

FRIENDS *of the* Central Experimental Farm

Summer 2023 Newsletter | Volume 35 No. 3

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SHELTERBELTS

OUR SOIL AND PLANT GUARDIANS

by Roman Popadiouk

The Central Experimental Farm (CEF) has existed for over 135 years, long enough to go through many changes in landscape, cityscape, environments, agricultural practices, and techniques. But in one important way the CEF remains the same — large fields still dominate the landscape. And large fields are always prone to erosion caused by strong winds. It has been important to reduce wind erosion throughout the history of the Farm. This ongoing planting of trees and shrubs along the Farm's perimeter, as well as within its boundaries, has resulted in there being many windbreaks and shelterbelts on the site.

Dense plantings of evergreen trees are impenetrable by winds and serve year-round as barriers against possible wind damage. Windbreaks of deciduous trees perform the same function but only for a few months of the year. But even when summer is over and their branches are bare, these trees do a different and valuable job—they reduce wind velocity without diverting air flow.

The difference between evergreen and deciduous windbreaks is apparent in winter. Dense windbreaks trap blowing snow and transform it into snow banks. Behind windbreaks of bare-branched trees, flat blankets of snow gently cover the fields. Farmlands need both snow traps and snow blankets. Plant the right types of trees at the right spots and they will help protect an acreage all year round.

EARLY SHELTERBELTS AT THE FARM

At the turn of the 20th century, the CEF pioneered Canadian programs to return

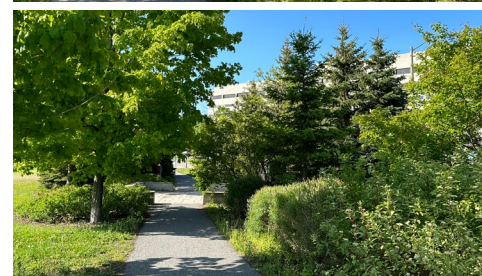
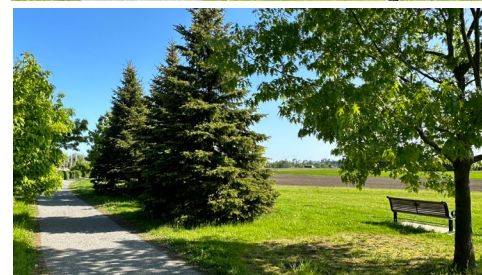
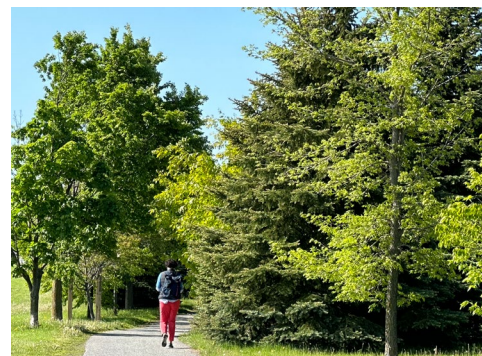
trees to farmlands and bring trees to prairie farms. The Arboretum was the site of a well-known initiative to test trees for their suitability for Canadian farms. Lesser known but equally important was a program to create windbreaks and shelterbelts.

The Farm is located on the uplands of an ancient bank of the Ottawa River. This plateau can attract very strong winds at any time from any direction. If the winds blow in on a hot, sunny day in June, young plants can dry out quickly. If it's a frosty day in December, top soil can drift away from bare fields. The wind-prone location of the CEF made it a highly suitable place to experiment with windbreaks and shelterbelts.

Wide multiple-row shelterbelts were planted in the 1890s and 1900s along the northern (Carling Avenue) and western (Fisher Avenue) boundaries of the Farm. In 1901, there were over 23,000 trees along 2.8 kilometres of shelterbelt at these two boundaries. Spruce, pines, Douglas fir, black walnut, larch, maples, ash, and other trees exist today in a remnant of the shelterbelt on Fisher, and it would still be possible to harvest timber from them.

Less costly, but very useful single-row windbreaks have also been planted at the Farm during its history. Fragments of old spruce windbreaks survive on the edges of fields behind the K.W. Neatby Building on Carling Avenue. Younger windbreaks work well for AAFC's tree and shrub nurseries (west of the old greenhouses). Crabapple,

Continued on page 5...



PHOTOS ABOVE:

1. Sheltering the research fields. 2. A place to relax and enjoy the Farm landscape. 3. A variety of trees and shrubs in the Merivale Shelterbelt.

A Time to Renew

President's Report at the
Annual General Meeting,
May 2023
(Excerpts, with added notes)



ERIC JONES

President, Friends of the Farm
Président, Les Amis de la Ferme

Spring is the time to renew, and not just your memberships (but please do that if you're overdue), but also your spirit of volunteering. It's also the time of the Tulip Festival, in which the Friends are a partner. We'll be planting more tulip bulbs for next year as well.

Unfortunately, this spring was a little rough for many of us. The ice storm left its mark on many trees and shrubs, and the clean-up was delayed due to a chipper that needed repair, among other things, but our volunteer garden teams are getting ready to return to work. *(They are back, hard at work!)*

This year is a milestone for the Friends of the Farm—our 35th anniversary! Those 35 years have spanned over five decades (late 1980s to early 2020s), during which the Friends have contributed to the Farm. There have also been lots of changes and now we're in the process of rebuilding and planning our course ahead.

This year has been one of transition for our Board of Directors. As luck would have it, many of our directors are stepping down at the same time—Deborah Higdon-LeBlond, Richard Hinchcliff, Blaine Marchand, Randy Taylor, and Rob Stuart. Their contributions, which have been significant, are very much appreciated. Although they're leaving the Board, we're not losing them and we expect to see them around the Farm.

We are adding the following new directors to the Board and look forward to the great work they'll be doing—Chantale Neapole, Janice Tayles, Cheryl Hutcheson, Elizabeth Atkinson, Dianne Caldbick, Mark Vigder, Christina Fiedorowicz, Linda McLaren, and Donna Pape (who is returning after a short absence). The Board will also include returning directors Eric Jones, Shirley Ewen, Heather Webster, and Dell Durnin. *(Election of the new Board was approved at the AGM.)*

I also want to mention our outstanding new office manager, Aline Michaud, who's been doing a terrific job for the Friends.

Agriculture Canada has also been going through a lot of changes, both at the managerial level and at the level of those we work with and for, and we hope to maintain our great working relationship with them.

