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Grade 3 students at Public School No. 121,
Santiago, Chile.

And Justice for All

Roots drive David Falconer to pursue social equity

Christmas Cheer

Wishing Tree standing tall
for two decades

Food and Nutrition

More pleasure, less pain
this feasting season

Creston Museum

War effort not limited
to overseas duty

Inside... *Holiday Greetings* Pull-out Section
Greetings, characters, lore, trivia, puzzles, recipes, crafts and more!

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is all

Wrapped Up



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Canuto River, was both a recreational spot as well as Falconer's once a month bath.

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David Falconer, who learned resiliency in the face of adversity at a young age, lives by the creed of helping those who can't help themselves.

The Magazine

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Holiday Greetings Centre Pull-Out Section

*Greetings, characters,
lore, trivia, puzzles,
recipes, crafts and more!*

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Guest From the editor

David Falconer is well-known around town as an educator, having spent the past decade in Creston, first as vice-principal at Prince Charles Secondary School (PCSS), then principal at Erickson elementary (EES) and now serving in the same capacity at Canyon-Lister (CLES) and Yahk elementaries. He's also in charge of international student recruiting for School District No. 8 (Kootenay Lake).

In all he's spent a dozen years as a teacher and the same number as an administrator in a handful of B.C. outposts –Lillooet, Penticton, Port Hardy and Salmo are the others – since earning his teachers' degree in Edmonton in the 1980s.

Locally Falconer initiated a handful of programs in keeping with his motto: to live a positive life, no matter what. The "no matter what" part comprises a large portion of his life story, which is chronicled in the pages of this, the December issue of *I Love Creston*. At a time of year when people often look beyond themselves to the needs of others, in keeping with the Christian roots of the Christmas season, who more fitting to profile than a man who backs up the following words with action: "It's a small world and it continues to get smaller. We need to take care of each other. It's our responsibility."

In conjunction with the Creston Rotary Club, Falconer co-sponsored the PCSS Interact program which provides volunteering opportunities in foreign countries. With the College of the Rockies (COTR) he started Grow Your Own Lunch, which promoted knowledge of agriculture and nutrition among three grades at EES. Students were mentored by volunteers in growing edible plants at

the Community Greenhouse which were donated to the Creston Valley Gleaners Society food bank.

Out of this program sprouted the Creston Valley Food Action Coalition, which now oversees a farmers' market that runs through three seasons at three locations.

A free, hot lunch program established by New Life Church at EES while Falconer was principal has been running for half-a-dozen years. At CLES, Falconer got students involved in Harvest Share, which benefits individuals in need through the food bank.

He sponsored the 30 Hour Famine at PCSS to raise awareness of global hunger-related issues as well as money for UNICEF. He also launched *The Voice*, a monthly, high school student-drive page in the Creston Valley Advance which branched into *It's Elementary* when he moved to EES.

"In both cases I started these pages with the intentions of providing students with experiences that would translate into, 'We have a voice, we have minds and we have the potential to transform,'" he says.

"I also partnered with Mount Hall Elementary School in Porthill to create the Hands Across Borders program to bring better relationships and understanding between Canadian and U.S. students. EES students travelled to Mount Hall where they met students and exchanged ideas about our countries."

By September 2012, Falconer anticipates flying the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) flag at CLES, which would make it the only such sanctioned school in the province.

"This privilege will be due to all the work that this school is doing

in the areas of the environment, understanding human rights and fund-raising," he says.

Falconer-led fund-raising efforts went toward digging wells in India and buying school supplies for African countries as well as the earthquake-stricken Chilean city of Concepcion. CLES is currently raising money to build a playground in the impoverished inner-city school Falconer attended in Santiago.

"These experiences have provided students with the opportunity to learn that they can have a positive impact in the lives of others," he says. "The experience itself provides learning. Connections happen and then these learning experiences become real, become part of who they are.

"It also provides them with the knowledge that they are truly blessed to live in a country such as Canada."

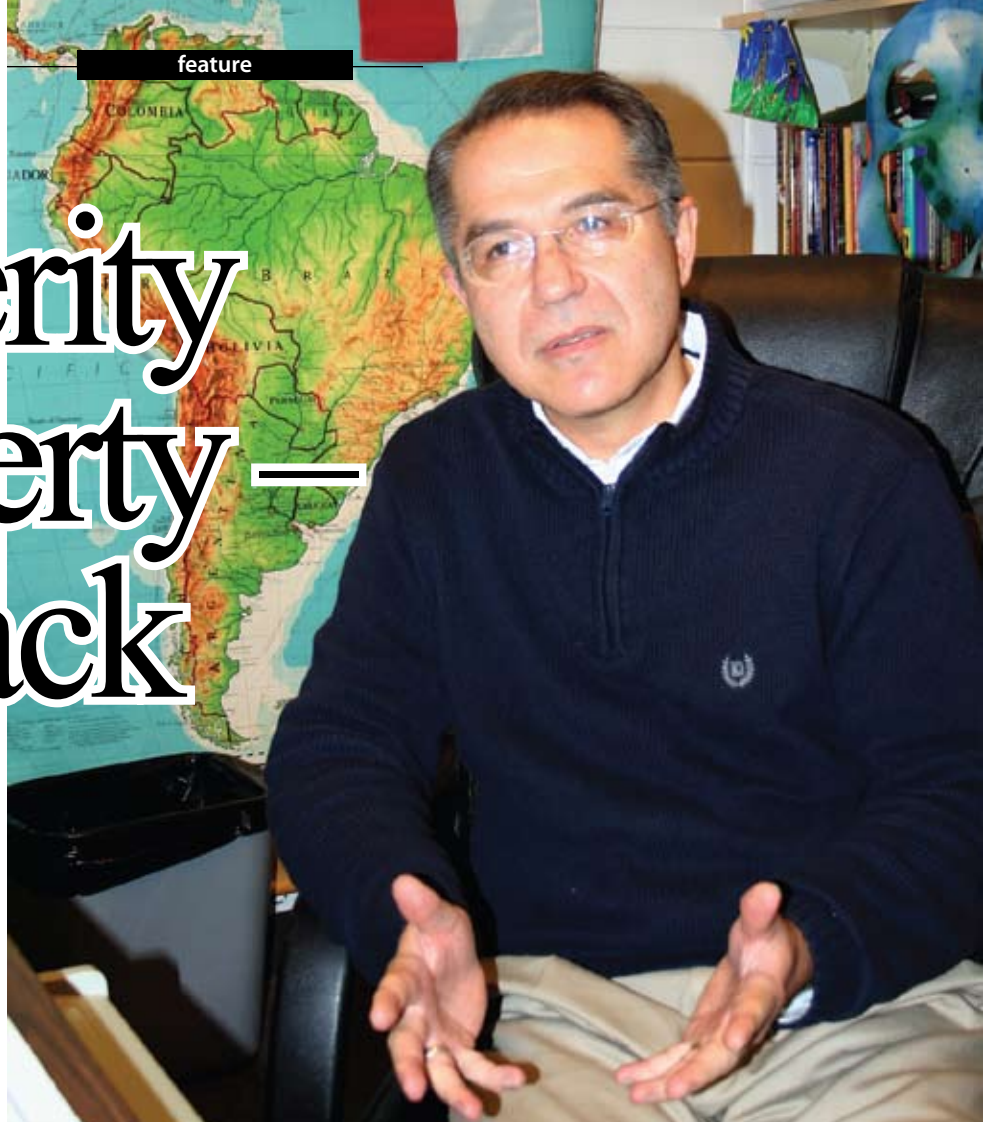
And Creston is blessed to have had Falconer, wife Roma and their two sons call this valley home for the past decade, according to friend and recently retired colleague Leonard DeVuono, who describes him as always accessible and fully engaged.

