



SASKPOWER  
NORTHERN READING  
PROGRAM  
WRITING CONTEST  
2026

# Adventurers



# Adventurers

Preschool/Nursery/Kindergarten:

## Picture Story

- The Path My Boots Made: Draw and tell a story about somewhere you walked recently — outside in the snow or slush, or inside a school or another building you visited.
- Show the path your boots (or shoes) took and tell us one thing you noticed along the way.



1st Place

Name: Mira

Age: 4



On The Trail By  
Our House.



MIRA



We see trees. We see  
mushrooms. We see bushes.



**2nd Place**

Amelia and Friend Ice Fishing  
Age 5



# Adventurers

## Grade 1 to Grade 2: Story with a Corresponding Picture

- The Mystery of the Missing...  
Choose a real object you've lost in real life (mitt, bookmark, hair elastic, homework, lunch bag).
- Draw/write the story of the path that object might have taken through your home or community.

No Entries

# Adventurers

Grade 3 to Grade 5: Story (300+ words), Poem, or Simple Visual/Illustrated Story with at least 5–7 sentences of writing.

- Follow the Tracks: Write a story where the character follows real tracks you have actually seen:
- Dog, rabbit, bird, snowmobile tracks, ski trails, boot prints, moose tracks, stroller tracks, etc.
- Describe:
  - where you were
  - what the snow/ground felt like
  - what you imagined would be at the end of the trail



1st Place

Time

Mystery  
Tracks

By Winston Lee

On the Day before X-mas I was walking down a deep snowy trail in pinhouse. There was a frozen pond up a head. It used to be filled with tadpoles but now there all frogs. They hopped away to find a new pond to bury them selves until the beautiful sunny flower filled spring. ☐

Then something caught my eye. It looked liked a moose hoof track, there was a lot of them. I wondered if there was a one legged moose that just passed by before I got here?

A one legged MOOSE!!! Oh no I dont have my camera with me. Just a sec I need to run home and grab my camera. . . . In back with no breath and my camera. Its time to snap a picture and be famous ya-who.

Wait a minute how would a one legged moose even work? Maybe just maybe it was created in a laboratory and some how it escaped. Or it was being hunted and lost 3 of its legs. Or it tripte on the side of the road and a car

ran over three of its legs and lost all three  
except the one that didn't get ran-over!

I guess I should follow the tracks. While I  
walked I saw a lot of snowy, dark green pine trees. It  
smelled sooooo good. It felt like a dream.  
But then I saw something speed by. I tried  
to get a picture but it was way too fast. It  
looked like the road runner from the Bugs Bunny  
cartoon, but white.

I followed the tracks so I could  
take a picture and maybe find that  
one legged moose. Then I saw  
the end of tracks and a weird hole. The  
tracks lead to the hole so I put my  
hand in the hole I felt some move-  
ment in the air. Then I saw that  
same creature I was too scared to  
grab it so I took my hand out.  
Then I saw the one legged moose  
tracks lead to the hole. I thought  
to myself I have to be brave so I  
put my hand in and felt some thing

fluffy and then that moment I felt brave  
enough to grab it out. But then I  
thought how would it even fit? Then I  
got that creature and I saw something  
unexpected it was .... a bunny family!!!



## 2nd Place

### “Follow the Tracks”

I was going sliding with my cousin Miles and I saw some tracks, so I stopped and he asked me why I had stopped and I told him to look at the ground and both of us saw what looked like wolf tracks. We were sliding at the hill by the Gas Bar, and we were going back up the hill when I saw the tracks. The snow was not too powdery but just enough so that you could see your own footprints. The tracks went into the trees, and I couldn't see where they led, so I followed them. Miles told me not to, that it could be dangerous, but I told him not to worry, that I would be fine. So, I followed them around some bushes over a pile of dead trees, and I came to a wolf den. V-e-r-r-y carefully I peeked into the den. Inside there was not one but three wolf pups fast asleep.

The tracks continued past the den and deeper into the trees. I stopped and listened. I could hear footsteps getting closer and closer and closer, so I started running, I could hear howling in the distance. I turned a corner and bumped straight into Miles who had come looking for me.” Why did you come over here?” I asked him.” I said to you I would be fine!” “Well, you were gone for a long time and-” He started “It wasn't even five minutes! Seriously, what is wrong with you? I yelled. “Sigh-You really need to see this” I said. I led him to the wolf den and told him to peek inside.”OMG that is soooo cute!” He said. "Thank you for showing me this!” I smiled and said” You’re welcome. We should go home now.” and we went home together.

Thank You.

Ellen Sinclair

Hector Thiboutot Community School

Grade 5

Feb 12, 2026



3rd Place

Ava Walker

Pre-Cam Community School

Grade 3: Room13

Explore

The moon is bold and bright

I see the winter night.

The mountains are still and grey

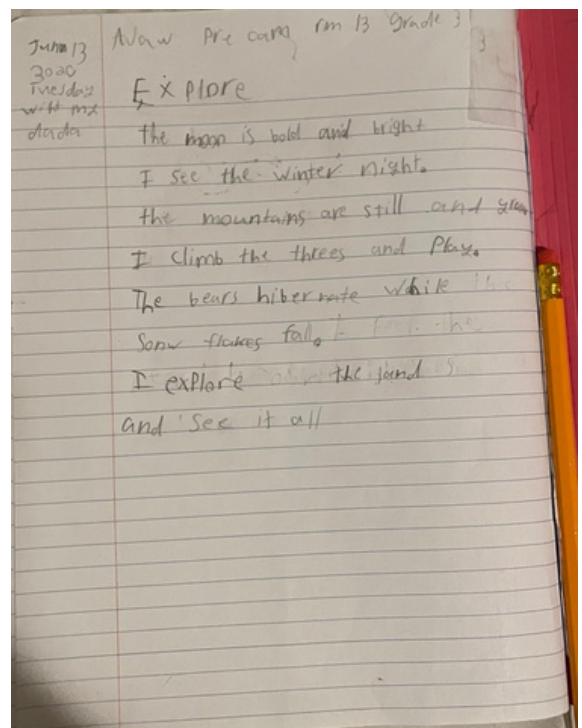
I climb the trees and play.

The bears hibernate while

snowflakes fall.

I explore the land

and see it all.



Grade 6: Story (700+ words), Poem, or Visual Story with 150–250 words of explanation.

- A Moment I'll Always Remember: Write about a real moment from your life that you still think about — even if it was small.
- It could be something funny, surprising, embarrassing, or meaningful.
- Describe where you were, who was there, and what happened that made this moment stick in your mind.
- Explain why you think you'll remember it for a long time.



## 1st Place

### A Moment I'll Always Remember

Right now, I have four foxes. I don't own them but I love to call them mine. They are wild foxes from the forest near my house. Nearly three years ago my first fox, a female that we named Foxy, started coming. She is very brave unlike her mate Al, who only comes during mating season. Another fox, Kit, Foxy and Al's first kit also started coming. Then, a year later, a fox from Foxy's second litter began to come...June. This is how she began coming.

One cold winter morning before school, I looked out the window and saw a red fox. I knew it was Foxy. I was about to go outside to feed her when I noticed another red fox in the background. At first I thought it was Kit, but Kit is bigger than Foxy. This fox was about the same size, maybe smaller. That moment that I realized that I "had" a fourth fox was very special and meaningful.

These are the reasons why that moment was so special, meaningful and why I'll always remember it. First, four is one of my favourite numbers. Second, foxes are one of my favorite animals. So it is pretty cool that I have my favorite number of my favorite animal. That is why I will always remember the moment I saw my fourth fox.

For about a month afterwards, June would come occasionally. Mostly with Foxy. She got brave enough to come close enough to be fed. Sometimes, Foxy would run and get the food first. When June tried to get it back, Foxy would just stick her butt in June's face so June didn't get any food. After that June started coming alone. Then she got more food! Kit was also coming around that time. As it got closer to mating season he disappeared. We think that is because he and Al, both adult males, can't be in the same territory during mating season. I miss Kit! Last week, mom and I saw a glimpse of Al hunting. We did not try to go outside because we know Al is easily frightened away. We knew it was Al because he was bigger than Foxy. I wish Al would come close enough to be fed. Then I could be FEEDING four foxes.

When Foxy first started coming, we didn't feed her. Now that we do, we always make sure that we are feeding her healthy things. We also make sure that we don't feed her so much that she doesn't have to hunt. The good thing about "having" pet foxes is that we have pets, but they can survive without us. The reason we don't have other real pets is because we travel a lot. I go to ski races and swim meets. Both my parents are gone at work for most of the day and I am at school. If we did have pets they would be home alone a lot. We think that would be a little cruel.

Even though feeding wild animals can easily become cruel, it did save the life of Kit. Last winter, Kit's first winter alone, Kit got his leg caught in a trap. He must have pulled and pulled until he left his fur in the trap. A few days later, he came to us desperate, hungry and with a paw the size of a hamburger. He ate four times as much as I have seen any fox eat at one time. He also came closer than he had ever come before...still not quite close enough to be touched. We contemplated trying to capture Kit and take him to a vet, but we decided that it would probably be more torture that it would be worth since the nearest vet clinic is two and a half hours away. We decided to keep him where he was and give him lots of food. We thought he would die. He could not hunt at all. We just kept giving him food and hoping for the best. Then he started to show slight improvement but then he disappeared. We were sure he must not have made it. But then three months later, he came back perfectly healed. His paw wasn't even the slightest bit crooked. We believe he wouldn't have made it if it wasn't for us. He is a lucky fox.

I love all four of my foxes. I could never pick a favorite, although Foxy is extra special because she is the original and the most consistent visitor. June is also extra special because she is my fourth fox...and maybe the cutest. As I have gotten to know my foxes, I have experienced their unique personalities. All of which are amazing. That is why I love my foxes and why the moment I realized I "had" four foxes is so special for me.

By: Abigail Birkham

Grade 6

Rossignol Elementary School

Ile a la Crosse, Saskatchewan

# Pathfinders



# Pathfinders

Grade 7 to Grade 8: Story (700+ words), Poem, or Visual/Multimedia Story with 200–300 words of explanation.

- The Day the Weather Changed Everything: Write about a real northern weather event (-40 cold snap, sudden storm, smoke from fires) that changed your plans or created a new path in your day.



## 1st Place

By: Naomi

We kept refreshing the Facebook page, hoping to get updates about our burning town. The fires were burning for a while, but they seemed like they were in a different world. They fire started in British Colombia and were nowhere near us, until they were.

It was Monday, June 2, 2025. We were all at school, all 400 of us, just hoping we got to stay here one more day. It was lunch time, the bell had just rung, and everyone was having their own conversations. The intercom buzzed and every conversation that was just happening stopped at once. "Lilly please come to the office, your lunch is here."

You could hear everyone sigh in relief. We were all waiting to be told to go home and pack up your whole life in 20 minutes and drive away to the next safest city. But that was not happening, just lily's lunch. The day went on and everyone was talking about the same thing; the fires. "Wanna bet how much longer we have till the fires get us?" Olivia joked. "Two dollars we leave in three hours." i replied. "Okay bet." Then we shook on it. The last we heard the fires were at Wadin bay, a beach 15 minutes away that i had been going to for my whole life, now just ashes on the ground. There had been big forest fires before but not like this. The firefighters had stopped them just before they reached the airport. That was not the case this year.

I stepped through my front door, and my phone made this awful beeping sound, like a broken CD. \*LEAVE LA RONGE IMEDIATLY\*. It was so surreal, i had thought about it and what i would feel, worried, anxious, and maybe even scared, but this was different. Nothing could have prepared me for this. I was terrified, not knowing if you were ever going to see your house, town, and the forest ever again. Not knowing if you even had somewhere to live in 24 hours. But we had no choice whether we were ready or not. We packed our bags, some food, our simeas cat Minou, and started the drive. My brothers and dad went in our gray dodge ram and my sister, mom and I went in her black Chevrolet.

When we passed the gas stations there was no gas left at all, people had been prepared and gassed up their cars the day before. The road was packed and we were bumper to bumper for four hours.

Before we left, Brandon, my brother's breakdancing coach, had driven down to La Ronge to teach some lessons. He didn't know how close the fires were, so he came that same day. When we got the amber alert to leave, he asked to drive down south with us. "I didn't know how close the fires were this close on, otherwise i would have stayed home." "Can I drive down with

We had been stopped for a while in what looked like the middle of the forest. The sky was still blue but if you looked to the right a little, you would have seen a gigantic brown/orange broccoli. My legs were falling asleep, so I decided to get out of the car with my brother and Brandon. Obviously, we brought my cat Minou when we got evacuated but when we put her in the car, she was so scared that she peed all over me. So, when I wanted to get out, I had to climb through the window since I was holding her. I got out and saw my little brother breakdancing on the brown gravel road with his coach Brandon. They told me to try some easy breaking moves, so I did, and I fell over face first on the road.

After a bit I got back in the car, and we waited for a while. It was another half an hour before we moved again but this time, we kept driving even though we were only going about 10 miles an hour. It felt like a turtle could beat us in a race. A lot of vehicles were turning around going back towards the fires, they had given up on waiting even though the firefighters were telling people not to.

Then it hit us like a truck; the sun stopped shining, and the cars behind us were now gone. We were in the fire. All the trees around us disappeared and were replaced by a thick wall of black smoke. You could feel it too. Your lungs heavy and your head dizzy. I started coughing along with my sister. "Cover your mouth with your sweatshirt Naomi!" My mom demanded. I tried to reply but it felt like the smoke had grabbed my neck. "We should take a picture." i said. "Of what? Pure darkness." My sister joked. A firefighter standing on the side of the road put his hand up, signaling for us to stop. Mom rolled down her window, and we felt a rush of smoke and heat. "The smoke is bad but cover your mouth and keep driving. Don't slow down and don't panic please. Then we drove. Through the smoke, through the sunshine, through the fires, and through the night.

The original trip takes 4 hours with stops but because of the fires and traffic, it took 8 and a half hours. We got to the city at 2:00 p.m. The rest of the evacuation was a blur. Sleeping, shopping, and worrying about my friends and i houses.

One thing i do remember is wondering where all the homeless or people that have nowhere to stay in the city went.

I asked my mom and she said that all the hotels in the city had come together to give them homes for a couple of weeks. Which is great until you think about it. Since they had no cars, they came down on buses with one bag each. They go to assigned rooms with their families, but if you were alone, you were put with some random strangers, in one room, for weeks. And people with kids had nowhere to go and no toys or things to keep them entertained. So, other, more fortunate people started donating toys, clothes, and toiletries. You would buy toys or clothes and give them to charities, and they would drive them down to families. So, we did the same thing. We bought bubbles, pop its, action figures, and hairbrushes. Some people were bringing in bags of clothes to give away.

