Climate Change Culprit?

Plus:
ROCK & (GENDER) ROLE
PRAIRIE PARAMEDICS & PTSD
PETER MANSBRIDGE ON THE FUTURE OF NEWS
and more!
Rawlco Radio Supporting Student Journalism

Saskatchewan-owned Rawlco Radio Ltd. is playing a major supporting role at the School of Journalism. In September 2017, Rawlco CEO Gordon Rawlins announced a $100,000 donation to the School. The fund is supporting equipment costs and travel expenses for student documentaries and investigative projects such as Hooked, a report on opioid addiction in Saskatchewan.

With seven radio stations across Saskatchewan, Rawlco has been a longtime supporter of the School’s internship program and an employer of many of our grads. “The backbone to any media, especially radio, is to provide good accurate local information,” said Rawlins. “That’s the motivation behind our gift, supporting the kind of quality education U of R School of Journalism is known for.”

Students primarily self-finance major projects through scholarships, personal savings and go-fund-me campaigns. Now, they can apply to the Rawlco Fund for supplementary support, which assists students at all levels, including bachelor’s and master’s students.

At the School of Journalism we don’t teach our students to chase awards. But it sure is nice when they win them. This past year was a good one. Hereewith, a list of awards, nominations and other honors bestowed on our students in 2018.

**The Price of Oil**
A collaboration with the Toronto Star, National Observer and Global TV
- Sidney Hillman Foundation 2018 Canadian Hillman Prize: Honourable mention
- Radio Television Digital News Association Canada (RTDNA): Nominee—Don McArthur Investigative Award
- Canadian Journalism Foundation: Nominee—Jackman Award for Excellence

**Crude Power**
An investigation into oil, money and influence in Saskatchewan
- Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE) Awards: Water—IRE Memorial Award (Student, large category)
- Emerge Awards: Winner—Best Videography
- Yorkton International Film Festival: Nominee—Best Student Production, Nominee for Best Research

**Severed**
An undergrad documentary exploring a man’s shocking and irrevocable decision
- Emerge Awards: Nominee—Best Videography
- Regina International Film Festival: Nominee—Best Student Film, Official Screening Selection

**Terms and Conditions**
An undergrad documentary about a relationship between a mother and daughter built on guilt and shame
- Yorkton International Film Festival: Nominee—Raffl Show Award (Best of Saskatchewan)

**Sirocco: Winds of Resistance**
A masters documentary investigating the human consequences of corporate and government greed
- Queen City Shorts Awards Festival: Winner—Best of Saskatchewan, Winner—Audience Choice Award, Nominee—Best Direction
- Saskatchewan Independent Film Awards: Special Jury Award
- River Film Festival (Italy): Official Selection and Nominee
- Yorkton International Film Festival: Nominee—Best of Saskatchewan

**In Her Veins**
An undergrad documentary exploring the human condition through one Indigenous woman’s journey to find herself in the ashes of the past
- Yorkton International Film Festival: Nominee—Best Student Documentary, Nominee—Best of Saskatchewan
- Emerge Media Awards: Nominee—Best Videography

**Key Change**
Story and photos by CAITLIN TAYLOR

The class of 2018 before the School of Journalism’s annual documentary showcase in April, 2018.

**Honourable Wound**
Story and photos by JENNIFER ACKERMAN

He had to grow up fast as the hole left by the absence of family was replaced over time with a growing feeling of anger. Realizing he needed to find a way to cope, DJ Kim trained in martial arts. He put everything he had into those classes. But, still yearning for a sense of belonging, his extra-curricular activities took a different turn.

**Prairie Power**
Story and photos by KATIE DOKE SAWATZKY

Kristen Martin and Jared Clarke bought 160 acres of land just northwest of Edenwold, Sask. They had moved here, 40 kilometres northeast of their hometown, Regina, for one reason: to nurture what many have forgotten and few value. It was time to return the land to grass.

**Emergency**
Story and photos by REBECCA MARROUNIN

In a small town, odds are high that first responders know victims, and witnessing the death of a close friend can be an unbearable experience. It is nearly impossible to say how many paramedics experience mental health issues, because statistics are simply not available. What is known is that each year over 40 first responders in Canada, including paramedics, commit suicide.

**Belch!**
Story and photos by LAURA STEWART

Numerous do-your-part lists admonish us to eat less meat and, especially, less meat from methane-belching cattle. Here in cattle country, that means turning down what your neighbor has to sell from seasons of work. It means rejecting what they’ve spent a career perfecting. And it raises questions about the future of an entire landscape.

**You Win Some, You Lose Some**

She’s the first person you see when you visit our school and, since 2002, she’s been the initial point of contact for every one of our students. Beloved by staff and students alike, it’s hard to imagine our school without smiling Shelley Kessel, our trusty secretary and longest serving staff member. But she’s decided to call it a career effective February 2019. Congratulations Shelley on a job well done. We hate to lose you but you’ve more than earned a break!

The School of Journalism is pleased to announce the appointment of veteran videographer and filmmaker Layton Burton as broadcast lab instructor. Students will be learning from one of the best in the business. Burton brings more than 35 years of experience shooting news with CTV and CBC, dozens of feature films, documentaries and multi-camera live productions as a director of photography and Steadicam owner-operator. Welcome aboard!
THE CROW is the annual student publication of the School of Journalism, Faculty of Arts, University of Regina.

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CROW’S NEST

If you want to see The Crow continue to publish in-depth journalism that matters to Canadians, please consider making a donation to the School of Journalism. Your support is crucial to The Crow magazine and other community outreach services, such as the school's annual Mini-lecture. Together we can make journalism the best it can be!

JENNIFER ACKERMAN was born in Alberta, raised in B.C. and is now a Saskatchewan convert. While at the School of Journalism Ackerman was awarded the EU-Canada Young Journalist Fellowship in 2017. She also received the John Spencer Middleton and Jack Spencer Gordon Middleton Scholarship, the Dorothy and Leon Goldman Scholarship, the Saskatchewan Legislative Press Gallery Association Award for best political/public policy story, the Blue Sky Award and a CTV Journalism scholarship. Ackerman interned as a general news reporter at the Regina Leader-Post from May 2017 to December 2017, which turned into freelance work, a part-time job and eventually a full time position upon graduation. Her story, Honours, begins on page 18. Follow her on Twitter @jenAckermanYQR and Instagram @jenkm5

KATIE DOKE SAWATZKY has lived with her family and young children in British Columbia and holds an English degree from Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg. While at the School of Journalism she interned at Eagle Feather News. Her research project, www.prairiecounnonrenca.ca, takes an in-depth look at the state of native prairie grasslands in Saskatchewan and the people who care about them. Her story, Prairie Past, begins on page 26. Follow her on Twitter @kdoke sawatszy

REBECCA MARROQUIN was born in Mexico and moved to Canada at the age of 10. While at the School of Journalism she interned at P孤单.com in Prince Albert. Upon graduation, Rebecca moved to Vancouver to work in communications for tentree clothing and pursue investigative/documentary journalism. Her story, Emergency, begins on page 38. Follow her on Twitter @becamarroquin and Instagram @rebbeccamarro

LAURA STEWART was raised on a farm in the Moose Mountains north of Arcola in southeast Saskatchewan. With a background in environmental science she interned at Eagle Feather News. Her research project, www.prairiecounnonrenca.ca, takes an in-depth look at the state of native prairie grasslands in Saskatchewan and the people who care about them. Her story, Prairie Past, begins on page 26. Follow her on Twitter @kdoke sawatszy

CAITLIN TAYLOR was born in Ontario and raised in Saskatchewan, where she returned as a School of Journalism student to intern at CTV. While at the School of Journalism Taylor also interned at the Bangkok Post. Chosen as our 2018 Joan Donaldson CBC News Scholar, after graduating Taylor worked for CBC in Whitehorse and Toronto. Taylor is also the recipient of the 2018 Kay Robbins Travel Scholarship, which she is using to travel to Uganda to shoot a photo essay about gorilla conservation. Her story, Key Change, begins on page 44. Follow her on Twitter @caitlinjtaylor and Instagram @caitlinjtaylor

Original from Regina, master's student

Laura Stewart

Master’s student

Laura Stewart was raised in the Moose Mountains north of Arcola in southeast Saskatchewan. With a background in environmental science she interned at Eagle Feather News. Her research project, www.prairiecounnonrenca.ca, takes an in-depth look at the state of native prairie grasslands in Saskatchewan and the people who care about them. Her story, Prairie Past, begins on page 26. Follow her on Twitter @kdoke sawatszy

Embracing true stories in a creative way, and illustrating them with images that capture the heart of things.