"David cares unceasingly about the emotional, educational, social and physical needs of children and is a tireless advocate for the rights of children to have a secure, safe and progressive place at which to learn," DeVuono says. "He is tenacious and unrelenting in not compromising his beliefs about the rights of all children to an equitable public school education."

As for Falconer's future goals, an autobiography entitled *B.E.L.I.E.V.E.* is set for completion this winter, and beyond that he quotes Richard Back: "Here is the test to find whether your mission on Earth is finished: if you're alive, it isn't." ■

Prosperity to Poverty – and Back

Creston Valley educator experienced the extremes of social injustice during a tumultuous childhood in South America



David Falconer recalls the first day he attended Public School No. 121 in Santiago, his Chilean home town. He was eight, had been born with a proverbial silver spoon in his mouth and was at once confused, shocked, embarrassed and terrified to be transferred from a cushy private institution to a low-income school in the midst of a shanty town.

“Most of its students came from homes where a decent meal was rare,” he says, “where most parents were not much more literate than their sons and daughters. On my first day of school they looked at me as if I had come from another planet. I initially thought and felt the same.”

Within four years No. 121 would seem like a dream compared to the

nightmare of living with strangers in the Amazon jungle, cut off from civilization and attending a “school” where survival was the primary subject and machetes, not pencils, were on the supply list.

By age 14 he was gone from South America, relocated with his parents to Canada, far from the political turmoil of Chile where Gen. Augusto Pinochet had seized power from the democratically elected government in a bloody coup within sight of where the Falconers lived.

He didn’t go back until 2008, by which time he’d been in Creston for seven years and was bearing a \$6,000 cheque for School 121 raised through Erickson elementary, where he was the principal.

Indeed, Falconer never forgot his roots – his parents made sure of that – which is a big reason why he is committed to broadening local pupils’ world view and furthering the cause of social justice, near and far. He does this through innovative educational programs and by raising money to improve the lot of students back in Santiago, where he was born in 1962 and has visited twice more in the past three years.

Things are stable now compared to that infamous day in 1973 – Sept. 11 – when the young Falconer “witnessed the bombing of the presidential palace, helicopters, tanks, machine gun fire outside our front yard, corpses floating down the canal next to my home, friends

that were apprehended and taken to concentration camps, friends that disappeared, the smell of burned bodies at night. It was a horrible period,” he says.

Not 48 hours earlier it had been a joyous occasion in the Falconer residence, a celebration of his mother Mafalda’s 50th birthday. Not that times hadn’t been troubled in Chile for several years, however.

Government opposition was manifesting itself in bombings and assassinations, inflation was running

Maria, Falconer’s paternal grandmother, was widowed at 16 when her husband died of tuberculosis. Her home and everything in it burned when a candle near her husband’s coffin set a curtain ablaze.

She moved to Bolivia with her two sons, including Falconer’s father, James, enduring dreadful conditions while working long hours at multiple jobs.

“Amongst fleas, lice, cockroaches and a horrible infestation of rats,

Ignoring pressure to “find a man to take care of her,” Maria eventually trained as a social worker and became a union and political activist, even going to jail several times for her role in demonstrations.

“Maria’s belief that she could be a tool for transformation made her fight for change even at her own personal risk,” Falconer says. “What an incredible example for those two boys,” both of whom obtained university degrees.

Maria married Pedro, a Mapuche Indian from Chile, in her 50s, and Falconer embraced him as his nono, or grandpa.

“Nono had his own stories to tell,” Falconer says, “stories of abuse, sacrifice, injustice, discrimination and racism in his own land. What used to impress me was the fact that these stories always had an incredible, positive message.

“Nono used to say that our power lied in how we responded to the circumstances in our lives. Circumstances, within themselves, are inherently neutral, so he used to say it is human judgment that assigns positive and negative values to those circumstances. For him, it was the irony of life that the challenges of difficult times can produce the most happiness in the end.”

“It was the irony of life that the challenges of difficult times can produce the most happiness in the end”

into four digits and only the bare essentials were available in stores – to those who could afford them.

“Reflecting on these very chaotic years I have realized how, as a young child, I developed critical resilient abilities by watching adults around me model resilient thinking and behaviour in response to adversity and stress,” Falconer says. “Both my nono and my grandmother Maria had been incredible examples of strength and vision.”

All of Falconer’s grandparents immigrated to South America from Europe in the early 1900s.