We had been gone for a week and one day now and we were done. Everyone wanted to go home, but there was nowhere to go now. Someone had posted videos of people who took our town sign and some videos of door cameras seeing wildlife running by. Every day we would refresh the Facebook page hoping to get updates about our burning town. They had posted the fire tracker and mapped out what homes it took and the ones it left. The fire was throwing sparts up to 25 miles away and were setting stores up in flames.

### **One week later**

The drive back was weird. It was like i was on mars, there were these weird purple little flowers everywhere, fire weed. It was like there were the on purpose to remind us of what happened. I believe they were there to show us that even after tragedy there can be beauty. All the trees were black and fell down, but there they were, the fire weed. Purple, small but beautiful, and unique. So vibrant against the black coal trees and ground. We pulled up in the driveway and sighed with relief. Our house was still there, in all its small cottage, now dead flower beauty. And it was good, amazing actually. The sky was still gray, and the air was thick, but you could finally feel the sun. Warm against my skin and making me feel the happiest i and been since before the sun left and the smoke took over. It would all be fine, even though some stores were now just ash and walls had been taken off some houses, i knew it would all be ok. We were going to see the good in this. We were going to be like the fire weed in the ditch.

**The End**



## 2nd Place

The Orange Glow  
Genevieve Plante

By May 22, nearly 250 000 acres had been burned in Saskatchewan, 10 times the 10-year average for that time of year. Ten days later, over 7000 people were evacuated from La Ronge and area. By May 29 a Provincial State of Emergency was declared for Saskatchewan due to wildfires.

Friday May 30

“Just a heads up, that due to the smoke, the doors will be locked during lunch.” That was the announcement that came over the intercom at school during the 4th period. Although by the amount of people reefing on the door, or the repeated clamor of the doorbell; Many people did not understand this. Even some of my classmates who made their way outside at the start of lunch for a quick break, got locked out

Monday June 2

That morning it was nearly smoke free, one of the least smoky days in the past week. It was extremely refreshing to be able to breathe clearly. But the winds were still reaching 80km/hour. Despite it being so clear at 10:05 all phones went off with the same notification; Sucker River was to evacuate immediately due to the Pisew fire, at the same time the tri-community was placed on standby. No one in my class left at that time; everyone had left before the order from smoke, lived-in town, or had plans to leave already. But everyone was on edge. I still feel like I lied to everyone when I said we would be okay, because 6 and half hours later at 4:30 the same alert came out for La Ronge, Air Ronge, and the Lac La Ronge Indian Band.

I was babysitting my brother at home after school and wasn't aware of the mandatory evacuation order that came out at 4:30 till my mom came

home and told us to start packing. My heart started racing, I lost my appetite, I got chills, and a lump in my throat. I had a panic attack. Once I calmed down, I worked surprisingly efficiently. I had finished packing my stuff and put them on our deck. My mom was helping my brother pack. I grabbed my keepsake box as well as my brothers, which he didn't even know he had. My brother had a race that weekend and not knowing how long we could be, and already being down south, we decided to pack his bike. But the bike and our stuff wouldn't fit in the car, so 85 minutes after the order came out, my mom had to drive to the airport to switch out the car for the truck. Later she told me that she told me that she couldn't see flames, but the orange glow off the smoke was extremely visible. By the time my mom got home, my brother and I had gotten all our stuff and family stuff including all our bikes and lots of snacks. It was up to my brother and I to pack the truck, while my mom went inside to pack her stuff.

Within 30 minutes we were on the road, knowing that the main two gas stations would have lines longer than the Rideau Canal, so we went to the third gas station which very few people knew about. Once we had gas, we started to go south. One gas station we passed had run out of gas and was closed; the other had a long enough line to rival the Churchill River. On our way down south, there were multiple patient transport buses and fire trucks heading north. One of the trucks was dragging their hose, with another one that had fallen off completely. 20 minutes later we were in the line of other cars that felt longer than the Nile River. When we got there, people were already turning around not knowing just how close the fire was from the north. After being in line for a few minutes there was someone walking down the line talking to people. At first, I thought it was a SPSA employee, but as they got to our vehicle, I learned it was another evacuee. When they made it to our truck, they expressed how relieved they were that my dad who works for the SPSA wasn't in the vehicle. We weren't moving and a few people had been waiting for hours. As we were talking, another car drove by but stopped at our vehicle. They asked whether it was worth going back. There was just enough room between the car in front of us and our truck that when we said no they pulled

into the spot in front of us. They then hopped out of the vehicle and came to join the conversation. A few minutes later, my dad called. "Shut up, he will have information." The first guy told the couple. It was during that call that we learned that the SPSA base was no longer standing, and the fire was approaching Dalby Cres.

As the one person kept making his way down the line of cars. The couple stayed and talked. As we were talking, their dog jumped out of the window of their car. Needing the distraction, my brother and I used the extremely long leash we still had in the truck from our two dogs before we put them down and played with the dog. All while the smoke going along the road was rolling and billowing, bulging, churning and boiling.

Around 9pm we started moving, half an hour later we were at the fires edge

"Just keep driving, don't stop" was what we were told, so that's what we did. It was still daylight, but once you drove for a few seconds. In the smoke it was pitch black, then you got to the fire. On both sides of the road fire roared like thunder and flames licked the side of the road like a hungry beast. Raining chunks of burning wood were like a waterfall of red and orange. And as suddenly as it started it was over, the sky was visible, and it was quiet. Every now and then there was still a patch of burning grass, but the rest of the way it was quiet. By the time we made it to the hotel that the evacuee registration was, my brother was fast asleep, so my mom and I went in to check in the three of us. Inside my mom got a message from our neighbor,

"If you don't have anywhere else arranged, you're coming to stay with us" no question, barely an offer more an order. By the time we got to the front of the line, they were sending people out of province, since all hotels in Saskatchewan were full.

We made it to the house, and it was midnight, I was exhausted, stressed and tired but sleep did not come easy that night. Nor did sleep or appetite for the next few days. Around seven pm on June 3 there was a public post, Rona was completely engulfed in flames, a while later it was confirmed that

Rona was gone, and Robertson's was also burning. During this a new tattoo shop across the street from both buildings had a doorbell camera, that was sharing the tragic event. During the next week and a half, I barely ate and slept more and more, I spent most of my day sleeping. At all times I had the same blue and red cat in the hat blanket with me. My mom started calling it my emotional security blanket. Over the next few days, I started to relax, I ate regular meals, and I had a reasonable sleep schedule. It felt like it had been just a few days at some moments, at others I felt like it had been years. On June 11 we were told that, on June 12 at 8 am, we were allowed to go home.

The ride home was unfortunate, everything was black and charred, even the dirt was burned. In some places, the only thing left was rock. But at home everything quickly went back to normal.

Later that summer we went on a trip to Banff. Every low cloud or smoke from a bonfire got my heart racing. I had to constantly remind myself that I was fine. Even now with the brush clearing, burning all the dead stuff so that it's less of a fire hazard. My heart skips a bat at the sight of ash and the smell of smoke.



## 3rd Place

### Fire and flames

About 1 year ago at the start of summer, we had an evacuation. It was fire season and one of the worst ones I have ever seen. This is a story about what happened from my point of view and how I experienced it. Of course, this is just one of the stories and there are many more. Some of my friends might even explain their point of view, which can be quite different from mine. So anyway, I hope you enjoy it!

I woke up looking at the pitch yellow sky with a bloody red moon glaring in my eyes. The smoke was the worst I have seen. Back again to the living hell where every breath you take suffocates your lungs. Yet here we are waking up for a little something called school. Another day of torture, but luckily, we do have only a few weeks till summer break, finally I will be free from this hidden jail. “Screcchhhhhhh”, the bus is here to the far little seat where I don't need to sit beside a kindergarten 5-year-old, I don't dislike little kids, I find them kind of fun, but when it's a random 5-year-old that doesn't know how to fully talk, and they are missing half their teeth, it's pretty hard to understand the 10 word sentence they said in 1 second.

Then

you end up having the choice of laughing or asking them to repeat what they were saying. So, to avoid that awkward moment, I sat in the only small seat. Problem solved! Once I got off the bus, I headed into the big school doors, another day of torture.

After about two classes we had gym, it was time to shoot some arrows. After a few of arrows hit the target, the intercom had some important news to tell us about the kids from Sucker River, “any kids from Sucker River had to leave school to evacuate and pack up” This was a problem because Sucker River was pretty close to our town, and it would be hard to evacuate our town because the two only roads out of our town were on fire, escape would be hard.

After gym we had Cree, I don't mind Cree but it's not my favorite class but we had to go anyway. My school had an extension, and this was the old part of the school the Cree class was in. Honestly, I was scared. Outside looked like hell and I was going down a dark long old hallway with flickering lights, that didn't set the “I want to be happy mood” to well. I step through the door to the Cree class and sit down. The smoke was horrible due to it being an old class, and it was worse for me because I have Asthma and the smoke was not helping my breathing. The teacher ended up bringing us masks to help with the smoke. I personally didn't use the mask due to it making it harder to breath, but I did hear it helped some kids so that's good. The rest of the kids sat down, and the teacher said that we were going to be watching a movie since school was almost over and we finished all our work. The movie that we were watching was a movie about war. It was not a happy situation. I was already quite stressed, and the movie was not helpful. Instead, I just made me more stressed than I was before. Once that bell rang, I booked it out of the Cree class.

Next was lunch, the smoke was so bad that if you were going to leave the school for lunch you could only leave once and come back in once, so the school was not smokey (not like it already was). We ate fast to go to the gym; it seemed to have the cleanest air. So, it was easier to breathe. After a bit of eating, I looked outside, oh wait, no I didn't it was so smokey outside the sky was so yellow you couldn't see a few feet in front of you, So fun. We finished eating and headed into the gym. Some of my friends played volleyball while the others sat and enjoyed the fresh sweaty air that was the gym.

After a few classes it was time to head home. I got on the bus, headed to the last seat, and sat down. We got to the elementary school to pick up the small kids; I was surprised when only about 4 kids hopped on. We do have days when only a few kids come on, but this was smaller than normal, but I just passed it off, I didn't care that much. The only thing that was bothering me was the constant Sask alerts (like amber alerts but for wildfires) that were going off the entire day. Slowly, all the neighboring communities were evacuating, one by one: Sucker River, Wadin Bay, English Bay, surely La Ronge was next.

Once I got home, I decided to pack my stuff in case we needed to evacuate. I don't know why but something told me that I needed to. Once all my bags were packed, I saw my mom pulling up in the driveway and running in. I went down the stairs to see what the rush was. "Elika! You need to pack. We need to evacuate as soon as possible! The fire is super close to the airport" (The airport is super close to us, and we can see it sometimes). This was crazy news, and some way, somehow, I knew that I needed to pack. I told my mom I was already packed, and she told me to pack more stuff for my little sister, so I packed all that I could find. I was about to leave but I went back and got my sister's little stuffed bunny whose name was Bunbun. There was no more room in her bags, so I put it in one of mine. Once all the bags were in the car, my mom was taking photos and I was going to pee, and I was going to end up in the bathroom a lot because when I'm stressed, I need to go pee. It's very annoying. And in this story, it might seem like I was handling everything good, and maybe it looked like that on the outside. But on the inside, I was having a mini panic attack. I have always not been a big fan of fire, sparklers at birthday party's (always avoided those), fire dancer I watched once (hid my head the hole time), fireworks (always stressed that the sparks are going to catch fire), leaving something plugged in for too long (scared the object is going to overheat and catch fire). But I held it together and got in the car.

After an 8-9-minute drive we pulled up to the empty driveway at the school. My sister and dad hopped in and sat down, after a conversation bettewn my mom and dad we were going to head back home and pack more stuff. I hated this idea because the fire was already close

to the airport and it would reach it soon. We pulled up to the driveway of our house and started packing more stuff, mom was packing, dad was going to get the boat in the water, my sister was in the car, and I was going pee, again. Once all was packed, we drove over to the boat launch ready to pick dad up. But the wind was crazy. It was changing directions every second, plus the water was the worst; waves were splashing everywhere in every direction. The boats were crazy like a sailboat in a storm no matter how hard you try and how good you are steering was nearly imposable. And when I was about to lose hope in getting the boat parked, I heard sirens nearing. In a flash, police cars were yelling at us to leave the boats and evacuate. "The fire has reached the airport you need to leave!" The sudden scream of the police and the stress that was building up made me nauseous. The jolt of the car moving made me wake up to reality. A few seconds before the turn I looked back and saw the boat parked. A small bit of relief came over me before I Remember'd we were in a fire sandwich. How were we going to evacuate if the only roads were on fire?

Next thing me, my dad, and my sister were in the hospital parking lot waiting for my mom. The buses were super late because of the fire. The patients that were unable to move had no escape at all. It was mayhem and the whole time I was thinking about going to the bathroom, I had to go pee again. In the blink of an eye, I was in the hospital bathroom and in another blink, we were pulling out of the parking lot. My mom got to leave early because she had kids. The tires skid on the road, and we were off; the journey had just begun. After about a 15-minute drive we hit the longest line, I have ever seen. About an hour passed by and we moved less than an inch. Then we got a call. My Anite was freacking out; she was told that she had to leave the line and hop into the water because the fire was getting too close. My parents were startled but they decided that it was best to stay until we got more info. But a never-ending line of cars was heading back to La Ronge. My parents didn't know what to do. "Quick the fire coming get out now!" It was a scream we heard from a family driving back. My parents cracked the turned around and we stared heading to la Ronge.

We stopped what we doing, there was no proper information, we pulled up back into line and checked every place for proper information. Eventually we got a text saying it was just a myth. This was so reliving but now we were at the far back of the line. After a bit of waiting a had to go to the bathroom again, but I couldn't go on the ditch because we were at a swamp. After about an hour of waiting we finally made it to the bush and I could finally go pee.

After what felt like hours, we finally made it to the fire; all the cars were in line and had their lights on. It was dark about 11:50pm and the smoke made it imposable to see; the only light was the headlamps in front of you and the fire. There were small fires on trees and giant

flames burning everything in sight everywhere. And once the flames stopped, more would come in seconds.

After we exited the fire, it was about 12:30 and our original plan was to go to a saskatoon, but it was late and we were running out of gas. So, we went to Waskesiu. One of our family friends had a cabin there and said we could stay. Once we pulled up to the door, I sprinted as fast as I could to the bathroom, I was holding it in for way too long.

