctions against Iran now that

Trump is back on top? Probably yes, and in that case the road would be open for the two of them to pursue their pipe-dream from last time: the 'Abraham Accords'.

That 'peace treaty', establishing diplomatic relations between Israel and some Arab countries that had never actually fought against it, was touted as the defining diplomatic achievement of the first Trump presidency. In fact, it never amounted to much, because Saudi Arabia, the greatest power of the eastern Arab world, never joined.

Now, perhaps, with Iran crippled, Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman of Saudi Arabia might be persuaded to make peace with Israel and set up some sort of joint hegemony over the Middle East. Or at least that is the pipe dream that entrances Trump and Netanyahu, and even 'Mbs' (as he is known) might be tempted. But only for a moment.

Netanyahu has been trying to write the Palestinians out of the story for his whole political life, and Trump may go along for the ride. But Mbs doesn't dare let Israel expunge the Palestinians, neither does General Sisi in Egypt, and Iranians wouldn't hear of it even if the regime changes.

There is no viable plan, and peace is not nigh.

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Valemount Council ...Cont'd from P3

municipalities with fewer than 5000 connections.

Staff asked Council's approval to submit an expression of interest and application to the program. Universal water metering would allow the Village to charge consumers according to their water consumption rates – as opposed to the flat rates currently set out in the Village's Fees and Charges Bylaw – and would provide data so staff can identify areas of improvement in the water system, according to the staff report. The program could cover up to 100 per cent of the project cost, including meter procurement and installation.

Torgerson said he remembered a similar program from his time as a councillor in 2014 or 2015, when the cost of installing a water meter would have been around \$1.2M. He said costs have risen since then.

"We've been looking at costs. We're still waiting on costing from one company, but it looks like between \$1.5M to \$2M," Yanciw said.

Council approved staff's recommendation.

Government Association call for resolutions

The Association of Kootenay and Boundary Local Governments, which represents municipalities and electoral areas in southeastern B.C. – including Valemount – sent an email requesting that members submit resolutions to be discussed at the annual convention by the end of February.

Torgerson asked if it would be useful to write a resolution on the cost of holding byelections after a member of local government is elected to provincial office, leaving their local position vacant. According to the Union of BC Municipalities, 25 local government officials were elected as MLAs in the most recent provincial election. This means 25 governments are left to cover the cost for a byelection to replace these officials, Torgerson said.

"Elections are not cheap," he said. "If a candidate runs for provincial election and is successful, which forces a local government byelection, who should cover that cost? Should it be the Province, should it be the party, or should it be the municipality?"

He added that the former mayor of the District of Barriere, Ward Stamer, left his position after being

elected as MLA in October. According to Torgerson, the subsequent byelection likely cost \$8,000 to \$10,000.

Torgerson asked Council if the issue seemed important enough to bring up with an association of several local governments.

Blanchette said she's inclined to have the candidate pay for the byelection. She asked if holding byelections as a result of officials being elected to provincial office was a frequent issue for municipalities.

"I think it was a one-off," Torgerson said. "There's been a mayor here, a councillor there in previous elections, but this was a big turnover."

Pearson said holding successful provincial candidates responsible for financing local byelections may discourage good candidates from running.

"I love the idea of uploading to the Province. They throw enough our way, it'd be nice to throw something back up the hill," he added.

Blanchette said she still believes individuals should be responsible for financing byelections.

"What's the difference between that scenario [running for provincial office] and me deciding to move to Timbaktu tomorrow... so I'm causing a byelection?" she said. "I don't think that the municipality should be on the hook for something that somebody's choosing to do."

Torgerson said he could work with staff on a resolution regarding financing local byelections after provincial elections, so councillors could hear other municipalities' opinions on the topic at the annual convention. Council unanimously carried a motion directing Torgerson and staff to write the resolution.

Falling property values

State of the Basin, a research group at Selkirk College which gathers data on well-being and living conditions in the Columbia Basin, recently compiled the 2024 and 2025 median assessed property values for communities across the basin. The newsletter regarding this research was sent to Village staff and included in Council's reading file.

Valemount was one of two communities which saw falling property values: the median value fell from \$337,000 in 2024 to \$320,000 in 2025, a five per cent

decrease.

Torgerson said it was interesting that property values in Valemount decreased, whereas 24 municipalities saw increases and two remained the same.

In-Camera

Torgerson adjourned the open session of Council at 7:45 p.m. Council moved to an in-camera meeting for consideration of four items per Section 90 (1) (a) (c) & (d) of the Community Charter to discuss matters related to:

(a) personal information about an identifiable individual who holds or is being considered for a position as an officer, employee or agent of the municipality or another position appointed by the municipality (2 items), (c) labour relations or other employee relations (1 item), and (d) the security of the property of the municipality (1 item).

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New Job Posting

An exciting employment opportunity has recently opened. **FireSmart Coordinator** is a part-time, temporary position with 19 flexible hours per week. The wage is \$30-32 per hour. Competition closes Sunday, January 26, 2025, at 4:00pm. For more information, please visit the website at www.valemount.ca/village-office/job-postings/.

Opportunities to Get Involved!

The Village of Valemount is currently seeking community members who wish to serve on the **Clean Air Task Force**. This group is a Select Committee of Council whose mandate is to explore all options to improve air quality in the village. For information on the committee's mandate and composition, please read the Terms of Reference, available on the village website at www.valemount.ca. Look for the Clean Air Website link in the upper right-hand corner.

The Village of Valemount is looking for volunteers for a **Community Foundation Board** to administer a Community Foundation grant program. The Foundation will support a wide range of causes based on the greatest needs and priorities in the community. Get involved to make a difference!

The Village is also seeking community volunteers to sit on a **Council Remuneration Panel**; this is a short-term project of evaluating and recommending Council compensation.

To learn more about each of these unique opportunities, and to access the application form, please see the Latest News & Events banners on the Village of Valemount homepage at www.valemount.ca.

To apply to any of the above groups, please submit your application form in-person, by email to corporate@valemount.ca, or by mail to Village of Valemount, Attention: Corporate, PO Box 168, Valemount BC, V0E 2Z0. The deadline for applications is Sunday, March 2, 2025, at 4 pm.

2025 Columbia Basin Trust ReDi Grants

Adjudication Committee Meeting Schedule

- January 30, 2025
- February 20, 2025
- March 13, 2025
- April 10, 2025

Meetings are at 6:30pm at the Village of Valemount Council Chambers at 735 Cranberry Lake Road. The Columbia Basin Trust ReDi Grants Adjudication Committee Meeting schedule for 2025 is posted at the entrance of the Municipal Office, and on the Village of Valemount website. Please note that meeting dates and times may change. Approved changes will be posted on the front door of the Village Office and at www.valemount.ca.

The deadline for ReDi Grant applications is February 13, 2025, at 4pm.



Be Prepared for Winter Storms and Power Outages

Winter storms may include snowfalls, ice storms and blizzards with high winds and blowing snow. These storms can cause outages that last for days. Have your 72-hour emergency kit ready, and ensure it has extra items to prepare for the cold and dark winter. Visit www.valemount.ca/services/emergency-management/emergency-kits/ for readiness checklists.

Prevent Slips and Falls

Wear appropriate footwear, walk with care, and be aware of potential ice under snow.

2025 Animal Licenses

When you license your pet with the Village, you receive a tag which identifies your pet and allows for a speedy return if they end up in our care. All dogs over the age of 3 months require an animal license. Failure to license dogs may result in fines in addition to the cost of licensing. Please license your dogs by January 31, 2025. Please ensure the Village Office has your PO Box and street address on file.

The 2025 dog license fees are as follows:

- Unaltered dogs - \$20
- Altered dogs - \$15

Cat licenses: are not mandatory but we encourage every cat owner to license their cat. If your cat is found, we can get it back home to you as quickly as possible. There is no fee to register and license your cat.