“As kids, my parents experienced poverty and family disintegration,” he says. “On my mother’s side, the entire Jewish family living in Germany disappeared during the Nazi regime. On my dad’s side, contact with the entire Scottish family in Europe ended with the beginning of World War II. Also, my parents lost their fathers when they were just young kids, so the two teenage mothers had to fend for themselves.”

she believed that things were going to improve,” he says. “It took Maria approximately 10 years to have the finances to return to Chile,” only to find that “the situation was financially not much better.”



Celebrating Mafalda's 50th birthday.

Huallaga River, Amazon.



Falconer drew strength from these examples many times, including December 1973 when, at age 11, he fled the chaos of Pinochet-ruled Chile for the relative safety of Peru with the oldest of four brothers.

“Saying goodbye to my family was difficult,” Falconer says. “Thirty-eight years later, I still remember the feel of my heart pounding, hammering against my rib cage.”

He clearly harboured no ill will toward his parents for having yanked him out of private school and plunked him into No. 121 three years earlier, despite its jarring effect. His folks, after all, had worked their way out of poverty by the time Falconer came along, “the nights when my mother had to stay up to ensure my older brothers wouldn’t get bitten by rats running throughout the house, if we could call it a house,” becoming a distant memory.

James, labouring by day, earned a degree in civil engineering after many years of night school and landed a well-paying government job.

“Thirty-eight years later, I still remember the feel of my heart pounding, hammering against my rib cage”

“By the time I arrived he was building a beautiful home in a beautiful, upscale neighbourhood of Santiago where poverty was something other people experienced,” Falconer says. “(But) even though the tough financial times had disappeared, my parents never forgot their past.”

It was in this context that Mafalda decided her youngest child’s “education was not quite finished” and required placement in an unheated public school where cold



Cumana, Venezuela Falconer's home for 18 months.

winds whipped in from the Andes through gaps around the doors and windows, supplies were minimal and other students did not enjoy the luxury of nice homes or decent clothing.

“I felt like my parents had pulled the rug (out from) under me,” says Falconer, who nonetheless “was

Falconer’s enrolment in the school of hard knocks wasn’t complete, however, until after the move to Peru, where he lived with his brother in Lima for just three months. “Unable to provide me with a school where he was working,” his brother turned the lad over to “a family I had never met before” who lived in the Amazonian village of Tocache – “middle of nowhere, no radio, newspapers, no media whatsoever.”

“I had never understood what loneliness meant before this,” Falconer says. “For over a year I didn’t have a proper shower or bother brushing my teeth. My stomach, unable to eat the local foods, screamed in pain (from) intestinal worms which didn’t disappear for as long as I lived in the jungle.”

In retrospect, he realizes how perilously close to death he was from a combination of disease, hunger and malnutrition.

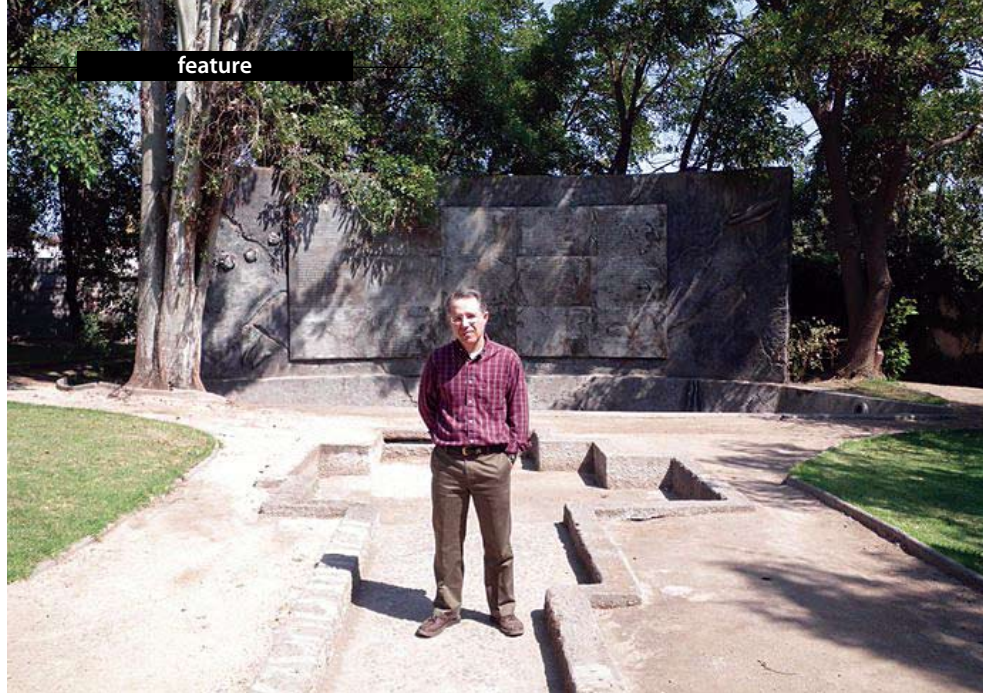
“I look back now and it’s actually like a movie. ‘Wow, did that really happen?’” he says. “Once again I was confronted with the injustice that exists in Third World countries

and it bothered me. I promised that some day I would do everything possible to help those unable to help themselves.”

With conditions not improving on the home front, Falconer’s parents left Chile, reclaimed their youngest son and relocated to Venezuela for 18 months before coming to Canada in 1976, sponsored by another son, Horacio, who preceded them in Edmonton as a refugee.

“Initially things were difficult as I did not speak any English,” he says. “(But) it became clear that my new home was going to offer me opportunities unheard of and that this particular gift came with responsibilities.”

Falconer soon felt called to the field of education and founded the Latin American-Canadian Student



Concentration Camp Pinochet, 5 minutes from Falconer’s Chilean home.

first in his family to pay for all his schooling.

“I was also inspired by one of my brothers who, while going to

of over 40 of the poorest students was overwhelming for this young university physics student. This was truly a case of ‘becoming the change you wish to see in the world.’

“Some would question what good did my brother do during those two years? I am not sure. What it is possible to consider, though, is that his presence, filled with a sense of responsibility for others’ welfare, gave many of these children the only reason for coming to school.”