I had a horrible sleep but was too tired to care. I walked downstairs and heard so horrible news. "We are now officially homeless," said my mom. All the broken all the stuff I left has been gone forever, where were we even going to stay? But my mom broke my worried thinking. "We were looking at the temperature on our phones and shot up in tempture the shut off". After about an hour of awkward silence, a "ding" came from my mom and dad's phone. It was a video of after the fire died down on our street and once we looked at it, we saw that our house was still standing. I can't explain the happiness I felt when I saw our house.

After that day we drove to saskatoon. And when the evacuation ended, there were 3 houses that burnt on our street. Including a 2 sheds, one playground, and our backyard stairs, which was a miracle, our house didn't go with it.

The end.

By: Erika

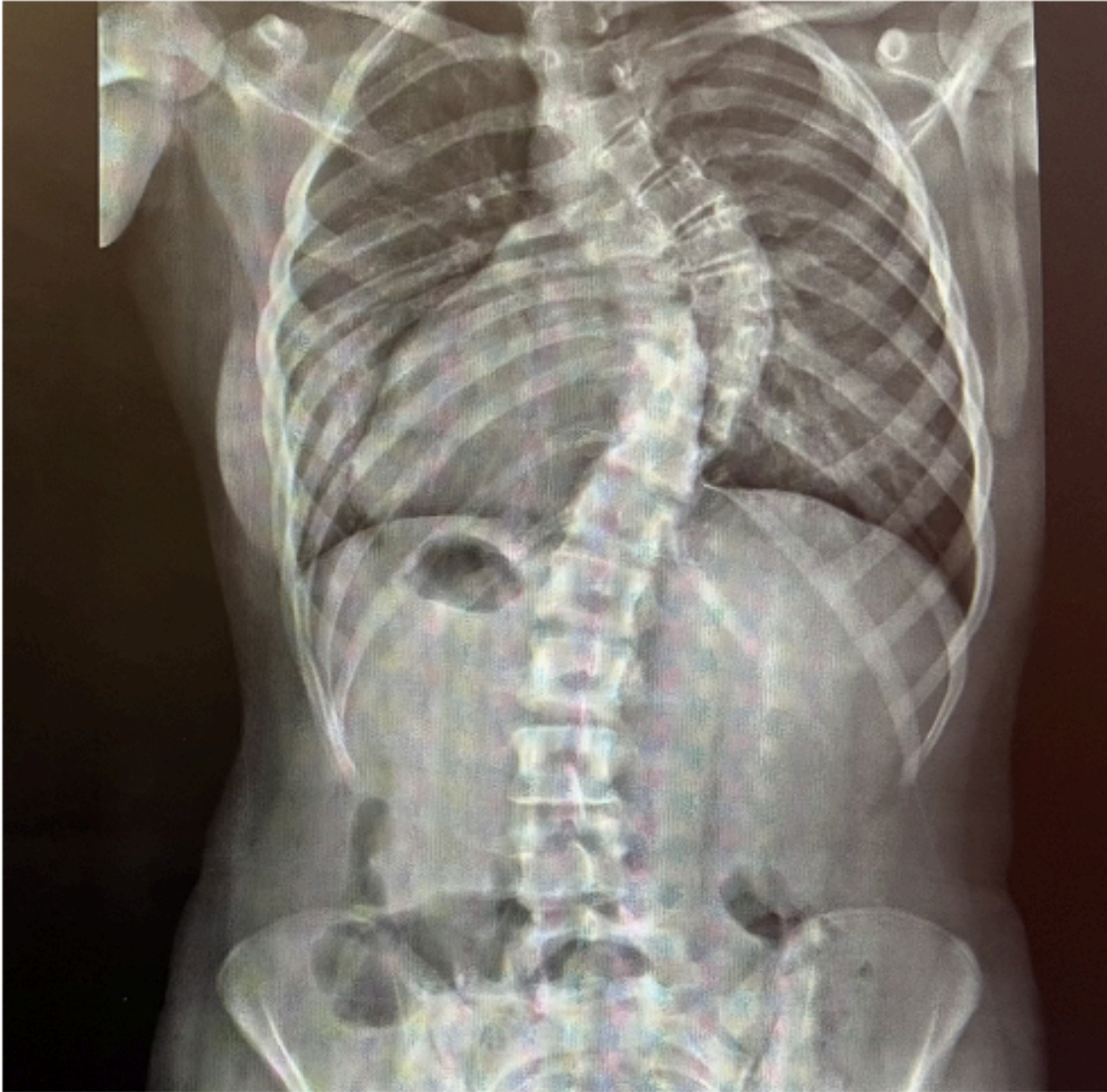
Grade 9: Story (1500+ words),  
Poem, or Visual/Multimedia Story  
with 200–300 words of explanation.

- A Story Hidden in a Photo:  
Choose a real photograph from  
your life — one on your phone,  
or one from home — and write  
the story behind it.
- Describe what was happening  
outside the edges of the picture:  
the people, the feelings, the  
words, the setting, or the  
moment that didn't get  
captured.



1st Place

# The diagnosis



Written by: Tessa Herperger

Only 2% of adolescents struggle with scoliosis. What is scoliosis you may ask? It is the curvature of the spine that results in getting a brace or even surgery. I am unfortunately part of that 2%. This is the story of how my life flipped upside down.

My body ached with pain. I was struggling to hold on. As I glanced over, my auntie on the other hand looked as perfect as a peacock, with a smile on her face, like she had just got ready for a wedding. As I gazed at my cousins, I didn't feel as weak. They looked like they were struggling just as much as I was.

"I shouldn't have worn a sweater," I thought to myself. I didn't expect Pilates to be very physically exhausting, but I was wrong. Not only did you need to be fit, but it also took lots of balance to follow along with what my auntie was doing. My legs were shaking, my arms felt like Jello. I could feel a little ache in my right shoulder, but I didn't give it any thought.

"Keep going guys, were almost done!" My auntie announced. Relief entered my body, knowing we were almost done and I could go take a cold relaxing shower soon. I looked like a dirty pig that needed to be cleaned.

"Last exercise!" My auntie proclaimed. Holding a plank wasn't as easy as I thought it was. After what felt like a century, the minute passed and I let my body collapse onto my mat.

\*

When we got back to my grandparents' house, I took a cold shower, and we had supper as a family.

"I noticed something on your back while you were doing planks." My grandma stated. "It looked like a big lump." Fear entered my body, the first thing that entered my head was cancer.

"Let Auntie Erin take a look; she will know what it is" Grandma murmured. Auntie Erin got me to lay on the ground, stomach on the floor. My stomach grumbled. It wasn't the comfiest laying on my stomach after our big turkey feast. Her hand felt around my back, and right away she knew.

"You have scoliosis!" Auntie Erin blurted. I was confused.

"What is that?" I questioned.

“It is a condition where your spine is curved. It is nothing to worry about, you will probably just need a brace.” Little did I know what my fate would hold.

\*

“Are you nervous?” My dad asked me.

“A little,” I replied, while fidgeting with the string of my sweater. We were sitting down waiting for the doctor to get us for our checkup.

“Tessa” A nurse announced with her clipboard in her arms. I took a deep breath and stood up. I followed the lady to a dim room and got seated on a chair. After a couple of minutes, I was led to an X-ray room. I stepped on a tube and was told to stay as still as I could. It was a little bit nerve-wracking, but I was out before I knew it.

A few minutes later, I was taken to the checkup room. As I entered, a doctor was sitting down. She had short, dark hair and was tall. She had round pink glasses and was dressed very casually. As I looked into her eyes, her face lit up. Her smile was as warm as the sun. I sat down on a chair and smiled back. Her presence made me feel calm, sending most of my nerves out of my body.

“Hey,” she said. Her voice was high pitched. It reminded me of a little mouse.

“Hello” I replied, looking straight into her eyes. She seemed genuinely nice.

After lots of questions, and checking my back, the doctor concluded that I had to get surgery. My stomach turned and my heart beat fast.

“SURGERY!” I shrieked. “No, this can’t be!”

“It’s ok,” the doctor replied, trying to calm me down. “It will be ok.”

I took deep breaths, trying to wrap my head around this. This was the worst possible outcome. I never thought it would come to this. I was so worried about the brace, I didn't even think they would be considering surgery.

"Is the brace another option" My dad asked.

"She is too curved to use a brace; her degree is 70. To get a brace you must have a curvature of 50 degrees or less" She explained.

I was scared. It was obvious, too. I was scared about what could happen, and what the surgery would be like. Bad thoughts went through my brain.

"I could die. What if they mess up the surgery?" I thought. My brain was spinning. "This could mess up my whole life!" This is not how I wanted this appointment to go.

\*

"Please don't make me get surgery, please mom" I begged.

"I'm not sure if we have another choice" My mom told me. I begged not to get the surgery, but deep down, I knew I needed it. If I didn't get the surgery, it could lead to getting a wheelchair later and could cause lots of pain and problems. Back surgery isn't the safest though. If the surgery didn't go as planned, I could go paralyzed or even die! Post surgery, you need to have a 6-month recovery with no physical activity. I didnt know how I would live without doing any sports for 6 MONTHS! There were millions of reasons why I didn't want to get the surgery, but I had too.

The scoliosis procedure involves using metal rods and screws to straighten the curve. They would have to put a metal rod on either side of my spine. It would also make me less flexibility. I wasn't too thrilled to get the surgery.

\*

“Lay on this bed please.” The nurse demanded. I listened and climbed up onto the bed. It felt like I was lying on a rock, it wasn’t the comfiest bed I have been on.

“They should really invest in some good beds.” I thought to myself. I was so scared, all I could think about was if this could be my last thing I do on earth. The death rate was only 1%. As I lay, scared, and alone on the rock-hard bed I thought “what if I am the 1%?”

The surgeons then came into the room. Their masks and gloves made my nerves increase. The scariest surgeon of them all came closer to me holding an anesthesia mask. I took a deep breath and let out all my nerves.

“I can’t control what happens, all I can do is wait” I thought. Before I knew it, the mask was getting put on my head. As I lay there waiting, I closed my eyes, and everything I was feeling left my body. I fell into a deep sleep.

As I slowly opened my eyelids, the light burned my eyes. The first few seconds were a blur. I smelled an overwhelming mix of chemicals. I was confused, but then reality came back to me.

“I am out of surgery” I figured out after a few minutes. My back ached, and my body was sore. Shivers went down my spine. I was alone in a room, and surprisingly, I was in a comfier bed. I was so relieved I was out of the surgery, and hopefully, the surgery went as planned.

“Tessa!” The voice sounded awfully familiar. As I looked to my left, my mom was walking towards me. Calmness washed over me as she came to hug me. I hugged her back as tight as I could. Whenever I was anxious or nervous, my mom was always there for me, and right now, I needed her.

Along came my dad and sisters, rushing over to see me. I was so happy to see all of them. They were always there for me when I needed them. They were also happy to see me!

“Theres some other people who want to see you” My sister said with a smirk on her face. Next thing I know, one by one, all 6 of my classmates rushed in. I was so surprised to see them, and my excitement went through the roof. My face was as bright as the sun. When I looked at Cami and Naomi, they were carrying something.

“What is that” I asked.

“It’s for you, a turtle cake.” My other friend Christina replied as Naomi came to give me the cake. It looked so good, with the turtles on the top and the ice cream in the middle.

“Thank you for everything” I exhaled. “You all have been so supportive through this surgery and I appreciate it.”

“It’s the least we can do,” Ava replied, smiling at me.

“I especially appreciate this cake” I giggled as I opened the lid and dug right into the cake. We all enjoyed eating the cake and chatting. When they finally had to leave, I didn’t feel sad, just thankful. I realized that even on one of my scariest days, I wasn’t alone. That’s when I knew I’d be okay, because I would always have people who care so much about me.



## 2nd Place

Ciara carr

### My Memorable trip

This summer, I was incredibly grateful to be invited to go camping in Missinipe with my boyfriend and his family. I was super stoked to go, and we ended up having the most amazing time. We were there for four days, and it flew by so fast. We spent our time swimming, having late-night talks on the dock, going on bike rides, and making so many new memories. That trip will always be a core memory for me.

The morning of leaving: I was rushing around making sure I didn't over pack or under pack. By the time I got downstairs waiting for his family to pick me up, time had already flown by, next thing I know we were driving down the rough Missinipe roads like turban lace in an airplane flying over an ocean. We arrived and headed straight for the campsite to start setting up the camper. Our campsite was right in front of the water and we were able to swim off the rock in front of our campsite. We felt like Elsa standing on the rock looking down at the crisp cool water. Us kids brought all the floaties and kayaks down to the rock for easy access when we wanted to swim. For the rest of the night we had just chilled played cards, had a fire and supper.

On the first day, I awoke to the bright hot sun shining on my skin. It smelt of fresh summer air with no smoke making a thick coat of smoke in your throat every time you swallow. I heard Lauren yell.

“Wake up you sleepy heads” referring to me and Amelia.

Karlan was staying with his uncle in his cabin, so around 9:30 Karlan biked over. We had pancakes, After we were all so full, we decided to go for a bike ride, before swimming to listen to the myth of getting a sore stomach if you eat then swim. We went all over Missinipe. When we came back, we jumped right into our bathing suits and jumped straight into the water off the rock acting as if the rock was a diving board. We could hear Amelia's mom yell

“time for supper!”

We all jumped to grab our towels and dry off. Running out of the water felt like I was doing the polar plunge or coming out of a hot tub in the wintertime. After supper all of us kids biked to the park, by this time it was already dark, we played on the play structure suffering from all the mosquitoes. We headed back because we were very slumped and we fell asleep very quickly.

Second day, this time I woke up to Karlan saying "Wake up, wake up" I was so tired, so I thought what any tired person would do and I pushed him off the bed and put the pillow over my head. Eventually I crawled out of bed. Amelia and I went to sit at the table outside, and after everyone was up and at'em, we played volleyball at the road of our campsite. Diving felt as if I was landing on Lego pieces. We just hung out more of the second day we played cards and board games, like golf, cheat and After supper we went for a late-night swim, it was pretty chili but fun. We played a game on the water mat we had to try pushing each other into the water, off the mat. After we came back we all dried off and went for a bike ride to the park. Our hair was dripping water as we biked leaving a trail for anyone to find us easily. Once we got to the park Lauren was teaching us how to do a summer sault, We failed badly at that one. Once we all arrived back at the campsite, Karlan and I went down to the dock and sat on the bench and watched the stars. We had a nice long talk even though it was disrupted by mosquitoes, it was a very special moment. I said goodnight to him and walked back up to the camper, so I could start to get ready for bed. For the rest of the night, Lauren, Amelia and I all laid in bed and visited. We were also on a mosquito hunt because by the second day already they had made themselves at home. We fell asleep pretty soon after all talking and hunting.