Now I need to report on a few things the Friends did over the past year:

- We finally had an event after two years of non-events (not just non-dinners);
- We installed the last of the celebration benches, which support and add to the enjoyment of the Arboretum. The program was a great success;
- We started up new garden tours, as well as producing a helpful self-guiding brochure;
- We carried on with our popular tree tours;
- We began restoring parts of the Arboretum woodland, which has lost a number of trees and needs some TLC;
- Our newsletter was full of fascinating tales as usual from the past and present;
- The popular Master Gardener lectures are reaching more people than ever;
- ... and lastly, the Friends' teams were out in the Ornamental Gardens, the Shelterbelt, and the Arboretum—doing the core work of the Friends.

Looking forward to 2023:

- We're having more tours and lectures *(but we can always use more tour leaders!)*;
- Our plant sale is coming up this Sunday. *(It was a great success!)* Plans for a book sale are in the works, as well as other event ideas;
- We're setting up a new tree donor program—in a few months we hope. The focus will be on adding new trees to the Arboretum;

- We will be publishing a brochure for the shelterbelt, and others are planned;
- We're working on a new book about trees in the Arboretum, to be printed in 2024;
- ... and our garden teams will be coming back reinvigorated for a new season. *(They are back and doing a fine job!)*

So again, we've been through a lot over the past couple of years, and Spring is the time to renew. Thanks for coming with us on this tour and please let us know if you have any ideas to share with us.



New brochure for the Shelterbelt.

Dépliant relatif au brise-vent.

Les bénévoles du jardin des pivoines, mai 2023.
Peony garden volunteers, May 2023.

Temps de renouveau

Rapport du président lors de
l'Assemblée générale annuelle
Mai 2023
(Extraits et notes en sus)

Le printemps est un temps de renouveau, davantage que le renouvellement de vos cartes de membre – y voir si elles accusent du retard – mais aussi un regain de l'esprit du bénévolat. Le Festival canadien des tulipes se déroule actuellement, et les Amis y participent dans le cadre d'un partenariat. Viendra bientôt le moment de mettre en terre les bulbes de tulipes en vue de la floraison de la prochaine année.

Déplorablement, le printemps s'est avéré quelque peu rigoureux pour bon nombre d'entre nous. La tempête de glace a laissé ses empreintes sur de nombreux arbres et buissons, et le nettoyage a été retardé, car il a fallu réparer une déchiqueteuse à bois, entre autres, alors que nos équipes de jardiniers bénévoles se préparent à retourner au travail. *(Elles sont de retour et triment dur!)*

Cette année, les Amis de la Ferme souligneront un jalon important – leur 35^e anniversaire! Ces 35 ans se sont échelonnés sur cinq décennies, de la fin des années 1980 au début des années 2020 pour les Amis qui ont apporté une valable contribution à la Ferme. Bon nombre de changements se sont produits, et nous sommes engagés actuellement dans un processus de reconstruction et de planification d'activités qui nous serviront dans les années à venir.

Cette année en a été une de transition pour le conseil d'administration (CA). Comme par hasard, un bon nombre de directeurs quittent leur poste en même temps, notamment Deborah Higdon-LeBlond, Richard Hinchcliff,

Blaine Marchand, Randy Taylor et Rob Stuart. Nous sommes grandement reconnaissants de leur contribution tout à fait significative. Bien qu'ils quittent le CA, nous ne les perdons pas et nous nous attendons à les croiser sur les sentiers de la Ferme.

De nouveaux directeurs, nommés ci-dessous, siégeront au CA, et nous avons hâte de voir l'excellent travail qu'ils exécuteront : Chantale Neapole, Janice Tayles, Cheryl Hutcheson, Elizabeth Atkinson, Dianne Caldbick, Mark Vigder, Christina Fiedorowicz, Linda McLaren, ainsi que Donna Pape (de retour après une courte absence). D'anciens directeurs tels que Eric Jones, Shirley Ewen, Heather Webster et Dell Durnin regagnent les rangs du CA. *(La proposition d'un nouveau CA a été adoptée à l'AGA.)*

Je désire aussi souligner la présence de notre incomparable gestionnaire de bureau, Aline Michaud, qui accomplit un impressionnant travail pour le compte des Amis.

Agriculture et Agroalimentaire Canada a dû faire face à bien des changements, tant au niveau de la gestion qu'en relation avec les personnes avec qui nous travaillons et avec celles pour qui nous travaillons. Nous espérons donc maintenir avec elles toutes une excellente relation de travail.

Il m'incombe maintenant de présenter le bilan des réalisations des Amis au cours de la dernière année :

- Nous avons enfin vu un événement se réaliser après deux ans sans aucune

activité (et pas seulement ces dîners qui n'ont pas eu lieu).

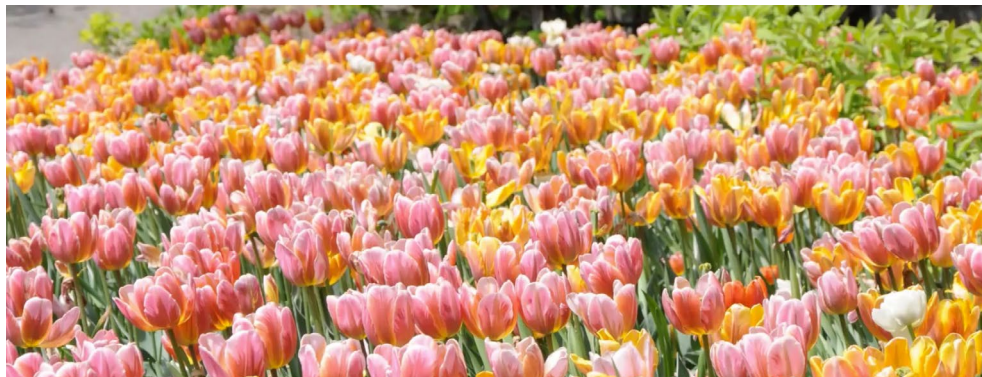
- Nous avons procédé à l'installation des derniers bancs commémoratifs, lesquels contribuent au grand plaisir du public lors de ses visites à l'arboretum. Le programme s'est avéré un franc succès.
- Nous avons démarré de nouvelles visites dans les jardins où les visiteurs déambulent de façon autonome à l'aide d'un dépliant conçu à cet effet.
- Nous avons poursuivi nos populaires visites d'arbres.
- Nous avons entrepris la restauration de certains secteurs du terrain boisé de l'arboretum, qui a perdu un certain nombre d'arbres et a besoin d'un peu d'attention.
- Comme d'habitude, notre bulletin regorgeait d'anecdotes passées et actuelles.
- Les « conférences du maître jardinier » (Master Gardener Lectures), lesquelles sont bien connues, attirent de plus en plus de personnes.
- ... enfin, les Amis en équipes étaient sur place, dans les jardins ornementaux, le brise-vent et l'arboretum, accomplissant ce qui demeure le travail de base des Amis.