Falconer is startled at the clarity of his life-long memories, both good and bad, which he’s compiling in an autobiography titled B.E.L.I.E.V.E. (portions of which are quoted in this story).

“I know why I remember, or maybe I should say, I know why I must remember,” he says. “My answer lies in the fact it helps me correct each day the way I live my life, or how I need to dedicate my life.

“Having experienced School 121, school in the Amazon and remembering being taught by family, friends and grandparents all led me to where I am today.” ■

“Having experienced School 121, school in the Amazon and remembering being taught by family, friends and grandparents all led me to where I am today”

Association at the University of Alberta in 1987, fund-raising to buy school supplies for various Central American countries. He became the

university in Chile, volunteered to become a teacher in one of the poorest schools in Santiago,” he says. “Teaching in an intermediate grade

David Falconer conducts a brainstorming session over lunch with his CLES newspaper committee: (from left) Richard Blackmore, Olivia Kettle, Meredith Cote and Emma Penner.





From the Mayor's desk

Story by: Ron Toyota,
Mayor of the Town of Creston

The Holiday Train is coming! Take up the challenge!

On Monday, Dec. 12, at 9:45 a.m. we will once again be treated to a special CP Holiday Train musical performance, with another cheque being presented to the Gleaners food bank.

the funds to our food bank and the Creston Valley Ministerial Association Christmas hamper program. This is perfect timing for the distribution of 400-plus hampers on Dec. 20.

"Let's raise \$5,000-plus and present the funds to our food bank and the Creston Valley Ministerial Association Christmas hamper program"

This year's entertainment will feature Valdy and his Rock and Roll Song. Valdy entertained the Creston Valley at this year's Blossom Festival celebration in May. Also riding the Holiday Train are Tracey Brown (part of Canada's most-awarded country group, Family Brown) and the Brothers Dube (10-, 12- and 13-year-olds from Ottawa).

On Dec. 13, 2009, the CP Holiday Train stopped in Creston near Millennium Park, providing pre-Christmas entertainment for all age groups. Additionally, a cheque for \$1,500 was presented to the Gleaners for its food bank program, along with many food items.

This special train did not travel through our valley in 2010 as the two Holiday Trains travel different routes on alternate years, but it's back for 2011.

So here is my mayor's challenge: let's raise \$5,000-plus and present

I will personally be giving \$500 to this worthy cause and it is my challenge to every employed or successfully retired person that they contribute what they can. A tax receipt will be available for those able to give \$20 or more.

Last year the hamper program raised \$25,000 from local organizations and groups. I would like to see anyone in the Creston Valley who did not participate with their respective businesses, places of employment or volunteer groups to open their hearts and, where possible, their wallets to those less fortunate at this special time of year. This is the season for giving.

Please bring or mail your donation to Town Hall at 138 10th Ave. N. (Box 1339). Thank you.

Merry Christmas and season's greetings to all. ■

Ron Toyota can be reached by phone at 250-428-2214, e-mail at Ron.Toyota@creston.ca or on the web at www.creston.ca.



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**MAKING A DIFFERENCE,
ONE STOP AT A TIME**

Foundation grants total \$28,000 for 2011

Story by: Peter Hephner

Two new directors, Ted Hutchinson and Heather Suttie, were elected to the board of the Creston-Kootenay Foundation (CKF) at the organization's annual general meeting Oct. 25.

Lon Main and Peter Hephner, whose three-year terms were expiring, were returned as directors and Nicole Nilsson,

who had been serving for one year, was re-elected for an additional two years.

The CKF, a non-profit body, is a member of the Community Foundations of Canada. It accepts donations of cash, securities, real property, bequests, etc., and invests them in perpetuity. Being registered with the Canada Revenue Agency it is

entitled to issue tax-deduction receipts to its donors.

Ken Gadick of Gadick, Minichiello and Carr, the group's auditor, told the meeting that the foundation's assets exceeded \$634,000 as of May 31.

Each year the proceeds from its investments are distributed in the form of grants to non-profit groups serving the area between Riondel and Yahk. President Larry Brierley told the AGM that the 11 grants for 2011 totalled \$28,000.

The largest grant, \$9,200, went to the Therapeutic Activation Program (TAPS) for its healthy meals for seniors project. Another substantial grant of \$9,000 went into a three-way partnership with the East Kootenay Foundation for Health and an anonymous donor to purchase a \$27,000, extra-long bariatric bed for Swan Valley Lodge.

In his annual report, Brierley rated the soiree held in June and attended by more than 120 diners and dancers as one of the highlights of the CKF's year. He also paid tribute to Julie Ewashen, winner of the group's volunteer-of-the-year award, and thanked Alex Nilsson for raising a substantial contribution to the CKF fund with his 24-hour golf marathon on the longest day of the year.

At a board meeting following the AGM, Brierley was returned as the foundation's president and Main was chosen vice-president. Other officers elected were Vern Ronmark, back as treasurer, and Suttie as secretary.

Creston town Coun. Joanna Wilson will continue representing elected local government officials in the Town of Creston and areas A, B and C of the Regional District of Central Kootenay, and Suttie will double as chairman of the Youth Advisory Committee. ■

Brierley encouraged anyone interested in learning more about the CKF, or wondering about how to donate to it, to visit its Web site at www.ckfoundation.com.

Creston Valley Business Buzz



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Much to offer at December market

Story by: Jen Comer, Creston Valley Farmers' Market Manager

The snow has crept down the mountains (and is probably sticking to the ground by the time you're reading this). Gardens have been put to rest for the winter. Evenings are spent inside, snuggled under a quilt, sipping hot cocoa. Sigh. The holiday season is upon us. I always look forward to this time of year. It means no matter how much I neglected getting the last of the garden taken care of, it's over.

Fortunately, just because I let the frost hit the last of my produce, it doesn't mean I go without local food this time of year. The Creston Valley Farmers' Market is a bounty of winter squashes, apples, carrots, beets, onions, garlic, potatoes and more. There's still time to purchase larger quantities of produce and store them for the winter.

