

# THE WHEATLAND ROUNDUP

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## TENSION ON THE RISE IN LITTLE BIG TOWN

Things are starting to heat up as the feud between the BlackJack Gang and the Smoking Ace Bandits intensifies. For a while, it looked as though the two gangs were going to work together as one. With word the Wheatland Express was expanding and going to be able to take up to 300 people, there was talk of a partnership.

“Famous Amos had some real good ideas. He said if the train was full and everyone had \$1, we would make \$100. He also said we would split it 50/50, so we would get as much as \$35.00. This sounded fair to us”. claimed Justice Jed. “But then Covid hit, and things started to go south.

“You know that Famous Amos came to me and said he had a tip on a real big job?” Jed explained, “Oh yeah, he came to me saying how he would do it but thought his Smoking Ace Bandits were too dumb to pull it off. It took a bit of convincing, but I got him to fill me in. He told us that CP would run one last train on the line to Melfort, and it was going to be full of gold. He even told us that the best spot to stop the train and rob it was at the bridge over the valley. He gave me the picture and everything.”



Justice Jed continued, “Well, we went up there all right, sat there and waited five whole days. Everyone knows CP always runs late, but we were starting to get restless. Mucked-Up Mick went to water the weeds and noticed there weren’t even train tracks on the bridge.”



“We knew we had been slickered. And to make things worse, when we got back to town, the Smoking Aces were holding a shindig with our women.” added Mucked Up Mick

“But we got the last laugh hey there, Mick?” says Jed

“Yeah, we turned them into the Covid police, and they got a big fine. Now Famous Amos is plenty mad at us.” explained Mucked Up Mick

“That Sheriff Jenkins has now been hot on our heels, and we think it is cause Famous Amos is tipping him off.” claims Jed

“Now that the sheriff has that stupid jail wagon, he can take us all in at one time to the jail in Little Big Town. But don’t worry, we are cooking up a little surprise of our own for the Bandits, and Sheriff Jenkins” adds Daisy Do Right

Justice Jed quickly ended the conversation and hurried his gang out of the saloon. All this tension between the Black Jacks and Smoking Aces adds to the stress in Little Big Town with the upcoming mayor election. Although no one has committed to running for mayor, rumors are swirling that the current Mayor, Marv the Mortician, will have some competition.

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# NOBLE NOTATION

## CLEARING THE MAIN

Written by Bill Noble

It's still winter in Wheatland County. We dream about Spring as we shovel last night's drifted snow from our driveways. And it's no different here on the railway. We talked last time about the Snow Fighter, the compact self-propelled machine we use on Wheatland now. This time, however, I want to talk about older snow ploughs. The railways had a wide range of snow-fighting equipment, all designed to be pushed by hard-working locomotives. There were sweepers, pilot ploughs, push ploughs, wing ploughs, spreader ploughs, ice cutters, flangers - all the way up to the awesome steam-powered rotaries - the majestic heavy artillery in the fight against the snow.

Remind me, and we will talk about some of the others another time, but today I want to dwell on the push plough and its near cousin, the wing plough. First designed in the mid-1800s, there are still examples in Canadian railway service built a hundred years ago. The push plough is a simple enough device. Think of an extremely strong box. On the front is a v-plough.

Underneath is the flanger, a blade that drops down between the rails to clear ice and snow. On the top is a cupola with windows and a headlight so the operator can see. If you added wings (think big barn doors on hinges), you had a wing plough. Now, weigh the whole thing down with several tons of iron slag or old rails to help keep it on the track and voila, a push plough. The concept was simple - just push this box down the track with a locomotive and shove the snow off the tracks. A subtle device - sort of an iron fist in an iron glove.