Regard sur 2023 :

- Nous mettons en place un plus grand nombre de visites et de conférences *(un peu plus d'accompagnateurs ne seraient pas de trop!)*.
- Notre vente de plantes est prévue ce dimanche-ci. *(Un énorme succès!)* Nous songeons à proposer une vente de livres, ainsi que d'autres types d'événements.
- Nous mettons sur pied un nouveau programme de dons d'arbres dans quelques mois, espérons-nous. On mettra l'accent sur la plantation de nouveaux arbres dans l'arboretum.
- Nous publierons un dépliant relatif au brise-vent, et d'autres publications sont aussi prévues.
- Nous entreprenons la préparation d'un nouveau livre sur les arbres de l'arboretum, avec une date de publication prévue en 2024.
- ... et nos équipes de jardinage reviendront revigorées pour une nouvelle saison. *(Nos jardiniers sont de retour et réalisent un travail remarquable!)*

En somme ... Nous avons vécu un très grand nombre de changements au cours des deux dernières années, et le printemps symbolise le renouveau. Merci de nous accompagner lors de cette visite et communiquez avec nous si des idées vous viennent à l'esprit.

EVENTS 2023



A bed of 'Princess Irene' and 'Pretty Princess' tulips created by Tina Liu. *Tina Liu.*

USED BOOK SALE

Saturday & Sunday,
October 21-22,
9 am – 4 pm, Building 72.

USED BOOK DROP-OFF

Saturday, November 4,
9 am – 1 pm,
Building 72.

ORNAMENTAL GARDEN TOURS

Check the website for tours of the peonies, perennial border, irises, roses, Macoun Memorial Garden, daylilies. Although the tours are free and open to the public, you must register in advance on our website. Space is limited to 30 people per tour. Donations to the Friends of the Farm are gratefully accepted during the tours.

ARBORETUM TOURS

Check the website for upcoming tours of the Arboretum. Guided by local experts, they are typically offered every month from May to November. Although the tours are free and open to the public, you must register in advance on our website. Space is limited to 40 people per tour. Donations to the Friends of the Farm are gratefully accepted during the tours.

STAY TUNED!

For more details on our events, use the QR codes below:

2023 Events



Facebook



Taking Care of Business and a Special Guest Speaker

**Annual General Meeting,
May 10, 2023**

(See Page 2 for President Eric Jones' report to the AGM.)

FINANCIAL POSITION REMAINS STRONG

Randy Taylor presented his Treasurer's report at the AGM. He summarizes it as follows:

"The 2022 FCEF Audited Financial Statements were presented to all members. These statements were prepared by the firm Numeris CPA Professional Corporation, and included the following: 'The accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the organization as at December 31, 2022, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with ASNPO (Accounting Standards for Not-For-Profit Organizations).'

"The major items of note for the 2022 Audited Statements include:

1. A 20% drop in cash as a result of the ending of donations from the Bench Program, which ended in 2021;
2. Decrease in investments of 7.5% as a result of overall losses in the year;
3. Donations decreased by 30%. This was the result of significant one-time donations in 2021;
4. Overall fundraising decreased by 45% primarily as a result of the drop in general donations (see 3 above) and the ending of the Bench Program in 2021 (which had \$38K in revenue).

"Despite these decreases, the overall financial position of the Friends of the Central Experimental Farm remains strong with fundraising expected to increase in 2023. You are encouraged to review the FCEF 2023 Financial Statements by going to our website."

This was Randy's last financial report as he is stepping down from the Board. His contribution was acknowledged at the AGM by President Eric Jones. "Randy has gone way beyond his role as treasurer," Eric said, "giving us sage advice and guidance in his unflappable manner. And besides keeping his hawklike eye on our loonies, he's kept all our procedures shipshape and running."

LONG-SERVING VOLUNTEERS

The following volunteers were recognized by Volunteer Director, Christina Fiedorowicz, for their dedicated long service to the Friends: (Five years) Dell Durnin, Andy McGregor, Robert Stuart; (10 years) Linda Horricks, Sue Killam; (15 years) Beverly Brooks, Fiona Cowell, Judy Hyland, Ben Pascolo-Neveau, Eileen Reardon, Josephine Stanic, Roger Taguchi; (20 years) Rick Carpenter, Kevin O'Connor; And an amazing 24 years of service by Polly McColl.

GUEST SPEAKER

The guest speaker was Tina Liu, design manager of the Capital Floral Program of the National Capital Commission. (She kindly agreed at the last minute to give a presentation, when our scheduled speaker became ill.)

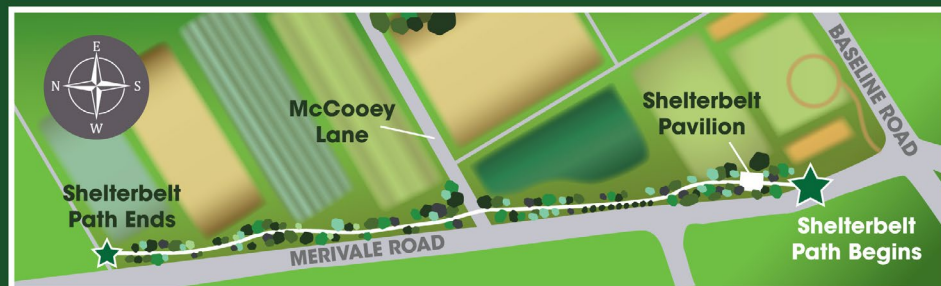
Tina orchestrates the floral display in Ottawa-Gatineau, which includes the Canadian Tulip Festival in the spring, and annual and perennial displays from summer to autumn. In a fascinating presentation, she traced the history not only of tulip displays but also of other plantings in the National Capital Region, and with beautiful images described the creation of recent plantings.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES!

It's not too late to help in the green and blooming spaces at the Central Experimental Farm. If you love gardening, give it a try. We are looking for new volunteers for our Garden, Shelterbelt, and Arboretum teams.

For more information on volunteer opportunities, please contact volunteer@friendsofthefarm.ca.

MAP OF THE SHELTERBELT



From the Shelterbelt brochure designed by Kat B. Design Studio

Continued from page 1...

white cedar, spruce, and white pine windbreaks divide a large field into sections that serve different purposes.