The third day, I woke up pretty early and played on my phone. Everyone was still asleep so Karlan and I went on a canoe ride, walking down to the canoe was horrible, Karlan thought it would be a great idea to put the canoe in the muskeg and I decided to wear Birkenstocks with socks moral of the story my feet were soaked but it made up for the beautiful Missinipe mornings. It was super nice to do the first thing in the morning, watching all the birds float in the calm warm lake. When we got back, everyone was awake. We had breakfast and all went for a walk. When we got back, we all laid in the hammock and talked about our plans for the fair. After lunch we all went for a bike ride to the store to get snacks and fishhooks. We then headed over to the dock to fish, sadly we were skunked. So, we headed back and helped with supper and cleaned up a bit

around the camper. After the yummy supper we put our wet cold bathing suits on feeling like a cold wet sloth giving you a hug. We then headed right to the rock to jump off of it. The water was the perfect temperature, almost like the lake knew what type of temperature we wanted. We ran out before we got chilled and threw on sweats, hoodies and lots of bug spray. Then we went to the park and played tag. Around 10pm we arrived back at the camper for a fire; Amelia had a very smart idea of making some s'mores. We played some cards and enjoyed the rest of the very peaceful day.

The last day, we woke up and had some breakfast, while we waited for Karlan's grandma to drive up for the day. When she got to Missinipe we all decided to go to the beach because it was so nice out, Karlan's aunt and grandma walked to the beach, while us kids kayaked and canoed to the beach. We swam for quite a few hours while we were swimming. We all washed our hair and body with a yummy smelling shampoo. You could see the bubbles floating away with the sun shining down on us. We swam back to the shore and had some crackers, cheese, and meat as a snack. We headed back to the camper and got dressed up in nice outfits because we were going to go for supper at the restaurant. I wore a long sun dress with flowers on it. We all jumped into the truck and headed to the restaurant. I had a chicken caesar salad wrap. I was supper excited because they have the best chicken caesar salad wraps like a rainbow on my tongue. After supper we went for a walk and got ice cream. I went with strawberry ice cream as always. We decided to walk all around Missinipe we ended up at the spot where my boyfriend's parents were married. It was my first time seeing that place. It was so gorgeous I've never felt so deeply connected to a spot before. We walked on the dock and Karlan pointed down, and we saw so many fish. We made jokes about if someone could grab a fish we would pay them money for it, obviously being teenagers and evolving money. We each gave it a shot; we were not successful. Everyone went to grab their phones to take pictures of the lake because it was so calm Karlan and I stayed back to look at lake and tell each other stories on Laurens way down she snagged a beautiful picture of Karlan and I, it is to this day my favorite picture because of the spot it has a huge meaning behind it and so many memories. I'm so thankful that Lauren took this picture.

The morning of leaving, the next morning we awoke pretty early and got packed up. It took us an hour to get completely ready to go. We then picked up Karlan from his uncles and we hit the road. It was pretty bumpy like a carton of eggs. In the car we listened to music. When we were driving back, our fuel was getting low because we forgot to get gas and hauling the camper takes more gas. We were still about 30 km out of La Ronge we ended up making it, It was a pretty nerve racking drive. We immediately went to gas up. I was dropped off and I thanked them for taking me on such a memorable trip.

Well that concludes my story of my special picture, it's of me and my boyfriend in Missinipe at the very special spot of his parents wedding. It was so perfect, the entire trip itself. I'm so grateful I had the amazing opportunity to go on this trip. I think about if I didn't go I wouldn't get to worship this perfect picture of Karlan and I. The picture behind it has so much meaning, It's not just a picture of my boyfriend and I it has a huge trip behind it with so many memories that nobody could guess, The picture was taken at the spot of his parents wedding and I'm 99% sure nobody could guess that unless I told them or they read this. I'm very grateful for the photo, for me its showing how beautiful it was out and how much memories it has behind it. It was a naturel photo. Lauren just knew and it came to be so beautiful like a summer night (with no mosquitoes). It was a great trip overall even with some ups and downs like running out of gas (almost) and the crazy amount of mosquitos but that's just summer you walk around in mosquitoes world. Thank you all for taking the time out of your day to read my story.





3rd Place

# *Bad Salzdetfurth*

*By Joanie Ryan-Willins*



“Why did I agree to this? It's way too early” I thought before sitting up.

Light filtered through the curtains; it was brighter in Germany than the winter months I was used to in Canada. My parents were upstairs, from what I assumed; they were already awake. The sounds of shuffling feet and muffled voices drifting from up the stairs were my main clue. I was sharing a room with their friend's daughter, Annie. Annie was already awake.

“Good morning,” Annie said. It was thickly accented but still understandable, which is more than I could do.

“Morning” I replied, still tired and awkward. We had only met yesterday, and I felt like I had been woken up this morning by a bus running over me.

We didn't really speak the same language. I spoke very broken German, as in I could say yes, no and could count to ten. She was better

than me when it came to speaking each other's language as she could speak enough English to at least attempt a conversation but still, we had just met each other. Though sharing a room with her wasn't too bad, she didn't snore like my parents, and she was around the same age plus we just lay down on our respective sleeping arrangements and slept.

Standing up, she walked out of the room with her clothes to change in the bathroom. Putting on my glasses, I grabbed some clothes and padded upstairs to where my parents were staying. They were downstairs by the time I was finished changing in their bathroom, I hurried down the stairs managing to slip and ending up in a dramatic starfish like position. Grabbing the rail of the stairs, I hoisted myself up as quickly as possible. Dusting myself off, I headed down the stairs to the bottom floor where all the adults were sitting my mom talking in fast German to Stephan and Corolla, my dad just listening adding in bits and pieces when the conversation switched to English. I sat down and started listening, too.

A few minutes later the rest of the kids came down, and we started breakfast. My mom and Stephan had run down to the local bakery to buy some fresh brötchen, a fluffy bun with a sort of hard and Chewy outside.

“Can you pass the Nutella please?” I asked Annie while gesturing the open Nutella jar beside her; she nodded and passed it over.

“What should we do today?” My mom suddenly said.

“Why don't we visit the town oma used to live in” I suggested

As we were about to head to the train station, Stephan ran down to the basement and brought up a picture collage of my mom and Stephan in university.

“Stephan, you've doomed me” My mom groaned while I snapped some pictures of her in all her college glory.

We went to the train stop; it was a warm day, and the white floor was reflecting more heat. After paying for the train tickets, we waited a few minutes before getting on. I sat close to my parents and just stared out the window checking that everyone else was still on the train. Soon enough we got off at the Hannover train station and switched trains doing the same thing as last time I sat and waited for our stop. Eventually, we got off at Bad Salzdetfurth. It was a small vibrant town filled with flowers; the air was cool against my face. My mom stopped us on the outskirts of town near a sign saying 'Willkommen Bei Bad Salzdetfurth', asking us to take a picture. It was a little difficult as we only had a phone, and there were eight people in our group. I stood beside my dad who stood by my mom while Annie, Marie and Beka stood beside their mother Corolla, Stephan stood beside her and my parents and took the picture.

We walked through paths that were winding and twisting through the trees, flowers planted along the sides of the paths had started blooming as spring had begun. Passing under a reaching tree we found ourselves on a small red bridge that sat over a river. A white tree sat feet away, its branches sprawling across the sky above the river, flowers starting to bloom. The bark brought even more attention to the tree as it was dark against the cheerful atmosphere of the town. I snapped a few pictures before we continued walking. Passing into a courtyard that had a tree planted in the middle. The tree didn't have leaves yet, but it was covered in small vibrantly colored eggs as it was nearing easter.

Walking for a while after we ended up near an ice cream shop that my parents used to go to when they would visit my urgroßmutter before she died.

"Why don't we stop here and take a picture before going to get lunch and come back later for some ice cream?" suggested my mom. We all gathered around Stephan again and he took the picture.

"Where is there to eat here?" My dad asked.

“We don't come here often, why don't we look around quickly” answered Stephan.

A little while away there was another river with a bridge. Of course, my mom wanted a picture there as well, so we took some before crossing the bridge to find a restaurant.

“Well, it seems we are too late for lunch and too early for dinner” Stephan said as he walked back to the group after walking ahead to read the signs on the restaurant door.

“There must be at least one place that's open in this town” my mom lamented as my dad nodded along.

Walking all the way back to the little red bridge we crossed, the white trees' leaves were swaying gently in the wind as we crossed. The trunk creaking slightly in the wind. As the petals of the tree gently floated onto the ground and river.

Walking down the flower covered path for a while, before heading to the mini golf course hoping that there might be at least some sandwiches to buy.

“Willkommen im Haus, was kann ich für Sie tun?” The girl behind the glass counter said as we walked in.

“Haben Sie hier etwas zu essen?” Stephan replied.

“Ja, folg mir” they said as they led us to a small separate room with an eight seated table.

“What are we going to do after we eat?” My mom asked between flipping pages of the menu.

“Well, we could head back or play some mini golf. I think they have the golf balls for sale or rent here” answered Stephan.

“Hey, DD could you read this for me?” I whispered to my dad, as everyone else talked about what to do.

“This is peperoni pizza, I think, and this one's Cheese and this one's bratwurst,” He said, “Which is a sausage braised in beer.” He elaborated when he saw my questioning gaze at the bratwurst.

After we all decided Stephan headed up to the counter to order our food and drinks. Everyone chatted as we waited for our food while I just ideally listened to it all not really picking up any of the German. After a while our food came out and we ate before heading up to the counter to pay.

“It’s really no problem we haven’t seen you in years. We’re perfectly able to pay,” Stephan said.

“And we’re staying at your house free of charge, we can at least pay for food” replied my mom. Already reaching for her card but Stephan had already paid.

“Alright but let us buy the golf balls and clubs” my mom sighed. She then turned to the cashier to rent the clubs and balls.

After handing out all the equipment we headed down to the course and got ready to start playing. For the first few holes it was fine, but on the third hole the youngest of the three sisters Becka was stuck at a hill that her ball just wouldn’t go over in the course and started crying. After she calmed down, we continued and came across another hill that Stephan had trouble with but accidentally did the opposite of Beka and ended up lobbing it into the stream beside the course, so he had to run and get a new one from the range attendant as we all laughed.

As the sun started to set, we headed back to the train station the orange rays, bathing everything in a golden glow.

“If I walked that much every day, I would be fit in a few months” huffed my mom as she flopped down onto the bench Corolla laughing with her as she complained.

The train pulled up covered in graffiti. I sat across from Annie and Beka as Marie sat with her and my parents. I sat and stared at the graffiti as Annie and Beka started to play a game like twenty questions but with just Harry Potter characters.

“Would you like to join us?” asked Annie, it was better than staring out the window, so, I agreed moving seats to sit with them nearly tripping a few times as the train was still moving. After playing for a while Beka lost interest and went over to her parents and me and Annie kept playing.

We kept playing after the train stopped and we got off at Hannover expanding it to anything in the Harry Potter universe which was a little harder cause things had different names in different languages and we started picking obscure things, but it was fun. We got off the train at our stop and continued to play all the way to their house. Super was a lot less awkward than breakfast was for me. After super finished we continued playing and she showed me the books she had which had illustrations on the sides of the pages with famous scenes and kept talking until Stephan had to come in twice to tell us to stop. As I fell asleep, I felt much better and much happier than I did this morning.

***THE END***

# Explorers



Explorers (Grade 10 - Grade 12)  
Short Story (2000+words), Poetry  
(any length), or a Visual/Multimedia  
Story with a 300–500 word  
explanation

Where I'm From, Written in Objects:  
Write a story built around three real  
objects from your life:

- Examples: a favourite hoodie, a keychain, a fishing rod, a pair of boots, a photo, a mug, a piece of beadwork, a letter, etc.
- Each object should reveal something about your path and identity.



History can be told by many voices; it can be warped and warbled, added to and redacted from, or merely a recounting of memories, lost forever to the unforgiving fog of age and time. But objects, they never lie; they have no mouth to speak otherwise. Their form tells the tales of a thousand lives, each speck of dust, a fraction of the lives they had once been glorified in. One bead in a bracelet paints a picture of what had long ago been.

In my culture, we tend to respect objects, as if they were elders of our past, and in a way, they are. They hold knowledge that we young ones will never come to understand, until we join our *umunna* in the sky. Then, we still may be too young to grasp the wisdom that comes with age.

I remember a night with my cousins, when our Lady of the Night had her full face out, bathing our village with an ethereal glow; we snuck to my grandfather's stead, slipping past his door and tiptoed to his study, itching to have a closer look at his walking stick. It wasn't just any cane; it was an Ofo, a traditional cane carried by the elders as a symbol of authority and strength in a clan. As children, we were told to look away when he wields it, that young eyes would melt at the sight of such a power, but we were never the kind to listen.

One step, two steps, a pause. We look around, waiting for the unfortunate moment of an adult catching us in our rebellious act. But the reckoning never came, so we left all discretion behind, pushing past the globe and peering into the glass box where he kept this staff. We awed at it, for what counted for ten seconds, before we carefully removed the lid and carried the staff. It was as heavy as lead; we nearly dropped it, and there were three of us holding it firm, as we slid it out of its hold.

The moment we had in our grasp, it was like we were sharing a collective memory. Flashes of blurry images filled our eyes; First it was an artist who was shaving wood into a staff, next followed what seemed to be a white man, and a man of our own shaking hands, the staff was handed off. Scenes later, it was nighttime, and a young boy slipped into the tent of the white man, dragging the stick out, his little body exerting itself to pull it along. Then it changed to a meeting of the elders, where the young boy, now grown, was receiving the staff again, a hawk feather now added to his cap. The sign of a chief, our grandfather.

We were sitting on the floor now, eyes teary from what we had seen. It was not our place, nor our time, to understand what the *umunna* above revealed to us. We placed the staff back, our curiosity far from satiated, but self-control is what dragged us away from the study, forcing us back into our beds, ending our rendezvous right there. We never told the adults what we did, but I always had the feeling my grandfather knew. He had that twinkle in his eye whenever he had an inkling of something, but like a true elder, he never spoke about it, keeping it to himself, leaving us young ones something to ponder on.

That night always stuck with me, ever so often I think of it and wonder, "What in my life would tell my story that way? What do I own that would give my successors something to ponder about?"

In no way have I done anything remarkable in my life. My story is forged by the lives of those who come before me. I am the first daughter of immigrants and the first granddaughter of a soldier. My great-grandfather was a chief, and I am a descendant of slaves, whose backs bore the weight of many a pain.

My life is not my own; it is simply complementary to the history of my roots, another name in the ever-scrawling tapestry that is my family tree. It would be unfair not to try to add my own narrative, to give my voice to our continued history, as raw and true as it can be.