2025 Business Licenses

All businesses, including home businesses, are required to have a business license before January 31st, 2025. If you are providing any professional or personal service for profit within village limits, you require a license. Applications can be obtained by visiting the Village Office or online at www.valemount.ca/business/business-licensing.

Utility Notice Information

Utility notices have been mailed out for 2025. If you do not receive your bill by mid-February, please call the Village Office. Any unpaid utility billings as of December 31, 2024 were applied to taxes in arrears on January 1, 2025, and are subject to interest charges. If 2025 utility bills are paid by March 10, 2025, an 8% discount will be applied.

Online & telephone banking, cash, debit, cheque, third-party credit card via the website, or email transfer to dof@valemount.ca are accepted. Visit www.valemount.ca/village-office/finance/tax-and-utility-payments/ for information on all payment options.



735 Cranberry Lake Road
250-566-4435 PO Box 168

McBride Council: supporting the valley's youth and water meter discussion

By ANDREA ARNOLD

Mayor Gene Runtz called the January 13th McBride Council meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. In the meeting Council was presented information about the Planet Youth Project and councillors discussed the possibility of water meter installation for the residents of McBride.

Planet Youth

Local lead for the Planet Youth project, Shirley Giroux provided Council with an overview of the project. Planet Youth is a Public Health Agency of Canada project being run by Northern Health. The intention of the plan is to increase recreation opportunities for youth and to help reduce and prevent substance use. Giroux also works as a councillor in both the Elementary and Secondary Schools in Valemount where she works closely with the community youth. The program is a 10-step model primary prevention program focusing on preventing substance use and supporting youth wellness for all young people, modeled after a program that was developed in Iceland. Giroux said that if substance abuse can be delayed up to the age of 15, it is four times less likely to occur overall. The hope of this program is to provide youth with options for safe hang out areas, not necessarily planned programs, but just somewhere to go. Through conversations with local youth, Giroux has learned that this is something that is desired across the valley. Specifically requested, a pool. She has also heard that they want to feel connected. They are interested in multi generational, community and family events. Currently, there are a few options for youth, but the lack of spaces means that it often has to be shared

between the younger youth and the older, resulting in some people not going because of the age range.

The Robson Valley was selected as one of seven communities that are now running pilot projects. The first phase of the program addresses the first three steps, and through engagement with both the youth and adult community members, Giroux hopes that they will receive the funding to continue on to steps 4-10. She also wants the program to be run by someone with a paid position.

"If you rely on volunteers, it is the same people all the time," she said. "It needs to be pay protected time. That will prevent burnout and lazy work."

Mayor Runtz recounted that a few summers ago he hired some youth to help at his home. He said they had a great time and he felt so much younger while working with them.

"Older people can feel younger by spending time with you people," said Mayor Runtz.

Water meters

CAO Jeanette McDougall presented a verbal request asking for up to \$2000 to cover the costs of Radloff to proceed with a grant application with the goal of installing water meters on all residences in McBride. The 100 per cent funded grant is being presented as a way to better identify infrastructure repair needs, support better water use, drought resilience, and staff work reduction.

Councillors were quite divided on the matter. Councillor Kolida asked what is stopping the government from using these meters to require each home to pay their consumption amount instead of the flat rate that is currently being charged. He feels that the grant is being offered as a way to get to this charging method.

Mayor Runtz said he doesn't believe that the intention is to move to individual billing, more the opportunity to identify where the water is going, resulting in quicker action when leaks occur. Councillor Peter Caputo agreed that this could be a time and cost saving method for water conservation.

Councillor Tina Bennett also expressed concern that the big picture would be to move to individual use billing. She suggested a monitoring system on the whole water line, not each house individually.

Councillor Glen Frear said that he isn't opposed to the meters going in, but it is his understanding that ultimately, the billing process is the village's decision so they could continue to bill at a flat rate even with the metres installed.

CAO McDougall said that at least one community in B.C., Campbell River, bills out a flat rate up to a certain usage point, then charges by the litre beyond that amount.

Councillor Kolida repeated his concerns, adding that residents in McBride do not like being told that people are coming into their house to do work, in this case the install, and that he feels this matter should be brought forward for community engagement before decisions are made. He also expressed his displeasure that the job of applying for the grant was automatically being given to Radloff. As Kolida has stated in previous meetings, he would like all jobs to be offered out to a minimum of three companies so that the village has a chance to choose the best option.

When a vote was called for the motion to grant the money to Radloff for the grant application the vote was 3-2 with both Councillor Kolida and Councillor Bennett opposed.

Council adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

Drag racing to take over McBride airport one day in June

By ANDREA ARNOLD

The Charlie Leake Airport in McBride is set to see a whole new kind of speed on June 22nd when the BC DragiT Challenge comes to town.

This is the third year that the event organised by Dianne and Mark Boutilier has taken place, but the first year it will be held in McBride. Dianne says that this year is shaping up to have the most participants so far. They have a maximum registration of 200 people, 100 drivers and 100 support crew, and they anticipate reaching that number based on registration so far.

The five-day event begins on June 18th in Lillooet, B.C., where drivers will race at their first location. After that event, they will pack up their cars with everything they will need for the next five days and hit the road to Cache Creek for their second event. Each vehicle raced during the DragiT Challenge must be street legal. Teams will drive between venues abiding by regular traffic laws, and then compete in the same vehicle. They must pack personal effects, tools, spare parts including tires, and anything else they may need over the five days in the car and, if needed, a small single axle trailer up to four foot by eight foot. The rules are so strict in this regard that if a driver's spouse is travelling along the route with an RV, nothing the driver needs can be in the RV.

As a result of not having a support team and vehicle, the teams often help each other out if the need for assistance during repairs occurs.

This year teams will travel from Lillooet, Cache Creek, Kelowna and 100 Mile House before arriving in McBride on June 21st. From McBride they will return to Cache Creek for final staging.

Boutilier says that plans for a show 'n' shine type event that evening are in the works and she hopes people will take the time to come check out the cars and meet the drivers. Some of the drivers have never been to McBride and they have already voiced their excitement at exploring this part of the Robson Valley.

"Drivers will have to check in at specific locations throughout the challenge, and they will arrive in the next community the night before the event," said Boutilier. "In McBride, we will have a drivers' meeting at 8:00 a.m. on the 22nd, and hopefully begin racing at 9:00 a.m."

Boutilier explained that each driver has to make a minimum of one pass at each location to keep their qualification. If repairs are needed, they are permitted to make them, providing they can complete one pass during the day. She anticipates the event will end around 2:00 p.m., allowing drivers enough time to make the trip back to Cache Creek for their final day.



A photo from a previous event shows what spectators can expect when the BC DragiT challenge takes over the Charlie Leake Airport in McBride on June 22, 2025. /PHOTO SUPPLIED BY BCDRAGIT

As plans get underway, Boutilier said that they are looking for a non-profit group that wants to operate a small concession stand selling easy items like hot dogs, bottled water and pop. The event will be a non-alcoholic, non-substance event to ensure a safe family environment. They are also looking for some volunteers to help with ensuring the day is a success.

Admittance is \$10 per person and kids under the age of 13 are free. Seating and shelter is not available, so Boutilier suggests that spectators bring a comfortable camping or lawn chair, and other weather appropriate supplies. She expects to have some foam ear plugs available but recommends people bring their own, especially for kids.

The pair had to work with Village of McBride staff and Council to get permission to run the event, and arrangements had to be made to ensure no air traffic to the airport on the event day. Chieftain Auto Parts in Prince George has agreed to sponsor the McBride event.

"Working with the Village staff has been great," said Boutilier. "They have been very supportive. It is great for the drivers to know that McBride is happy to have them."

For more information about the event, registration and regulations visit <https://bcdragit.ca>, or follow BC DragiT them on Facebook.

