

Young Agrarians feature young farmers with fresh ideas

Kristin Dyck

An apprenticeship program and an active online learning community are two of the ways the Young Agrarians, a farmer2farmer resource network, are slowly changing traditional ideas of farming.

While heritage farms, agricultural university programs, and succession plans can be the norm for many Peace Country Farmers, Lilli Lundgard, Young Agrarians Peace Regional Coordinator, wants young, agriculturally-minded individuals to know there is another way.

"Our organization, our program, is offering programs to help those kind of people who are not continuing to farm on a family farm, the entry into all of this," Lundgard said. She went on to say that she knows many people who have started farming without an agricultural background, many of whom are actually women.

The 2016 Census of Agriculture supports Lundgard's observation. At that time, the number of women in agriculture in Canada rose by 1.8 per cent since 2011 to 28.7 per cent and recent studies suggest that number has continued to climb.

Lundgard herself is a female farmer. While she has spent the last several years working on her in-laws farm, Nature's Way Farm, Lundgard said she and her husband just founded their our farm, Valhalla Farm.

"It's just an interesting step. I am obviously still a little bit on the farm (Nature's Way). But I am starting to do farm projects on my own," she said. "I am just enjoying to focus on a few things that I really want to learn about, like our dairy cows - making cheese."

The Young Agrarians as a program focuses on ecological, organic and regenerative agriculture largely in Western Canada. Their regenerative principles focus on a need to minimize or eliminate tillage, protect and cover the soil, and increase biodiversity.

Funding for the Alberta Young Agrarians program comes from the Province, the Alberta Real Estate Foundation, Alberta EcoTrust, AFSC, Alberta Community and Co-Operative Association, Parkland County, Lacombe County, County of Grande Prairie, MD of

Smoky River, Central Alberta Agricultural Society, Battle River Research Group, University of Alberta, the Berwyn Agricultural Society and the Grimshaw and District Agricultural Society.

In her role as regional coordinator, Lundgard plans events and learning opportunities. Events often include farm tours, potlucks, and an annual Peace Country mixer where attendees can benefit from a variety of educational workshops, different speakers and plenty of community building activities.

Lundgard said the Young Agrarians focus on community building so that new, young, and immigrant farmers have access to ample resources. Currently, the Young Agrarians in Alberta are working on a land-matching program. This program will provide a land-access guide and guidance on different ways of forming a land-agreement.

In B.C., the already established land matching program is funded by the Province with support from Columbia Basin Trust, Cowichan Valley Regional District, Real Estate Foundation of B.C., Bullitt Foundation, and Patagonia. The B.C. program has been successful in connecting farmers with available land to start or grow their farm business, as well as

landowners interested in finding someone to farm their land. The program helps to address the barrier a lack of affordable farmland poses for farmers just entering the agricultural industry.

Another entry point for farmers in Alberta, facilitated by the Young Agrarians, is the apprenticeship program. This program connects young farmers with mentor farmers to offer advanced hands-on experiences in regenerative agriculture.

The fully-immersed program includes carefully selected farm mentors, including Peter and Mary Lundgard of Nature's Way Farm in Grimshaw, who can offer apprentices a look into their diverse expertise and skill sets.

"It's a unique way for people to find the first steps into the agriculture world," Lundgard said. "The really neat thing about this apprenticeship program is that it's not just that farms are saying 'Okay, we need a farmhand,' there's a real process. People are getting interviewed. It starts in January. Apprentices all over Alberta take part in bi-weekly check-ins and . . . they create a group where they can exchange their experiences."

Apprentices participate in tours of other mentor farms, which creates learning opportunities from more than one ecological farmer and their

perspectives and practices.

"We are constantly feeding people information," Lundgard said. "It's a way into agriculture that is pretty unique if you do not want to go the university or college route."

Most apprenticeships last eight to 12 months, however some farms do offer a shorter four to six month program. Apprentices live on the farm and work six days a week. The program includes on-farm evaluations, supplemental training and workshop opportunities, peer-to-peer networking, and individualized support.

"Even creating that network of apprentices, where they know other mentor farms throughout Alberta, I know that the apprentices really value that connection. And, my father-in-law keeps getting called by former apprentices because they have questions, and now they have people to ask and turn towards to."

In 2020, there were 10 host farms in Alberta.

Moving forward, Lundgard said she would like to see a second phase of the apprenticeship program where mentors open up a portion of their farm to apprentices who are ready and bale to take on an enterprise of their own.