Some old plantations were removed. The Farm lost a long shelterbelt beside Carling Avenue, when that road was widened in the 1960s. Other shelterbelts, such as the one on the east side of the Arboretum close to Dows Lake, lost trees. Younger windbreaks tend to follow old designs with limited selections of tree species. Both older and more recent windbreaks are intended to protect cultivated crops and the Arboretum's plants. However, 21st century challenges need new ideas about efficient land use, and this applies to the large fields of the CEF.

DIVERSITY AT THE NEW SHELTERBELT

About 20 years ago, AAFC and Friends of the

Farm started a new project to plant trees and shrubs along the western boundary of the Farm—the Merivale Road Shelterbelt. This shelterbelt defines one edge of our “national historic site,” as well as protecting the Farm fields. And by commemorating the goodwill of Friends volunteers, members and supporters who are engaged in helping to enhance the CEF for the use and enjoyment of all Canadians, this shelterbelt is unique among others at the Farm.

Being volunteer driven, the project made gradual progress and a relatively small number of trees were added each year—until 2017 when AAFC contributed 150 trees for Canada's 150th year. However, different species were chosen, not only among the trees being added each year but also among those planted en masse in 2017. This created significant diversity in the new shelterbelt. When you move along

the path you notice that colours and shapes constantly change. Spring, summer, autumn, and winter display their own season-specific set of colours and branching patterns. The only constant as you move along the gently-curving, flat path is frequent change.

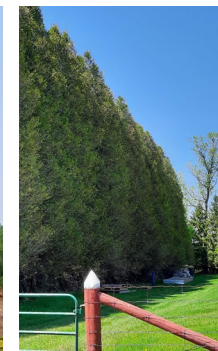
Yes, many of the trees are common to the area: maples, spruce, and oaks. But other species and/or cultivars (see “A Job Well Done,” page 6) add colours and texture in the foliage and a diversity in the crown architecture which is not often seen in farm landscapes.

The 150 young trees and shrubs alongside the path at the northern end of the Farm have not yet fully displayed their particular attractions. Their role is important, however, in showing city dwellers just how long it takes and how difficult a task it is to create a beautiful and healthy environment offering all the benefits that mature trees bring to a location. You can, however, already experience these as you take a stroll through the southern part of the Merivale Shelterbelt.

Dr. Roman Popadiouk, a long-time volunteer with the Friends of the Farm, has led many tours of the Arboretum and Shelterbelt.

PHOTOS BELOW:

1. Crabapple and poplar windbreaks. 2. Poplar and spruce windbreak. 3. White cedar windbreak. 4. White cedar windbreak, opposite side. *Roman Popadiouk.*



OPENING THE SHELTERBELT

On September 8, 2005, Governor General Adrienne Clarkson opened the new Shelterbelt Project on Merivale Road at the corner of Baseline Road.

In her opening remarks, Her Excellency spoke of the agricultural history of The Farm and its importance to residents of the National Capital. “Deputy Ministers and Heads such as Saunders and Carling understood that we need this place to mark that we are an agricultural nation...I salute the Friends of the Experimental Farm for helping this become and remain what it is a very important place for Canada and for the City of Ottawa,” she said. (*FCEF Newsletter*, Fall 2005)

PHOTO: John Ralston Saul, Governor General Adrienne Clarkson, MP Marlene Catterall, and Doug Shouldice, Acting President, Friends of the Farm, at the official opening of the Shelterbelt, 2005. *Courtesy of David Carnegie and the Governor General's office.*



A Job Well Done

POLLY McCOLL AND THE MERIVALE SHELTERBELT

BY JOAN BUTCHER

Polly McColl's achievement during 15 years as Project Coordinator of the Shelterbelt is perhaps one of the most visible among the many successful efforts undertaken by Friends of the Farm volunteers. Prior to 2005, if you were driving north along Merivale Road at the western boundary of the Farm, there was nothing to see but open fields and some fencing. But now you will find a charming recreational path, shaded by and adorned with approximately 400 trees and shrubs, as well as plantings of roses, daylilies, and daffodils. This new green space is the result of an ambitious project that involved many years of careful, dedicated plant selection, watering, mulching, pruning, feeding, protecting and digging; lots and lots of digging.

The project was begun in the early 2000s by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), as an attempt to re-create some of the forested area that once grew along the northern and western borders of the Farm. The plan involved the establishment of a belt of greenery that would feature a recreational trail. As well as being aesthetically pleasing and opening up the area to visitors, the shelterbelt would provide protection for the test fields, and some relief from the air pollution created by the busy traffic on the Merivale Road.

A year into the project, the Friends of the Farm asked AAFC's permission to seek support for the project from donors. Donations from \$100 to \$700 could be made, and contributions were recognized in an inscription on a plaque at the pavilion near the southern end of the Shelterbelt. The donor component of the Shelterbelt received great support, and ended in July 2018, when there was simply no more room to plant trees or shrubs.

HARSH CONDITIONS

Early on, Polly and her team discovered that the most useful gardening tool for the Shelterbelt site was a pickaxe. The soil was extremely compacted, with a full complement of stones, some that may have come from an early fence. This is understandable as the land was once the site of the Scott Farm, which included a

dairy operation. Evidence of this appeared one day when one of the volunteers found an old silver ice cream scoop during her digging. This is as close as the Friends have come to finding buried treasure, and is destined for display in Building 72.

Merivale Road is a busy roadway with heavy traffic that causes air and road pollution. The toxic chemicals involved in de-icing the roads affect trees adversely. There was severe damage on lower branches facing the road. But a few years later, damaged trees filled in as they grew. Some vandalism and theft of roses and lilacs occurred and all the ash trees were taken down due to the emerald ash borer. The effect of high winds can be also be seen, especially on the hawthorn trees, which are now bent facing east. A few trees have died as a result of wind damage and one after being hit by lightning. Polly considers that the survival rate of the trees is remarkably good, given the challenges of the site, including lack of water.

There was no H₂O available on the site until 2011, when the Shelterbelt shed was built at the end of McCooey Lane, across from Central Park Drive. Solar panels installed on the roof provided power to an existing well. Prior to this, volunteers had to sometimes resort to bringing water from home if only a few shrubs were planted. AAFC provides water to large trees and if there are drought conditions. Watering is still time-consuming, as piping to the pump has never been installed.

YOU WIN SOME . . .

