



**Heritage handiwork**

Students came to Wildwood elementary school in pioneer outfits Friday to celebrate Heritage Days and learned a bit about folk crafts to boot. Grade 5 student Lisa Sigvaldason, left, tried her hand at making a candle, while Grade 6 student Deena Gibbard, centre, braided a strip for a rug with the assistance of Grade 2 student Daniel Duck-

worth, and Grade 3 student Kris Heyer, right, built a covered wagon from egg cartons. During the day, students had a chance to make bannock, butter and sang pioneer songs during one of the many Heritage Week programs held in district schools.

Citizen photos by Dave Milne

**ANIMAL CONTROL**

**Somebody's got to do it**

by ARNOLD OLSON  
Staff reporter

Pets that wind up in the city pound on Lansdowne Road have three possible fates.

The two more pleasant outcomes are reunions with their owners or adoption by new owners.

The third is simply that they are killed. Any of several methods might be used: shooting a wounded animal where it lies, or, for those at the pound, injecting them with a quick and fatal poison, gassing or electrocuting them.

The choice of methods is up to whichever bylaw enforcement officer is saddled with the duty.

People like to say, "Put to sleep," or, "Put down," or any of many euphemisms used to make the deed sound acceptable.

But the cold fact is they're killed.

That's it. Those who must do this struggle mightily against that last act because they don't enjoy it one little bit.

In fact, chief bylaw enforcement officer John Hacock said he wouldn't hire anyone he thought might like it.

"To be an effective (animal) control officer, you have to like animals."

He wants concerned people who will care for the unfortunate animals right to the last minute — people like Sandra Merkley, who washes their blankets and dishes by hand.

All of the killing methods are painless — even electrocution.

"We don't want animals to suffer — nobody here wants that," Hacock said.

With the gas and injection methods, the animal simply loses consciousness and dies.

The electrocution method is a bit more complex.

The animal is led into a large

(Canadian Standards Association) CSA-approved wooden pen which is wired to do the job.

The animal stands in a pan of water, thereby being properly grounded, and is held in the pen by a collar clipped to a restraining hook. Two clips are attached to its wetted ears (again, to ensure good electrical contact).

Electrocution is in two steps: First a stunning charge is administered, knocking the animal unconscious.

That eliminates any feeling in the animal, Hacock said.

"Then you switch to the lethal position for five seconds.

"It (the electrocution chamber) is designed to do its job."

He said the steps are repeated with large dogs to ensure the animal is killed.

Although the 30-year-old electrocution method seems cruel, "It is the number one method around the world," Hacock said.

The 15-year-old machine is maintained by public works electricians so animals will always be humanely killed.

"You don't want any malfunctions.

"This is the worst part of the job. Nobody likes putting animals down.

"That's why we push so hard to get people to pick up their animals."

When time comes to kill an animal, the electrocution chamber is the most used because it is both quick and painless, although each person delegated to do the job has free choice of methods.

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**An image problem**

The city pound has an image problem: it's the last stop for many a stray animal before being put to death.

In many people's minds it's the exact opposite of the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), which enjoys a better reputation and more public support because of its name and the fact its building is called a shelter.

Yet the city pound does much the same work — caring for strays, keeping dogs, cats, other animals and even large birds until their owners or potential owners come to claim them.

"Nobody comes down here with bags of dog food or other materials," says chief bylaw enforcement officer John Hacock, the man responsible for animal control.

"Nobody comes down here to offer volunteer work."

Still, the pound staff bends every

effort toward placing animals before they are destroyed.

Charged with the care of animals and with the weight of the law behind them, the city's four animal control officers' duties place them in a different light than SPCA officials.

Despite the pound having the reputation as the place where animals are eventually destroyed, animal control officers fight that fate as much as is humanly possible, trying to contact animals' owners, trying to find homes for unclaimed strays or animals found at large.

Cats, puppies and small dogs are kept separate from the larger animals. Injured animals are treated, whenever possible.

In all cases homes are sought.

Although each animal has a minimum stay of three days almost guaranteed by the system, Hacock and his officers will extend that period whenever possible.

"If we think there's a chance, we'll keep it," Hacock said.

One animal was picked up Jan. 23 and kept to Feb. 11, when it was sold to someone who wanted a pet.

"We sell an awful lot of dogs," he said.

The cost for a dog is \$40, plus the \$18.50 licence fee. The pound has a long list of regulations and fee schedules posted in its pound at 1697 Lansdowne Rd.

He said the pound will not sell an animal to people living in the same area from which it had been taken.

Like the SPCA shelter, any strays or abandoned animals are taken in. In one case, a person found three puppies thrown into a garbage can at Purden Lake and brought them to the pound where they were fed and kept in a pen in hopes someone would take them.

Animal control officer Sandra Merkley kept a female dog because the two of them get along wonderfully — to the point the dog has become a good watch dog and a fierce protector.

The latter characteristic is appreciated because some irate animal owners have threatened violence when their at-large animals are picked up.