My favourite method for storing winter squashes is washing the dirt

off and wiping the squash with vinegar. Then I let them air dry on the counter and pack them away in my garage with air space between each one. The vinegar acts as a sanitizer and the garage stays cool, but not cold.

"Buying gifts locally is a unique experience"

Looking for a delicious squash recipe? Check out Heidi at FoodDoodles.com for her Locavore's Cookbook submission in the Creston Valley Advance. We've got one more reason for you to join us every Saturday at the farmers' market . . . (insert drum roll) . . . we've got fresh gourmet waffles being served up by the Blueberry Patch Country Market! With fresh fruit toppings, whipping cream and maple syrup, it's a good reason join us for a late breakfast or for lunch. After you're done munching on your waffle and sipping on your coffee, take a stroll around the market to tick off your Christmas shopping list. We've got gifts for kids: think handmade wooden toys with eco-friendly finishes, marshmallow guns, toques, activity aprons and handmade candy.

For the men, try a bolero tie, knit slippers or a wine rack. Ladies are always easy to please with gifts from the market; check out the wide selection of handmade jewelry, furniture from reclaimed wood products or a matching table setting with placemats and table runners.

For anyone, edible gifts are always a hit. Pick up jars of honey, jams, jellies, pickles, salsa or pickled eggs.



Don't worry if you don't have time for all your holiday baking. There are lots of delicious cookies and squares at the market that you can put in your freezer and pull out for holiday gatherings. Buying gifts locally is a unique experience. When you buy a gift, learn about the person who made it and then tell the story to the gift receiver. You can be guaranteed that a gift with a story behind it is that much more special. ■

Find us online: www.CrestonValleyFarmersMarket.ca; www.Facebook.com/CrestonValleyFarmersMarket; and, www.Twitter.com/CVFarmMarket. Or call market manager Jen Comer at (250) 977-5362.



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Little Artist of the Month



Kati Foy
Age 9

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The wars on the home front

Story by: Tammy Hardwick
Manager - Creston & District Museum & Archives

I was recently asked to give a talk at Toastmasters about the work done in Creston to support the First and Second world wars. With Christmas rapidly approaching, the spirit of giving that prevailed throughout both wars seems an appropriate topic for this month's article.

The wars touched everyone in the Creston Valley. Family members who were left behind struggled to make ends meet without their principal wage earner or farm worker.

Every resident was issued ration books filled with coupons for his or her monthly allotment of meat, butter, sugar and other staples. Collection drives gathered all kinds of materials, from rubber to metal to paper, for use as war supplies.

People served in local militia units and as air raid wardens to protect Creston even though they could not serve overseas.

But the biggest effort on the home front, by far, was the endless fund-raising throughout both world wars, resulting in hundreds of thousands of dollars being collected.

In August 1915, the Creston Review congratulated the community for raising nearly \$300 – the cost of a new machine gun for the boys at the front. Great War fund-raisers also provided tobacco for soldiers and paid the expenses of an Allied prisoner of war, among many other causes.

In the Second World War, the Women's Institute raised money for mobile kitchens and Milk for Britain, while Bundles for Britain gathered money, clothing and other necessities for people left homeless by the Blitz.

The Canadian Dorothy Spitfire Fund encouraged girls named Dorothy to raise funds to buy a fighter plane. The local Dorothys, led by Dorothy Sinclair, contributed \$22. Meanwhile, the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire helped build a bomber.

People of all ages were encouraged to buy Victory Loans and war savings stamps; even small school children were pressed to give up their allowances.

Funds were raised in an astonishing number of ways: special dinners, patriotic concerts, auctions and rummage sales, whist drives and card parties, apron bees and monster parades.

The Victory Bundles girls performed a special dance. Dressed in wooden barrels and very little else, they sang, "We're here to tell a story, and it's not for any glory. But we want your old



Victory Bundles dance, June 1944

clothes right away. We will press them, we will mend them, we will sew them and we'll send them to our Allies far away."

In October 1917 the provincial government implemented an amusements tax. Patriotic efforts were, of course, exempt from the tax, which no doubt helped many organizations decide that their suppers should support the troops.

And, if all else failed, a little psychological pressure went a long way. Fund-raising drives were announced alongside the latest reports from the front in a direct reminder of what the fund-raising was for.

Community organizations invariably listed the names of those who had contributed, both to thank their supporters and to prod those who had yet to give. Occasionally, the gentle hints gave way to out-and-out guilt trips.

An ad for the 1917 Victory Bond campaign states, "How many Victory Bonds have you bought? Have you put yourself to any real inconvenience to buy them? Until you have bought Victory Bonds to the very limit of your ability, you have not done your duty."

Whatever the motivation, the results were astounding. Newspaper reports

give some idea of just how much was being given to these campaigns.

In a four-month period the Red Cross made and shipped a total of 799 items, from handkerchiefs to mittens, largely from donated material. The following

summer, the Red Cross and the Women's Institute made more than one ton of jam – 150 pounds every day. The fruit for this, and much of the sugar, was also donated.

What is most amazing is the fact that all of these efforts were being achieved at the same time. In May 1944, the Review noted that every local organization was involved in war work, and they were all meeting their objectives.

This was the case throughout both world wars – an endless succession of multiple fund-raisers to which everyone was expected to give very generously, and they did.

In September 1941, the Review printed a letter written to a Creston resident from a friend in England. It read: "No words can tell how grateful everybody here is to Canada for the magnificent and wholehearted way in which she is helping us. It is lovely to know that Canada is our friend, but when that friend works and sacrifices to help us, then she is a friend in need and a friend indeed . . . Thank you most gratefully for all you are doing, and for all you are giving." ■

For more information contact the Creston and District Museum and Archives by phone at 250-428-9262, by e-mail at mail@creston.museum.bc.ca or at the Web site www.creston.museum.bc.ca.

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The gift of giving

Story by: Trish Bartlett

Anyone shopping at Pyramid Building Supplies this month will see traditional Christmas decorations, but there is one with a difference: this is the 20th year for Pyramid's Christmas Wishing Tree, a tree festooned with special tags. Each tag represents an opportunity for someone to make a child very happy this Christmas.

Anyone can help. The tags give the age and sex of a child; it's up to the purchaser to decide on an appropriate gift.