The process begins with bringing stories to the roundtable. Most contributors first pitch the idea they think will sell. Meanwhile, the story that is their true passion lingers in the background. Good stories have a way of revealing themselves, though. There is a certain unstoppable magic to the manner in which a story that needs to be told finds its way to the storyteller who needs to tell it. The conversation usually begins with, “Well, I have this other idea, I don’t know if it’s any good, but…”

The result: a collection of work that goes beyond the ordinary. Whether it begins with a hug, a connection, a shared curiosity, a personal experience, or a passing encounter with a fascinating person, each one of the The Crow’s stories is indelibly linked to its writer and illustrator. It begins with a spark, endures through a hard season of researching and interviewing, forms itself in a flurry of keyboard-tapping and shutter-clicking, comes to life when the press hits the paper, and enters the world the moment you, the reader, pick up a copy, settle into a chair and open the first page. Thank you for being the most vital element in the journey.

-Patricia W. Elliott

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Memo to Mick: She’s no longer under your thumb.

T
he way Brynn Krysa stands on stage, you’d think noth-
ing ever fazes her. She rocks to the beat, swaying with the
music. Her stance and pos-
ture are that of a true bassist—engaged, but relaxed—relin-
ced, even. She seems at ease as a way people are when they’ve done
something hundreds of times before. Not one to wear flashy colours, tonight she’s
dressed simply in a brown blouse, black
jeans and baseball caps, in the middle of the after-
noon. When Krysa started playing her bass,
she straight-up told him that he was
cool, Krysa reached for her microphone.

“Country Girl (Shake it for me)” or The
Runaways, dodged a kiss while performing
Under my thumb.

ща://www.saskscanadian.com/

Patriarchal.Saskatchewan.

Prominent women in the national and in-
ternational music scene have shared simi-
lar stories from stages, recording studios
and pretty much anywhere a female
musician is likely to encounter patriarchal
norms. In September of last year, Mol-
ten.

It took years for Krysa to realize she
wasn’t alone. Having often played in bands
with either all male musicians, or with only
one other woman, Krysa thought it was
probably just her, or just that one situation.
That changed, however, when she joined
the ranks of Girls Rock Saskatoon.

Krysa isn’t alone in her experience.
Patriarchal values permeate all aspects of
society—down to local music scenes like
the one in Saskatoon.

Saskatchewan has a strong rural culture
where rock and country music thrive—
genres that are often linked to intensely
masculine notions. Typical rock and coun-
try songs present narrow ideas of how
men should be and even narrower ideas of
how women should be. Think Luke Bryan’s
“Country Girl (Shake it for me)” or The
Rolling Stone’s “Under My Thumb,” which
so succinctly goes:

Ah, ah, say it’s alright
Under my thumb.

“Under my thumb:
A Siamese cat of a girl
Ah, oh, say it’s alright
Under my thumb:
Shes the sweetest, innocent, put in the world.

“Tonic masculinity in rock music goes
beyond just lyrics. The very image of
someone rocking out on stage, wide-

and that also has a social impact because of women and non-binary folks in music, says Valle-Castro. “We need to create spaces for girls to feel awesome about themselves and to feel that they can do anything, that they are enough… that’s there’s no one way of being a girl.”

This is where Girls Rock Camp Saskatoon comes in, and it’s just as awesome as it sounds. The premise is simple: female and gender non-conforming musicians from around Saskatoon host summer camps where they teach the next generation how to rock. Over the course of a week, participants aged eight to 14 learn how to play an instrument, form a band, write a song, and perform their song at a showcase. Organizers also hold workshops for the campers on topics like social justice, body positivity and women and non-binary folks’ contributions to rock music.

The Saskatoon chapter of Girls Rock Camp started in 2013. It’s part of a much larger international alliance founded in 2013. It’s part of a much larger international alliance founded in 2013. It’s part of a much larger international alliance founded in 2013. It’s part of a much larger international alliance founded in 2013. It’s part of a much larger international alliance founded in 2013. It’s part of a much larger international alliance founded in 2013. It’s part of a much larger international alliance founded in 2013.

Despite its name, Girls Rock Saskatoon aims to be inclusive of more than just cis-gendered women. It’s a safe space for trans, two-spirited and gender non-conforming folks as well. As a transwoman, Pallagi said she felt accepted and welcomed at the camp. She loved creating music with new friends in a tight-knit band. “It felt amazing. It was pretty much like instant sisterhood and comradery,” she recalls.

Since she and I participated in All Grown Up last year, Pallagi has continued playing her bass. Most recently, she was...

ONE TIME A GUY “COMPLIMENTED” KRYSA ON HER MUSICIANSHIP BY SAYING THAT HE WAS SURPRISED THAT A WOMAN COULD PLAY THE BASS SO WELL. IT WAS A PIVOTAL MOMENT FOR HER.

Elise Pallagi was in that audience and also jumped at the chance to teach bass and percussion to girls aged eight to 14. “I knew I would love it, but I had no idea how much I would love it,” says Pallagi. “This was my first experience being held in a room full of women doing things I want to do.”

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Brynn Krysa is a Saskatoon musician and volunteer at the Girls Rock Camp.
part of a Marilyn Manson cover band with other Girls Rock Saskatoon musicians. They played at a 90s cover night to raise funds for the kids’ summer camps.

One year later, All Grown Up returns. I park outside Queen’s House Retreat and walk through the snow towards the front doors, wishing I was participating again. I find the next generation of keyboard players. One of them is Jena Schell. Other than Grade 6 band, Schell has never played an instrument. She does have experience, however, singing into her hairbrush as a child and frequenting karaoke joints in her 20s. She hints that she has stage fright and is feeling nervous about the showcase. I make a mental note not to tell her about my left hand’s faulty performance last year. Even though nobody noticed but me (right?), I don’t want to jinx her. Throughout the weekend, Schell learns some piano and forms a band—the Crayolas. They have a haunting, moody sound and an awesome piano melody to match.

This year’s showcase fills Amigos Cantina again. In the crowd, there’s a mix of seasoned Girls Rock musicians, All Grown Up alumni, family, friends and other folks from the local music scene—all here to support the newest musicians to join their ranks.

When the Crayolas play their song, Schell belts it! She sounds amazing. I can’t believe she can sing like that and play at the same time. I must ask her about this later.

I spot Krysa in the crowd. It’s been a couple of weeks since I saw her play at The Capitol Music Club. Instead of being on the stage, she’s now standing in front of it, holding a camera; she’s volunteered to take photos of the showcase. Krysa has helped teach bass at the kids’ summer camp every year since it started, but hasn’t been free to volunteer during All Grown Up. She’s inspired to see that the same positive energy from the kids’ camps was here tonight. “I felt really excited and happy for them and the crowd was so amazing. The minute they stepped on the stage... everyone just looked like naturals,” she says.