Valemount to begin review of staff & Council remuneration

By ABIGAIL POPPLE, LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER, RMG

The Village of Valemount is preparing to review staff and Council's compensation. Council awarded a \$16,000 contract to compensation consulting agency Drive OD Ltd at their January 14th meeting to carry out the review.

In a delegation to Council, Drive OD consultant Julie Case outlined how she reviews compensation practices for local governments, and the role that elected officials play in the process. It is important for local governments to have a formalized policy on staff compensation reviews so they can be transparent with residents, Case said.

Additionally, Case said elected officials typically give staff direction on which communities to use in their review. Case gathers market data by examining the same staff position across a handful of similar municipalities, then uses that data to suggest how much her client should pay for that position in their own municipality. Comparison communities are selected based on population and the government's annual expenses, she said.

"What we need your insight on tonight is: who does Valemount compare itself to?" she told Council.

Case identified twelve comparison communities, ranging in population from about 1300 to 2400, for Valemount's compensation review: Radium Hot Springs, Fort St. James, Nakusp, Keremeos, Burns Lake, Warfield, Barriere, Harrison Hot Springs, 100 Mile House, Fruitvale, Ucluelet and Clearwater. She plans on sending a questionnaire to each community asking for salary data on 15-20 staff positions, then summarizing the data and making recommendations for Valemount staff – a process which will take about three to four months, Case said.

Council moved to receive the delegation.

Councillor Pete Pearson asked if a community's median income is factored into whether or not it makes an appropriate comparison community. A community with a similar size but higher median income would have a larger tax base to work with and may have higher-paid staff, he said.

Case said she does not retroactively adjust her data based on a community's tax base, and said she believes the comparison communities are fair.

Mayor Owen Torgerson said he had a similar question to Pearson, and thanked Case for her presentation.

Later in the meeting, Council approved a \$16,000 contract with Drive OD to conduct a compensation review for the Village.

"I am confident that we will get results," Torgerson said.

Pearson said he is concerned about the additional workload a compensation review will place on Village staff. According to the staff report on the contract, Village staff will conduct a "considerable" amount of work for the review.

"Staff will be involved in drafting a [compensation] philosophy and policy, but the actual review I would really like to leave with an independent body," said Yanciw. "The work around the entire compensation piece will include staff time for the policy work and so on, but not for the actual comparison."

"I understand that part, but... we have a lot of things going on, and a lot of people wearing many hats," Pearson said. "That's my only concern about it."

Staff also recommended approving the aforementioned 12 communities for the staff compensation review.

Councillor Hollie Blanchette raised concerns about the larger populations of the comparison communities: for example, Ucluelet has a population of 2,066, and Clearwater has a population of 2,388, putting them at around twice the size of Valemount, with a population of 1,052. Additionally, four of the communities selected are incorporated as districts, rather than villages.

"I'm just wondering if this is fair," she said. "Are there not any communities more [similar] to our size?"

Torgerson said the bigger communities likely employ more staff, rather than paying the same number of staff a higher salary.

Blanchette also wondered whether communities' annual expenses were taken into account when selecting comparison communities.

"One reason to go the same size or bigger is if we go smaller, we start to not have comparison positions," Yanciw said. "There isn't a clear correlation between [population] size and salary."

Councillor Hugo Mulyk said it is difficult to find appropriate comparison communities for a municipality of Valemount's size.

"I can see your challenge in trying to do this fairly and equitably," he said.

Council unanimously approved adopting the 12 comparison communities.

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Berg Lake Trail to reopen this summer despite recent damage

By ABIGAIL POPPLE, LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

BC Parks anticipates that the Berg Lake Trail will reopen this summer despite having sustained minor damage from flooding this fall, according to the Ministry of Environment and Parks.

The 37.8 kilometre trail was a popular multi-day hike before a severe flash flood wiped out bridges and other infrastructure in July 2021, prompting the closure of the trail. Since then, BC Parks has rebuilt bridges, picnic tables and washed-out portions of the trail, opening up the first seven-kilometre segment leading to the Kinney Lake campground in June 2023. A second segment of the trail reopened the following June, leading to the Whitehorn campground at kilometre 11.

In an email statement to The Goat, the Ministry said a September 2024 storm damaged some infrastructure on the trail between kilometres 14 and 15. However, the damage was "relatively minor" and will be repaired this spring with upgraded bridge components and minor repairs to the trail itself.

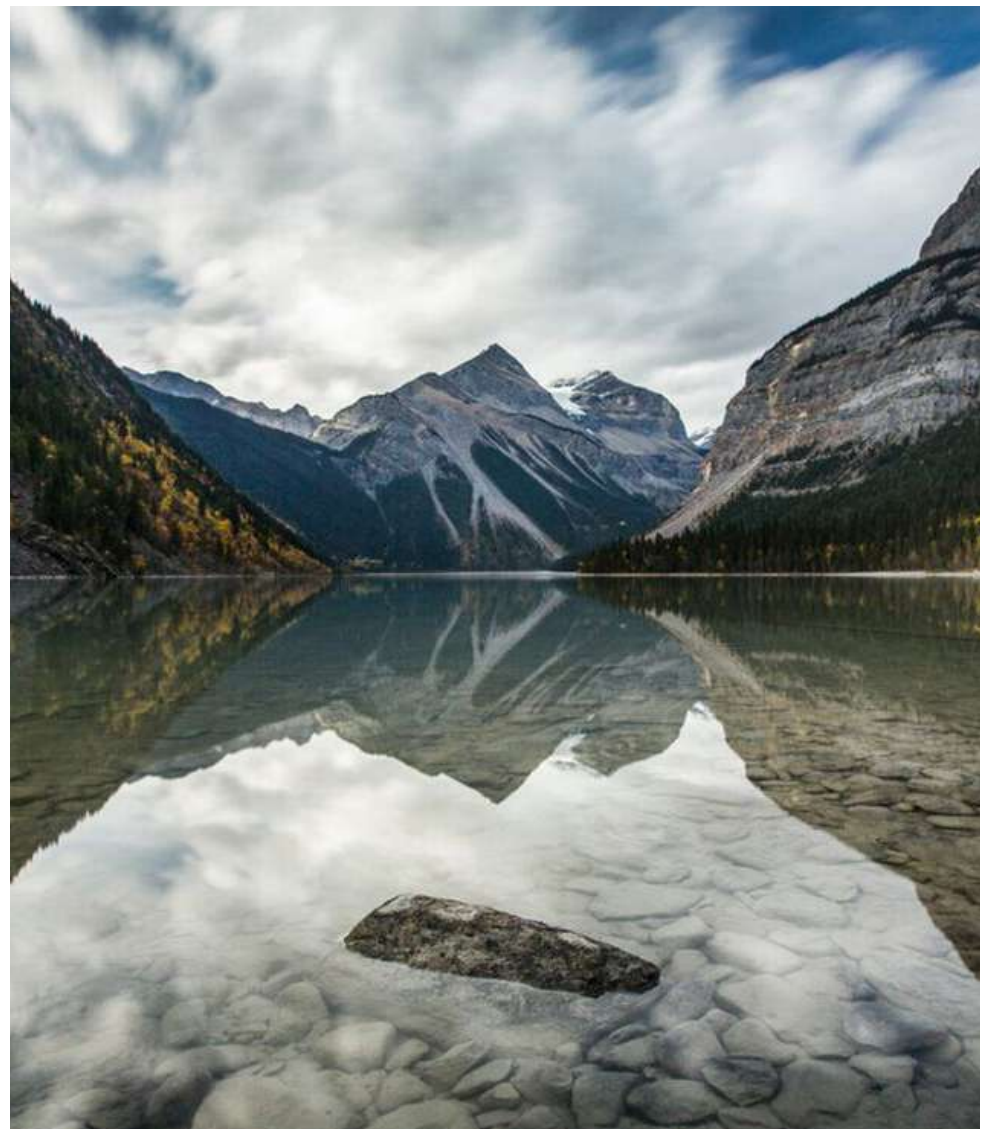
BC Parks is currently in the third and final phase of the trail rebuild, according to the Ministry.