"We haven't figured it out yet. But we are talking about the next steps. This is like opening a door. And

now we can help you take baby steps towards your own farm enterprise, building up your own farm," she said.

OBITUARY

Wayne Valin

It is with great sorrow we announce the passing of Pee Wee ~ Willie "Wayne" Valin.

Wayne passed away suddenly on July 3rd, 2020 in Cold Lake, Alberta at the age of 75.

Wayne was born in Berwyn, Alberta on June 7, 1945. His parents named him Willie Wayne, but to all who knew and loved him he was Wayne.

At passing Wayne had a home in Cold Lake, Alberta, but much of his time was spent in Brownvale, Alberta with his companion Dorothy Gerk. Wayne loved this area enjoying his many old friends and new ones he found along the way.

Wayne is survived by his Best Friend Dorothy, his son Wayne Jr, daughter Holly, Grandchildren Stephanie, Derek, Morgan and Great Grandchildren Sierra, Tayven, Chimera, Tearnin, Nivana-Lee, Daxon, Lucas. Son in law Kevin Drake.

Wayne is also survived by his Brothers Clifford, Elmer (Betty), Dale (Doris), Frieda (Bob).

Wayne was predeceased by his parents Andrew and Vera, his brothers Stuart, Scotty, Chester and sisters Doreen & Darlene.

A graveside service will be Friday July 17, 2020 at 1:00 PM at Griffin Creek Cemetery.



OBITUARY

John Szmata

1927 - 2020

John Szmata was born on May 10, 1927 in Kenora, Ontario. He was the third child of Tanas and Annie Szmata. He had two older brothers, Nick and Mytro. In 1928 the family moved to Alberta. They homesteaded in the Gould District and the family soon increased with the births of three more boys, Charles, Peter and Steve.

In 1947 John married Mabel Montgomery. John always had the entrepreneurial spirit and was involved in many business ventures over the years and was also a town councillor in Grimshaw. John and Mabel really liked to socialize and they had lots of friends. They enjoyed travelling and in the late 60's they retired and moved to Kelowna, BC where they lived for about 5 years, then moved to back to an acreage outside of Grimshaw where they lived for a few years before moving into Grimshaw. John and Mable divorced in 1990.

John loved life. He lit up a room when he walked into it always teasing and joking with everyone there. He loved to camp, fish, boat and he especially loved to laugh. He was an excellent cook and housekeeper.

John lived in an Autumn Lodge villa for a few years and finally moved to Long Term Care in Grimshaw where he passed on May 8, 2020.

John was predeceased by his ex-wife Mabel and brothers Nick and Mytro.

The family would like to thank the wonderful staff at Grimshaw Long Term Care for the attention, support and care they provided for him.

We shall miss him lots and remember him always. His ashes will be placed at Briarcliff Cemetery.



OBITUARY

Franklyn Brown

1937~2020

Frank was born on October 31, 1937 in Seymour, Alberta to parents Marie and Frank Brown. He passed away on June 17, 2020 in Fairview, Alberta at the age of 82 years.

Frank retired from ATCO Power in 1999, he wasn't involved with any organizations but was always willing to help out when needed. The most important positions he had were being a husband, father and grandfather.

Frank loved baseball, his #1 passion, then golf and fishing. Once the children and grand kids came, he loved being involved in whatever sport or activity they were in. His greatest joy was watching them.

He was predeceased by his parents Frank and Marie Brown; brothers, Leo, Gordon, George; sisters, Winnie, Helen, Evelyn; and his baby brother Richard who passed when he was an infant.

Frank will be lovingly remembered by his wife Shirley Ann; sons, Greg (Mary Jane), Patrick; daughters, Michele (Rusty), Tracey (Kurt), Dawn; 12 grandchildren, Diana, Lacey, Chelsie (Tyler), Parker (Kelly), Courtney, Dylan (Kyla), Colt, Kole, Traejn, Gabriel, Ethan, Chase; 3 great grandchildren, Zak, Leland, Zoe; sisters, Cec (Lloyd), Millie (Len), Barb (Joe), Debbie; and as well as numerous nieces and nephews.

If friends so desire, donations to A Charity of One's Choice would be greatly appreciated.

At Frank's request no Funeral Service will be taking place.



Funeral arrangements under the direction of Chapel of Memories Funeral Homes & Crematorium Peace River, AB
Ph:780-624-2686