When I was a little girl, I was like a gale, always moving, never fixed. I was everywhere. I could never be restricted to a spot. Like most children before they grow older, I had no fear. But there was one thing that would always set me straight, my father's *koboko*. A *koboko* is an African word for a cane, or a whip made with horse hide, usually used by herdsman in the sweltering North to lead their cattle across the plains. Though that was never their fixed purpose. In most households, these disciplinarians were used to "set children straight" and "instill the Fear of the Lord." My household was among those who participated in such a ritual.

I was cautious to avoid it. Always handing in my homework, aiming for the stars whenever I was given a task to do; anything to avoid the sharp bite of horse hide on my ankles. Then again, I could not dodge the inevitable. Years went by, and as the whip bit through my skin, it grew back tougher. I no longer feared the whip; I dreaded it, but it was not lord over my life any longer. A tool overused has lost its relevance; it is just as basic as the tool before it. It made me rigid and firm, unwilling to change lest it was the hand of God that moved me.

I grew older, still fixed in my ways. I couldn't see reason, and I didn't want to. I was trained to avoid punishment, so I dodged anything that could lead to it. It changed when an old man handed me a Bible again. I was raised in the faith, but that didn't mean I followed it. I found it insane that I was supposed to praise and fear a deity who never showed grace upon me, even in the zenith of my innocence. I never felt a pull as my parents did, my lifeless eyes gazing straight ahead to the man in the stained glass, his orbs peering back at mine, judging me, berating me. I wanted none of it. If He truly forgave sins, why did it always feel like I was swimming against a flood?

When I was handed the Bible, my first thought was to kindly say thank you and return home to stuff the book along with the other articles of faith my family thrust upon me. So I took the book and waited for the bus. As I waited, I flipped through. It had been so long since I read the words in red, and it was the first time that I acknowledged that I missed them. I missed my bus, and the next one, sitting at that bus stop, the rain was pouring down from the sky. It was a cleansing, washing away my pain. It wasn't erasing the pain of my past, but I saw it as God and I making a clean slate.

I would say my history is complete with a blank sheet. Many even, like the journal that sits unused on my desk. I have many books that I have written from top to bottom, even on the sides, if lines proved to be insufficient. What is written in those journals is my past, tucked away

for reference that I might never have to make. To write in them is my present, to free my self for their oppression by locking them away in a book, never released to torment my life again. It is only by letting go of the past that I might look forward to the future, but that may never come if active steps aren't made in the present. Hence, the empty journal, I do not know what the future holds, I don't know what kind of person I will be tomorrow that will fill those pages.

That is my history, all told by the objects that have seen me through it all, and made me a balance. With my firmness comes a faith that allows me to relax and put my hope in the things unknown.

Has my account honored my family tree? Is this a tale that my grandfather can exclaim and say he is proud of me? His destiny was formed by a carved stick from a tree; how much more would fate have in store for me?

Will my story be noteworthy, or would it be another dog-eared tale my successors would toss away on the shelf?

# Voyageurs



## Voyageurs (Adults)

Short Story (2500+ words), Poetry, or Visual/Multimedia Story with a 300–500 word explanation.

A Northern Kind of Kindness: Tell a true story of someone who stepped in to help you — or someone you helped.

Could be:

- a stranger on the highway
  - a neighbour during a power outage
  - someone lending tools or gear
  - an unexpected ride
  - help during a fire, flood, or deep cold
  - a small act that meant a lot
  -
- Write the story of that connection, and how it shaped your path.



## 1st Place

The Stranger (by TJ Pinehouse)

Broken bonds lead to broken paths  
walked upon by broken souls  
who once carried the light.

I once maneuvered through this earth  
like I could never get far enough  
from where I was going,  
from where I was meant to be,  
from where I belong.

Prairie beds to mountain ranges  
to concrete roads to nowhere.

I once fretted running out of gas  
until I feared running out of reasons to breathe.

And out of that breath

I heard her whisper,  
whether it was the mother  
whether it was the land  
it mattered not,

for she softly commanded for me,  
“come home, child.”

‘Twas like a womb

when I crossed her borders,  
and I was met by the lake, the land, the people.

My people.

I could not understand their words,  
except for when their souls smiled at mine,

And said, “welcome home.”

This is written as my interpretation of my return home after four decades away as a 60s Scoop kiddo. In 2025, I returned to my home community in remote, northern Saskatchewan and I found one of the kindest things the people could do is make me feel welcome when I was insecure, unsteady, and unpacking decades of trauma related disconnection. So, the stranger is me.

# Joint Effort

(Cross-Age Collaboration)



## Joint Effort (Cross-Age Collaboration): Child and Parent/Guardian or Classroom Project:

Create a shared story, poem, or illustrated/multimedia piece made together as a family or classroom.

- A Shared Story or Poem Together:  
Visuals: Create a multi-view story about a memory you all share — something you remember together, but from different points of view.
- (If using visuals or multimedia, include brief written explanation showing how each person contributed.)

# More Stories To Enjoy!

While these submissions weren't selected as winners, they still showcase imagination, adventure, and storytelling talent.



Ryan jr park  
Nitelaztue Elementry school

Miss Rae  
Grade 4

When I was rabbit snaring once I saw bear, duck, goose, and dog track's so I followed it until it stopped and lead to a cabin with black roof and brown door and lots of boxes in the cabin and tools and we went inside of the cabin and found hot coco and cookies so we took it and went home and when we went inside we saw a random dog in my backyard so I went to it and it ran away in the forest so I followed it in the forest and it lead in this old house so I went inside and found a sharp hammer and smashed this red button and this door opened and it lead to a basement so I went in the basement and found a bike then I rided it until I fell and started to feel dizzy and fell to the ground and woke up after 30 minutes and walked back home and drank the hot coco and cookie and I felt weird and went to the bathroom but when I was done the water was brown and black and made my hands black and brown so I went upstairs and I washed my hands in the sink and went outside to play with my friends in the pool and had a race to the other side of the pool and I was second place and one was first last was my cousin and dried up and dressed up then I went on the quad then I went to treaty grounds and got popcorn and cotton candy then I went swimming after I was done I dried up on the hot sand after I was done I went on the monster truck ride then I went home and sleep the end `

I saw bear, tracks by the lake behind the kfc. There was a bear I saw it. The tracks where in sand. it was a very hot day it was in the Summertime of July 2025 me and my friend were taking a walk. some of the parts are real and some are not by the way back on to the story we were walking. And we saw it. it was a bit scary but we were fine her name is Emily I don't know if I spelled it rite but she got ate by the bear and then she died rip Emily I will forever miss you I am totality goanna miss you then I made a new friend name Kate we were playing volleyball at the beach and the same bear, showed up and then Kate got eaten by the bear. And then I made a mother friend her name is Bella me and Bella were at her cabin in the forest we were playing tag behind her cabin and guess what the same bear, came and ate Bella I done making friends. Because they are going to get eaten by the same bear, I started to call the bear Henry the bear is big back. You might, be thinking, how did they get eaten by the bear and not me well i ran away and left them. I told them to come but. They didn't listen so that's how they died sorry for all your loss's, but I did not like them anyway so it's good that they died they stole my money and touch my stuff without. Asking first and I didn't like that, so I did what I had to do. Emily Kate and Bella are big backs. I think my story makes sense; I hope it does. The end

I once followed tracks down by the old school. I was playing then. I saw some track so I followed it and it took me to the other playground then I see rabbit tracks, deer tracks, and bird tracks. one had three toes. And I was by Garson Lake and la Loche. And then we caught the rabbit so that's how I found the rabbit just because the rabbit tracks. Then I yelled so I think I was scared of the rabbit. Then we went hunting, I found the rabbit tracks and it was winter and spring. It was muddy and wet everywhere. And in winter it was snowing and I moved a tree and snow went all over me. Me and my friend Keith and my dad went for a walk and Keith got ATE by a BEAR!!! Then me and my dad ran, and the bear was chasing us, so we went in to a house and found a spear, so we got the bear, and he was scared then we and my dad went home so he made me some food. and me and my other friend were going to the playground. Then we found some money. And then we went to the store and got some snacks and we found some. Tracks and there were rabbit tracks. Then my friend ran to it and she draped her snacks, so I ran after her and I found them. A beaver nest. And so, we went to take a look and found a baby beaver and my friend TOOK it I told her no, but she still took it. Then we found some more and then I saw a baby chicken and I took it because it is cute so I rested it. Then we went home and I fended it so sleep with it next day it was gone so I looked everywhere and I found it in a bin and then it snow so I played and saw foot prints and I all most got eating by a dog because I was kicking it because it went in my yard and tried to hurt my dog. Then I saw a flower and picked it and then I saw a duck footprint so I went to it and I found a big duck! And I went to get slushy and then I went home and worked on some stuff. And I went to bed for a bin then I woke up and worked some more and played outside to get some fresh air and feed my dog, and my dog wanted some more. So, I gave it a little more. And I went to feed my other pets then I looked out the window and I saw some tracks I don't know what they were, but they were some kind of animal but I don't know what kind of animal it was it had three feet. I think it was a rabbit that was in my yard when I was sleeping. I went to bed because I was watching a movie and I fell asleep with the movie on. I was outside and I sunk in the snow. And the sky was blue with a bit of pink clouds. With a bit darker sky. And I made a snow man it was big and then I saw some footprints and a sound coming from the trees I went to take a look and I saw a deer! Then I saw her baby; it was so cute. So, I went inside my house and I told my brother when he came outside and they ran away! Because my brother scared them by yelling because he was so happy, so they ran away. So, when I saw them, they were cute, so my brother didn't get to see them. that's all bye have a great day.

Once a guy named Jerry was going to the beach. And while he was swimming, he saw something in the distance in the water. He thought it was just a fish but soon after he was wrong because when he was about to go back home, he saw hair. He was scared because it was colorful and he ran back to his car and drove away and saw something in the water again. Later that day he told his friends, but they didn't believe him and said that it was a fish, but he saw real footprints, but his friends left and he was terrified and acting like a chicken. A couple of years passed, and he is bigger and braver than last time he was going fishing on a big boat, and he got flashbacks from last time, but he just brushed it off and started fishing and 2 hours passed and he saw it again and shouted look! Everybody looked in his direction but saw nothing. All of them said it was his imagination except for his friend he believed him and they planned a hunt on the girl in the water. First, they saw more scales, but they weren't scared, and then they set the boat down in the water, and they used binoculars to find it, but they weren't sure it was there. They checked every shore part of the ocean about 4 hours more they found it behind the boat, and the friend was distracted because she was too beautiful and he got capture by the girl and after he went home, he saw it for a split second and saw wet footprints and he told his friends again but now they were confused because his friend was gone and they knew he was gone so they ran out the door on the concrete into the parking lot in the truck and went to the beach into the sand and it was at night so they couldn't see properly and one guy saw the friend on the shore and another guy saw it in the water. The friend went in there and never came back, but the other friend picked him up from the shore and left that night they all slept at Jerrys house. All Jerry wanted was a nice morning at the beach, but that gone wrong into a big problem and soon after they caught it and reported it to the police for good and for their safety, so they stay heathy.

I was on my way to saskatoon, and we drove on the highway. Well, I was looking out the window I saw tracks. Moose and rabbit tracks walked across the highway, but I didn't saw them. When I met a friend named Quinn, and Avery, and we were swimming in saskatoon ,and it was so fun in saskatoon inn, and me, and my family went back to our room, and the next day me, and my family went to humpty's ,and I ate spaghetti, and my mom ate liver, and my dad to then we went shopping for stuff like Clairs, and u kids, and yoyso, and I got new Nike shoes there were white Nike I loved them, and they were very nice, and they fit me good, and but me, and my family were in the mall so we went every store in the mall then I found some cinamonroll stuff, and they were so cute, and I found other hello kitty stuff, and they were so cute, and nice then I loved them, and they were so nice, and me, and my family went back to the room, and when it was night time we went to uncles house, and 10 mins ago we went back to the room, and then the next day we went home but it was 6 hour drive home it took very long drive to home like very long drive home then I fell asleep on a very long drive, and then I had super over loaded sub, and we were almost home but we were at buffalo, and my dad said we are 1 hour away from home so an hour ago then my dad said we are almost home then we got home, and the next day I slept at sister's house, and I had a good sleep at sister's house, and now I'm going to sleep with sister again right after school, and have to wait for sister at the stair's after school, and I'm going to watch YouTube at sister's house at 3;30 after school, and going to go to art set. I followed the tracks while I was going to saskatoon, and it was fun.

Luca Ryan Innes  
Nitelazetue Elementary  
School

Miss rae's class  
Grade 4

I was with my friend markiplier. We went down a hunting trail we could tell cause there were lots of snares. It was deep so it was good that we brought our ski pants. It was also winter so of course there was snow. We found a rabbit actually caught so markiplier had the audacity to steal it. We also found a deer, but we brought no gun:(. The trail was small and there was a big hill at the end, so we climbed it up. After we climbed it up, and we said "I'm tired." because I was tired. We went home. Then tomorrow we went to second new trail. The next trail was a skidoo trail. Ther was a lot of skidoos passing by. The snow felt very hard so we couldn't fall in. It was a very long trail, so we slept on the side when it became night. We already known it was long, so we brought a tent. Then tomorrow we walked farther. We also brought a gun and there were a lot of big animals we couldn't carry. Soon we found some rabbits and hare. We shot them and put them in our bags. Soon I asked my dad to pick us up. When I was calling him he asked "why are you that far." I replied with "I don't know." After half an hour he came and we got into his truck and another half-hour came by. We ended up going to the park after the park we went on a third trail. The third trail was another ski-doo trail. But finally, this time we used a ski-doo. The trail was very bumpy and their was a big ramp. I went around because I was scared. We seen some moose antlers on the side of the trail. We went to the end of the trail, and we turned around then cooked the rabbits at the end.