When the bands play their last notes and the house lights come on, participants and fellow musicians hang around. It’s like they don’t want to leave. They don’t want to go back to “regular life” that exists outside those wrought iron doors. But that’s kind of the point—to take the encouragement, support, and confidence fostered at Girls Rock Camp, walk out those doors and share it with the rest of the world.
ON FAKE NEWS: There is so much to understand and unpack in today's global world—it's an embarrassment of riches for a journalist. It's exciting. Or it should be. But with every high, there is a low. And what a low:

As we are witnessing some of the best work we have seen by journalists around the world, we are also facing an unprecedented attack on our industry.

What concerns me today, and what should concern all of you is that it's not just our industry under attack, but the major principle it stands for. Truth is under attack. And those brave enough to tell the truth are being cut down like never before.

Telling the truth used to be something that was admired. Now it's something you're blasted for if it doesn't fit into certain people's worldview. If a “truth” isn’t liked, it’s been decided by those who can’t bear to hear it, that it is, in fact, not the truth. Welcome to the world of fake news.

Now let me be clear. Fake news is a real issue. In real fake news, false stories are passed off as real news to influence an outcome. It's Russia planting stories through social media, with the intention of trying to sway an election. It's doctored videos passed off as real events to promote hate and division. That is fake news, and it's a real threat to any society.

We should all be concerned with fake news. But fake news is not CNN. It's not The New York Times. It's not the Ottawa Citizen. It's not the CBC. It's not any organization that practices real journalism. Fake news is at best a propaganda machine that doesn't even try to get it right. At worst, it's flat out lies used for a sinister outcome.

ON TRUTH: Nothing is more sacred in our industry than the truth. Because when it comes down to it, you cannot argue with the truth, no matter how hard you try. It is the truth. So finding it, speaking it, sharing it is all that matters. Nothing is more vital. And we need to be prepared to risk everything to get it. We need to fight for the facts. Because you fight injustice with facts. You battle a bully with facts.

ON DONALD TRUMP: The word “lie” used to be a blacklisted term for our industry. Journalists would bend over...
backwards not to use it. Because it was loaded. It implied terrible things—primarily, the willful intent to deceive.

Think about that. It takes intent to lie. It’s not a mistake, or a confusion or mis-speak. It’s a conscious decision not to tell you the truth because it isn’t in someone’s best interest.

When Donald Trump first took office, most journalists used every other word possible: misled, misinform, interpretations, fictions, falsehoods, deceptions, even “untruths” before so many of us couldn’t take it anymore. He lies. He’s a liar.

And he’s not the only one. He’s given license to so many people in power to do the same around the world. He has surrounded himself with liars. They lie to their voters, to the media, to each other. And when others tell the truth, when others deal in facts, not fictions, the liars have the audacity to call the truth-tellers liars. They have the audacity to call investigative reporting—that takes months of time, energy and money, that corroborate stories again and again, that cross every “T” and dot every “I”—fake.

JAMES M. MINIFIE was a crusading journalist and outspoken advocate of truth and the freedom to tell it. Born in England in 1900, his family immigrated to Canada in 1909, homesteading at Vanguard, Sask. He attended Regina College, the University of Saskatchewan, Oxford (as a Rhodes Scholar) and the Sorbonne in Paris. Minifie’s career as a journalist began in 1929 when he joined the staff of the New York Herald Tribune as Paris correspondent. Along with contemporaries George Orwell and Ernest Hemingway, Minifie covered the Spanish Civil War and Mussolini’s rise to power. During the Second World War he reported on the Battle of Britain from London, where he lost an eye from a German bomb blast while watching an air raid. After the war Minifie began his long association with CBC as Washington correspondent, first on radio, then on television. The Minifie Lectures, hosted by the University of Regina’s School of Journalism, salute that courageous reporter from Vanguard, Sask., and what his legacy represents: the importance of Canadian journalism to our democratic society.

Which Canadian journalist would you like to see present the next Minifie lecture? Let us know!

Call 306-585-4420 or visit: www.uregina.ca/arts/journalism

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What’s the difference between a hero and a warrior?

Story and photos by Jennifer Ackerman
Their first meeting happened in Unit 4 during a game of ping-pong. Michael Meszaros grew up in Regent Park, back when it was Toronto’s roughest neighbourhood. A life of gangs, crime and drugs followed him to Regina at age 12. And now he was doing time at the Paul Dojack Youth Centre, a facility for young offenders.

Fifteen years old and paddle in hand, his smile was met by another as Padre DJ Kim walked into the unit. Kim made his way towards him almost immediately.

The unlikely pair played ping-pong for a while and then sat down to chat. For reasons he can’t explain, Meszaros found himself able to talk to Kim in ways he had never been able to with anyone else.

During his time in Dojack, Kim would come see him twice a week. Meszaros finally had someone who was there for him no matter what. For the first time, he shared his life story without fear of being judged. He didn’t know why he trusted Kim so much. Perhaps it was Kim’s positive energy. He was the only person to truly accept Meszaros for who he was despite his crimes.

Six years later, Meszaros sits in a non-contact visitors’ room at the Regina Provincial Correctional Centre, an adult facility. He is three months away from finishing his latest in a string of sentences.

“I’ve spent eight plus years of my life in jail and no matter what, he never turns me down. He’s always there for me,” says Meszaros. “He makes me want to live for something.”

So for Meszaros and many others who grew to rely on Kim, it would have been a surprise to hear that a few years earlier, a particularly dark thought had entered Kim’s mind as he stared at his reflection in the mirror.

The world would be better off without me.

Like many of the people he now helps, Kim had a difficult life too. Born in Taejon, South Korea in 1962, Don Joo Kim was one of three children. After his mother died when he was very young, he bounced back and forth between relatives and group homes. His father, a military man, was seldom around and never really got to know his children.

“Whenever I think about my childhood… there are some good memories, but mostly just painful memories,” says Kim, today a solidly built man of 56, his black hair peppered with bits of grey. He had to grow up fast as the hole left by the absence of family was replaced over time with a growing feeling of anger. Realizing he needed to find a way to cope, Kim trained in martial arts. He put everything he had into those classes. But, still yearning for a sense of belonging, his extra-curricular activities took a different turn.

At age 16 he became a member of the White Snake gang. There he found a brotherhood and a bond unlike anything he’d ever experienced and would ever experience again. He rose in the ranks quickly, eventually becoming what they called a “hit man”—not killing, but challenging rival gang members to one-on-one fights in a territorial war. But as time went on he realized life as a gang member would eventually end in one of three ways.

“Number one, you’re going to have a good sleep, six feet down,” says Kim. “Or you end up being a vegetable.”

Option three, life in jail. So two years after becoming a White Snake he got out while he still could. He worked various jobs as a cook until he was drafted for his three mandatory years of military service at age 20 and served as an infantry soldier in the demilita-
Canada on a student visa in 1993, leaving no Lutheran seminary in Korea, he left for revolutionary ideas, Kim sought more. With one of the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther, he discovered German theologian and lead-er of his life. In the early 90s, his faith in God remained an important part of his life. In the early 90s, he married and began building a new life. With his wife Miji’s support, he studied hard to earn a degree from Korea Baptist Theological University/Seminary in 1992. He worked as a youth minister for some time, but after a lifetime of being on the front lines in one way or another, he found he wasn’t happy in the church.

“There was always some kind of deep hole in my heart,” says Kim.