Despite the difficulties encountered in planting and watering, and the various depredations of rodent, insect, and human pests, a variety of trees and shrubs were put in place on a trial basis with excellent overall results. Those doing well are Yellowwood (*Cladrastis*), Catalpa, Douglas-fir, Wingnuts (*Pterocarya*), Horse Chestnut, 'Ivory Silk' Japanese Tree Lilac (*Syringa reticulata*), Serbian Spruce (*Picea omorika*), and Ginkgo. Elms planted at the Shelter Belt and thriving include 'Frontier', 'Brandon', 'Princeton'. The Common Lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*) has done well, where Preston Lilacs did not. Other shrubs that have succeeded are Buffaloberry, Ninebark, and the 'Bloomerang'



Lilac. Caragana flourish, but seem to have a short life span. Forsythia and Elder have done poorly. Birch and White Pine were deemed unsuitable for the site, and the Sumac that were planted in the early stages of the project proved to be a liability because of the spread of their suckers. This year we are trying Cornelian cherry, grey dogwood, American filbert, and wayfaring trees.

ADAPTING THE PLAN

In the early stages of the Shelterbelt project, AAFC contracted with a landscape design firm to prepare the plan for re-foresting the area. Over the years, Polly has been adapting this plan as circumstances demand. For instance, trees were planted quite thickly in the first few years, but this concentration of greenery along the recreational path made for dark areas that could make users feel vulnerable. Polly altered the way the trees were spaced, making for a more inviting and safer environment.

One of the great satisfactions for Polly in leading the work on the Shelterbelt has been the opportunity to make choices like these that are responsive to the needs of the community as well as horticultural imperatives. Polly is uniquely suited to this task, having earned a diploma in Horticulture and one in Landscape Design from the University of Guelph. A member of the Master Gardeners of Ontario since

TOP LEFT: Polly at work beside the Shelterbelt pavilion, 2008. **TOP RIGHT:** Over the years, Polly altered the way trees were spaced. Here, a spruce is planted in 2015.

1986, she was also in the landscape business as a consultant and designer for 16 years. Her involvement as a volunteer with Friends of the Farm began back when the Friends participated in AAFC's annual Chrysanthemum Show, which ended in 1992.

Polly has been rightly called the Friends of the Farm's volunteer extraordinaire. She organized the Friends' Master Gardener lecture series, and was a key member on a number of projects, as well as leading the Iris and Daylily garden teams. She helped establish an advisory group that worked with the Arboretum and Gardens staff to plan the priority activities for each year.

She served as Vice President, and became President in 2008.

Jim Odell, who will be the co-lead of the Shelterbelt Team next year, describes Polly as "an incredibly knowledgeable gardener and landscaper." He is constantly amazed by her knowledge of plant names and habitat requirements and suggests that "she likely planted most of them." He pays homage to her as a very tolerant and supportive team leader and claims "I've never worked with anyone better at organising a crew and getting the best out of them. With such a combination of landscape development and maintenance, the work done by the Shelterbelt team has been both

comprehensive and demanding."

Year after year, Polly and the Shelterbelt team have prevailed in the face of wind, drought, storms, road salt, air pollution, poor soil, large rocks, and pestilence of many kinds. Polly gives credit to Manotick Tree Movers for doing the heavy work of tree planting in the Shelterbelt and the Green Thumb Nursery for their fine selection of shrubs and plants. Most of all, she attributes the success of the Shelterbelt project to the "tremendous team of dedicated and self-directed workers" with whom she has been fortunate to work. Together they have experienced the very great satisfaction of seeing a lovely ribbon of shady greenery emerge on the Farm, opening up more of this wonderful acreage to recreational use, and helping protect Farm fields and lessen urban air pollution.



PHOTO ON LEFT: After the tree planting in June 2017, Polly McColl led visiting students from the Grade 7 gifted class at Hawthorne Public School along the Shelterbelt, pointing out the various trees and shrubs, and answering their many questions.



New Leadership:
Jim Odell
By Joan Butcher

When Jim Odell moved to Ottawa in 2013 and was taking long walks to discover the city, he was attracted by the open spaces of the Farm. He decided to volunteer with the Friends of the Farm, and chose to begin working with the Shelterbelt project, since he had already done some forestry work and landscape construction. "As part of the grounds crew at the University of Calgary, where we were turning bald prairie into parkland, I became well acquainted with the use of hand tools and a wheelbarrow," Jim explained. Although it came as a surprise to find the heavy work of tree planting was contracted out, he was happy to be active out doors in the sunshine and fresh air, engaged in activities such as lawn cutting and tree trimming.

He also decided to move outside his comfort zone and join the groups looking after the day lilies and irises. He was a complete novice when it came to gardening, but was inspired to give it a try because of his fond recollections of his grandmother's glorious gardens. "They would have given the Ornamental Gardens a run for their money," he explained. Long on memories but short on gardening skills, Jim admits to being so embarrassed on his first day that he spent his entire shift pulling dandelions from the grass. "I couldn't tell a plant from a weed," he confessed. Years later, he has not only developed a gardener's skills but finds the work enjoyable and satisfying.

Looking forward to his new challenge as co-lead of the Shelterbelt team, he feels optimistic about taking on a new role, along with his fellow Shelterbelt team member Linda Moreau. It's daunting to be taking the reins from someone who has accomplished as much as Polly McColl, but he feels that there is a good understanding between himself and Linda of what they will need to get a handle on. Having coached lacrosse for decades, Jim hopes some of the skills are transferable. He knows the crew is experienced and dedicated, and trusts that with Polly and Josephine Stanic remaining as part of the Shelterbelt group, the "transition should be as smooth as it gets."

Dawn Chorus

At Shelterbelt at Merivale Road to mark the Farm's western boundary would not have been appropriate before 1989, because until then the Farm owned land on the other side of Merivale.