One time I found tracks, they were bear tracks so I followed the tracks and I was in the woods and I immediately thought there was something over there so I ran to it and there was nothing and den a bear!! So I ran as fast as I can and I escape home and want to know what happened it was a dream so I got up and I went outside with my friends da names were Jordan Micheal and conner so we went back door of my house and we found car tracks so we followed them and we found more tracks they were fox tracks so I followed them and I was being followed by a man so I ran as fast as I can and I past the thing and I didn't see it so I went to my friend's house so after I did the 67 hands 67 times then I wentyl to bed at 12;41 and 67 kid jumped on me because I did da 61 hands 41 times and I went to bed because it was bed time 12hourslater I went down stairs to eat chicken nuggets well watching 67 at full sound and my mother was mad at me so she wacked me with a whip and I cry for 41 hours and I went down stairs to the basement so I can get my ps4 so I can play fortnight and Roblox Because I'm brain rotted and I went outside and I forgot to go out and clean my dog and clean the car so I went outside and cleaned the car and cleaned my dog and my mom was looking at me with the death look and she smacked me with a Whip and I went to bed and snoozed away and dreamed

Jorja Sweet Paige Janvier Herman  
Nitelazeture elementary school

Miss raeane tulik  
Class grade 4's

I followed moose tracks. At school it was summer. There were 10 trees and me. And my friend Casley after we went to it. The bush with me and her dad went for. A walk to the bush. Saw moose tracks. When we got back to the house, we went to the store. playground and then when we got back to the house, we eat wings with spatter and. Then it was 10:00 pm and. Are bedtime being at 10:00 o clock and the next day was the last day she had to go back. Because she lives in saskatoon, so we went to the bush but. Before we went to the bush, we went to the store. And got slush and ruffle chips. and after that e went fishing. At the creek we went swimming and. She had to. Go so I walked home and it was cold and I got a ride. and I said I live in spoke can. They drop me off at me. Auntie house. And I tried to knock on the door. and I walked back to my house, and I made it home about an hour later. When I got home, I looked at myphone and then i went to bed and then. Then the next day I woke up and got ready for school, and I told myfriends how i saw moose tracks and I followed moose tracks. Thinking I was going to see a moose but didn't. And then i went home for lunch and my mom made me moose meet for lunch Because my uncle had killed the moose while he was on his way the garbage ground to throw away his trash and so happened to come across that same moose l'd had saw earlier that day and we got blessed with moose.

I followed moose tracks when I and my family went to go hunting. I followed rabbit tracks as well as catching a lot of rabbits. I saw a fish and I grabbed it, but it slipped out of my hand. We got to cook fish and burn smores. Then we slept and, in the morning, we had breakfast. Then we got ready and went to school. And me and my brother did work. At lunch we ate rice and hotdogs. And then we went home. At home we watched a movie. After the movie we went to bed and fell asleep. When we woke up, we got ready and it was the weekend and we were so happy. We asked to go to the skating rink. And our parents said yes. When they said yes, we got so excited. We started to get ready and put on our winter clothes for skating. Then we got to the skating rink and put on our skates and went on the ice. I wasn't the best at skating, but my brother was super good at skating. We had so much fun skating. And the skating ended so we went home. When we got home, we had dinner. And then we went on our iPad. And then it was our bedtime, so we went to bed. After that we woke up and we went hunting again but this time we got to bring my brother. And we saw a lot of tracks like ducks, bears, and moose tracks we followed them. And we caught a moose. And we ate the moose after we skinned it. We went for a walk and saw quad tracks. We followed them until we were at a dead end, so we went back home. We went to bed and slept tightly. We woke up and got ready like any other usual day. But today was the best day ever because we went to the water park. And we had the best time ever. And we got ice cream there, it was tasty. I had the best time ever and my brother did too. It was fun there but then we had to go back home. And we also went to the store and got slushes and candy. And when we went back to bed, it was school the next day. We got up and got ready to go to school. When we arrived at school, we were dumbfounded because there was a huge bouncy castle. And all the kids were excited and had the best time ever. But then we had to go back to class and do our work. When we were done, we had a recess. We played tag, hid and seek, and catch. We had a lot of fun outside. After that we went home and had dinner. Then we went to bed. When we woke up, we got ready. But I couldn't find the shoes I looked at all over. When I found them, my brother and I were late for school. When we arrived, we did same old same old math. After math we went for recess. At recess I found dog tracks, so I followed them. It reached the end of the fence. And when I realized my class had long gone inside. When I got inside, there was a gym. So, when we went to the gym we played bulldogs tag, freeze tags, and hot dog tags. Then we went back to class and got ready for home time. When we back home and went inside. We went for a walk and followed the trails. Midway through the walk we started to follow tracks and the tracks were a dog. We had to go home because it was getting late and dark. When we got home, we had dinner. When we finished eating dinner, we went to bed. When we woke up, we had breakfast. After we had breakfast, we got ready for school.

Macauley Lemarige  
Nitelaztue Elementary School grade 4

Miss Rae

One time I was on a quad we followed a track we almost got stuck and it took us like 2 mins to get out I think it was me or my dad's and they were by the lake and I was scared so much my mom was driving and I was more scared and it was a small quad it was mine quad and I got it like 3 years ago I was so happy about that quad when it got stuck that was probably in 2024 that was 2 years ago or that was in 2025 or 2023 I pretty sure we got stuck in mud and I think it was not that deep I forgot what we got stuck in and I don't know what year was it and I got go back um I don't know but we still ride for much longer I pretty sure I went to the store to get a drink I just don't remember what year was it I think we came back at 7 or 8 and I think I went to bed at 11 00 then I went on a quad again and we didn't get stuck were lucky that we didn't get stuck then I went home because it needed some gas so we put gas in the quad we were thirsty so I went home to grab a drink so I grab a bag and I put my drink in the bag then I chips I grab Dorito's then we went back on the quad for like 1 hour I was so tired I lay down for a bit then I got up then I went outside I ride around the yard I got bored and went back inside I was sleeping and I woke up and I asked my mom to go on a ride and she said yeah I was so happy so I went outside and went to the quad we ride for 3 hours after that we went back inside and then I fell asleep the entire time it was 8:00 pm and the next day I woke up at 10:00 I was still so tired and then I eat breakfast and I was thinking I should go on a ride at 2:00 it was now 2:00 and I asked my mom if we could go on a quad ride and she said yes I didn't know she will say yes so she grabbed the key we both went outside and went on the quad it had no gas so she put in the quad.

When I was walking with my friend Madie and my dad it was summer we saw foot prints in the dirt it was big foot prints and I think it was a bigfoot and it was next to the forest so we followed the foot prints in to the forest and I saw a big foot we were so scared we were shaking I was walking back and I stepped on a branch the big foot saw us and we ran in different directions and the big foot saw me and I saw Madie and Madie saw my dad so we ran together and we broke the big foots legs and we ran off and I told my dad to go home and me and Madie were the only one there the big foot was still chasing us until we got stopped by two guys but we ran past them until they the big foot that was chasing me and Madie the guys tried to fight the big foot off me and Madie went to go hide we didn't hear the big foot only heavy breathing and I peeked it was those two guys they were standing in front of the big foot they turned around we saw their face it looked like a pack of blood exploded in their faces and it was all cut up we were so scared that we were shaking even are legs were shaking we had to crawl till are legs regained strength the two guys were slowly walking towards us and then are legs regained strength the guys came closer and closer and then me and Madie started running and then the two guys started running so me and Madie started running to my house and then the two guys followed us to my house then we got in my house and then my mom saw me and Madie and then the two guys started breaking down my mom's door and then the two guys broke in my house and then me and Madie started to run upstairs and then the two guys almost grabbed my foot but I kicked the guy in the face then we got my room and I locked the door and the I ran to the door and me and Madie jumped out the window and then the two guys came in right when we jumped out and when we jumped out the window we ran to the police station and when we got there we told the police about the two guys the police told me to tell him were the two guys are at I told them they were at my house and I told them to come with me at my house and when we got to my house the two guys tied my parents in two chairs. right when I told the police that's them then the police aimed his gun at the two guys then he shot the two guys and then I untied my parents and I gave both a hug.

Aaliyah Cougan  
Nitelazetue elementary school

Miss Rae's  
Grade 4

new friend her name was Edie. me and Edie were looking for these barbies she hid them, so I had to find them. It was like a hide and seek game. It was my turn to hide them, so I hid some in the bushes. She went in there and the bear I found was there. it ate her so I ran and screamed. Later that day I told the police to block that place and find the bear they found it and took it away and killed it somewhere. 4 days passed and peeps were back. I was so happy and we went to abcedes house and asked to play. She said yes so me and peeps played there it was pretty fun so I asked them if they could sleep at my house. It was just 3 houses away. Both their parents said yes. We walked to my house, and slept in my room. Then they woke up and we played for a bit. Then they had to go home I said bye. I was still scared of that bear, but I remember its gone. It was a sunny day out and I asked peeps and abcede to have a picnic they said yes and we at peanut butter and jelly it was delicious. We played some games it was super-duper fun. until we had school. We forgot that we had school at lunch. We couldn't go in the morning because there was a meeting. but it was alright. Because it was fun all morning. Because we played Barbies, hid and go seek. Other stuff. like we baked cookies yum. It was ok. I would rate the cookies 100/10. Cause duh and we went to the playground and lived hapliy ever after. that's the end of the story bye.

I once found a track to a path in the forest. I was nowhere in the forest, and I was lost. I couldn't find my way out of the forest. until I found dog foot prints leading out the way. But I found a duck called rubber duck, we became best friends. We followed the dog foot print, leading the way out, and I had found a hut with lots and lots of food and drinks. We went inside and ate and drank, eventually someone came in the hut and found us eating. The person got scared and ran. We went out of the hut and continued to follow the dog foot prints. And we found the teacher looking for me. She didn't notice us and we continued and walking. And we cant find a way out. Until I found someone named Innes. We continued walking and walking and walking. And we can find a way out by an idea, we have to run faster and faster until we get out. So we ran and ran but no way out. Until we heard a voice calling out for us. So we ran for the voice. And almost found our way out here. We found a dog named Monke. We grabbed and ran and ran and ran. And we kept on running. And we were getting tired from the run. So we lay down until the next day. And we had a lot of energy, so we runed again. And we had a quick sip of water. And we continued to run. And we were so tired but we didn't give up. And we ran and ran and ran and ran. And we eventually need to make it. And we had to give up. And we didn't want to give up. So we needed to rest. Night came and we were getting tired. So we slept. Until sunrise came. But we slept and slept until day time. We got up and we walked and walked. Until we were hungry. until we found our teacher. He said "what are you guys doing here this far?", we got scared. And we ran away scared. We kept on running and running. but we gave up. We Wanted to get out of this forest. Until we heard a roar. We turned around it was a bear. We gotten scared. We ran and ran away from the bear. And we lost sight of it. We rested. We slept.

# A Smoky Day

By Dana Pajunen

One peaceful day after school, there was a lot of smoke. Everyone in our class thought we were going to be evacuated in like a week. When I got outside, the sky was orange, yellow, and red. That same day we were evacuated. I drove to Prince albert at 8pm that day. My dad stayed back in town. We got to prince albert at 3 in the morning. We stayed at a truck stop. We slept there for 4 hours then we left that morning. We went to Melfort for two weeks. When we got to Melfort we set up our camper at my grandparents. We ate A&W for lunch. I had bacon and cheese on my burger. We got camp set up. I did absolutely nothing for the first three days because I did not think to call Ben. On like the 4 th day I called Ben. Ben and I play Minecraft. I had to play bedrock edition. We played Minecraft and talked all day. He walked the streets of saskatoon I walked the streets of Melfort. We called for hours, and it was awesome. Every day I had to scoop my dog's poop. It was not fun. We took her for walks.

We forgot to bring our bikes, so we were very bored. Ben brought his bikes, so I was very mad. We spent the days in the camper and shopping at Dollarama and Canadian tire. We went to Dollarama like every day it was sad. We made food in the camper we did not eat out every day. When we were there, we found Father Pedro our priest when we had to go to church one day. After that we had to eat lunch with the Herpberger's at Tim Hortons. My grandparents live on Brunswick Street right by a park where there is a lot of deer. We played in that park every day. We played disc golf. The park is also a disc golf course, it was fun. I beat my sister every day in disc golf. It was awesome, I loved it. One time my dog started barking at a squirrel. The squirrel got scared out of his jeans. It was very funny.

My favorite day was when we got home to our house. It was awesome. I went to sleep in a real bed for the first time in two weeks. The hole drive down it was all fire and smoke. There were cars for kilometers. All I could see was the car lights in front of us. There were brake lights behind us where head lights. It was the most boring thing. My sister, on the other hand, slept through the whole thing. We ran out of snacks halfway there. It was very sad that we starved for the next 2 hours.

The scariest thing was when the fire was on the road in front of us. When we finally got to Weyakwin there was an escort for 20 kilometers. We finally got to drive faster. Once we got to prince albert, we stopped at a truck stop for the night. We only slept for 3 hours. In the morning, I got up pet with my dog and then we set off for melfort. The drive to melfort was way faster compared to the drive to prince albert.

When we got to melfort we set up camp at my grandparents house with our camper. Me and the boys talked for like a day. Lucas said "hey guys look at this" he showed us a video of his new cat the cat was playing in the hotel shower. We took the dog for a pee and then went for supper. Lucy, the dog, stayed in the house where it was colder than in the camper. Every day we played disc golf and my mom sat on the phone all day worried. She was made and angry the whole time we could not even stay in the camper. My grandparents were not home for the first week when they go there the second week me and my sister and my grandma went disc golfing. It was incredibly fun. I liked it. Me and Ben were on the phone for like 5 hours every day. Ben said, "do you want to pay for Minecraft" I said, "ya ok." We also played Minecraft every day.

My dad's part. My dad stayed in town to save our house. He watered our garden with a firehose. He set up our sprinkler system with the 4 big water tanks they hold 10000 gallons of water each. That's 40000 gallons of water that is a lot of water. He also sprayed the trees with a fire hose. He stayed back with my other dog, Xena. she apparently by his side the whole evacuation. In town, they needed a card to get gas and stuff. That is very bad because some people did not have one so they could not access the gas and stuff. It was very bad because they needed gas for their pumps, cars, and trucks. My dad had way worse than us.

When we got home, we had to unpack everything. After about a week or so we had to clean up the pumps. During the evacuation we did lots of things like shopping, eating food and playing in the park. We had a fun time. I played Minecraft with ben 24/7 that was also fun. Me and Ben played hard core worlds I died like 30 times he on the other hand did not die for like 50 minutes it was very funny because he was stacked. I went for walks every day on the phone with ben I seen a cool vehicle it was a corvette. After that I got chased by a big dog, it was very scary. When ben called back, he said why are you so out of breath I said I have just been chased by a dog. Ben said oh wow that just happened to me.

## The end

# Fire Time

On June 2nd, 2025, I was in school. There were fires going on all around La Ronge and it was very smoky. People were getting pulled out of school to evacuate. Everyone was wondering when La Ronge was going to get evacuated. I thought it would be next week. On the bus ride home I was talking with my friend. "When do you think we will get evacuated?" I asked. "Probably in the next couple of days" he responded. When I got home, my parents were packing up to go. My mom said we were evacuating. I was okay with that because I was excited to go to Regina.