He began visiting low-income family workers and volunteered as a chaplain at a youth correctional centre instead, acting as more of a social worker than a church minister. But his faith in God remained an important part of his life. In the early 90s, he discovered German theologian and leader of the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther. Falling in love with Luther’s rev-olutionary ideas, Kim sought more. With no Lutheran seminary in Korea, he left for Canada on a student visa in 1993, leaving Miji and their four-year-old son behind.

“When I look back at those times, I would say they are one of the very painful times, because I missed them just horribly,” recalls Kim.

After three-and-a-half years apart from his family, Kim graduated from Concordia Lutheran Seminary and got his first call to a congregation by the Lutheran Church-Canada Central District. The family was finally reunited when Miji and his now nine-year-old son joined him in Canada. They spent the next 15 years at Trinity Lutheran Church in Neudorf, Sask., population 281. It was fun for a while. They were sur-rounded by good people. But there was still a part of him that felt empty—a void long-ing for the right thing to fill it up.

Write a sermon. Visit a few people. Get a paycheck. Repeat.

“This is it, DJ? This is the reason you wanted to be a church minister? You’re happy?”

“My life has always been kind of front line guy, which means I have lived with real people in the street, being a gangster, being a street fighter, being a frontline soldier,” says Kim. “What I really missed—a bond, a brotherhood.”

In 2012, someone asked if he would be interested in joining the Royal Regina Rifles as a padre. He took it as a sign. Leaving Neudorf for Regina and a new mission, he was in his element again. He started out helping broken soldiers who had come back from Afghanistan, then expanded his reach to police officers who were strugg-ling with the trauma of attending suicides and murders, and then to inmates like Mexasos, many of whom suffered horri-ble childhoods.

He became the one thing he wished he’d had when he was in their shoes—someone to simply say, “I understand you. I care about you.” He wasn’t there to convert them. He was there to hold their hands. To listen. To laugh. To cry with them. To be there when everyone else has turned their backs. People are not their actions, he made a point of saying. Everyone deserves some unconditional support.

As a chaplain for the Regina and Moose Jaw police services, and a frequent visitor to Dojack and the Correctional Centre, Kim’s unconventional “congregation” grew and his Lutheran Church title changed to ‘missionary at large.’

It wasn’t easy. He didn’t have a tradi-tional congregation to help fund his work and the church was only able to pay him 60 per cent of a standard salary. Miji managed a small restaurant in a local food court 365 days a year for over three years to help him get by while Kim pursued his calling.

“Even though I support it, didn’t mean it was easy,” says Miji about Kim’s work. “It’s very difficult.”

Tom Prachar, the Lutheran central district president based out of Winnipeg, recognizes the unique challenges of Kim’s mission.

“We have to support him as best we can knowing… the people whose lives he does touch in many cases don’t have the money or the resources to help,” says Prachar.

The financial pressure was one thing, but the emotional toll was another, perhaps bigger, hurdle.

Nightmares. Withdrawal. Lonel-iness. The weight wore on Kim night from the start, but a careful-ly constructed mask hid his struggle from the outside world. He had made the switch from the church to the street, again. He was back where he belonged—on the front lines, helping the “broken people.” But the trauma of others wore on his spirit and his mind.

Irritability. Anger. Depression.

Still he listened. A police officer re-counted a violent murder. A war vet de-scribed holding his buddy’s hand, attached to half a body, the other half blown up by a roadside bomb. A gang member recalled years of child abuse.

How can humans do these kinds of things to other humans?

The question circled Kim’s mind as he talked with, cried with, and sat with one broken soul after another, year after year. His number one goal was to be the best pastor, the best caregiver. He excelled at it, but that pursuit turned him into something else at home.

“I started re-experiencing their experi-ences and then I found myself almost be-coming a monster,” recalls Kim.

The mask he wore at work—the one he used to convince people he was the same happy, positive Kim they had all grown to know and love—came off the moment he walked through the door at home. He dis-tanced himself from Miji. By not talking about his work and the effect it was having on him, he believed he was shielding her from the trauma.

But then it bottlenecked inside. His tem- per flared.

“You’re nasty to me, sometimes too much,” Miji said. “This is not you.”

She urged him to get help. He didn’t listen. One night, about three years after Kim began street ministry in Regina, they got into a big fight. It started over something small, but as pent up feelings burst out into the open like rushing water through flood-gates, things got out of control.


The next thing he knew, the police were...
HE ROSE IN THE RANKS QUICKLY, EVENTUALLY BECOMING WHAT THEY CALLED A “HIT MAN”—NOT KILLING, BUT CHALLENGING RIVAL GANG MEMBERS TO ONE-ON-ONE FIGHTS IN A TERRITORIAL WAR.

hero dies on the battlefield and he ceases to be of help. A warrior knows when he is wounded and when to retreat and heal.

“So DJ, it’s going to be our journey to-gether,” Arbuthnott told him. “This is my job, helping you be able to switch from your hero mode to the warrior mode.

You are here. You are wounded; badly wounded. This is time for you to recover from your wound and then once you are healed you can go back to your battlefield.”

“It had a very profound effect on him and I think that was one of the things that had him say, ‘This man understands me,’” says Arbuthnott three-and-a-half years lat-er. He has been given permission by Kim to share some of their sessions. A veteran psychologist, Arbuthnott spent more than 30 years of his career working with police officers and members of the military. Like Kim, he was famil-iar with the kind of trauma his patients suffered and he understood the weight it burdened Kim with—a burden that mate-rialized into symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder through secondary trauma.

Dr. Nick Carleton, a psychology pro-fessor at the University of Regina, special-izes in operational stress injuries including PTSD.

“Indirect exposure is receiving increas-ing attention in the literature because of growing amounts of evidence that in fact you don’t necessarily need to be actually there—in order for you to have difficul-ties,” he says.

While there are many factors that im-pact something as complicated as mental health, Carleton says there are four broad symptom groups associated with PTSD, whether through direct or indirect exposure to trauma: re-experiencing trauma through dreams or intrusive thoughts; avoiding stimul related to the traumatic event; nega-tive thoughts and mood, including being more likely to believe negative things about yourself; and hyperarousal—irritability and hypervigilance.

Dr. Arbuthnott once a week. Through a combination of medication, cognitive behav-ioural treatments and mindfulness he slowly began to heal. He learned how to open up to his wife and he found ways to cope—a workout at the gym, the uncondi-tional love of his dogs Heinz, Annie and Simba. Now when Kim sees a sign of stress he recognizes it as a red flag. It’s a signal to retreat from the field and take care of himself.

Recognizing a need for more support, the Lutheran Church set up a local com-mittee to meet with Kim at least twice a year, more if he feels the need. As well, they now fully fund his mission.

“I used to believe that my role was helping people—not asking for help,” says Kim. “But now I can say if I need help, I never hesitate asking.”

He said these words just after a sched-uled surgery. An ankle replacement would have him off his feet—and off the job—for at least six weeks.

Before the surgery, he went to Dojack to tell the boys he’d be away for a while. It pained him to think about not being there for them if they needed it.

“What?!” they yelled. They were pissed.

“I am so scared because I’ve never ever done this kind of major surgery!” Kim ad-mitted to them.

“You’re scared?” they asked.

“Yes,” he answered. “So I’m going to ask you guys, pray for me right now.”

Do you shoot and share photos and videos with friends, family and the world at large? Do you write texts, emails or blogs to communicate news, ideas and other important information? Interested in turning that into a career in journalism or communications? Or just want to better understand how it all works? Get started with a brand new course open to all students in Winter 2019, Introduction to Journalism (JRN 100). For more information contact the School of Journalism at 306-585-4420 or journalism@uregina.ca.

www.uregina.ca/arts/journalism
PRAIRIE
Grasslands can help fight climate change.