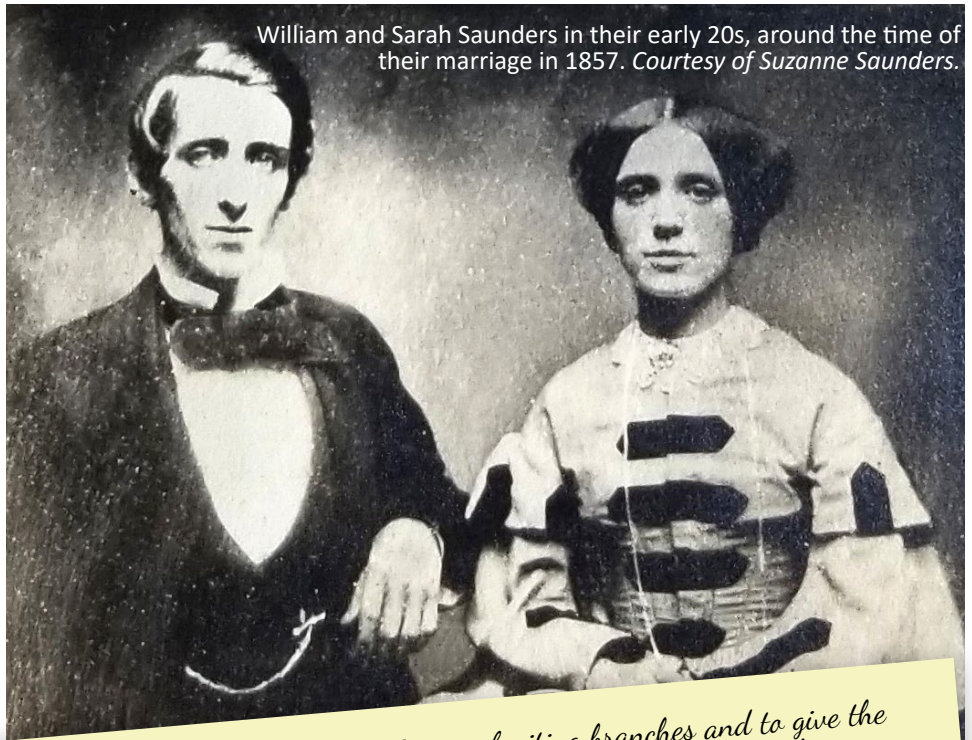
The land was used for poultry research and nearby residents had to put up with a dawn chorus from 5,000 roosters. They and the hens were "doing their noisy best to help improve the quality and quantity of egg and broiler production." (The Ottawa Journal, August 25, 1960)

As well as the roosters, there were 600-800 geese, "all of whom were accomplished honkers," according to one of the Farm's poultry scientists at the time. Nobody apparently tried to invoke the city's anti-noise bylaw, probably "because of an understanding and appreciation that the value of the research exceeds the nuisance it creates."

The site on the west side of Merivale Road was sold in 1989 for development of the Central Park subdivision.

Buffaloberry Botanizer

William Saunders chose sites for experimental farms at Agassiz, Indian Head, Brandon, Ottawa, and Nappan. As director, he visited them often. On July 20, 1895, he travelled by rail directly to Agassiz, B.C., where he spent nearly two weeks at the farm. On his return trip, among other stops, he spent a week at Brandon, Manitoba, inspecting the work in progress at the farm there. In his Director's annual report, he wrote: "In company with the superintendent of the Brandon experimental farm, Mr. S. A. Bedford, a drive was taken covering about 220 miles through some of the more important grain districts in southern Manitoba." At the end of the first day of this journey, he wrote to his wife Sarah ...



William and Sarah Saunders in their early 20s, around the time of their marriage in 1857. Courtesy of Suzanne Saunders.

Northern Pacific Hotel
Wawanesa, Manitoba
August 29, 1895

My dear wife -
We left the Brandon farm this morning shortly after 7 and after a delay in town of about half an hour started south and after 35 miles of a drive through immense wheat fields in most charming weather we reached this place about 1:30 pm.

During the afternoon we wandered

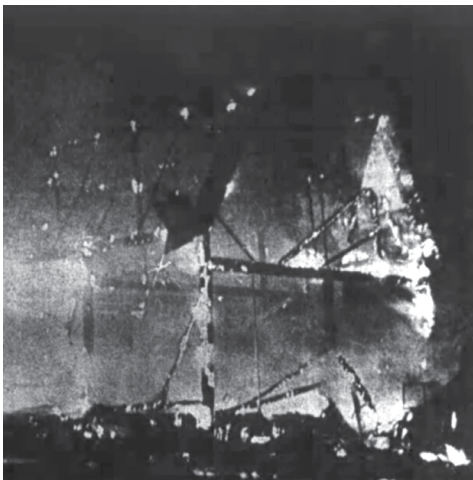
down the wooded banks of the Souris River which makes a great bend around this little town in the form of a loop. While botanizing there we found several bushes of a yellow fruited form of the Buffaloberry - *Shepherdia argentea*. I cut two sprigs with fruit on, which I packed in a cigar box which was then nearly filled with picked berries yellow and red. This I mailed to Ottawa and addressed it to W T Macoun. I have written Will asking him when he opens the box to hand you one of the

fruiting branches and to give the other to Mr. Fletcher so that you may see what a pretty thing it is. I think it is one of the handsomest bushes I have seen when full of fruit as we saw it today.

It is now near 10 so I must be off to bed as we are to be up at 6 in the morning so as to have breakfast and start at 7. Good night my love

...
Ever your loving husband
William

Source: W.E. Saunders fonds, Royal Ontario Museum Reference Library Archives (SC47).



Ottawa Journal

A Fiery End to the Scott Barn, AUGUST 1968

"A crowd of 800 cheered as the burning skeleton of a barn on the Experimental Farm, at Baseline and Merivale roads, collapsed Monday night and sent a shower of fireworks into the sky that could be seen for miles."
(Ottawa Journal, August 20, 1968)

The large barn, the last remaining building from the former Scott farm, was unoccupied and boarded up pending

demolition. As well as the barn, the dairy farm had included an 11-room house, several sheds and a silo.

The southern section of the Merivale Shelterbelt is at the edge of 26 hectares (65 acres) of land formerly owned by the Scott family and continuously farmed since the 1870s when William L. Scott began dairy farming there. The land was purchased by the Department of Agriculture in 1949 from the estate of Olive Scott. The Department's need for more land to experiment with new varieties of cereal and forage crops had been increasing significantly during the early 20th century.

Ice Storm Damage

Jeremy DiZazzo is Chief, Grounds Maintenance, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. In May, we asked him about ice storm damage in the Arboretum.

NEWSLETTER: How does the damage from the April 5, 2023 ice storm compare with that of other storms you've seen?

JEREMY: We're still in the process of assessing the full extent of the damage. The tally so far of total losses to our Collection is up to 11, but some trees that were significantly damaged may still have to be removed, so the number of total losses may increase. That being said, after the derecho in May of 2022 we recorded 14 total losses and 22 that were significantly damaged. Although we were largely (and thankfully) spared from the tornado in September 2022, we experienced wind damage. The most notable and significant damage in recent memory was from the microburst/downburst of September 2017. This extreme weather event resulted in well over 20 total losses and seemingly endless amounts of significant and minor damage. If you recall, this was the culprit that devastated our beloved Bebb's Oak.

NEWSLETTER: Are there any tree losses/damage that are especially sad?