The trail will likely be opened up to the Whitehorn campground once again come springtime, the statement adds, depending on what the trail condition is like once the snow clears. BC Parks is working to reopen the entire trail this summer.

"Currently there is no set date for booking backcountry sites," the statement adds. "If the trail opens in spring, it may initially open on a first-come, first-serve basis, with advance booking for the summer."

The remaining work is vital to ensure the trail is safe for use, the statement says.

"We are excited to welcome visitors back to the Berg Lake Trail, but we need to complete the trail work to ensure the safety of visitors and staff alike," it reads. "While a date has yet to be set, we hope to invite visitors, partner organizations and community members to a grand opening in the summer months."



The Berg Lake Trail is set to reopen in summer 2025. /BC PARKS

Gas station rebrand



The Frontage road in McBride will have a new face for fuel service in the coming weeks as the PetroCan transitions to a Centex service station. Employees and signage anticipate the change over should only take a few days. Many current services will remain the same with the addition of Chester's Chicken. /ANDREA ARNOLD

Interactive map showcases Blue River film locations

BY RACHEL FRASER

An interactive map released by the Thompson-Nicola Film Commission (TNFC) showcases the region's filming destinations and directs interested folks to locations that have been used to film movies, TV shows, commercials, music videos and documentaries in the Thompson-Nicola Regional District.

The TNFC is a department within the Regional District with the purpose of marketing the region and attracting motion picture production to the District. The commission received funding through Destination BC to create the map.

The movie locations map shows that five productions have filmed on location in Blue River — all ski and snowboard related.

While most of the five are documentary-style productions, the 1993 Hollywood feature film "Aspen Extreme", starring Paul Gross, used Blue River, among other locations in B.C., as a stand-in for Colorado backcountry.

"Like There's No Tomorrow," a 2011 documentary on winter and winter sports like snowboarding and skiing, puts Blue River in the company of "the world's most inspiring snowy landscapes," according to a promotional blurb.

According to a Regional District press release announcing the launch, the map allows film enthusiasts, tourists and locals to connect with the region's film history by showing the locations pictured in the productions while also providing information on how to watch the production, including whether it can be borrowed through the Thompson-Nicola Regional Library. It also lets you know if the location is accessible to the public. Many locations are not.

"Probably half of our locations that are used for film productions are somebody's house, or ranchland," said TNFC Film Commissioner Terri Hadwin. "So those are places that we wouldn't want folks exploring on their own, or feeling like they're entitled to go up to someone's door and poke around."

Downtown sidewalks, restaurants, tourist attractions and other public spaces that have been used in filming are listed as visitable and visiting is encouraged.

All Blue River sites were filmed through Mike Weigele Heli-skiing, so while film buffs can visit all five, they will have to access them the same way.

The map is a modernized version of a similar site that was shut down about 7 years ago, but has now been brought back due to requests from tourism providers across the region, according to Hadwin.

"They felt that quite a lot of people, when they came to the area, would say, oh we're here because we heard that Jurassic World was filmed here, and they want to have something that they can point people to."

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REGIONAL DISTRICT
of Fraser-Fort George

BATTERY

RECYCLING

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Correct disposal of batteries keeps everyone safe. Even if batteries seem to be 'dead', they can hold enough of a small charge to start a fire. This fire could start in your garbage can, the garbage truck or at the landfill.

Recycling batteries protects your community and the environment, ensuring that harmful materials don't end up in the landfill. Materials that are reclaimed from recycled batteries can be used to make new batteries, watches, bicycles, golf clubs and small appliances.

Storing Used Batteries

Keep yourself and your property safe by properly storing used batteries until there are enough to drop off at a recycling location.

Put used batteries back in their original packaging if it's still available. If not, tape over the positive (+) terminals with packing, duct or electrical tape – just avoid covering the battery's label. Single batteries can also be individually bagged in clear zip-seal, produce or newspaper bags. Multiple cylindrical alkaline batteries can be wrapped together with all (+) terminals pointing in the same direction.

Other storage tips include:

- Don't keep batteries in drawers or containers with other metal objects like coins, paper clips or screws.
- Don't store bagged or taped batteries in metal containers – repurpose an old yogurt container, milk jug or plastic storage bin.
- Store your container of batteries in a cool, dry place. It can be at room temperature, but avoid direct sunlight or extreme heat.



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Winter bear sightings not unusual: Ministry

By ABIGAIL POPPLE, LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER, RMG

Earlier this year, a Valemount resident spotted a bear wandering near train tracks – despite the winter weather. Following this sighting, The Goat reached out to the Ministry of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship to learn more about winter bear behavior.

While locals should avoid areas with fresh bear tracks, the Valemount-area sighting is not cause for concern, the Ministry said. The Conservation Officer Service says it has not received any reports of bear sightings in the area through its Report All Poachers and Polluters line, though the Service will monitor bear activity in the area, according to the statement.

Bears may rise from hibernation after being disturbed by nearby human activity, or damage to the den from flooding or other natural events, the Ministry said in an email statement. A healthy bear will dig a new den and re-enter hibernation within days, it added.

"In some cases, the bear appears to be in very poor body condition and does not re-den," the Ministry said. "These particular bears may have gone into hibernation in poor condition or perhaps chosen a poor den that did not protect them from the elements well."

While it is not necessarily the case that winter bear sightings are becoming more common, bears are denning for fewer months out of the year, the statement added.

"Bears are denning for shorter periods as the climate warms," it said. "More extreme weather events such as unseasonably warm temperatures or rain events during winter do have the potential to flood dens and disturb bears."



McBride resident and longtime photo contributor to The Goat Sandra James was diagnosed with colon cancer just before Christmas this year. /RMG FILE PHOTO

Donations greatly appreciated for James' cancer battle

By GOAT STAFF

McBride resident and longtime photo contributor to The Goat Sandra James has recently been diagnosed with colon cancer and is in need of financial support.

This diagnosis comes after other health issues she has been dealing with over the past two years.

James has made numerous trips to Prince George since her diagnosis right before Christmas and will need to make more over the course of her treatment. She is scheduled for surgery on February 3rd in Prince George.

Those who are able to help can make donations towards fuel, accommodations, food and medications that James will need. Cash, gift cards, vouchers for grocery stores, e-transfers to sandrajames1976@gmail.com are greatly appreciated.

Donations can be dropped off with Gina at Mountain View Boutique in McBride.

PUZZLES



CROSSWORD

Answers on P13

- Across**
- Bear in the Goldilocks story
 - "___ walks in beauty . . .": Byron
 - Beanie Babies for example
 - Got gray
 - Duty
 - Incur
 - Semester
 - "Pale" beverage
 - "Brave ___ World"
 - Didn't heed
 - Applied, as house paint
 - Canvas shelters
 - Part of a coffee service
 - Dirt and water
 - Bound
 - A pop
 - Debater's position, perhaps
 - Soothing location
 - Smooth
 - Had gotten up
 - Smelled
 - Make up one's mind
 - Volleyball obstacle
 - Think about it
- Down**
- "So __, so good"
 - Going to happen
 - No more than
 - Sear
 - Sum (up)
 - Subdued
 - Square of butter
 - How old you are
 - For every
 - Come out of denial
 - Kind of comedy
 - Circle of light
 - Exercise
 - Affection
 - Wow
 - Drops on blades
 - Stony sparkler
 - Underwater slitherer
 - Billiard sticks
 - Kind of account
 - Pedigree
 - Measurer
 - Bridge
 - Chose, as for the military
 - Female lobster
 - Profitable rock

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
11				12			13			
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17	18					19				
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26			27		28		29			
30		31		32		33		34		
35			36		37		38			
39				40						
41	42			43			44	45	46	47
48				49			50			
51				52			53			

- Somewhat, slangily
- Senseless person
- Family problem
- Not working
- Golf score
- Paternity identifier, abbr.
- Street shading tree
- Yeoman's "Yes!"