POWER
A farm couple hopes it’s not too late.

Story and photos
by
KATIE DOKE SAWATZKY
The small audience gathered at the Fort Qu'Appelle Senior Citizen's Recreation Hall gasps as water from a storm cell falls like a nuclear bomb on homesteads in Tuscany, Alberta. It’s as if the divine commitment to never again flood the earth was revoked for fun, just to see what would happen. Described as a “wet microburst” by local papers, for Tucson residents there would have been nothing micro about it.

Jared Clarke, standing to the left of the screen, pauses for the reaction and then moves on to the next slide. "You don't really care about things that you don't know about," says Martin. "Unless you've experienced the prairies and you know it makes your blood jump, you probably don't care about them."

It's not hard to speculate why southern Saskatchewan’s natural landscape—rolling plains of mixed and moist mixed grass with occasional groves of small trees or bush—doesn't garner the protection or fervour of, say, rainforests. The ecological community watching this slide show are harder to see because most of it unfurls in the grasses themselves. One quarter-section (160 acres) of native prairie is capable of supporting 50 different plant species, ranging from tall grasses to native prairie that Joni Mitchell's line—"against the plan's imposed national carbon tax. Saskatchewan misses out on $62 million as a result, funding offered to the prov-
Grass and Green Needlegrass to their mix, which also included native Slender and Western Wheatgrasses. Over the years, they’ve harvested seeds from the native wildflower garden in their front yard. When there’s a wet day, they drop the seeds on the ground in the pasture and push them into the soil with their feet. Now when they look out on the field, the purple heads of Prairie Clover, Wild Western Bergamot, Giant Hyssop and yellow stalks of Goldenrods dot the horizon.

“You’ll have an approximation of a prairie but you just won’t have the same thing,” says Neufeld. “Anybody who practices restoration will agree that conservation is best because once it’s gone, it’s gone. You cannot replace that. That took 10 to 15,000 years of evolution to happen.”

Martin and Clarke originally wanted to put their grassland back to its prehistoric use and raise bison on the land, but their neighbours politely shook their heads.

“They were like, ‘Oh boy, there’s no way,’” laughs Martin, who recalls being told they didn’t have the infrastructure to raise the massive creatures. After deciding they couldn’t make cows work either, they settled on goats, a smaller and more manageable ruminant. Since 2010, they’ve averaged 35 goats a year, but are down to 11 now. The goats keep the weeds down in the grassland in the summer. In the fall some of the animals are sold for meat in Regina.

It’s kidding season and, every two hours, Martin walks on the snowy path through the grove of spruce and ash lining the western side of the house. Her brown snow pants and orange toque stand out against the snow, which in March stubbornly sticks around. Six-year-old twins Teal and Rowan amble along, underneath the branches where chickadees sing. Past the trees and through the wooden gate is the small red barn, where goats and their kids keep warm under heat lamps, snuggled in hay. The first kids were born in the small field behind the barn five days ago, at the end of a bit- ter cold snap in the middle of the month. Martin regularly checks the field and brings any new kids into the barn so that their wet fur doesn’t freeze in the wind. Rowan and Teal feed grass to their favourite goat, Cutie, a white doe, and her new kid, Cockapoo.

Martin stays at home with the twins and the goats and works as a server at Bronco’s Pub and Grill in a nearby town, Pilot Butte, in the evenings. She had the twins right after she finished her master’s degree. Before that she worked as a field technician for Environment Canada and Ducks Unlimited. She hopes to work in biology again, when the kids are in school full time, but the scarcity of daycare near Edenwold makes it challenging. Her days are full, including acting as the secretary for Public Pastures-Public Interest, a small organization that raises awareness about native prairie in community pastures and public land.

The Public Pastures group holds its monthly meetings in Regina. While the conservation community in Saskatchewan is small, the farmers among them are even harder to find.

“We’ve kind of gone in our field!” says Lorette Scott, a 71-year-old farmer and friend of Martin and Clarke. Scott has farmed for 35 years near Indian Head and was Minister of the Environment for the Saskatchewan NDP from 1995 to 1999. An active bird-bander who works with national and international conservation organizations, Scott put a conservation easement on his land to protect the bush and wetlands that provide habitat for wildlife, something he says other farmers don’t understand. “I’m often considered to be non-progressive because I don’t bulldoze every tree down,” he says. He admires Clarke and Martin for the fact that they are young farmers putting the ecological value of the land first. “They are model young people that we need in our society, in rural Saskatchewan in particular where most of us are older.”

For Martin, living in the country with the twins can be isolating, but the land makes up for it. When they step outside their door, she says her kids see garter snakes, lots of different birds and wildflowers growing in the pasture.

The second half of Clarke and Martin’s cropland was seeded last summer, a field they plan to use for hay once the grass establishes, which could take a couple of years. Conscious of their carbon emissions from driving so much, they used their wedding money to put solar panels on their roof in 2016 and bought a hy- brid vehicle at the end of 2017. For Clarke, their lifestyle choices are a result of looking the future of the prairie in the face and realizing what’s at stake. The fact that 50 per cent of land-based
The danger of intense droughts hit home last summer, when their dugout went dry.

“We could potentially run out of water,” she says, “and so you really think about… how what you do affects the land because you need the land to survive.”

Martin’s words have even more import with the threat of climate change. While grassland has a myriad of ecological benefits like water and air filtration and soil stability, research from Diego Steinaker at the University of Regina in 2013 suggests that grasslands sequester more than double the amount of carbon in the ground per hectare, per year, than the Weyburn-Midale carbon storage project. So if prairie residents want climate solutions, all they have to do is look at the grass underneath their feet and make sure it stays there. When prairie is plowed, some studies show it loses around 50 per cent of the carbon stored in the soil through its plant matter.

“Native prairie should play an important part in… Saskatchewan’s climate change plans in the future,” says Clarke. “We need to protect native prairie so that it can continue to sequester carbon out of the atmosphere.”

After encouraging the group to pressure governments to pursue renewable energy and join initiatives like solar co-ops, Clarke ended his presentation in Fort Qu’Appelle by asking everyone what they would tell their grandkids, when, in 20 years, they ask, “What did you do to solve the climate crisis?” It was a bold question to pose to a room full of prairie people, who, at best, are conflicted about climate change and can see few alternatives to their current way of life. Weather variability is a natural part of the prairies and floods in Spain have little relevance in a larger province with a fraction of the population. But with wetter springs and drier summers projected for the rest of the century, the fate of Saskatchewan’s already threatened landscape is unclear. The patch of prairie Martin and Clarke restored is now safe, but much more remains unprotected.

“Can we call ourselves prairie people if there’s no more prairie left?” asks Clarke.
PHOTOGRAPHY, as Cornell Capa once said, “is the most vital, effective and universal means of communication of facts and ideas between peoples and nations.” Here at the School of Journalism we tend to agree. Whether our students go on to work at small town newspapers or big city magazines, in television, radio or online, they’ll be called upon to show and tell stories with photos. In our three core print classes, students are required to shoot photos for every story they write. In JRN 312 (Photojournalism), an elective now open to students from outside the School of Journalism, students spend an entire semester examining the role and placement of photojournalism in mass media and shoot assignments such as WHL hockey games, feature photos, portraits, breaking news and long-term personal projects. The photos on these pages are some of the best from our students in 2018.