The gift is returned to Pyramid. From there it is given to the Creston Valley Ministerial Association for its Christmas hampers. The goal is to ensure every hamper destined for a family with children will contain a present for each child.

The Wishing Tree was the brainchild of Kelly and Dale Moberg, the co-owners

of Pyramid Building Supplies along with Steve and Tania Bilcik. Twenty years ago, while attending a hardware convention in Vancouver, the Mobergs listened to a motivational speaker who urged his audience to do something for their communities. By the time the Mobergs reached home they had the idea for the Wishing Tree.

They contacted the ministerial association and arranged for numbers and types of gifts for children. Up until that year the Christmas hampers contained only food.

"We were able to put presents into about 150 hampers that year," says Dale Moberg. "Our kids were 9, 10 and 7 that first year and they were excited to be able to buy a gift for someone. Over the years a lot of families have used the tree to help their kids learn about giving."

Since that first year the number of hampers given out has increased but the Wishing Tree has been able to keep up with the demand.

"We have regulars come in every year," Moberg says. "We don't put the tree up until after Remembrance Day and we have people calling every year to ask when it's going up."

"We get a lot of donations of toys. They are not always bought. Some are home-made. There's a woman who makes Raggedy Ann dolls every year



and donates them. We have donations of baby quilts, infant outfits and wooden toys.

"We also receive donations of money which we put towards teen gifts. People usually like to buy for the four-year-olds. We'll usually buy gift certificates at local businesses for the teens to use."

The store doesn't just stop with collecting gifts; every year half the staff is sent to assist with the hamper packing and delivery. This year the hamper packing will be at the Creston and District Community Complex on Dec. 20 beginning at 9 a.m. Set-up is the day before starting at 9 a.m. Help is needed for both days and anyone is welcome to show up and do what they can.

When asked how long Pyramid plans to continue the Wishing Tree, Moberg says, "As long as we can. We just want to give a big thank you to the community and to the ministerial, who is just phenomenal to work with. We are glad to be able to give back to the community."

This is just one example of the way the Creston community works together to keep the spirit of Christmas alive, and one more reason why I love Creston. ■

The Wishing Tree

Spread a little Christmas cheer by helping others in need.

Come down, pick a tag and place the unwrapped gift under the tree.

Please drop off gifts by December 11.

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Community greenhouse upgrades seniors' access

Story by: Anita Sawyer
College of the Rockies, Creston

Several projects took place over the last year to better accommodate seniors who participate in programs at the Community Greenhouse and to increase the number of seniors using the facilities and grounds.

Prior to this fall, people with mobility issues were only able to access the main building at the greenhouse. A wheelchair-friendly walkway has been installed from the front door of the building through the grounds to the furthest of five greenhouses.

Now our senior participants and others with mobility issues are able to get around the grounds and will be able to see more of the gardens and what's happening in all the other greenhouses. I'm sure they will be thrilled to be able to wheel right up to a new raised strawberry bed along the walkway and pick their own berries next summer.

A heritage garden was established which was planned and built by seniors and youth together. This is an exciting addition to the gardens. Seniors who were not able to be involved physically participated by suggesting the types of seeds to order and giving direction as to where the flowers and vegetables should be planted. This new garden will continue to be planted and cared for by seniors each season.

Raised beds were also made available to several seniors who did not have a space to grow a garden at their places of residence. It has been wonderful to have more of the seniors in our community being involved in gardening at the greenhouse.

Individuals from the Therapeutic Activation for Seniors program and Swan Valley Lodge were involved in a pilot program with several young

families from Creston Valley Family Place. Parents with preschool children attended and the seniors provided mentorship to the families by passing on their knowledge and skills related to a complete garden cycle.

The group planted seeds to grow flowers and vegetables for the heritage gardens at the Community Greenhouse and for the gardens at Swan Valley Lodge, TAPS and the families' home gardens. It was a fun-filled and enjoyable program for all



involved and we hope to continue to offer it in the future. ■

These projects were funded by the Government of Canada's New Horizons for Seniors program.

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Walkin' in a winter wonderland

Story by: Carla Ahern, Director of Communications, Stewardship and Education Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area

Winter came upon us a little early this year but I refuse to complain anymore because: a) no one really listens; and, b) most people I associate with love winter. Crazy, I know.

The white stuff is growing on me. And I have to say that the enthusiasm of others for winter sports and activities is a little contagious. Skiing, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, ice fishing . . . there are many options to choose from.

I tried ice fishing on Duck Lake the second winter I was here. It was February, it was -15 degrees Celsius, it was windy and I was freezing. But all in all I had fun as we stood with our lines in the open water in the newly carved hole in the ice, bundled like Michelin

men, barely able to feel our digits, chatting and sipping hot chocolate spiked with Baileys. I didn't catch one fish, not even a nibble.

I purchased snowshoes that same winter, figuring I should find more ways to get out and enjoy the snow. I tromped around the dike trails in the Summit Creek/Leech Lake area.

Sticking to the flat-top dikes was great. I avoided the cross-country tracks that others had put in place and stuck to the middle of the dike.

I ventured off the dike a few times and took some deep plummets into what I later realized was lots of snow piled on top of a lot of vacant air space between dead cattails and grasses. It was always an adventure and a really good workout

trying to get out of those deep wells I created.

Cross-country skis were my treat two years ago. I have only used them three times, which sounds really bad. I will make a pledge to myself, weather co-operating, to get out more this year.

I still feel a little unsteady on them. They are not nearly as solid-feeling as downhill skis – a sport I have tried many times but am not too crazy about.

“It was nice to get into the mountains and see so many people having fun”

I don't want to fly down the hill. I want to stop and look at tracks and trees and scenery, maybe take a few photos. I really am a stop-and-smell-the-roses kind of girl.

I remember getting in trouble from a friend while downhill skiing because I stopped too much. Well, I wanted to look at the beautiful view from the mountaintop, not whip down it at 100 miles an hour.

I went snowmobiling with my husband on the poker run last year and I have to say it was kind of fun. I have the similar issue as with skiing. You may have guessed it: speed. He was nice for the most part and took it pretty slow, but he also wanted to show me what that puppy could do and goosed it a few times to the point of producing a good squeal and some white knuckles from me.