BY HOLIDAY MATHIS

Raise a Cup to Aquarius Season

In Greek mythology, Zeus was so moved by the stunning beauty of prince Ganymede that he transformed into an eagle and carried Ganymede off to serve as a kind of superstar ambrosia barista who famously brightened things up around Mt. Olympus. This week starts Aquarius season in the spirit of service, soul nourishment and advancement, with a lucky lunar trine to Jupiter followed up days later by a solar alignment of profound purposefulness.

you're the only one who feels as you do. No -- you're not alone in your struggles. Levity is a fix. The desire for more playfulness and fun isn't a sign of lacking. It's part of your humanity. Take heart. There are people who will gladly meet your energy.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). The primal part of you that will steal the chance to be lazy is a wise creature indeed. Laziness is wonderfully restorative, and you so rarely grant yourself the hours to relax and reset. This week, you will recalibrate with thoughtful intentions for your health and productivity that include luxurious stretches of doing nothing.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). You know how to be sensitive to what others need, but when was the last time you aimed those super-sensors back to yourself? Self-care is the worthiest cause this week. Go out of your way to accommodate your own needs, provide yourself with comfort and make things easier on yourself.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). You love to learn, and it will give you excitement and satisfaction today. The beautiful thing about growing your skills and knowledge in the current age is that for someone willing to do the research, there is so much you can learn for free or for a low cost. You'll profit in many ways from what you pick up this week.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). "Authenticity" is a buzzword that keeps coming up, but be cautious because it's often the loudest voices claiming authenticity that are furthest from the truth. Trust your instincts and keep it real in your own way. Also, know that your job isn't to have all the answers but to inspire yourself and others to look for them.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). You're deeply resilient. Even when you get overwhelmed by sadness or frustration, you turn your gaze forward -- toward action plans, small joys and meaningful work. Lean into this talent. Keep looking for the next step. Someone will show up to help you make your plans come to life.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Your influence is strong and growing, though not exactly obvious because you're a quiet kind of leader. It's a magician's trick: a whisper loud enough to echo in someone else's decisions. You'll plant thoughts like seeds, the kind that sprout now and again later. The kind that may not consciously register and yet refuse to be ignored.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). You hold a vast capacity for love, even when it's not obviously reciprocated. Maturity allows you to view relationships from a long perspective. You don't worry about the tally of every small interaction. You crave and cultivate depth in all things, including relationships, family dynamics and creative work.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Your ability to bring joy and connection to others is a gift that brings you positive feedback this week. People feel like a star around you, due in no small part to your conscious effort to position them as such. Carry their warm affirmations with you through the week -- a testament to your kindness and thoughtfulness.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). You're fiercely self-aware, though sometimes patterns emerge that you might not fully see or credit yourself for. The week highlights your remarkable ability to observe and articulate your emotions, relationships and behaviors. It's courageous to name your struggles, and doing so will help you move forward.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). It's normal to wonder how you're doing, though your best performances will be entirely self-conscious. This week, you'll feel the awkwardness that indicates you are still learning. It's what makes you appreciate the areas in which you are truly confident and fully engaged in the moment.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Yes, you have plans, ambitions and vision. But you're also grounded in the fact that this life right here is something you created and appreciate. Sure, it's somewhat incomplete and a bit messy, but you're making a steady effort to align your daily life with your values. The week features connections and projects of meaningful impact.

THIS WEEK'S BIRTHDAYS: Welcome to a year that celebrates your originality and rewards your quirkiness. Your energy acts as a catalyst for growth. With your gentle care, others heal, thrive and create. Direct that same kindness inward. When you nurture yourself and your passions, your most cherished projects gain incredible momentum. More highlights: You'll experience relationships almost cinematic in their vibrance, as well as comedy and seemingly exaggerated twists. You'll accept a post and revel in the responsibility. You'll make a big sale and be part of a remarkable team that turns out work all can be proud of.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). The depth of your emotions might sometimes make you wonder if

		7		4					3
	4				6				
6	5		2						
8		9	4	5			2	1	
7	2						3	4	
4	3			2	7	5			6
					5		1	7	
			9				8		
3				8		9			

SUDOKU

Answers on P13

HOW TO PLAY

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 only once.

Each 3x3 box is outlined with a darker line. You already have a few numbers to get you started. Remember. You must not repeat the numbers 1 through 9 in the same line, column or 3x3 box.

The Toughie

Answers on P13

- Across**
- Goose, in Tuscany
 - Light bulb unit
 - "Yippee!"
 - Fool
 - 17th US state
 - Metallic auto-trim
 - Compass pt.
 - Foul
 - Truck
 - Tammy Wynette hit
 - Title girl in a 1986 Starship hit
 - "Carmina Burana" composer
 - Really bad
 - In a way
 - Golden state, for short
 - Codger
 - Martina McBride hit
 - Succotash ingredient
 - Inner self
 - Disarrange, in a way
 - Gloomy state
 - Crossed bars
 - Part of the Corn Belt
 - Dixie Chicks hit
 - Meyers, for example
 - Spelling contests
 - Slate workers, for short
 - Car bars
 - Sailors
 - Born (Fr.)
 - ___ manual
 - Sports figure
 - Completion
- Down**
- "The File" spy thriller
 - Cambridge grad.
 - Fatigued
 - Promise
 - The Pequod's captain
 - Baby
 - Asian capital
 - Landings
 - Jack-in-the-pulpit, e.g.
 - Granada greeting
 - Portentous signal
 - Done, to Donne
 - Blow hard
 - Emerging
 - Spanish for gold
 - Directional assistance
 - A pint, maybe
 - Veterans Memorial designer Maya
 - Pacific island group
 - Casting requirement
 - Ode title starter
 - It's a mess
 - Fed. pharmaceutical watchdogs
 - Post-E.R. place
 - ___ compos mentis
 - A.M.A. members

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13			14				15				
16			17				18				
19		20				21					
22					23						
24			25	26	27	28		29	30	31	32
33					34			35			
36	37	38				39	40	41			
42					43						
44			45	46	47		48		49	50	51
52					53			54			
55	56	57				58	59	60			
61					62					63	
64					65					66	
67					68					69	

- Trio from Cincinnati
- Actress, Long
- Mil. authority
- Some are secret
- Liable to snap
- Laotian money
- Geological epoch
- Largest country in Western Europe
- Mouthed off
- Monies owed
- Moistens
- Nagy of Hungary
- Forbidding
- Uncluttered
- "Buona ___" (Italian greeting)
- Shampoo in a can noise
- Shaq's alma mater

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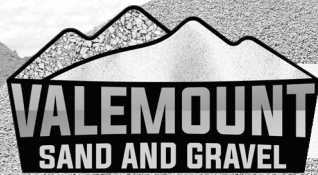
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11	A	G	E	D	12	T	A	X	13	O	W	E			
14	T	E	R	M	15	A	L	E	16	N	E	W			
17	I	G	N	O	R	E	D	18	T	E	N	24	T	25	S
20	C	O	A	T	E	D	23	T	E	N	24	T	25	S	
26	U	R	N	27	M	U	D	28	L	E	A	P			
30	E	A	C	H	31	P	R	32	O	33	S	P	A		
35	S	L	E	E	36	K	A	R	37	I	S	E	N		
38	S	N	I	F	E	D	39	F	E	E	D				
41	O	P	T	42	N	E	T	43	I	D	E	A	47	A	
48	F	A	R	49	D	U	E	50	O	N	L	Y			
51	F	R	Y	52	A	D	D	53	T	A	M	E			