Clockwise from top left: Firefighters douse hotspots after Lang’s Cafe, a popular restaurant in Regina, was destroyed by fire on April 4, 2018; The sun rises over early morning traffic on Regina’s Ring Road; The Regina Women’s March, Jan. 20, 2018.

Photo by Heidi Atter

Photo by Janelle Blakley

Photo by Harrison Brooks

Clockwise from top right: Murray MacDonald inside his food truck on a Regina street; Jeannine Hackl, a social work student at FNUniv, entered the program to empower Indigenous families; Regina Pats goaltender Max Paddock stands for the national anthem before playing the Prince Albert Raiders.

Photo by Madina Azizi

Photo by Jennifer Ackerman

Photo by Jim Pitk

Clockwise from top left: AWholeLotta GAYSHIT, Jan. 20, 2018; Regina Pats goaltender Max Paddock stands for the national anthem before playing the Prince Albert Raiders.

Photo by Heidi Atter

Photo by Harrison Brooks

Photo by Jennifer Ackerman

Clockwise from top right: Murray MacDonald inside his food truck on a Regina street; Jeannine Hackl, a social work student at FNUniv, entered the program to empower Indigenous families; Regina Pats goaltender Max Paddock stands for the national anthem before playing the Prince Albert Raiders.

Photo by Madina Azizi

Photo by Jennifer Ackerman

Photo by Jim Pitk
Interested in journalism or communications? We’re opening up select classes to outside students!

Rights and Responsibilities (JRN 302): A critical look at the social role and ethical responsibilities of the media. An introduction to journalistic responsibilities and legal parameters, including court reporting, image use, libel and slander, protecting sources, etc. A focus on understanding journalist rights, including freedom of expression, access to information, and the justice system.

Investigative Journalism (JRN 307): The history and social role of investigative journalism. Students will explore investigative tools and techniques, including accessing public information, approaching and interviewing hostile sources, computer assisted reporting, online resources, ethical pitfalls, journalistic numeracy, avoiding legal problems, ensuring accuracy, fact-checking and security.

Contemporary Issues in Journalism (JRN 308): This course examines selected topics of importance to journalists, and aims to promote critical responses to journalistic issues, interpreting and disseminating information about an increasingly complex world, technological advances in reporting, and developing journalistic fluency in a mediated culture.

Photojournalism (JRN 312): A detailed examination of the photojournalist’s role in the news gathering process. A focus on communicating through digital imagery and the power of visual storytelling, with emphasis on practical approaches, techniques and ethical image editing.

Magazine Writing (JRN 413): An intensive writing seminar/workshop with a focus on developing the creative voice and how to apply literary conventions to journalistic writing. A detailed examination of the roots of New Journalism, creative non-fiction, literary journalism, self-directed journalism and the freelance environment.

Indigenous Peoples and the Press (JRN 480): This course investigates the fairness, accuracy and inclusion of Indigenous representations in the media. Topics range from under-representation, under-reporting of Indigenous issues, media cultural imperialism, framing from the “romantic Indian” and “the Hollywood Indian” to the “criminal Indian” and difficult reporting challenges and alternatives.

For more information call 306-585-4420 or visit: www.uregina.ca/arts/journalism

Clockwise from top left: Jesse Gabrielle of the Regina Pats chirps the Swift Current Broncos’ bench during WHL action Friday, March 16, 2018; First year students Beth Giesbrecht, left, and Felicia Oostra hang out in Giesbrecht’s dorm room at Miller College of the Bible in Pormbrun, Sask.; The Konkel family raise and homeschool their seven children in this home in Bredesbury, Sask.; Horses make their way to the corral of the Pinay Ranch at Peepeekisis First Nation.

Photo by Brenna Engel
Photo by Lynn Giesbrecht
Photo by Alex Konkel
Photo by Annette Ermine
EMERGENCY

Each year about 40 Canadian first responders commit suicide. EMT Shane Kunz has learned the importance of seeking help.

Story and photos by REBBeca MARROQUIN
I hung the lifeless body of his close friend from the entrance. At the top of the stairs, the first sight was a set of stairs six feet away and each step felt like a mile. He reached the door. His feet were heavy, confirming death. There were three steps before reaching the door. His best friend, being comforted by the man he was supposed to comfort.

“The call was identified as ‘Echo’ the most life-threatening out of the others, Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, and Delta. It stands for non-confirmed death, an uncommon call in Melfort, the small Saskatchewan city where Shane Kunz worked as an EMT. Kunz was a week shy of 22 and had been a paramedic for less than a year. Each shift, he and his partner took turns driving the ambulance, while the other person treated the patient. That Saturday afternoon, it was Kunz’s turn to treat the patient.

They switched on the sirens and headed to the scene. Within minutes, Kunz and his partner received news that the emergency was downgraded to Bravo, meaning a death was confirmed. They turned the sirens off. They switched on the siren and headed to the scene. Within minutes, Kunz and his partner received news that the emergency was downgraded to Bravo, meaning a death was confirmed. They turned the sirens off.

A few hours later, Kunz was awakened by Thompson, dressed in winter attire. Oil, oxygen pressure, horn, and sirens were being crossed off the list, one by one, when suddenly the first dispatch of the day came through. He glanced at the clock—8:00 a.m.—and knew immediately something wasn’t right. Anxiously he walked to the door and turned the knob. A police officer stood in the hallway.

The news was beyond terrible. Walking alone along the highway, his best friend Thompson had been struck and killed by a passing vehicle.

The days and weeks passed. Kunz couldn’t walk through the room where Thompson’s belongings were scattered, so he moved into a vacant dorm room across the hall. The guilt was unbearable. How could he have let his best friend go for a walk so late at night?

He turned to counselling to help him cope, yet still his grades plummeted below the entrance requirements for medical school. He dropped out and moved back to Anaheim. There he found a job working for the village and made friends with a co-worker. Life was okay, but it wasn’t where he wanted to be. Unwilling to give up his dream to work in the medical field, he signed up for a paramedic course in Saskatchewan.

The third musketeer, Travis, now lived in Saskatoon, but Kunz turned down an offer to be his roommate because he did not want to risk losing him like he lost Thompson. He dove into his studies, though it was tough work. His practicums required him to treat actual patients in the field, which was highly stressful at times. One time he administered a medication that caused the patient’s airway to block. The patient survived but it was a nerve-wracking experience for a trainee. When he got through the training successfully, he felt more than ready to start fresh in a new town.

For Kunz, who had few close friends, the first time Bryce had done this so, with out question, Kunz fell back asleep.

Melfort is a small city about an hour’s drive from Anaheim. Kunz settled into a new job as an emergency medical technician, occasionally making the drive back home to visit his family. Once again, he was alone, outside the circle of Melfort’s social scene. When his old co-worker from the Anaheim village office moved to Melfort, they reconnected. Kunz was happy to have someone to hang out with again.

