

Yoga teacher finds opportunity in P.G.

Katrina Molendyk, a community-centered entrepreneur, yoga teacher and young mother of three, is passionate about inspiring health and wellness in Prince George. As the flourishing owner of Balance is Bliss Yoga and Wellness, Molendyk is well known for classes that are both compassionate and challenging, along with her amazing work with athletes in town.

“For me, Prince George has been a land of opportunity, providing me with a place that has not only welcomed me as a new business but as a teacher in the community,” she said.

Molendyk teaches primarily at Chinook Yoga (No. 165) and the Northern Sport Centre (No. 282), and is dedicated to enhancing the practice of sports through yoga by reducing injury and increasing

Guest column

TOURISM PRINCE GEORGE

mental focus. Outside of the studio, she spends her free time exploring Prince George with her family: feeding the pigs at Noah’s Ark (No. 97), spending quality mother-daughter time at story time in the library (No. 110) and watching all her kids’ faces light up at the Festival of Trees in the wintertime. She also praises Café Voltaire (No. 125) for their friendly staff and the best London Fog in town.

Molendyk speaks fondly of her experience here.

“I feel so lucky to live in a city that encourages so much opportunity. There always seems to be



MOLENDYK

something going on, and it is a wonderful place to live as well as a great place to raise my kids,” Molendyk.

“The sense of community that exists in this city town is so inspiring.”

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Canadian helping equip Dominican fire departments

Ethan LOU *The Canadian Press*

Carl Eggiman sits in his condo’s garden in the Dominican Republic, iPad in hand and sipping cafe con leche.

“It’s not Tim Hortons,” he says over the phone from Punta Cana, “but it is good Dominican coffee.”

It’s been five years since the eastern Ontario retiree bought his Caribbean condo and four since he helped set up the first fire department in Punta Cana’s north.

Since then, Eggiman led the effort to provide seven underequipped fire departments with donated Canadian equipment. It involved more than 10 shipments, 3.6 tonnes and \$1.25 million worth of gear – including two fire trucks – and \$25,000 of Eggiman’s own money. And now, Eggiman is setting his sights on equipping all 165 of the country’s fire departments, an initiative that can require up to 150 tonnes of additional shipments.

“We can probably have it done within four to six months,” he says.

Eggiman, of Carrying Place, Ont., near Belleville, was a provincial police officer before he left in 2000 to manage his wife’s Tim Hortons franchise.

As they neared retirement, the couple bought property in the Dominican Republic, and Eggiman learned of the lack of a fire department through the local Rotary club.

He then established the fire department together with the community, and that one initiative soon flourished into a long-term project to modernize the region’s fire departments.

Punta Cana fire chief Miguel Angel Alvarez says many of the region’s departments are wildly underequipped, with some lacking even a fire truck with a pump for putting out large fires.

“The lack of equipment and tools not only makes it difficult for firefighters, it also endangers their lives,” he says in a translated email.

Working with Dominican fire departments, Eggiman travels each year to Ontario to canvass the province’s fire departments for gear.

In May he became the Ontario representative for Firefighters Without Borders Canada and his mandate expanded to encompass the entire Dominican Republic.

The group’s president Randy Dubbert says firefighting technology evolves faster than equipment wears out, so Canadian fire departments often have a lot of surplus as they get new gear while the old equipment is still usable.

Even before getting involved with Firefighters Without Borders Canada, Eggiman managed to get 12 fire departments on board that were keen to repurpose their equipment.

The enthusiasm then spread, with the Canadian consulate in the Dominican Republic and the Toronto-based Sunwing Airlines offering help with air shipping.

After making contact, Firefighters Without Borders put Eggiman in touch with an 18-year-old volunteer firefighter from New Brunswick, who canvassed his province and contributed 50 boxes of gear, worth about \$25,000, to Eggiman’s cause.

Early this month, nearly 15 tonnes of equipment,

including an ambulance – Eggiman’s largest shipment to date – left the Port of Saint John in New Brunswick.

It was more than everything he had shipped previously, so heavy that planes could not take it.