It was nice to get into the mountains and see so many people having fun and socializing in the wintery scene that day.

When in doubt about what to do this winter, I will grab a book and sit in front of the fire. I will get out my sewing and knitting projects. I will make stews and home-made bread.

There are plenty of indoor activities for those really cold and miserable days when venturing out into the snow just sounds too, well, cold. ■

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Volunteers are the key to success

Story by: Creston Valley Thunder Cats

The Creston Valley Thunder Cats are a community owned and operated junior B team in the Kootenay International Junior Hockey League. Without the countless hours put in by many volunteers of all ages you would not see the product we are able to provide you, our fans, each weekend from September through February/March.

At the head is a board of directors (ranging from six to 11 members). Currently we have a hard-working group of 10 people, a mix of men and women, who dedicate a lot of time during the whole year to providing family entertainment to our community for six months. The board is responsible for the financial aspects as well as the management of the staff and other volunteers.

There are many volunteers who help out the team, from the equipment manager, statistician, trainers, game night event staff, concession and merchandise sales people, and special promotional events personnel, etc. A rough calculation is that it takes about 100 volunteer hours to host one home game, and we have at least 26 games this season.

Volunteers are always welcome. If you would be interested in volunteering, contact Lorraine at (250) 428-5356 or the Thunder Cats office at (250) 428-8929.

The team relies on support from our community, not only in volunteer hours but in financial sponsorships (rink/wall advertising, program advertising, etc.), supporting our fund-raising endeavours and fan attendance at our games.

Recently some community members purchased support equipment for the team (two shoulder braces and

three pairs of compression shorts). We would like to extend our thanks to Ina Schultz, Mayday Electric, Kozy Heating & Plumbing and Pharmasave for helping keep the players on the ice when facing minor injuries and to prevent the injuries from escalating.

The team does not survive on grant money or advertising dollars; therefore, we are required to go out in the community to raise additional funds. This year we are raffling off a 2011 Chevy Cruze and nine other prizes (eight being cash). We printed 1,000 tickets and have started selling them in the community.

Tickets are \$50 each and can be purchased from any board member, at home games or by calling the Thunder Cats office. Players and volunteers will also be selling at Overwaitea Foods, Extra Foods and Home Building Centre from time to time.

The draw will be made during the first weekend of playoffs (Feb. 26). All proceeds go to help pay for team travel, meals and accommodations on road swings, equipment purchases and many more expenses that the team faces on a daily or monthly basis. We look forward to your continued support to keep junior B hockey in Creston.

To our faithful and seemingly tireless volunteers: it wasn't the reward that mattered or the recognition you might harvest; it was your depth of commitment, your quality of service, the product of your devotion – these were the things that counted in life. When you gave purely, the honour in giving, that was honour enough (Capt. Scott O'Grady). ■

Check for game updates and schedules at www.crestonvalleythundercats.com.

**Come out
and cheer on
your local Junior B Team!**

December Home Games

All game start at 7:30 unless otherwise noted.

Saturday Dec 3 Kamloops
Sunday Dec 4 - 2pm Golden
Friday Dec 9 Sicamous
Friday Dec 16 Kimberley
Saturday Dec 31 Fernie



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The meaning of the black belt

Story by: Shifu Neil Ripski

The idea of rank in martial arts is varied and has different meanings from teacher to teacher. For some, a black belt is like graduation, or finishing your training, but in most traditional arts like kung fu it is really a new beginning.

To receive a black belt or sash is a great accomplishment requiring hard work and understanding found after years of study and practice. But in truth it is the acceptance of the student by the teacher as a serious beginner. When seen by the student in this way, the chances of gaining a deep understanding of the art are more likely.

In our Chinese martial art the entire style is broken into two pieces: foundations and the art itself. Up to black sash, Level 1 trains in the foundations necessary to handle the advanced training that takes place after black sash.

Looking deeply into the matters of internal connection, martial ability and nei gong, or the building of character, involves the study of the martial arts philosophy of non-violence and good citizenship. These are the most important lessons of the Asian arts, in my opinion, and without them the art itself is but a shell.

It is a shame that I have met so many people who refer to getting their black belt as “finishing” their training when in fact it is the beginning of real understanding.

I wanted to write this article in hopes of sharing with others how much more there is to go once this milestone is achieved, and hopefully

to spur them on to remain with their teachers and find the real depth of the art they have chosen to study.

I would also like to add, in answer to many questions I get at my school about our rank system, how it works and the order thereof: green sash is the beginners' rank and it contains three levels marked by Chinese characters written on our sashes as we progress.

First green is a plain sash, second has the character for beauty and third the character for truth. Green is the colour of spring and symbolizes the fresh start you are experiencing in starting martial arts training.

The next colour sash is blue, symbolizing summer and the youth of the training, and being able to run and move along with your other classmates. It has three levels as well, the same as green sash.

Orange follows blue and symbolizes autumn, the beginning of the end of the basics. It also has three levels.

Then comes the coveted black sash, full autumn descending into winter. It contains four levels before reaching the final rank in the system of white, showing the cycle is complete.

Typically a student who works hard and is dedicated can accomplish a black sash rank within about five years. I am happy to add that last month I was able to welcome a Creston student to the rank of black sash. It is a proud and wonderful time for our school to have another qualified instructor among us. Well done. ■

Neil Ripski teaches kung fu and tai chi at Red Jade Martial Arts in Creston. He can be reached at 250-866-5263 or at www.redjademartialarts.com.



Say goodbye to indigestion this holiday season

Story by: Maya Skalinska
Master Herbalist, Registered Herbal Therapist

The holidays are here and we're busy baking and cooking all our favourite holiday treats. Unfortunately, a lot of those treats can bring us as much pleasure as pain, with bloating, gas and indigestion.

The good news is that it all can be avoided with some simple herbs and spices that most have in their kitchens.

Holiday meals give us trouble due to the traditional food combinations (starches, proteins, sugars/simple carbs) that digest at different rates. Drinking during meals dilutes the stomach juices and enzymes needed for proper digestion. On top of that, most of us eat too fast, not chewing our food long enough.