Meanwhile, Kunz’s job was very demanding. As an EMT, he witnessed trauma every single day, from people getting stabbed to vehicle collisions. Arriving on
the scene, Kunz had to first determine the victims' medical histories, to prevent allergic reactions. Often a patient's family members would curse and yell at him to stop asking questions and do his job, instead of providing needed information. Other times, work policies stood in the way of helping people. For example, once his crew was dispatched to a violent domestic dispute. They were first on the scene, but policy stated he couldn't enter the home before police arrived. So Kunz and his work partner were forced to sit in the ambulance on standby, knowing a woman inside was being beaten by a man. When things like that happened, Kunz was flooded with feelings of helplessness that were difficult to shake off. Since Kunz and his friend worked similar hour shifts, they would often meet up after work and go for a drink. It felt good to unwind. His hometown buddy was a charismatic guy, with a good job in Melfort and a steady girlfriend. Then one day Kunz arrived early to work, completed the routine ambulance check, and took the emergency call, never imagining it would end with seeing his friend at the top of the stairs, a victim of suicide. Kunz wondered how he could have missed the signs. “The training that I have, I know how to read people,” he says. “He literally showed nothing at all.” His supervisor gave him some time off to grieve. He was provided with counselling services, but in a week's time had to go back to work. Dealing with workplace trauma is especially difficult for EMTs, who are ethically bound not to share the things they see every day. “What happens at work, stays at work and doesn’t get told anywhere else,” Kunz explains. The Canadian Mental Health Association states that traumatic events can trigger the onset of PTSD after the original traumatic experience occurred. It also says that depression and drug or alcohol abuse can show up along with post-traumatic stress disorder. Jennifer Williams, the director of practice and research of the Saskatchewan College of Paramedics, says support for EMTs has improved over the last decade. In the past, “anyone suffering from any mental health issue or illness was looked down upon or treated poorly,” she says. “I think that there is more awareness now and more support for (mental health).” Still, available services have limitations. In Saskatchewan, most emergency medical services employers provide help lines and some counselling services for their employees, but additional sessions must be purchased out-of-pocket. Kunz took advantage of the counselling services offered by his employer. He’s glad he did. “If I didn’t use my resources or go talk to a counsellor, I would still be beating myself up over it,” he says. With the help of counselling, Kunz recovered and began to rebuild his life once more. He got a job working as a paramedic on the oil rigs in southern Saskatchewan in late 2017. His shifts were often 12 hours long. When a job offer in Grand Prairie, Alta., came up in the spring of 2018, he decided to take it. Before moving, he had a few days off to see friends and family. On April 6, he went to Saskatoon to celebrate a friend’s birthday at a bar. It was a carefree moment, the future stretching ahead. And then one of his friends checked Facebook. The news was horrifying: a bus carrying the Humboldt Broncos hockey team had been involved in a bad accident. Humboldt was just 34 kilometres from St. Peter’s College in Muenster, where he’d studied after high school. Kunz was friends with some of the players, and a memory of scrimmaging against them came to his mind. A terrible feeling grew in his stomach. As the news unfolded, he learned two of his friends, Conner Lukan and Logan Schatz, were among the 16 killed. “Losing people does have an effect on me,” says Kunz. “My mental health is not what it used to be.” He adds, “Honestly, I thought I suffered from depression because I would wonder on the daily, why, every time I try to get close to someone, (do) they pass away?” Four days after the bus accident, Kunz traveled to Humboldt one last time before moving to Grand Prairie. He went to every convenience store in town looking for a Humboldt Strong sticker to paste on his vehicle in memory of his friends. If nothing else, the multiple tragedies reveal the importance of seeking help. Whether through work or life in general, Kunz has seen more tragedy than most his age. Beyond professional counsellors, he has come to appreciate the love of friends and family. “Just knowing I have people who care about me, gets me by every day,” he says, before climbing into his vehicle for the 16-hour drive ahead.
Belch!

Cud chewers or climate change culprits? The science may surprise you.

Story and photos by LAURA STEWART
a truck, with just a few heifers held back of those calves were quickly loaded onto cows bawling for calves on weaning day where I grew up. I remember the din of Grant, acting as roadie, tasked with keeping I had come to the corral with my husband, tractor before moving on to other chores. fresh bale that Trevor had placed with his out in their pasture.

The calves I was watching had settled a a bull.

The calves I was watching had settled a a bull.

But there’s a problem. Each time that
spent outside feedlots, mostly on cow-calf operations. Ominski said on average, cattle get about 80 per cent of their lifetime feed as pasture.

For Canadian cattle production, Ominski and her fellow researchers gathered detailed statistical data to calculate methane emissions per kilogram of beef produced, for the years 1981 and 2011. “In that 30-year timeframe, we’ve seen like a 17 per cent reduction in enteric methane emissions,” she said. “Not really a lot of that reduction is because of improvements in overall production efficiency on farms.”

Another study asked which farms were most efficient, and why. Getting good growth from individual animals was only part of the picture. For example, efficient operations culled more of their cattle, selling them for meat, instead of keeping them in the herd for future breeding. This avoids wasting feed on less productive animals or on those that aren’t producing at all, such as cows that don’t get pregnant.

At GBT Angus, they cull heavily. Sometimes this simply means choosing one replacement heifer over another. But sometimes it means a tougher decision. Just two weeks before our visit, with their annual bull sale coming up in the next month, Travis had decided three of the bulls weren’t up to the reputation of their ranch. Sold for meat, they brought far less money than they would have in GBT’s online auction of breeding stock. “It was kind of banking on that income,” Cheryl said.

Still, there’s only so much you can do to make cattle production more efficient. Any one of those things can run counter to healthy eating mantras. Take hormone-free beef, for example. When I was a teenager, on the day we prepared calves for their fall calving, I instructed, and drove a mile south, and a place in a landscape where every struggling spruce tree along the dense row of spruce trees along the road, looking thoroughly out of place in a landscape where every struggling lone poplar tree contains a hawk nest.

Late last January, getting directions from Kevin Beach on the phone, I pictured those spruce trees. At the far side of the village, I turned off the highway as instructed, and drove a mile south, and a mile east. In the gently rolling fields to either side, golden crop-stubble stalks stood up from the white-covered ground in lawn-like precision. But closer to my destination, the slopes grew steeper, and the shallow snow disappeared among taller, thicker stems of dry grasses the colour of whole-grain bread. I had arrived in one of those remnant grassland areas you can see in satellite imagery amid the rigid grid of cropland. It’s part of the Missouri Coteau, a band of rough, rising ground that stretches across southern Saskatchewan and on southeastward into North Dakota. On the Beach farm, more than a third of the land is native prairie and of the rest, Kevin told me, “a lot of it probably should have never been broke.”

He and Donna Bryck-Beach toured me through some of it. Leaving my Prius at the farmhouse, we took their SUV to a feeding area across the road, where they called “Boo! Boo! Choo!” and brought some young cattle trotting in from the pasture for a measured ration of grain. We drove further toward the south, looking for the mature cows. Kevin pointed out some hay he had spread for them on a cultivated field. As the animals fed there, their manure and manure wash would return some nutrients to the soil. But the cows hadn’t found the hay yet.

We doubled back and found them right next to the farmyard. The youngest animals were there in the yard, tosy, in a separate pen where they had lived on feed since their late-fall weaning. In another month or so, in March, they would go to the pasture across the road. Leaving the cattle to their outdoor lives, we went inside to chat about the history of the farm over coffee.

Pastures failed here from lack of rain in 1988, Donna said, recalling the challenge she and Kevin faced just three years after they married. She came from Saskatchewan’s moister Parkland region. “It was kind of a shock, in terms of the dust and the drought,” she said. They had to send their cattle north that year “because there was nothing for them to eat.”

Kevin and his extended family, including his father and uncles, had been farming together since 1982. They had always tended to use more natural, low-input cropping methods such as plowing down a clover crop to enrich the soil, and never liked using chemicals. Tractors back then didn’t offer much of a cab for protection against the chemical mist. “We’d be spraying — my brother and I — and your house would pound for two weeks after that,” he recalled.

With the extra financial challenge of the drought, Kevin and Donna gave up the chemicals entirely, and got cropland certified organic in 1989. More recently, they simplified their cattle operation as well. By shifting the calving season later into the spring, so the animals can calve on pasture with minimal assistance. Donna said they try to “let them be...
as natural as possible, and not to handle them as much.” The approach is easier on both the cattle and the couple. “There’s no fun in calving in February,” Donna said—but the benefits go only as far as the farm gate. She hunted for words to describe the organic beef business.