It's 'way before sun-up on a prairie-cold, snowy, windy morning in Nutana Yard in Saskatoon in the late 1940s. We have been called for a snowplough extra. I am expecting a long hard day. I am the fireman. When we pick up our orders (the flimsy), we see that we are to plough Melville's mainline ahead of Number 4, the eastbound Continental Limited. The Continental Limited is Canadian National's crack transcontinental varnish, and management doesn't want any problems or delays. We worker bees know what's good for us and heartily endorse that directive. Today's run is a long one (some other snow-fighting equipment is laid up today for journal bearings), but the lure of good overtime beckons sweetly.



We approach our train simmering on the ready track. On the point is the plough. The plough operators are veterans who know the road we are to clear intimately. They will be our eyes, alerting us with whistle blasts. In the days before radios, a cord was run from the plough to our engine's whistle. A vital job for the plough operators is to lift the flanger blade to clear crossing planks, switch rails and other obstructions. There are flanger signs, the black and white signs with two large dots that you see along the track, but these may be hard to see today. Snow is going to fly. The operators are in for an adrenalin-filled day. Imagine riding in the front of a missile with no steering wheel.

Next is our engine, the 2140, an older 2-8-0 Consolidation type freight hog. Our old hog is a hand bomber (i.e. the fireman shovels the coal) with an open cab. The canvas winter curtains are installed, but they won't be much help today. The cab and the coal bunker of the tender are swathed in a tunnel of heavy tarps lashed on with lots of rope to give some added shelter. My experience reminds me that's not going to be a lot of help either. As the engineer inspects and oils 'round the valve gear, I quickly check the cab and the tender's water and coal. Then I give the grates a bit of a shake and bale in some coal to build up the fire to raise steam for our departure. Please remind me to tell you how I was taught to fire a hand bomber.

Our short train (and crew) is completed with a caboose with a conductor and brakemen. Well, that's not too bad; a short train like that should be a snap to pull. Uh-huh, just wait.

Our whistle blows twice from the plough operator, and the hogger answers with two toots of our own. We move through the yard and onto the main. Almost immediately, the operator is on the whistle - More speed. There must be some deep snow. Wham! We hit the first hard drift, and a shudder goes through our little train. The water in the boiler surges forward and sloshes back. I have to do a little dance to keep my balance. Snow blasts upward from

the drift and envelopes us. In the cab, we can see nothing outside. Our old hog is working hard and using a lot of steam and coal and water. I must carefully watch the boiler sight glass. Too much water is bad. Too little water can cause a catastrophic explosion.

The hard work is causing the steam gauge to drop, and the increased draft is threatening to rip a hole in my fire. I am firing heavy now, but carefully. Each scoop of coal must be placed properly to keep an even, hot fire everywhere. To help, the old hog is really rockin' and rollin'.

The engine bounces in every direction at once, and all the deck and tender plates crash and bang. But the icing on the cake comes every time I put a scoop of coal into the fire. As I turn from the tender with a scoop of coal, I step on the pedal to activate the air cylinder to open the firebox door. The open firebox sucks in a huge gulp of air from the cab, which sucks in snow through every gap, crack and crevice. The powdery snow hits warm stuff, sticks and melts. Water runs onto the cab floor and freezes, and I am soaked.

My coveralls are soaked, my boots are soaked, my hat is soaked, and my mitts are soaked. My soaked mitts are slippery on the handle of my scoop. I do not want to have my scoop sucked into the firebox.

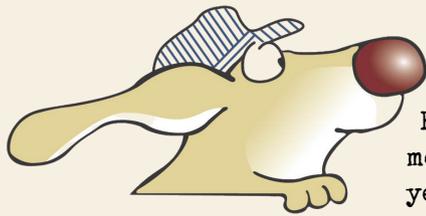
We are working hard and using a lot of water. As a precaution, we stop at the next tank to fill the

tender. As I emerge from the cab, I am astounded at how much snow is piled on our train. I climb up on the rear of the tender and am met by the head-end brakeman who helps shovel out the water hatch cover. By the time the tender is full, my clothes are frozen solid. I climb down from the tender and reenter the cab. I am moving rather like the Tin Man with my clothes cracking, and binding and I must be careful not to take a header with my frozen boots on the ice-covered floor.