Digestion starts with chewing our food, which in turn gives signals to the rest of the digestive system to prepare to break down the food for absorption. All of this results in fermentation in the stomach and small intestine, producing carbon dioxide, hydrogen and organic acids which in turn manifest as painful gas and bloating.

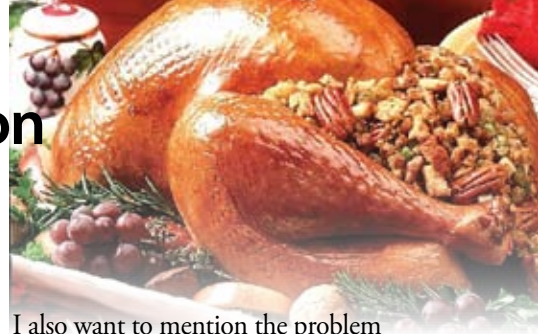
Good thing we've got some amazing herbs and spices to help us along the way. One of the best spices for this is fennel seed.

Crush two teaspoons of the seeds, add one cup of boiling water, cover and steep for 10 minutes. Drink this tea about half an hour before your big meal.

After the meal, make a spice tea that I am sure your family and guests will enjoy. Grate a chunk of ginger root, add two or three teaspoons of cardamom, one or two teaspoons of coriander seeds and one or two cups of boiling water, cover and steep for 10 minutes. You can add a little bit of cinnamon for some extra-warming holiday flavour.

Alternatively, simple peppermint tea will work in a pinch. For those who have chronic heartburn, avoid the peppermint.

If you have digestive troubles already, try digestive enzymes containing pancreatin just before or during your meal. Take two or three capsules, depending on how large your meal is, and drink fennel tea on a more regular basis.



I also want to mention the problem with choosing antacids for digestive complaints. Antacids neutralize the acids in the stomach, preventing proper digestion and interfering with absorption of nutrients, which leads to continued indigestion. I see this in my own practice with many of my clients with digestive issues.

Antacids also contain aluminum compounds which cause constipation, and calcium carbonate which causes a rebound effect in which the stomach produces more acids than before, once the antacid effect has worn off. This results in heartburn, so more antacids get taken and a vicious circle begins.

Taking natural remedies to help digest holiday treats is better for your body as there are no negative side effects. So enjoy your favourite treats, slowly savour each bite and save that drink till after your meal and spice tea. Happy holidays! ■

Maya Skalinska is a master herbalist and a registered herbal therapist offering iridology, pulse and tongue analysis, herbal medicine, nutrition consultations and flower essences in Crawford Bay and at Vital Health in Creston. For more information or to book an appointment call 250-225-3493.

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Out & About

Submitted by: www.crestonevents.ca

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Local artists and crafters

Location: Cherrybrook Farms, 1 to 5pm

Contact: Cherrybrook Farms

Phone: 250-428-3070

Saturdays, Nov. thru Dec. 18 Fall Farmers Market

Fresh local produce, baking and crafts.

Location: Morris Flowers Greenhouse

Saturdays, 10am to 2pm

Contact: Jen Comer

Phone: 250-977-5362

www.crestonvalleyfarmersmarket.ca

December 1 to 3 Aladdin - performed by Footlighters

Presented by the Footlighters

Location: PCSS Auditorium. 7:30pm

Contact: Frank Goodsir

Phone: 250-428-5183

December 3 Annual Santa Claus Parade and Festival

A full day of festivities, Santa Claus Parade

Contact: Jim Jacobsen

Phone: 250-428-4342

December 3 Creston Valley Thunder Cats vs. Kamloops Storm

Watch exciting Junior B Hockey action!

Location: CDCC. Starts at 7:30pm

Contact: Joanne Endicott

Phone: 250-428-3965

www.crestonvalleythundercats.com

December 3 CDSCL Therapeutic Riding Program Benefit Potluck

Benefit potluck for a fundraising event

Contact: Michelle Whiteaway

Phone: 250-402-6793

<http://cdscl.com/trp.htm>

December 3 Wynndel Community Centre's Annual Christmas Arts & Crafts Fair

*Featuring 30 Tables of Handcrafted
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Location: Wynndel Memorial Hall

9am to 3:30pm.

Phone: 250-866-5570

December 4 Creston Valley Thunder Cats vs. Golden Rockets

Watch exciting Junior B Hockey action!

Location: CDCC

Starts at 2pm

Contact: Joanne Endicott

Phone: 250-428-3965

www.crestonvalleythundercats.com

December 4 Creston Fiddlers Christmas Concert

Annual Christmas Concert

Location: Catholic Church Hall, 2pm

Contact: Bridget Currie

Phone: 250-428-5430

December 5 Wildsight Creston Speaker Series: Winter Slide Show

Local photographers Jim & Howard Smith,

Brian Stushmoff, Cheryl Jagers, Raina

Messenger & Ralph Moore.

Location: Tivoli Theatre, 7:30pm

Contact: Tanna Patterson

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December 7 to 10 Ye Olde & Nu Christmas Shoppe

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December 10 & 11 Annual Singing Christmas Tree

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Brass Choir.*

Location: PCSS Auditorium

Saturday 7pm

Sunday 2:30pm

Contact: Elvin Strand

Phone: 250-402-6533

December 12 CP Holiday Train presents "VALDY"

*The goal is to collect food and money for
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the fight against hunger*

Location: Millennium Park, 9:45am

Contact: Jim Jacobsen

Phone: 250-428-4342

[www.cpr.ca/en/in-your-community/
holiday-train](http://www.cpr.ca/en/in-your-community/holiday-train)

December 16 Creston Valley Thunder Cats vs. Kimberley Dynamiters

Watch exciting Junior B Hockey action!

Location: CDCC

Starts at 7:30pm

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Phone: 250-428-3965

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 Contact: Joanne
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December 31
Creston Valley Thunder Cats vs. Fernie Ghostriders
Watch exciting Junior B Hockey action!
 Location: CDCC
 Starts at 7:30pm
 Contact: Joanne Endicott
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