My siblings and I had to pack some important stuff. Me and my dad drove in the truck with all the gas. My mom and siblings were in the van. I had the genius idea to bring our bikes. I loaded them all into the back of the truck. My dog, who is really old, was having trouble breathing because it was so smoky. Everything looked very orange. We were going to leave soon, when my friend Dana called me. He was asking me if I could play Minecraft. I said no because I was going to be evacuating soon. Dana was saying that he wasn't going to evacuate. "I think I'm going to stay for the night at least" he said. He evacuated like 2 hours later. I packed my phone and my dad's computer. That is all I need. Me and my dad stayed a bit later after my mom and sisters left. We set up the sprinklers on the roof of my house to protect it from burning down. After that we loaded up the truck left for the highway. It was super-duper duper crammed.

There were a couple of car crashes. We saw cars in the ditch. We were slowly driving out of town.

I saw a couple of bears running away from the fires. I took some videos of the fires, it was also very smoky. We saw a bunch of other cars even though we left early. We were in a line of cars going away from town. Everyone was going like 40km/hr because there was a person leading making everyone stay together. For like an hour all I saw was smoke and smoke and smoke and fire. I saw a couple of bears running towards town. This was because they were scared of the fire. I saw a couple of cars in the ditch, getting a new tire or something. We didn't have a lot of gas to start off with, because the gas stations were full. But we had backup gas in case. I was worried about ash landing on the gas. This would be bad because it would explode.

Around 30 minutes later, I saw Weyakwin. A lot of trees were on fire, also parts of the ground, and pretty much everything was gone. Me and my dad stopped to say hi to my mom and my sisters because they pulled over. My parents talked about switching cars but decided against it. We had some snacks, which were very good. I had some granola and some waffles. Then after that we hit the road again. After a couple of hours, we hit Saskatoon. We drove into town and got to our Airbnb. When we were there we unpacked, which took a while because my sisters packed so much pointless stuff. They packed like a bunch of stuffies and toys and Lego. My grandparents were in Saskatoon at the time, so they came down to say hi to us.

We watched Titanic and had some pizza, which was really good. I had 2 slices of 3 different types of pizza, so I was very full. I called my friends, and we were talking about Minecraft and playing Minecraft. "I'm staying in a hotel," said one of my friends. "So am I, said another." I was talking about where they were and what they were going to do tomorrow. Me and my friend Dana talked about life. I watched some videos and then went to sleep early, even though I didn't have anything planned for tomorrow. We were going to leave Saskatoon tomorrow night, to go to Regina. The next day I called Dana and I talked about fire. My dad kept getting phone calls about the fire since he's a doctor. He was getting calls 24/7.

I took a bike ride around Saskatoon, which was fun. I went by a fountain, an ice cream shop, and over a bridge. Dana was talking with me, and he was in Melfort. I got chased by a little stray dog. I quickly biked back to my house. I told Dana about that and he said, "That happened to me earlier today!" When I got back home, my dad was on a phone call with a patient. My mom was talking with someone from La Ronge. They said the fire was really close to my house. It was burning around Nut Point. I thought our house had a chance to burn. I was asking my mom about where the fire was all the time. A really good store in La Ronge called Robertsons burnt down, which was really sad. A lot of people thought that someone might have burnt down the place on purpose. Also, a store next to it is called RONA burnt too. It was suspicious because that was the store that sold all the sprinklers and stuff for fires, and it was one of the first ones to burn.

So, the next day, we packed up our stuff to head to Regina, I made sure I didn't forget anything, because I have done that before. My mom said, "Alright guys, we're leaving in 20 minutes."

My grandparents said goodbye and drove off to my uncle's apartment to say hi to him. He didn't get the chance to visit us because he was studying and getting stuff for college. We drove through Saskatoon, and it was a very hot day. Because of this I got kind of carsick. "Mom, I don't feel so good" I said. "Well deal with it, we just started driving," she responded. I dealt with it by looking at the beautiful scenery. It was just fields and cows. After a couple of hours, we entered Regina. We drove straight to my grandparents house, in time for a late lunch. "Hey guys!" exclaimed my grandpa. We all said, "Hey," and loaded our stuff inside. The next couple of days weren't that exciting, but the 3rd day was kind of cool. My parents were working at this evacuation shelter because they were doctors. There were people from all over Saskatchewan whose houses had burned or evacuated. I drove there with my dad and met my mom there; she was currently busy aiding a person. Everyone was sleeping on cots in a massive gym. The evacuation center was located in a big main building in Regina. It usually hosts big sporting events and things similar to that.

In conclusion, forest fires usually have a very massive effect on people and their communities. It can destroy the environment but also make room for new things to grow.

That's the story of what happened when there was a forest fire in La Ronge from my perspective.

-By Ben Bayda

# Smoke Cloud

By: Camille Duffy

Have you ever thought your entire life was going to burn? Well, I have and it all started with a normal day at school, kids yelling in the halls, people skipping class, doing work, laughing with friends, and annoying the teachers. The only difference was the smoke. It was filling the air coming into our classes. I walked home coughing a sound like tearing paper. The smoke was getting thicker, making the sky orange like the leaves in fall. Then at 4:00pm the amber alert came.

EVACUATE LA RONGE IMMEDIATLEY”

“Start packing your bags. We’re leaving!” My sister, Megan, yelled. An hour and a half went by, packing all the important things, my stuffies, clothes, pictures and some hygiene products. We got our dog in the car and got the cats in their cage. One of them didn’t get in, he was meowing, scratching and hissing at us, so we had to throw him into the car. After we started going, he climbed in front of my dad, and he couldn’t see where he was driving. We got him into his cage, but they were meowing a lot, and I panicked, scared they were going to get hurt. We pulled over and I went with my sisters finally calming down.

At 6:00pm we were stuck in traffic, luckily my friend Abby was right behind me. I don’t know what I would have done if she wasn’t there. We waited and waited talking, laughing, and just hanging out. After a little while I looked around, seeing the huge cloud of smoke growing bigger and bigger. It looked like a cauliflower slowly taking the blue sky away and turning it smokey.

“Woah! Look at the sky Abby!” I yelled, stunned.

“It just keeps growing!” My mom said.

More time went by, waiting, talking, and walking. Eventually, my dog got antsy, so I decided to run in the ditch with her. After a little while she ran into the bush scaring the Beavens family who were peeing.

“Your dog just scared the life out of me” Kenny said while laughing. Bailey ran out of the bush panting like she just ran a marathon. Garrett and Thadeous came out laughing and talking together. Bailey ran up to them, wanting to play. So, Garrett and Thadeous chased her for a while, after she asked for lots of pets.

More time had gone by, just chilling moving the car little bits ever so often. The sun started to go down and the red glow from the fire shone across the sky like a flashlight in a dark room. We started to move more and more but, still, we had to wait ten minutes until we could move again.

Eventually people started to turn around driving towards the other fire in La Ronge. Someone was going around telling people to “Turn around the Ditch fire is getting too big.” The firefighters didn’t want them to; they were getting the Ditch fire contained. We didn’t turn around.

I started to get scared, wondering if we had to spend the night in the ditch.

“Turn some hype music on Megan.” I spoke, wanting to be distracted from everything happening around me. Megan turned on some country, pop and a little bit of rap. We were all singing and having fun trying to make the best out of the situation we’re in.

More time had gone by, breathing in and tasting the smoke. I wanted to get through the fire, feel the excitement of being free, having less smoke around you and not having to stress about not getting through. It felt like we

were never going to get through; more and more time passed. Each minute I grew less confident that we were going to get through.

“How much longer do you think we’re going to be stuck?” Asked my sister.

“I’m not sure hopefully not much longer” Megan replied. Eventually I got really tired and decided to take a little nap.

“Wake me up when we are going through the fire.” I said to my sisters.

After sleeping for around 20 minutes, I woke up to my throat feeling really dry like a dessert. I drank some water, but it only took the feeling away for a few seconds. I sat there staring out the window, bored out of my mind. I had nothing to do but look out the window and listen to music. I lost track of the time, but eventually we got closer to the ditch fire. I sat there worried out of my mind, feeling stuck and helpless. I wanted to do something, but I couldn’t. I was stuck in a little smoke-filled car. A couple minutes went by, then we were there, ready to go through the fire. My sisters and I put our masks on, hoping it would block out some of the smoke.

“Don’t talk, it will only make it harder to breathe” my sister said. We slowly started going through, barely moving. We had Luke Combs playing in the background. That’s the only thing you could hear besides the wind and the crackling of the flames. The smoke was dark, like the grinch’s heart. The flames weren’t as big as I had expected; they were still there, but they were not roaring into the sky like I had expected.

“Woah, I didn’t expect this.” I said.

“Shh don’t speak too much Cami” Megan said.

Everyone had their phones out wanting to capture the moment before it was over. After around five minutes we made it through! I didn't think we would go until the morning. My sisters and I removed our masks and was finally able to breathe normally again. We still drove under the speed limit, being careful. It was pitch black outside; you could only see other car's hazard lights blinking through the darkness. We drove for another forty-five minutes, finally making it too Prince Albert. It was one in the morning, and we were all exhausted just wanting to sleep. But first we had to get the pets out of the vehicle.

“Anyone want a cinnamon bun?” Jenelle asked. I took one without hesitation, exhausted and hungry. We were staying with Jenelle and her family; they are our friends and offered us a place to stay. She showed my sisters and I, our room. We picked where we wanted to sleep, and we crashed as soon as our heads hit the pillow. I slept like a baby that night, waking up after ten hours.

# THE END

# Escape

By: Christina McDougald

"Jessica!" he said pointing, "That's not a sunset."

She looked to where his finger was pointing. Her stomach dropped as the wind blew in their faces and ashes fell from the sky like a very wintery snowy day. They opened their phones to notice a message from the town.

**"EVACUATE IMMEDIATELY!"**

Their town had always been quiet. It was a small town. Fires happened nearby, not here. Not in their town. Jessica ran inside her house, grabbing the first things that came to her mind her backpack, her camera, a faded photo of her parents that she lost when she was 15 that she kept by the door. Tyler, her best friend since childhood, followed, grabbing his backpack, his childhood stuff animal, Bear Bear. That stuff animal meant everything to him.

"Jess, we have to go. Now!" Tyler shouted across the house. Outside, the sky was orange like Goldfish. Everyone was already leaving, horns honking, people scared from the fire hoping tree to tree. The main road had a lot of traffic, from everyone trying to leave the smoke and fire.

"There's an old service road by the river. No one ever used it anymore." Said Jessica.

“Good. We’ll take it.”said Tyler. They ran, embers fell from the sky on to the road, they got into the car Tyler climbed in first, Jessica getting in next. Jessica slammed the door and turned the key. Ashes covered the windshield, making it hard to see.

“Jess, I don’t like this road,” said Tyler.

“We don’t have a choice. The main road has lots of traffic if we want to make it out. We must go this way, she replied. Then there was a loud crack outside.

“Jessical!” Tyler yelled. A huge tree fell and crashed down onto the car. The car, crumpled. The car spun to a stop. Tyler screamed.

“Tyler? Tyler!” screamed Jessica. A branch had smashed through the windshield and door, on his leg.

“It hurts,” he said. “Jess, it’s stuck. I can’t move.” Smoke was already coming closer, flames moving tree to tree behind them.

“I’m here,” she said, unbuckling her seatbelt. “Don’t move, okay?” She got out of the car. The tree was massive. She grabbed the branch and pulled it. It didn’t move.

“Jess,” Tyler cried “Please.” Using all her strength. The branch shifted slightly, scraping against the car. She pushed, then pulled again, with one final shove. The tree rolled off Tyler’s leg into the dirt. Jessica dropped to her knees beside him. “You’re free,” she said, breathless.

“We have to go. Now. ”Said Tyler getting up. He limped beside Jessica and they kept walking. The fire was behind them,

moving fast. They followed the old service road until it suddenly ended. A river blocked their path. The bridge was gone.

"We can't cross that," Tyler said.

"We have to," replied Jessica. They stepped into the water. It was freezing. Halfway across, Tyler slipped; his injured leg gave out.

"I've got you!" Jessica yelled, pulling him close. They got to the other side soaked and shaking. The fire stopped at the water's edge. Tyler let out a laugh. "We made it." Jessica looked at the flames "Yeah," she said softly. "We did." They stood there for a moment. The river made noises from the embers hitting the water. "I really thought... that was it." Said Tyler. Jessica didn't answer right away. Her hands were still shaking. She reached into her backpack and pulled out the faded photo of her parents. She held it tight.

"We're not done yet," she said. "We still need help."

Tyler nodded and looked down at his leg "Yeah. And maybe... a hospital." They followed the riverbank, The sky finally cleared, the smoke going away that Jessica could finally see. It felt wrong, how calm it suddenly was. After what felt like hours, they saw flashing lights through the trees.

"Jess," Tyler whispered. "Look". Emergency trucks lined up the dirt road ahead. Firefighters moved fast, shouting orders. A medic spotted them and ran over.

"Over here!" She called. "We've got two!" Relief hit Jessica like a weight just fell off her shoulders. She sat down on a rock as

they lifted Tyler onto a stretcher. Ambulance doors closed; Jessica looked back once more. Watching the firefighters trying to control the fire. The wind shifted. Jessica felt it before the sudden roar. Someone shouted.

“BACK UP!” FIRE JUMP!” and the calm shattered instantly. Flames leapt the river. Firefighters ran hoses, one of them tripped on a branch. Another disappeared into a wall of orange. Jessica’s eyes burned from the thick smoke in the air.

“JESSICA!” Tyler screamed from inside the ambulance, pounding on the window.

“JESS—” A medic slammed the door shut.

“We have to go! NOW!” Jessica ran toward the ambulance, coughing, and her vision blurring. A firefighter grabbed her arm.

“Miss, we have to move and get out of here” The firefighter was ripped away from her grip, lost into the flames. Jessica stumbled backward; she thought of the photo in her backpack of her parents, all the good memories with them. Of Tyler and their friendship.

“Go,” she whispered, though no one could hear her. The ambulance sped away, sirens wailing, Tyler screaming her name as the fire disappeared behind them. Hours later, Tyler woke up in a hospital bed; his leg wrapped; Bear tucked under his arm. A nurse stood at the end of the bed.

“I’m sorry,” she said softly. Tyler already knew, his best friend since childhood was gone. He cried. Tyler missed Jessica

and all their memories. He wished that he could bring her back. Tyler clenched his fist in agonizing pain.

“I want her back.” Tyler cried to the nurse.

“I’m so sorry Tyler, but there’s nothing I can do. I wish I could though. You guys seemed like you guys had a great friendship.” Spoke the nurse.

**4 months later.**

The fire was out and everyone could finally go home. People helped each other clean up the ashes and found anything that was not destroyed. Even though the town was badly damaged, the people did not give up. Together, they began to rebuild their homes and their lives.