Eventually, we arrive in Melville and roll up the passing track to the station. We are met by the agent, who informs us that the dispatcher has authorized us to help with a situation. There is a big drift on the wye track that is too heavy for the Jordan Spreader. Could we perhaps poke a hole in it? Glad to help. And, of course, the overtime will be sweet. A bit later, as we work our way through the drift, a train whistle catches our attention. The engineer pulls out his watch. "Number 4, only 16 minutes late. Not bad on a day like today". Not bad at all.

I wish to acknowledge an old friend from the Bytown Railway Society in Ottawa. Duncan Dufresne was our steam guru and a true friend. He taught us all so much. His memories, particularly in his delightful book "Snow Plow Extra," planted the seed for this story. Thank you, Duncan.





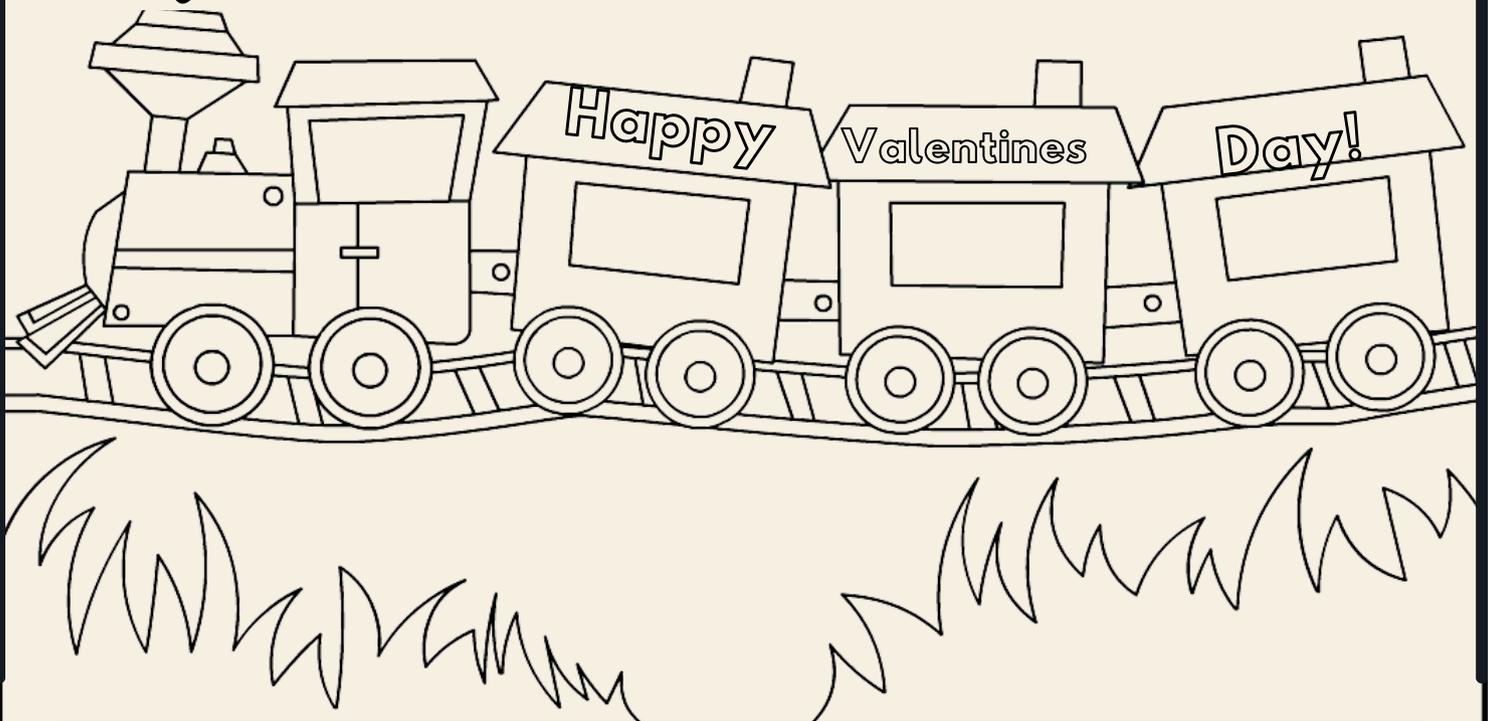
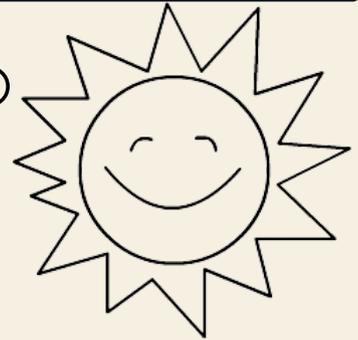
# SPIKES SAFETY SCOOP