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2	9	7	1	4	8	6	5	3
1	4	8	5	3	6	2	7	9
6	5	3	2	7	9	1	4	8
8	6	9	4	5	3	7	2	1
7	2	5	6	9	1	8	3	4
4	3	1	8	2	7	5	9	6
9	8	2	3	6	5	4	1	7
5	7	6	9	1	4	3	8	2
3	1	4	7	8	2	9	6	5

TOUGHIE ANSWERS

1	O	C	A	2	W	A	T	3	W	A	H	10	O					
11	D	A	W	12	O	H	I	O	13	C	H	R	O	M	E			
14	E	N	E	15	R	A	N	K	16	H	A	U	L	E	R			
17	T	A	N	D	B	Y	18	O	U	R	M	A	N					
19	S	A	R	A	20	O	R	F	F									
21	A	B	Y	22	S	M	A	L	23	O	F	24	S	25	O	R	T	S
26	C	A	L	I	F	27	C	O	O	T								
28	N	D	E	P	E	N	D	E	29	N	C	E	D	A	Y			
30	C	O	R	N	31	A	N	I	M	A								
32	U	N	S	T	33	A	C	K	34	S	A	D	N	35	E	S	S	
36	W	I	D	E	O	P	E	N	37	S	P	A	C	E	S			
38	L	E	M	O	N	S	39	B	E	E	S	40	E	D	S			
41	S	T	R	U	T	S	42	T	A	R	S	43	N	E	E			
44	U	S	E	R	S	45	S	T	A	T	46	E	N	D				

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Valemount

FRI-SUN Jan 24 - 26th U11 Valemount Minor Hockey Tournament, held at the Canoe Valley Rec Centre. Come cheer on our under-11 age players! Game schedule TBA.

TUES Jan 28th Legal Advice Zoom Do you have a legal question you need answered? Connect with barrister, Jesse Stamm, at the Valemount Public Library The next Legal Advice Zoom session is scheduled for January 28, 2025 at 6 PM. Call the library at 250-566-4367 to register. Two spots available. No cost.

Money Matters Workshops on Tuesdays Jan. 21, 28, Feb. 4, 11, 18 from 6:30 to 8:30 PM at the Valemount Learning Centre. Call 250-566-4601 to register or for more info.

SAT Feb 1st DJ Night at the Valemount Legion with Koala Dolla from Prince George. 8pm-1am. Tickets \$25 available at Ticketleap.com or Infinity Office and Health.

MON's February 3rd and 10th: Caregivers of children aged 0-8 years are invited to join us for **Let's Talk Tech for Tots!** Two informative mornings starting at 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM, at the RVCS office in Valemount, 1444 5th Avenue. Registration is required; please contact the office to sign up at 250-566-9107 or email events@rvcsbc.org for more information. This program is brought to you by the Infant Development Program and Family Support Program.

FRI Feb 7-9th U11 hockey tournament held at the Canoe Valley Rec Centre. Come cheer on our under-11 age players! Game schedule TBA.

FRI Feb 14th Tourism Valemount presents Winter Fest 2025! Block party on 5th ave 4:30-9pm. Ice sculptures, DJ, bouncy castles & more!

SAT Feb 15th Frostbite Fury is set to take over at The Rocky Mountain Speedway, come out and watch the snowmobile races. Gates open 10am, adults \$20, senior and youth \$15, under 12 free. Vintage, pro and kids racing categories. Warm-up fires, concession, beer garden & more.

FRI Feb 21st VACS presents Dunster's own Dream Heavy. "Fearless, epic, melodic, progressive metal with influences in latin, celtic, and other world music, Dream Heavy is a heavy hitter on all fronts." 7:30-10 PM p.m. at the Community Theatre (high school). Tickets available at valemountarts.org

Ongoing Valemount

Pancake Breakfast - Sundays
Pancake breakfast at the Valemount Legion Sundays 8 to 10:30 AM. By donation!

Cribbage - Mondays
Join us every Monday at the Golden Years Lodge for a game of cribbage! 1 PM. Everyone welcome.

Drop-in pickleball - Sun, Mon, Tues, Thurs
Drop-in pickleball at the Community Hall at noon Sundays, and 8:30 AM Tuesdays and Thursday. Also 6-8 PM Mondays and Thursdays at the high school.

Crafty Stitchers - Sundays in December
Sundays 1-3 PM Crafty Stitchers meet downstairs at the Valemount Public Library, all welcome! Call 250-566-4367. Library closed for the holidays Dec. 24-Jan 2nd.

Oldtimers drop-in adult hockey -Sun & Wed
Co-ed drop-in hockey 6:30-9 PM. Cost is \$20 per game. Seasonal rate available. Sundays 6:30 PM and Wednesdays 8 PM.

Personal Tech Help - by appointment
Hosted by the Learning Centre Need help with your ipad, tablet, phone or computer? Schedule your one-on-one appointment 250-566-4601 or email learn@valemountlearningcentre.org

Mother Goose - Wednesdays
WED's Starting January 29th: Infants aged 0-12 months and their adult caregivers are invited to join us for Mother Goose. This Parent-Child Mother Goose Program is a group experience

for parents and their babies and young children. The program introduces adults and children to the pleasure of using rhymes, songs, and stories together. The program runs from 1:00 PM to 2:00 PM and lasts for 10 weeks at the Valemount Public Library, 1090A Main Street. No Registration is required for this Drop-In program. For more info contact 250-566-9107 events@rvcsbc.org.

Old-time Music - Wednesdays
Oldtimers band and music night at Golden Years Lodge in Valemount 7 PM every Wednesday. All welcome! Play music, listen or dance.

Choose to Move - Thursdays
Starting Jan 22nd anyone over 55 is invited to our 12 week activation program. Join us each Wednesday from 1-3 PM for a free flexible program that is designed to give you the support and motivation to get moving. You will get a personalized plan from trained activity coaches, a chance to meet new friends while becoming more active and receive tools to help build healthy habits that last. No matter your ability Choose to Move helps you make small changes to have a big impact on your health and well-being. Registration is required please contact the office to sign up 250-566-9107 or email events@rvcsbc.org for more information.

WED's Infant Massage Starting January 29th: Infants aged 0-12 months and their adult caregivers (no siblings, please) are invited to learn about the benefits and techniques for Infant Massage in an 8-week program. Join us from 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM at the Valemount Public Library, 1090A Main Street. The purpose of the International Association of Infant Massage is to promote nurturing touch and communication. Registration is required; please contact the office at 250-566-9107 or email events@rvcsbc.org for more information

Astronomy Course - Wednesdays
Drop in and learn about astronomy through the Valemount Library's ongoing astronomy series! 7-8:30 every Wednesday. Library closed for the holidays Dec. 24-Jan 2nd.

Valemount Coffee House - Thursdays
Free Drop-In/Coffee House at the Golden Years Lodge the 1st & 3rd Thursdays of the month 10 AM-2 PM. It's open to everyone regardless of your age. If you currently have mobility issues, call CARE-A-VAN 778-915-8550 for a ride in the accessibility bus.

Drop-in curling Wednesday & Friday nights 7 PM at the Valemount Curling Club. \$10 drop-in fee after \$10 membership. Brooms provided, just bring clean shoes!

Tween Scene Book Club - Every 3rd Friday
Free book club for kids 9-12yrs. Sign up in library or give us a call 250-566-436.

Legion dinner and music nights - Fridays
Dinner at the Valemount Legion 5:30 followed by music at 7 PM every Friday. Music varies by week and includes open mic, karaoke, jam sessions and special events. Check under the Valemount events list at right or the Legion facebook page for details about specific dates. No music Dec 27th this month.

Family Place Drop In Program - Fridays
If you have questions, are looking for parenting resources, or just need to chat, you can join us in person 9 AM-noon every Friday in Valemount at 1444 5th Ave. Our weekly targeted programming is a great way for kids ages 0-6 (with their caregivers) to play, connect, explore, and learn!