“Full of obstacles,” Kevin chimed in. When you grow grain, you can store it and wait for the best time to sell, but when a mature beef animal goes unsold, it passes its prime—and keeps on eating. Where an independent butcher shop might have bought a whole carcass, retail chains will take only certain cuts of meat. These ranchers believe they have a good product, but the trouble is connecting with people who could grow to appreciate it.

“For us, I kind of wish we were a little bit younger,” Donna said, and Kevin joined her in a hearty laugh.

The next generation on this land may see the benefits. “Our youngest daughter is very seriously wanting to be a farmer,” Donna said. “(It) scares me, on some levels, but I’m also very proud of the fact that she wants to do that, too.”

A bison herd near Irvine, Alta. Comparing present-day cattle herds with historic bison across the 10 American states within their former range, two New Zealand-based researchers estimated the cattle are burping up only 14 per cent more methane each year than the bison had.

At the close of our interview, I mused on the complexity of the issues around beef production. As she gazed out her dining room window toward a hillside brown with the same grasses the bison once grazed, Donna suggested it may not be so complicated.

“What else are you going to do with that prairie?” she asked. An even broader question is: What are we going to do with our agricultural land? The call to “eat less beef” suggests that for every foregone steak, there will be a little less methane wafting skyward, and a little more grain available to make bread instead of being fed to cows.

But how much difference would that make? What if we completely eliminated meat production? A recent U.S. study modeled the effects on agriculture in that country and the implications for human diets. The results suggested that emissions from agriculture would decrease 28 per cent—but as a fraction of total U.S. emissions, the decrease would be only 2.6 per cent. And although cropping could shift somewhat from cattle feed grains to human foods like soy, it’s unlikely that fruit and vegetable produc-
Amiro said there’s nothing wrong with being vegetarian, but it’s misleading to promote it as an environmental action here in Canada. “You have to imagine where your vegetables come from in January on the prairies, and there’s an environmental cost to access those vegetables,” he said. Even plant foods produced here in Canada have their own environmental impacts. If farmers plow up grassland to grow crops instead of beef, the soil loses carbon to the atmosphere. If they fertilize the crops with nitrogen, some is lost every year as another greenhouse gas, nitrous oxide—and it’s almost 10 times more potent than methane.

Roland Kroebel uses models to study how farmers can change the carbon and nitrogen cycles to boost efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. When I spoke to him, he had just returned to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada’s research and development centre in Lethbridge, Alta., after a presentation to farmers in Leduc. He compares the nitrogen cycle to a leaky pipe. “You can fix one hole, but then all you do is basically get more out of another hole,” Kroebel said. “It’s hard to plug all the holes at the same time. But then also the trouble is that sometimes you try to avoid one greenhouse gas, and that causes another greenhouse gas to go up on the other end.”

The science of agricultural greenhouse gases is a very active field. For example, another Lethbridge researcher, Sean McGinn, uses lasers to detect methane in the air upwind and downwind of cattle pens, or even in the open air above a grazing herd. Ed Bork, a rangeland ecologist at the University of Alberta, has explored how grazing affects soil carbon storage, and how soil microbes take up or release methane and nitrous oxide under treed areas, pasture or cropland.

Studies like these reveal a bewildering web of interacting effects, all complicated by natural factors such as soil types, seasons and weather. Kroebel explained that some very complex models try to build in as much detail as possible, to test their output against real observations and to see how well our current scientific explanations work.

Other simpler models, like the one he was presenting to farmers, focus on larger long-term patterns that are fairly well understood. Kroebel looks at the main greenhouse gases, carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide, at the level of a whole farm. The model helps farmers see how changing one part of the farm operation will change other parts, shift the balance among the gases, and thus change the overall impact on the climate.

None of that is very helpful when you’re standing in the grocery store aisle, deciding what to eat. When I asked Kroebel about easy, uncomplicated ways to reduce emissions, he replied, “The easiest way would be you stop eating, but nobody really wants that.” He pointed out that, according to atmospheric scientists, even if you succeed in reducing both methane and nitrous oxides, you are merely delaying climate change and not preventing it.

After we talked, Kroebel emailed me back. A colleague had reminded him that there actually is one easy action for consumers: waste less. No matter which food we choose, a farm had to emit greenhouse gases (GHG) to produce it. “So any food that’s grown for nothing (thrown away), emits GHG for nothing in return,” Kroebel wrote.

And often our much-maligned livestock help reduce waste. Ominski said cattle are able to eat fibrous by-products from processing human foods like hemp and sunflower seeds. Cattle will even tolerate sprouted or mouldy grain, turning these otherwise waste materials into nutrients for people. If climate change brings unpredictable harvest weather and more crop spoilage, this role could become even more important.

Again and again, researchers reminded me that cattle help grasslands stay healthy and productive. Reducing the cattle herd would have its own environmental cost. At best, it would buy us some time to address the fundamental problem.

Amino pointed to the elephant in the room. “We have to keep in mind that most of our climate change issues are driven by fossil fuel emissions, and that we wouldn’t even be having this conversation if our fossil fuel emissions were zero,” he said.

Or as Kevin Beach put it: “I hope the focus doesn’t become on the rumenant animal, at the expense of keeping all the automobiles on the highway.”

O n the GBT Angus website, Trevor and Cheryl write, “Being that our boys are the sixth generation on this farm we want them to have the opportunity to one day take the reins if they so
They don’t know what the land was originally like, or how it changed through the disastrous dust storms of the 1930s and beyond, but they find clues along the field edges. “The fences lines seem like they’re the ones that grew the really rich grass, and it’s because of the topsoil that’s sitting there from the neighbours or from your other fields,” Trevor said. He and Cheryl want to make their whole farm as rich and productive as those edges.

By keeping cattle on the land, rotating them through small paddocks to give the grass more recovery time between pulses of grazing, and feeding imported hay. On the grain region, “to see if there’s any differences in pasture systems at sites across the Prairie region, “to see if there’s any differences in pasture systems at sites across the Prairie region,” said Ed Bork, the range ecologist from Alberta. 

The Branvolds have had to search for information around the fringes of mainstream-oriented agricultural research. But Ed Bork, the range ecologist from Alberta, said there is strong scientific interest in “adaptive multi-paddock grazing” (AMP) systems like theirs. He is in on a study comparing neighbouring AMP and traditional pasture systems at sites across the Prairies region, “to see if there’s any differences in everything from plant biodiversity to plant production to soil carbon, greenhouse gas emissions, a whole plethora of things.”

With or without research support, the Branvolds will keep looking for ways to improve both their land and their herd for the long term. But will the public continue to support the beef industry?

In England, the prominent environmental columnist George Monbiot has been touting cultured meat as a replacement for livestock production and a pathway to “rewilding”—totally giving former agricultural land over to nature. Here in North America, in 1987, Deborah Popper and Frank J. Popper brought together various proposals for large-scale prairie restoration into the concept of a “Buffalo Commons” stocked with bison and other wildlife, and extending through multiple U.S. states. Although the scheme drew bitter criticism, more moderate versions continue to intrigue and inspire supporters. Who knows? Perhaps someday the driest parts of the Plains will look more like they did before the settlers came. But for the foreseeable future, the moister grasslands and parklands still need grazing, and beef producers still need customers.

The one thing I can recommend to each consumer is go out and get to know the farmer that produces your food,” said Kroebl. “They know, usually quite well, how to treat their lands, and how to be sustainable. And they try to do their best to be sustainable, because usually, at least with family farms, they think further than just their own generation.”

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