Nobody makes a threatening gesture to Merkley now — at least not twice. Several belligerent men have backed off quickly.

Hacock said he would welcome whatever help the public would like to give. Since the pound is operated by the city through the taxes it collects, the more efficient the pound's operations are, the less of a drain it is upon the taxpayer.



Pellets containing 2-4-D will be used to control the weeds on school grounds in School District 57 this summer.

Over the objections of Trustee Gordon Ingalls, at this week's school board meeting, trustees decided to replace a former policy of using spray to control weeds with the safer pellet form, which should be subject to less drift.

Trustee Bob Holtby, a professional agronomist, assured the board the chemicals in the pellets would be absorbed very quickly and should present no on-going threat to the health of students playing on the fields.

"The amount of weed killer used in this community is monumental compared with what the school district will use," he said.

**Accident victim dies in hospital**

A funeral service will be held at 1 p.m. Monday at Assman's Funeral Chapel for Harold Harbak, 56, of Prince George, who died this week in Shaughnessy Hospital in Vancouver following a pedestrian accident earlier this month.

Harbak died from injuries sustained in an accident Feb. 1 on the Hart Highway near Salmon Valley.

RCMP said Harbak was standing in the ditch beside his truck, parked in the northbound lane facing south, when he was struck by a northbound vehicle.

Police are still investigating the accident.

**Library shows science books**

Science buffs will be able to view some of the latest books on the subject Sunday at the Prince George public library.

More than 250 British science publications will be on display at the library between 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. as part of a province-wide tour arranged by the B.C. Science Teachers' Association (BCSeTA).

Association president Susan Slater says the collection includes textbooks and books of interest to the public at all levels.

The tour has been arranged to meet growing interest in science throughout B.C., she said.

**Expo officials come to town**

Officials from Expo will be at the public library from 7-9 p.m. Monday and from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Tuesday with a display and to answer questions about the exposition.

Expo staff members will return to Prince George March 5 to 15 when they'll be at Parkwood Mall taking photos for use on Expo season passes. Adult passes will cost \$139 until May 1, then jump to \$169 after that.

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**REGIONAL BRIEFS**

**Rural grocery store approved by board**

Elsie Fisher was given the green light this week to open a grocery store in Salmon Valley, a rural community north of Prince George.

The Fraser-Fort George Regional District board approved the store over the objections of some residents and Salmon Valley board representative Henry Christensen.

A majority opposed the store at a public hearing held earlier this month at the Salmon Valley community hall, citing increased traffic problems, noise and a hazard to schoolchildren because of the store.

But when the hearing continued at the regional district office in Prince George Thursday, several residents supported the store as a "badly-needed convenience."

The nearest store to the community is in the Hart Highlands area of Prince George.

Petitions were presented both for and against the proposal.

"We feel it is a threat to the way of life our people have chosen," said Christensen of the store, to be located on Salmon Valley Road.

Petitioners against the store fear it will attract "river people," residents from Prince George who use the Salmon River as a swimming hole in the summer, to the quiet community.

Pineview residents have a chance to decide whether to authorize a loan for a new \$95,000 firehall in a referendum to be held April 12.

The Pineview volunteer fire department wants to double the size of its existing building.

The proposed 268-square-metre, two-storey firehall on Pooley Road would contain three truck bays, a training room and a recreation room.

Tabor Lake-Stone Creek director Bob Headrick this week told the Fraser-Fort George Regional District the new firehall would not cost taxpayers a cent because borrowing costs, to be spread over 15 years, would be covered by the fire department's existing equipment budget.

The department is also applying

to the B.C. Lotteries foundation for a \$40,000 grant which would reduce borrowing costs.

An information meeting will be held April 3 at Pineview elementary school.

If the referendum passes, district staff expect the firehall will be completed by September, subject to provincial approvals.

The district board decided this week to withhold \$500 of a \$2,000 performance bond to a Robson Valley rancher who was granted a permit to remove gravel from his property.

Over the summer, Bill Peterson excavated 8,000 truckloads of gravel from land near Dunster, 250 km east of Prince George.

This was twice the amount specified by the permit authorized by the district.

However, since the agricultural land commission is satisfied that Peterson has enhanced the land for agricultural use, the district decided the extra removal was a non-issue.

Peterson has yet to reseed the area and the district board recommended withholding \$500 of the bond until the seeding is completed.

**Reports clarified**

In a report on Shelley fire protection in Friday's Citizen Northwood Pulp and Timber official Dave Theesen was incorrectly identified as Dave Thiessen. In another story, the site for a proposed Du Pont chemical storage facility is one kilometre east of Miwirth not west as was reported.

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**Diamond winner**

Joanne Sheets of Prince George shows off the \$10,000 diamond ring she won by purchasing the lucky Mardi Gras Diamond Lottery button, numbered 23804. The draw for the number was made during Mardi House on Monday.

Citizen photo by Dave Milne

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