January 24 - New Years Dance Party
January 31 - Let's Make Soup!
February 7 - Sing Along with Cat

McBride

SAT Jan 25th Miniature Painting at the McBride Library 1:30-3:30. Ages 10+. Anyone is welcome to join this drop in workshop facilitated by Jeff Nadwdny.

SUN Jan 26th Figure Skating Jamboree

8am-5pm at the Robson Valley Rec Centre.

THUR Jan 30 JENGA Get ready for some fun with JENGA!! Join us at the McBride office, 942 3rd Ave at 1 PM for an exciting game session! No registration is required for this drop-in program—just come and enjoy the game! We can't wait to see you there! This event is brought to you by the RVCS Seniors Program.

THURS Jan 30 - Thematic Books Discussion Group at the McBride Library 1:30pm. Read any Frontier and Western Fiction book and join in for a lively discussion.

FRI Jan 31 & SAT Feb 1 the McBride Mustangs Boys Basketball team host their annual tournament. Watch this spot for more information in coming weeks.

MON Feb 3 Soup & a Bun We invite you to join us for some homemade soup and fresh buns, and get social with your neighbors! Monday, February 3rd, from 12:00 PM to 2:00 PM at the McBride office. We look forward to seeing you there and sharing a delightful afternoon together! No registration is required for this drop-in event. This event is brought to you by the RVCS Better at Home Program.

WED Feb 5th McBride Library AGM 5:30pm. Everyone is welcome to attend the annual general meeting for a report on the annual business and participate in the election of the governing board. Interested in becoming a year round advocate for the library and its mission? Consider becoming a library trustee.

THUR Feb 6:Tech Drop -In Struggling with your phone or iPad? Want to get the most out of your devices? Drop by our Tech Drop-In for friendly, hands-on help with your basic tech questions. No question is too small, and no device is too old. See you there on Thursday, February 6th, from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM. This event is brought to you by the RVCS Adult Literacy Program. No appointment necessary.

THUR Feb 13 Pottery with Lyuba, whether you're a beginner or an experienced artist, this workshop is perfect for everyone. We'll be working with air-dry clay to craft beautiful and distinctive pieces. See you there from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM at the RVCS office in McBride. Registration is required; please contact the office to sign up at 250-569-2266 or email events@rvcsbc.org for more information.

Ongoing McBride

Family Place Drop In Program If you have questions, are looking for parenting resources, or just need to chat, you can join us in person 9 AM-noon every Monday in McBride or Friday in Valemount. Our weekly targeted programming is a great way for kids ages 0-6 (with their caregivers) to play, connect, explore, and learn!

January 27 - Snowman Sensory Bin
February 3, 10 & 24th - Swim Days at the Best Western by registration only, email charlene@rvcsbc.org in advance to register

ASL Sign Language Club
Tuesday's 3:00-3:30 Basics & 3:30-4:30 Beyond Basics @ the McBride E-Free Church. Great for families, friends and cognitive brain stimulation. Contact Lonnie 250-569-7657

Weekly Program for Children - Tuesdays 3:00pm starting with a story and snack, each week library staff will host activities under the umbrella of the following themes: constructing and creating, critical cinematic conversations, board games and cards, and computer lab learning (coding and creation apps). Beginning January 28th, this program is geared to ages 9-12. Please call 250-569-2411 or stop in to register children for some or all events. More info on the website library@mcbridebc.org.

Fibre Artists
On Wednesdays the McBride Library host the Fibre Artists' group 10 AM-12 PM: come knit, sew or crochet with us! Beginners welcome. Online option available - call the library for info on 250 569 2411.

Book Clubs for Adults

The McBride Library hosts two monthly book discussion clubs for adults Thursday afternoons 1:30 PM. Call 250 569 2411 for info.

Dungeons & Dragons

For ages 12-18, the classic fantasy storytelling game. Join us on Tuesdays from 3:30-6 PM at the McBride Library. Bring D&D dice if you have them!

Rolling with ADHD - Wednesdays

WED's starting Jan 15th through to Feb 5th Our Family Support Program is hosting a **Rolling with ADHD** program, this is an 8 module series that covers practical strategies and tools for families. Whether you're looking to relearn skills or develop new ones, we welcome you to register for this eight module series where we learn about the dynamics of ADHD and executive functioning skills. Communication and building connection is key! Afternoon 12-1 PM and evening 7-8 PM options. Contact the office 250-569-2266 or email events@rvcsbc.org

Sunshine Stories

10:30-11 AM Thursdays. An early literacy program for children ages 0-5 and caregivers. Songs, rhymes, stories and fun! In partnership with Decoda Literacy.

Tuesday Night Jam - McBride

Now playing in the CN Station Lobby, 6:15-8:30 PM. It is an open jam; musicians, singers, and onlookers welcome. For more information call David at (250) 569-2569.

German Conversation Club - McBride

Join us on Wednesday 11:30 - 1:00 at the McBride Library for a fun German language conversational class with Lilly. All levels and abilities welcome, from beginners to advanced. For further details, call the library on 250 569 2411.

Writing Group - Fridays

Writing Group for adults meets every Friday afternoon at the McBride library 1:30-3 PM. We tend to chat for the first 30 minutes about what we are working on, then we sit silently for an hour to write. Our writers are working on a range of things - novels, memoirs, poems, short stories, dissertations. Join us!


Dunster

Community Potluck Lunches hosted by the Dunster Community Association again this winter at the Dunster Community Hall. They will be on the first and third Saturday of February and March. (February 1st and 11th and March 1st and 15th - Mark them on your calendar!) The Doors open at 11:30 AM and Lunch will be at 12:00 noon Sharp. For more information contact Pete Amyoony 250-968-4334 or Loretta Simpson 250-968-4453.

Fibre Arts Meet Up Thursdays at the Dunster Schoolhouse!! Starting Thursday Jan 9th. Drop in with whatever you are working on, anytime between 10:00 AM -2:00 PM.

Schoolhouse Cafe will be starting up with hot soup and treats starting Wednesday January 15th from 11:00 AM -1:30 PM.

Seniors for Climate Action get together on Wednesday, Jan 22 from 10 AM-2 PM at the Dunster Schoolhouse. More info coming soon.
Poetry Workshop, Wednesday, Jan 29th at the Dunster Schoolhouse from 10:30 AM -12:30 PM. A workshop designed to read, write, speak, and discuss poetry. All ages welcome.



**McBride & District
Public Library AGM**
Wednesday 5th February
5:30pm
In the library or online by request.
All welcome.



Snowshoe hares are mostly nocturnal so they they spend a great deal of time resting during the day. For them resting doesn't mean falling asleep as they are constantly on the alert from their many enemies. Their acute hearing will help them detect an approaching predator. /LEON LORENZ

UPCOMING EVENTS & NEWS!



REGULAR EVENTS:

- Friday Night Dinner** served 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.
- Friday Night Music** most Fridays 7pm-close!
- Sunday Pancake Breakfast** 8:00 to 10:30 a.m.
- Bingo** - Second Thursday of every month. Doors open at 6 p.m.