JEREMY: Although I believe that any and all losses and damage are 'sad' (because every individual candidate in our Collection has such

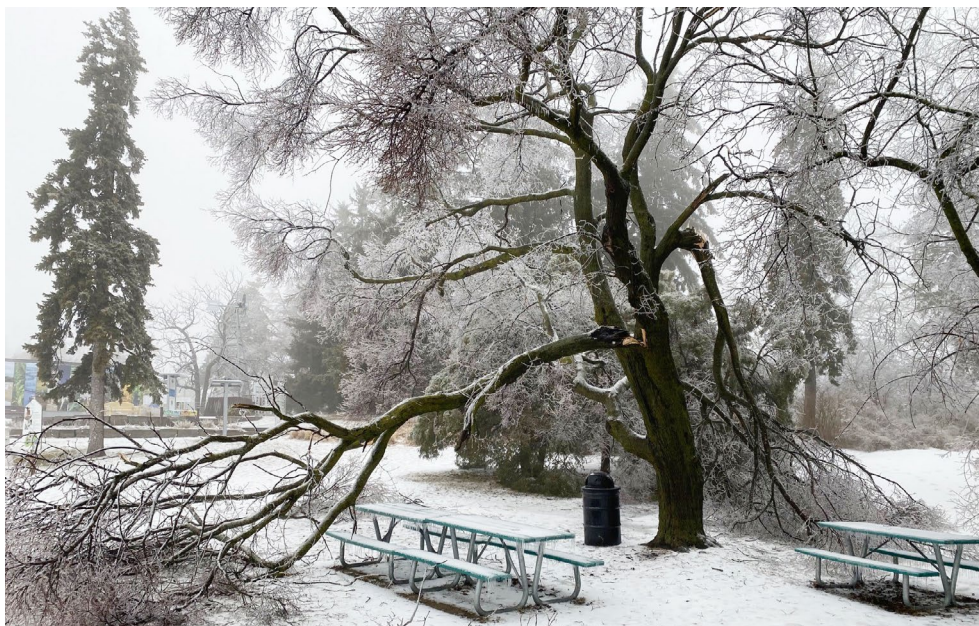
interesting provenance, even those that are seemingly insignificant), I am especially upset as a result of some of the losses within the Arboretum Circle. The dramatic aesthetic impact of the loss of mature trees within the heart of the Arboretum will unfortunately not be replaceable in my lifetime. Also, the impact that the varying levels of damage has on the appearance of numerous tree canopies will be visible for some time. Robert (Glendinning) has informed me of an especially disappointing total loss of a tree that

was unique to our Collection (it was our only one), a Rock Elm (*Ulmus thomasii*) that was planted in 1970.

NEWSLETTER: How have you managed the clean-up?

JEREMY: We had our entire team (17) fully deployed on storm clean-up (not including our Summer Students, who have also been assisting us) for the two first weeks of May. After that, there were other areas of work that required my crew's attention (Ornamental Gardens, lawns, etc.), so the remainder of the work is being done by the Arboretum staff alone. Also, our new tree orders arrived and we were concerned for the balled and burlapped trees in the hot weather, and wanted them in the ground. This means we still have several weeks of storm clean-up work ahead of us.

ALL PHOTOS: Jeremy DiZazzo



The Farm, the School, and Alfred James Kirkness

By Patricia Jasen

The Brandon Experimental Farm and the Brandon Indian Residential School existed side-by-side in rural Manitoba for almost 80 years. The former, created in 1888, was one of five research farms set up by the Department of Agriculture at locations chosen by Central Experimental Farm director William Saunders. Their goal was to help settlers become successful farmers and to advance the state of agriculture across Canada. The latter, also referred to as the Brandon Industrial School, opened in 1895 and was part of a countrywide network of federally-funded, church-run institutions aimed at the cultural assimilation of First Nations children. The school closed in 1972 and was demolished some thirty years later. The experimental farm is now known as the Brandon Research and Development Centre, specializing in such areas as crop breeding and genetics and field and landscape resource management.

These unlikely neighbours were both agricultural enterprises, albeit of a very different nature and purpose. A look at the life and times of a former residential school student and longtime Brandon Experimental Farm mechanic, Alfred James Kirkness, offers some insight into their shared presence on the Manitoba prairie, as well as the leading role this farm employee played in bringing historical truths to light.

FARM AND SCHOOL

The farm and the school were located on Grand Valley Road, which runs west from Brandon into a gently rolling landscape near the Assiniboine River. Both occupied fertile lands in the river valley as well as higher ground to the north that was ideal for cattle grazing.

It is easy to see why Saunders selected this particular site for the experimental farm, as it was close to a burgeoning town and the newly completely Canadian Pacific Railway. The farm's early successes included work on crop rotation and the testing of new varieties of wheat, oats and barley. Saunders was well pleased with his choice, and enjoyed exploring Manitoba's vast grain-growing country when visiting the Brandon farm on his rail trips west.

But why was this spot chosen for the residential school? Federal officials and the Methodist Church (which was to run the school) wanted it close to a white settler community and far from students' homes, the object being to sever children's connections to their parents and culture. Brandon's City Council saw an economic advantage in having the school nearby and offered land next to the experimental farm.

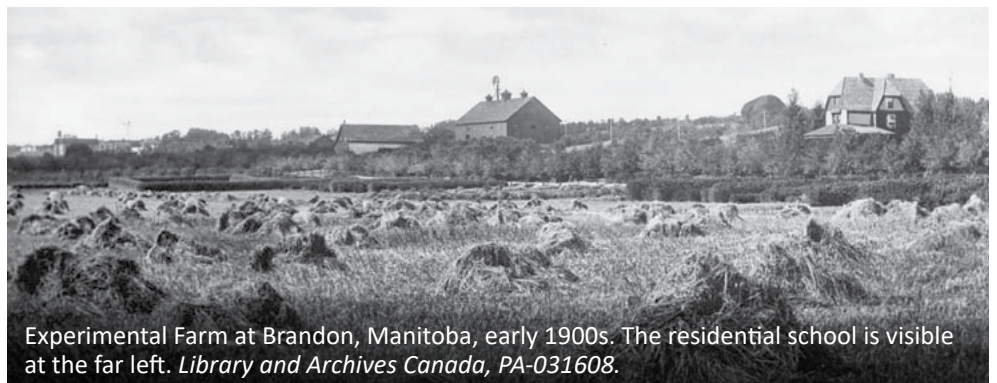
Early recruitment focused on collecting children from northern Manitoba communities where Methodist missions were located. The federal grant to run the schools depended on enrolments, and the transfer of children, involving



Alf Kirkness and chickadee. "Bird in the Hand," *Brandon Sun*, March 3, 1975

hazardous journeys across Lake Winnipeg, was aggressively undertaken as soon as the school opened. First Nations leaders and parents had expected schools to be established near their homes, as promised in Treaty 5, and they mounted a sustained resistance.