Hello everyone. Spike, the Safety Dog here. February is my favorite month because it has Valentine's Day, and that is my favorite day of the year. Valentine's Day is all about love, and I LOOOOOOVE to teach everyone about railway safety. Railway safety is so important, and can never be too careful around railway tracks. Do you know how far back you should stand when standing at a crossing waiting for a train to pass? Five meters behind the crossbuck sign is safest. That's about the length of a minivan. Make sure you never cross until after the train has completely cleared the crossing, and you have a clear view both ways before you cross. Remember, a train may come on any track in any direction at any time. If the crossing has lights, bells, and the gates that come down, you must never cross until the lights stop flashing, the bells stop ringing, and the gates are fully raised. Never go under or around lowered gates. Now that I have given you a few safety tips, I'm going to go bake some heart-shaped biscuits to give out for Valentine's Day. Here is a special Valentine for you to colour in. Happy Valentine's Day!



-Spike the safety dog

♡ Spike Choo Choo  
♡ Chooses You!



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# HELPING DOGS TO FIND THEIR WAY

Written by Karen Philipation



There's a reason they say all dogs go to Heaven. They are such incredible patient, tolerant, smart animals. It amazes me how they could communicate so much while saying so little..... not to mention they are just cute.

I have always loved animals and have always had dogs and cats in my home. I thought owning dogs all my life I knew so much about them, but now realize I actually didn't know much at all. I started a course last year to get a better understanding on how dogs communicate and to learn how to better communicate with my dog. Its turned into so much more. I'm learning how to read dog body language and how to train them using positive reinforcement versus the traditional methods which includes punishment.

Education for people is such a big part of it. We invite pets into our home but often don't think how foreign all of it is to them and just how stressful it can be. I'm learning how dogs communicate thru body language, the importance of socialization during critical developmental stages and fun ways to engage and interact with your dog.

Volunteering at the local shelter, I've come to realize there are a lot of dogs that are never given a fair shake. Some come in as strays, some are surrender for various reasons (which often aren't their fault), some are born there. It's a scary, stressful place and often dogs who are stressed don't look "adoptable". But working with them we can give them a better chance to "manage" while they are in the shelter and find their forever home. Now I've fostering my 3rd dog who is well on her way to becoming a confident happy dog. When she came to me she was scared of the whole outside world and people. Now she is wandering around the neighborhood and meeting all the neighbors.

All dogs deserve to go to heaven, but sometimes they go sooner than they should because they didn't get a chance. By fostering one at time and educating everyone I can I hope to help as many as I can.



(Above pictures are Cinnamon. A 5 month old rescue Karen has been fostering for the last 5 weeks)

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## EMPLOYEE PROFILE

**Name:** Karen Philipation

**Born:** Minnedosa, MB

**Currently Reside:** Cochrane, AB

**Work History:** Started in banking at CIBC for 15 years, Rail logistics with GNP for about 10 years. Now with GSR, Safety Train, and Wheatland Express

**Favorite Movie:** Million Dollar Baby

**Favorite Sports Team:** Calgary Flames of course!

**Favorite Wheatland railcar:** The Diner Car

**Did you know:** Karen has lived in four different provinces (MB, AB, BC, NL)



# OPERATIONS UPDATE

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## Great Sandhills Railway

Cold temperatures and wind are making it tough going. We continue to have issues with CN Rail at the interchange. This is more related to stupidity than the weather. The big news, of course, was the arrival of the baggage car from Stettler by truck. We have been over a year trying to coordinate its move to us. No thanks to CP Rail we did it on our own.