So it marked the first time a shipment went by sea – it was also the first time one got stuck.

The 12-metre cargo box arrived in the Dominican Sept. 10, but was held at customs for nearly two weeks.

Eggiman, who was in New Brunswick to co-ordinate the shipment at the time, says the holdup was a result of him modifying paperwork while equipment was en route. Eggiman’s wife and Alvarez worked respectively with Canadian and Dominican Republic authorities to resolve the issue.

The shipment was unpacked about one week ago and is Eggiman is currently working to distribute the gear among local fire departments.

While modernizing an entire country’s equipment sounds daunting, similar initiatives have been undertaken before.

In a four-year effort that ended last year, Firefighters Without Borders delivered more than 800 sets of personal protective equipment, including suits, helmets, goggles and boots, to El Salvador. To date, more than 70 per cent of firefighting equipment in use in the country originated from the group.

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Lesser Expectations

Book focuses on Charles Dickens’s son in Canada

Keven DREWS
The Canadian Press

VANCOUVER — Charles Dickens was one of England’s most-respected writers during the 19th century, but he wasn’t much of a father, and that may have had an impact – even a small one – on Canadian history, says the author of a new historical novel that focuses on the younger Dickens’s life as a Mountie.

Veteran journalist Vic Parsons of Victoria recently self-published Lesser Expectations: Charles Dickens’ Son in North America, which explores the father-son dynamic between the respected writer and his third son and fifth child, Francis.

Based on years of research, including time in the national archives in Ottawa, Parsons said he has concluded Dickens wasn’t a great dad and only two of his sons, excluding Francis, likely ever met his great expectations.

Parsons said he believes because of that poor relationship, Francis grew into a man who was reticent to take charge, especially as a commissioned officer in the North West Mounted Police.

“What I’ve tried to do, I guess, is to try to say, you know, this was kind of a guy who came from greatness in a sense... that Charles was a very popular writer, well-known, and his children never kind of led up to his own expectations,” said Parsons.

“I think if you have a parent like that, it kind of lingers with you for the rest of your life, you know, it impacts your personality.”

Parsons pointed to one incident while Francis was posted to Blackfoot Crossing, southeast of present-day Calgary, Alta., in the Bow River Valley.

He had joined the North West Mounted Police, the precursor to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, in 1874 after time in India with the Bengal Mounted Police.

His mother’s aunt had known Lord Dufferin, Canada’s third governor general.

While at Blackfoot Crossing, Francis arrested a man named Bull Elk, a member of the

Blackfoot, who had fired his rifle during a dispute over the sale of a cow’s head.

The First Nations man was taken back to the local detachment where he was held in custody. After a short investigation, Francis decided Bull Elk should stand trial at Fort Macleod, west of present-day Lethbridge, on a charge of attempted murder.

But a crowd of about 700 Blackfoot warriors, some wearing war paint, formed outside the police building.

Francis called for Crowfoot, the “paramount chief of the Blackfoot Confederacy,” and decided to turn Bull Elk over to the leader, instead of trying to take him to Fort Macleod.

Crowfoot had promised Francis he’d bring Bull Elk to the magistrate when the case was heard locally.

But Dickens’s superior officer, Leif Crozier, who was stationed at Fort Macleod at the time, “growled in disgust when he read Dickens’s report on the events at the Crossing,” Parsons writes. “He was appalled at the inspector’s lack of preparedness, his weak resolve and his willingness to compromise.”

Crozier left for Blackfoot Crossing with 20 senior officers and men, and when he arrived, he ordered Francis to prepare for action.

The Mounties seized Bull Elk from Crowfoot’s lodge, rode back to police headquarters and began a preliminary examination.

Bull Elk was subsequently found guilty of attempted murder and served 14 days in a Fort Macleod guard room before being released.

Francis continued serving with the force until February 1886.

Parsons said after his service with the force, Francis tried to get a job with the public service in Ottawa, but ended up meeting an American doctor in Montreal who convinced him to go on a speaking tour. He ended up in Moline, Ill., where he suffered a heart attack and died before he was able to give his first speech.

He was 42 years old.

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