COMING EVENTS:

- FRI Jan 24th - OPEN MIC 7PM**
- FRI Jan 31st - KARAOKE 7PM**
- SAT FEB 1ST - DJ NIGHT 8PM**

General Meetings: 3rd Tuesday of the month 7pm

Hall Rentals: available for events, meetings, seminars. Call 250-566-1115 or email valemountlegion266@gmail.com

Royal Canadian Legion Branch 266, 970 Main Street, Valemount
Underage patrons welcome until 10pm

Valemount Eatery Hours Guide



BoShay's Bistro
M-Thu 8am-3pm, Fri 10am-3pm
+ M,W,Th 5-9pm 250-566-0154



Caribou Grill
Open 4:30-9pm. Closed Tue, Wed
1002 5th Ave / 250-566-8244



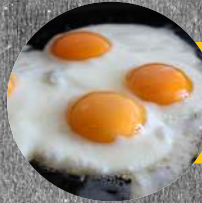
Summit Grill
Open 7 days a week 4-9pm
Located in Best Western Plus Valemount



Valemount Legion Branch 266
Friday dinner 5-8, music 7-10
Sunday pancake breakfast 8-10:30
970 Main Street / 250-566-4343



Glacier Fire Pizzeria
Mon-Sat 4pm-8:30pm
250-566-9090



Abernathy's
Open 6am-1pm 7 days a week
250-566-9199



Vale Coffee Roasters and Cafe
Reg Hours: Th 9-2, Fri-Sun 7-2
info@valecoffee.ca / valecoffee.ca



IGA Deli
Mon-Sat 8am-8pm
Sun 9am-5pm



Vacation Inn Dine & Lounge
Open Fri-Mon 4-9pm 250-566-4880
1495 - 7th Avenue on, Karas Dr

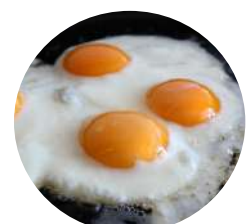


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ABERNATHY'S RESTAURANT

Open 6am-1pm
7 days a week
250-566-9199



**Some eateries opted not to take part in this feature

Visit my website to see all of my featured listings: www.valemountmbridelisting.com. A great resource for your property search in the valley.

Shelly Battensby

REALTOR



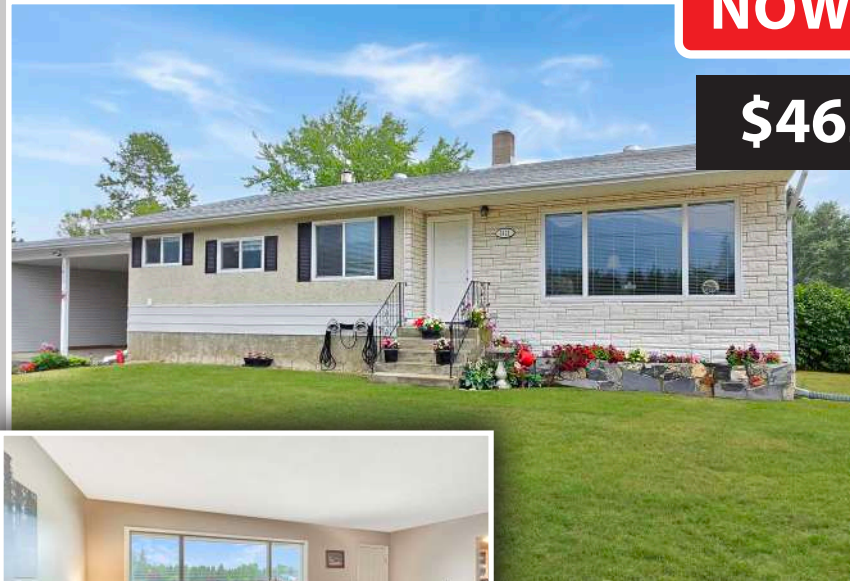
DIFFERENT BETTER

1411 6th Avenue

VALEMOUNT

NOW ONLY!

\$462,000



Take a deep breath, let it out, and settle into this large property in the heart of town. At nearly a half acre, you have yard enough for all your

outdoor plans. The large house features an eat-in kitchen with large living room and 3 good sized bedrooms. Immaculately kept, you need to do nothing except move-in. The full basement is ready for finishing and presents great opportunity for a media room, in-law suite, or a place for the kids. Available for quick possession.



RE/MAX HALL OF FAME

2023 **100%** CLUB AWARD



RE/MAX CORE REALTY

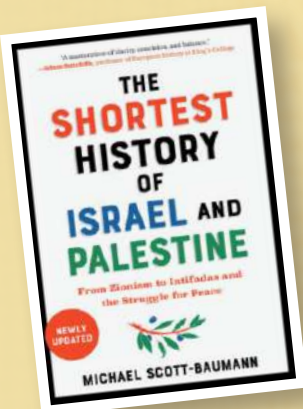
CELL: 250-566-1086
OFFICE: 250-645-5055

SOLD

FOR SALE

Available At The **RMG** BOOKSTORE

HOURS: MON 9:30am -4:30pm | TUES Closed | WED - FRI 9:30am-4:30pm

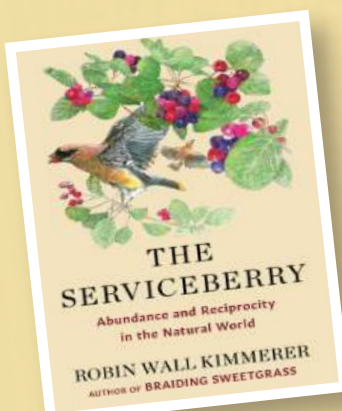


THE SHORTEST HISTORY OF ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

The ongoing struggle between Israel and Palestine is one of the most bitter conflicts in history, with profound global consequences. In this book, Middle East expert Michael Scott-Baumann succinctly describes its origins and charts its evolution from civil war to the present day.

BY MICHAEL SCOTT-BAUMANN

HISTORY

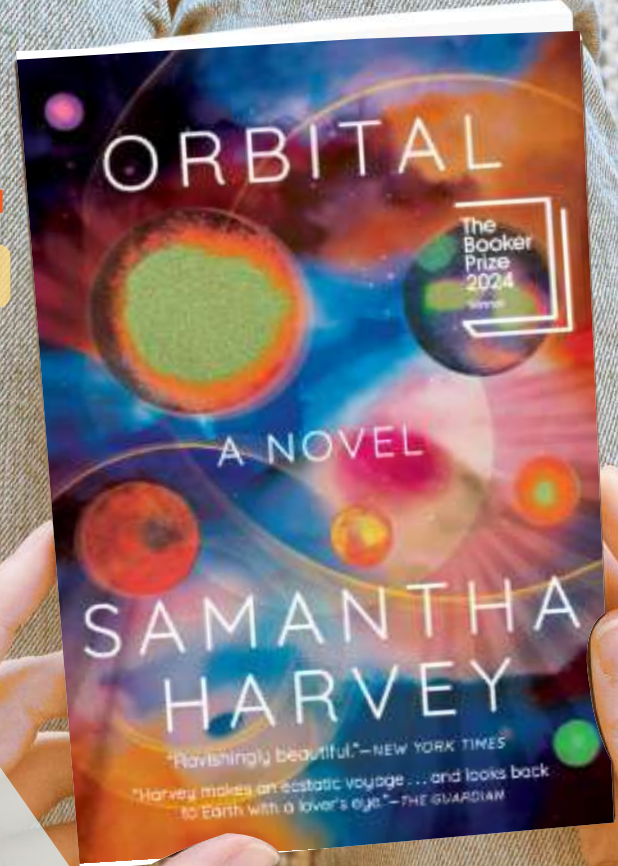


THE SERVICEBERRY

As Indigenous scientist and author of Braiding Sweetgrass Robin Wall Kimmerer harvests serviceberries alongside the birds, she considers the ethic of reciprocity that lies at the heart of the gift economy. How, she asks, can we learn from Indigenous wisdom and the plant world to reimagine what we value most?

BY JASON JOHNS

INDIGENOUS



ORBITAL

Orbital deftly snapshots one day in the lives of six women and men traveling through space. Selected for one of the last space station missions of its kind before the program is dismantled, these astronauts and cosmonauts—from America, Russia, Italy, Britain, and Japan—have left their lives behind to travel at a speed of over seventeen thousand miles an hour as the earth reels below. We glimpse moments of their earthly lives through brief communications with family, their photos and talismans; we watch them whip up dehydrated meals, float in gravity-free sleep, and exercise in regimented routines to prevent atrophying muscles; we witness them form bonds that will stand between them and utter solitude. Most of all, we are with them as they behold and record their silent blue planet.

Located at 1170 5th Avenue, Valemount, B.C. (ACROSS FROM THE IGA DOWNTOWN)