We will be finalizing our summer work program with again the plan to change some railway ties, dump ballast, and do a little surfacing. We will be aggressive in cutting weeds and brush along the right away, concentrating on sightlines at all crossings.

The locomotive 3131 blew a turbo that we will have to replace as soon as temperatures get closer to bearable.

players using the VR headsets will see as well. When the players sit down, they will be able to see a train moving. The program will prompt them to put the train into emergency, which will show them how long it takes for a train to stop using familiar landmarks. For example, once put into an emergency, the players will go by the mosaic stadium, NHL rinks, Football fields, etc., to give them an appreciation for exactly how long it takes for a train to stop.



## Wheatland Express Safety Train

The Canadian Safety Train Express went into the new year full force! We launched online learning presentations that are not only becoming immensely popular but are also booking in other provinces! Using Google Classroom and ZOOM, we provide railway safety presentations to grades K-12 in French or English. We have also included a quiz for the older children and an answer key for the teachers! We also created and launched the French version of our website, which will tie into our Social Media. We are going strong on both Facebook and Instagram and look forward to what this year will bring!



## Weatland Charities Inc.

Wheatland Charities gives back to a variety of organizations. One division of Wheatland Charity is the Wheatland Racehorse Retirement Association. The WRRRA currently has 6 retired racehorses in its care and we will periodically be featuring one in our updates. Featured this month is Diamond Brite aka Sparkle. Sparkle is 17 years old and was recently retired from being a broodmare. In her career, she ran 33 times and won 6 races, finished second 4 times, and ran third 6 times. She is a barn favorite and one of the kindest horses you will ever meet. Although she is 17 she does not look or act it and you may her just see her this summer in Little Big Town.



## Wheatland Express Learning Centre

2021 is going to be a fascinating year for the Learning Center. We have already started production as

our friends at Evolution came out to our location to begin installing the wiring to kick the project off the ground. We have already purchased some of the materials we need for our exhibits and cannot wait to showcase our progress.

One of our first-year exhibits is "How Long to Stop." This exhibit will feature 2 Virtual reality headsets equipped with headphones and two chairs in front of a screen. This screen will show what the





## Wheatland Express Excursion Train

January has passed in a blink around the railway. Our activities have been as brisk as the weather, with construction projects large and small and the arrival of a new car to our fleet. From building the tables or wagons to upholstering seating, our team focuses on all the details that create a magical experience when we return to tours. With the arrival of the newest car, the crews will focus their attention on the extensive work required to whip it into shape for passenger service. This railcar will be fitted with a permanently accessible lift that will allow us to offer an inclusive experience to guests with mobility issues. We can't wait to show you the transformation! Besides the physical construction, our team has continued to work hard to develop our tour experiences. We've connected with new partners and are thrilled with what we're creating together. Wheatland Express works closely with Tourism Saskatoon and Tourism Saskatchewan, participating in workshops, training and development programs. We continue to monitor the pandemic situation closely and plan for re-opening when it's safe to do so. Stay safe and healthy!

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## STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSES MOUTH HOW TIMBIT SEE'S IT

Neigh there. I am Timbit, a reporter for the Wheatland Round-Up my job is to keep the folks of Little Big Town updated to the goings-on on all things four-legged. With Valentines Day this month, I thought I would talk to Tommy about his love life.

Hey Tommy, how's your love life these days?

"Well Timbit, being the new guy around here, I am sure getting a lot of attention from the fillies."

Is that so? Any of the fillies caught your eye?

"There are a lot of good looking ones, that's for sure, but there is one that I can't stop thinking about. She is really something special."