At the residential school, students were primarily trained in agricultural and domestic work. Their labour financed a large portion of the school's operations, and the sale of wheat, oats, root vegetables and fodder brought in considerable income. While classroom instruction was part of the curriculum much of the boys'



Experimental Farm at Brandon, Manitoba, early 1900s. The residential school is visible at the far left. *Library and Archives Canada, PA-031608.*

day was devoted to crop raising, animal care, and maintenance work. The girls were trained in domestic chores and dairying. The government's intent was not to enable First Nations men to become independent commercial farmers in competition with white settlers but to prepare them to work for others and tend garden plots for their own use. The heavy workload took its toll on poorly-fed children and contributed to their vulnerability to disease. The high death rates that ensued were similar to those at residential schools elsewhere in Canada.

Information about relations between the school and the adjacent experimental farm is hard to come by. Some girls did household work for local families, which included cleaning homes at the farm: according to one former student, working extra hard could earn this brief respite from the harsh life of the school.¹ Boys were sometimes sent to help local farmers, but no evidence has surfaced that they worked at the experimental farm while still at school. We do know, however, that at least one graduate made his career there.

ALFRED JAMES KIRKNESS

Alfred Kirkness was born in 1902 at the small community of Island Lake in northern Manitoba, on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, near Norway House. Accounts suggest that he was taken to the school as a child of two after his mother's death and joined his siblings as a student in 1908. As historians Anne Lindsay, *et al* write, "Kirkness grew up at the Brandon school."²

The boys were responsible for the operation and repair of agricultural equipment and machinery, and Kirkness likely acquired his mechanical knowledge as a student. In the 1920s, he served briefly as superintendent of maintenance at the File Hills Hospital in Saskatchewan. He then returned to take up employment at the Brandon Experimental Farm in 1929 where he honed his skills "to an art as he kept equipment running" for close to four decades.³ Lily Deyell and Alf Kirkness

married in 1932 and raised a family on Grand Valley Road, near both farm and school.

Kirkness retired in 1967 and was honoured at a farewell barbeque on the experimental farm lawn attended by some 230 fellow employees and families. There was much praise for his work, his demeanour, and his sense of justice. The director, W.N. McNaughton, told the guests that Alf was a man of "undiluted goodness" whose philosophy was that "regardless of who a person is or where he is from, this man is my neighbor." Plant geneticist Richard Metcalfe wrote from Winnipeg that "I have never left your company without having felt I was taking something of Alf Kirkness with me."⁴

In later life, Alf and Lily Kirkness spent time closer to family on the West coast, but their home remained on Grand Valley Road. As a well-loved member of the community, Alf was once featured on the front page of the *Brandon Sun*. He was portrayed as a man with "a lot of friends," some of whom were the chickadees he had trained to take seeds from his hand and even "right out from his lips."⁵ He died on January 29, 1980 in Bremerton, Washington.

KIRKNESS' CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT STUDENT BURIAL GROUNDS

A sense of justice led Alf Kirkness to pursue a tireless campaign for which he is still remembered. Having grown up at the Brandon residential school he knew the history of the site intimately. During and beyond his final decade as a farm employee, he sought recognition and respectful treatment of the dozens of unmarked graves of children who had died at the school. Although several burial grounds are now under investigation, two were known to Kirkness at that time.

The older burial site, in use from 1895-1912, was on school property near the Assiniboine River that was later leased to the City of Brandon for recreational use.

The issue came to a head for Kirkness when City bulldozers arrived. In 1961, a swimming pool was opened near the burial ground, resulting in people "tramping over the graves." To preserve knowledge of its location, he marked out its boundaries with four white stakes, assisted by the farm's foreman, C.H. Waldron, and its director, J.E. Andrews.

The other cemetery was located to the north. After the school closed its agricultural program in the late 50s, this land was transferred to the experimental farm and continued to be used for grazing cattle. In 1961, foreman Waldron took the initiative of erecting a temporary fence on three sides of the North Hill burial ground.

Surviving correspondence, photos, and hand drawn maps document Kirkness' long struggle to have the burial sites recognized by local officials and properly cared for by the Department of Indian Affairs. The federal government did not deny the legitimacy of his complaints but repeatedly failed to take action. His contribution is summed up by Lindsay, *et al*, who point to his exemplary "refusal to let the department feel that they had put the matter to rest. Because of the perseverance of Alfred Kirkness, the two cemeteries associated with the Brandon Residential School were not forgotten."⁶

Kirkness' legacy carries on. The land on which the school stood is now part of the Sioux Valley Dakota Nation and, in partnership with university researchers and community elders, its members are working to locate unmarked graves and identify the many children who died while in attendance. The City of Brandon and the Brandon Research and Development Centre support these ongoing efforts.⁷

Patricia Jasen is co-author of Building Canada's Farm, published by the Friends of the Farm in 2021. Her other publications include Wild Things: Nature, Culture, and Tourism in Ontario, 1790-1914.



Brandon Indian Residential School. McKee Archives, Brandon University.

1 Katherine Lyndsay Nichols, "Investigation of Unmarked Graves and Burial Grounds at the Brandon Residential School," MA Thesis, University of Manitoba, 2015. <https://mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca/items/51fa7ae1-799d-49a3-bae1-710a8b6baad1>

2 Anne Lindsay, Clare Cook, and David Cuthbert, "A Cup of Cold Water: Alfred Kirkness and the Brandon Residential School Cemeteries," *Manitoba History* 78 (2015).

3 "Research Station Honors Veteran of 38 Years, Alfred J. Kirkness," *Brandon Sun*, July 13, 1967.

4 "Research Station Honors Veteran."

5 "Bird in the Hand," *Brandon Sun*, March 3, 1975.

6 Lindsay et al, "A Cup of Cold Water."

7 <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/team-investigating-brandon-former-residential-school-help-model-follow-1.6073118>

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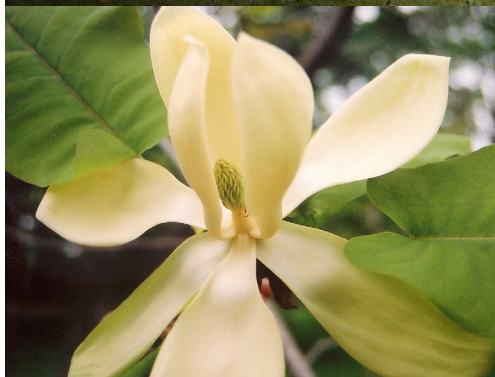
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