Which one is that? Anyone I know?

"Oh you know her. How could you not? It's Sparkle, or her race name was Diamond Brite. Have you ever seen such a beautiful filly Timbit?"

She is not a filly Tommy. She is a mare and has a few years on you, and you sure do shoot for the stars. She is royalty around here.

"I know, who would have thought a big teddy bear like me could in love with a thoroughbred, but here I am going completely neigh neigh over her."

Is the feeling mutual?

"I don't know. I haven't talked to her."

Your pasture is right beside hers. What do you mean you haven't talked to her?

"Well, I was hoping she would make the first move. I have been doing a little bit of prancing up and down the fence line in hopes she would come over and talk to me. You know how mares can be though, they like to play hard to catch."

"Actually, she comes to the gate when the humans come to catch her, you on the other hand, have usually broken the gate and half with your huge teddy bear self, and they have to look for you."

"I am just trying to show her how strong I am. I have a feeling she is into the bad-boy types. I hear she use to date that Charlie horse in the paddock over there, and he only took her on a date once a year. I, on the other hand, would take her on a date anytime she wanted as long as she didn't try to eat off my hay pile. I hate when mares do that."

I talk with Sparkle all the time want me to see if she is interested.

"Would you? But don't make it obvious or anything."

I'll try not to. Although that prancing your doing is making it obvious you're a complete bozo.



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# EXCITING TIMES AHEAD FOR WHEATLAND EXPRESS

The arrival of GSR 2020 is a sign of exciting times to come for Wheatland Express. GSR 2020 previously numbered TPHX-19480 comes to us from Stettler, Alberta and had to be brought to us by truck instead of rail. This car was built in 1948 by the Budd Company in St. Louis, Missouri, and proves to be a bit of a mystery. Where it was in between when it was built to when it arrived in Stettler is anyone's guess. GSR 2020 is a baggage car or sometimes called a combined car, which means it was built to store large pieces of luggage for passengers in one half and have coach seating in the other half. Wheatland Express has been waiting on this car to

arrive for some time as we have some big plans for it. This car will allow our excursions and tours to be inclusive to all who wish to experience the magic of the Wheatland Express. The car will be fitted with a permanent wheelchair lift and an accessible bathroom, and considerations. Although we do not know for sure, it is safe to say this particular car has been out of service for quite some time and will be undergoing an extensive renovation. But we have the best group of contractors who do fantastic work, and we can't wait to see the final results. Here are some of the photos of GSR 2020 in transit and being lifted by crane onto our track in Cudworth.



# 2021 WHEATLAND EXPRESS SCHEDULE

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Wheatland Express is committed to re-opening as soon as conditions permit us to do so. Here's a glimpse of what we have planned for you so far in 2021! Had tickets for 2020? Your tickets are valid for rescheduled tour dates. Ticket holders can expect to receive an e-mail from us with event updates and options if they cannot make the 2021 date.

## JUNE

- 05 - David James & Big River - Johnny Cash Tribute Excursion & Dinner Show
- 06 - Prairie Train Heist Excursion
- 13 - Murder on the Wheatland Express Excursion
- 20 - Father's Day Prairie Train Heist Excursion
- 26 - Family Summer Express Excursion
- 27 - Excursion TBD



## JULY

- 03 - Prairie Train Heist Excursion
- 10 - Cowboy Showdown & Country Cookout Excursion
- 11 - Murder on the Wheatland Express Excursion
- 17 - Eagles Tribute Excursion & Dinner Show
- 18 - Prairie Train Heist Excursion
- 25 - Family Summer Express Excursion

## AUGUST

- 08 - Prairie Train Heist Excursion
- 22 - Murder on the Wheatland Express Excursion
- 28 - CCR Reprisal - CCR Tribute Excursion & Dinner Show
- 29 - Family Summer Express Excursion



STAY TUNED FOR ADDED DATES, TOURS  
AND TRAVEL OFFERS!