Tyler stood at Jessicas grave. Family members are all crying.

“I miss you, Jess. You were always there for me. I miss all the memories we had together, I hope that you are at peace with you and your parents.” Tyler spoke in tears.

**The End**

## My Tour in the Philippines

Have you ever been on a thrilling vacation before? Was it filled with a lot of adventure? I have. During the summer of 2024, I went on a month-long exciting trip to the Philippines. During my stay, I traveled across the country. I stayed in my mom's hometown, called Jala-Jala in the province of Rizal. I stayed there most of the time. I went to many new towns and villages, and it was a truly adventurous experience. I went snorkeling, boating and island hopping. The highlight of my trip was snorkeling because it was so exciting and I loved it so much.

During my time in the Philippines, I traveled around the country. I went to Coron, Palawan (which is a province in the Philippines, and where the photo was taken). I then went to Boracay in the province of Aklan, which has white sand beaches, many resorts and lots of tourist attractions. We also went to Blue Coral, San Juan in the province of Batangas. On my last day in Boracay, I even saw a traditional fire dance which was very popular.

“Abby, come here and watch this!” My mom called me over.

While I was watching, I was so mesmerized by the dance and how the dancers moved like a butterfly in the wind. Since there were already a lot of people crowded around the stage, and recording left and right, my mom and I decided to go back since we couldn't really see them dancing.

During my time in Coron which was honestly my favorite part of my trip in the Philippines, I stayed there for one week in one of the most beautiful resorts I have ever seen. The resort was on the ocean where you could see the beautiful blue ocean. My parents and my aunt planned to go on a full-day tour in Coron. During that time, we went snorkeling, island hopping; which is a style of travel involving visiting multiple islands nearby, and kayaking. All the islands we went to were only a little bit different but much more to explore. We then had a delicious lunch full of seafood and other Filipino delicacies. We had lunch on an island with water that was so blue that it looked like the sky. I swam with my cousins, and it was so much fun. Not only was the water perfect, but the island we had lunch on was a white-sanded beach.

“Do you want to take a picture?” My mom asked my cousin and me. We did take multiple pictures, but I literally looked like I got run over by a truck, because I had gone swimming earlier.

At the end of my full-day tour in Coron, my cousin and I sat down on the edge of the boat and watched the sunset. While we were watching the sunset, my cousin and I let our feet dangle in the water.

“This is so beautiful-” My dad cut me off..

“Abby, Noah, stop that!” My dad said. It was because we were splashing water on the boat and splashing other people on it too. Finally, we made it back to Coron. All the islands we went to were only on the waters in Coron territory.

“Ma’am, please move.” One of the boat members said. While I was getting up, it took me a while, and I was embarrassed because it took me a longer time to move out of the way, including standing up and getting off the edge of the boat, as well as everyone watching me trying to move... their eyes felt like there were a million people watching me on a TV show. This memory will haunt me forever before I fall asleep.

When everyone got off the boat, the cold water hit our feet like plunging into a pool of slush in the North. It’s significantly warmer in Philippines than Canada, but the water is always cold. My cousins and I went to the change room to change back to our normal clothes and dry off. Since I am a girl and both my cousins are boys, we obviously had to go into our own gender-separated change rooms. After we all finished changing to our normal clothes and drying off, we went back in the tricycle, which is a ubiquitous and essential form of public transport in the Philippines, consisting with an attached sidecar where people sit inside. We then went back to the resort and packed our stuff because it was our last day in Coron.

On our last day in Coron, we had to take a plane ride back to Manila, since there were no direct flights from Coron to Jala-Jala, so we took a long drive back to my mom’s hometown. My parents also brought my Tita and cousins along, since they were staying close to my mom’s hometown. During the car ride, there wasn’t much stuff to do. My cousin and I just slept in the back the whole time, while my other cousin was using his phone. After maybe 5 hours of being in the car, we finally made it back to Jala-Jala. My parents and I stayed in my Lola’s; grandmother’s house for the time being in the Philippines. Although it was only my parents and I, there were some of my relatives too. My Tito, (mom’s brother/my uncle), his daughter and my niece. They were all staying in my Lola’s house, so we weren’t alone and the last time we were here was in 2014 when I was only 3 and a half years old.

In the end, everyone had so much fun travelling around the Philippines, going to malls, buying new clothes and some Pasalubong, souvenirs, to my family in Canada, and getting to see all the resorts and the blue ocean, Karaoke, and going to a farm in Jala-Jala where there was a Bahay kubo, or nipa hut, is an iconic eco-friendly, and sustainable stilt house indigenous to the Philippines. It was made to thrive in tropical

climates. More over, getting to try new Filipino street food! My favorite food would be Buko Pandan or Leche Flan. While I was in Manila, I saw so many street vendors that stretched out across the whole road like a long snake slithering around the jungle.

Our trip in the Philippines came to an end. Everyone had a blast! Summer vacation was ending, work and school were going to start again, so we had to leave and fly back to Canada. On our way to the airport in Manila, the mood was not lively. After spending a month in the Philippines, it felt like we were living there. Everyone was so nice and welcoming, they helped us with everything. Once we got to the airport, everyone was very emotional. But we had no choice but to leave. We went inside the airport, not knowing when the next time we will be in Philippines.

After we got all our luggage ready on the plane, we went to our gate and waited for our plane to board. Our flight was a connecting flight from Manila, Philippines to Toronto, Canada. Once we got on the plane, the pilot told us that the planes takeoff would be delayed due to all the planes taxiing on the runway. Due to the delay, my mom was worried about our connecting flight and was wondering if we could sit closer to the front of the plane, since just our luck, we sat at the very back of the plane. While my mom was worrying, I didn't think much about it. I thought that we would make it in time, but we didn't. We missed our connecting flight and had to stay the night in a horrible Holiday Inn. The customer service was horrible.

“Sorry guys, I'm not taking you because there's too much luggage.” The driver didn't want to take us because we had “too much luggage” and told us to wait for the next ride. Well, guess what? The next ride was the same driver. We eventually got to the Holiday Inn, exhausted and annoyed, and mind you, it was 2 in the morning when we finally got to the Holiday Inn.

The next morning, we got on our plane ride to Saskatoon, and the good thing was that it wasn't delayed! Once we got there, we had to stay in our house in Saskatoon for three days, giving Pasalubong to everybody. I would say that the most souvenirs my mom brought to Canada was dried fish. She brought it for all our relatives because she said that's what everyone asked for. Or maybe it was because that was the only thing she could think of! The jet lag hit hard. I couldn't fall asleep and if I did, I would have only slept for 2 hours. And to make it worse, my cousins would come every day to see me, as if I wasn't tired and I was honestly so mad and I stayed in my room the whole time and was trying to fall asleep, but since my cousins were there I couldn't! They would always call me.

After a few days of staying in Saskatoon, it was time to go back to La Ronge and get my stuff ready to go back to school.

My trip in the Philippines was a special experience for me. Seeing all the new scenery and the clear blue ocean made me feel peaceful and calm and happy. Being able to spend time with my relatives again, after not seeing them for a while and probably not remembering them, meant a lot to me and my parents and reminded me how important family is. Trying new foods and seeing new places was exciting and showed me more about the culture. Overall, this trip gave me great memories and made me feel more connected to my family and the Philippines.

# MY CANOE TRIP TO COGLAND FALLS



**By: AVA Oatley**

My name is AVA. I went on a trip to Cogland Falls with Coner, Krista, Michell, Greg, Janessa, Ryan, and Nikky. Coner and Krista are dating Ryan and Janessa are married and Nikky is Michells auntie. The canoe partners were Coner and Krista Nikki and me Jenessa and Ryan, Greg and Mickell. The tent groups were Ryan and Janessa, Krista and Coner

Mickell and Greg were in their own tents. That is just some background for the trip. Greg also gave me a postcard with the falls on it.

So, to get to where we started, which was Nikky's cabin at lower Courtney we had to drive for 5 hours on a dirt road. Nikky had most of the bags in her truck bed, and she had the 4 canoes in all yellow ones. The trailer bounced once or twice. Once we got to turn off, we went the wrong way, but it was fine.

We spent one night there and when we were there it was warm, so Greg Coner and Krista went swimming. It was extremely shallow. It was my waste, and I am 5 feet tall. There were a few really deep drops off. The next day we started on our way we went down a little creek and at the end there was a norther immediate drop off. Then you were at the first lake, which was Courtenay Lake. That was I really small lake it only took around half an hour to 45 mins.

Then at the end of the lake there was a really long lake called the Johnson River. It was really long and windy. It went really shallow and really deep. There was a beaver dam

and one spot where there were a lot of rocks. When we got back in the canoes I realized that there were baby LEACHES! All over my feet everyone started freaking out and we got them all off as soon as we could.

After that traumatizing experience, we were in Pardoe Lake. Really soon after we left the river, we stopped at a small beach for lunch. I had a taco in a bag. It was so good because we were all really hungry. There was a really far out sand bar and Coner walked to the end of it and started fishing, however, did not catch anything. I put a stick standing up just before the sand started going under water (remember that for later) we got around a third of the way through Pardoe when we saw a nice beach and decided to spend the night there. Every night we had a nice camp. We had a covered-up fireplace area. But it did start to rain unfortunately, it was okay though because it stopped raining.

The next day we went another third way through Pardoe. I was trailing my fishing rod behind us. But then the wind started to pick up. A huge fish got on my huck, and we had to stop so I could get him off when I did. We were so far behind. I named my fish Big Birtha. It started raining badly and after

that there was a sand bar just before the beach we were staying at. There was a sand bar that was so high that there was only like 2 inches of water and we all had to get out and walk across it. When we got there, it was so cold and windy I had two pairs of sweat pants on a hoodie and a coat on and I was still cold. The rain was on and off after we went there.

The next day we went to the falls they were amazing and when me and Janessa were taking a picture there was a big black bear in the background across the falls. Nobody knew where it went, so we took a few pictures and then left it wasn't that far to get back to camp though. When we got back we went to the huge sand hill and raced up and down lots and drew stuff and laid there and just talked. On the way back to the camp, we went down to a different spot when we went up so there was a big high up tree that everyone except me went around. I decided to go over it and when I jumped of it I face planted in the sand: [ . Janessa burst out laughing and early on else did too but not quite as loud as Janessa, don't worry though because imidoyl stated laughing too.

The next day we started on our way back to Nikky's cabin. On our way back to the same beach as before we saw two baby bears and a mama bear we also saw the other

canoe group but the thing is they weren't even canoeing they were all tied together with string and being towed with a motor. Also all their supplies were in motor boats and they had generators. I don't even know how that boat got through the river because you know how I said it was really shallow. and remember the stick that I told you about was still there. anyways we spent a night there and got up really early in the morning and got back to Nikky's cabin.

This is on the way back the weather was really bad both days it was really windy and Greg and Mikelle got separated from the rest of us when we were back in Courtney lake. It was okay though when we got back to lower Courtney (where Nikky's cabin is) we stayed at Nikky's cabin for two nights because we did actually go back early because of the weather. On the way back it was supposed to be a nice slow way backhoe but we couldn't do that.

We would also like to tie up and hold our canoes together for snacks and to refill our water bottles from the lakes. The lake water didn't taste the best so everyone used MIO (the little squeeze water flavors). It made it taste really good.

When we got back Ryan Greg Nikky and Janessa put up the wind block and Krista, Coner, Mickell and I went the canoes on our backs and put them in the Traylor. Me Krista and Nikky got our stuff in the cabin and everyone else wanted to sleep outside. Coner was smocking his walleye over the fire and when it was done, OH MY GONNESS it was like haven, that's how I found out what my favorite food is. Also, Mickell and I were sitting at the kitchen table and we were just taking for like 2 hours it was one of the best talks I've ever had.

Later after lunch Coner went birding and Krista and I went berry picking. Once Coner got back Krista, Coner, Janessa, Nikky and I went on a walk to the other beach. On the way there Coner started walking really sassily and was swaying his hips and when we walked past us, he said, "ma hips don't lie girl!" Krista and I burst out laughing and shortly after Coner did too.

The day after we started on the way back home. We stopped at a gas station and got candy and gaz. Another time we also topped because we saw a grouse and started

throwing rocks at it for Coner because he was in the other truck. We didn't get it though. On the way back it took us 9 hours and remember it only took us 5 hours to get there. It took us so long because of all the rain. But oddly enuf it felt a lot shorter.(I did fall asleep on the way home). We stopped at Missinipe for lunch I had a poutine it was so very good.

When we were waiting for our food I noticed how good Greg's posture was and I said "oh my gosh you have like really good posture" he said "I've never noticed that, thank you" then I said "yeah". I Coner Krista and I went to the gas station across the road and we got some candy and drinks. They didn't have much though sadly. After lunch Greg and I switched seats. When we dropped off Coner and Krista, Krista's little siblings were yelling and running around saying "Coners home!" That made me burst so laughing. Then Nikky and I had more driving to do because we had to go to Napatac which is where we live Nikky is my Neighbor. Nikky and my mom and grandma have been really good friends for a long time. It took us an extra half hour to get home all the way.

Thank you for your time I know this would have taken a while to read. And that you have lots to read so i hope you enjoyed this and i hope you have a good rest of your day.

**The end :)**

It started with a rose.  
 As white as snow, kissed with dew  
 Still clinging to its curved petals as it was held out to me.  
 The Giver had the widest grin  
 As if knowing my heart had yearned for such a perfect flower.  
 And it was; the flower and our love.  
 And just like the rose, it had its thorns  
 It tore me apart, cuts starting to form  
 But I clutched to the rose  
 Not wanting to lose something so ethereal  
 Day after day, the cuts turned to stabs  
 My hands are bleeding from holding on for so long  
 And finally, I drop the rose  
 The scars remain, but the pain stopped  
 But I lost my giver  
 Left behind with bleeding palms  
 And tearful eyes  
 The pain I lost, dull in comparison  
 To the loneliness that filled my heart.

Years later,  
 A bracelet was thrown at me  
 It was a rough texture on the beads  
 Detailed visuals on each seed  
 I was too stunned to be mad  
 More intrigued by the craft  
 The Giver had a harsh scowl  
 Almost unsettling to my soul  
 I wanted to hand it back  
 But they threw to me again  
 A silent understanding that it was mine  
 And truly, I didn't mind  
 This bracelet was harsh on my skin  
 Leaving me bruised  
 But made me stronger, almost immune  
 With this refund strength  
 I pushed The Giver away  
 I refused to be hurt again  
 Despite of how good they think they might be

And lastly, it was a bow  
 So perfectly tied  
 Its little edging fraying  
 At the cold  
 The Giver is nervous  
 They know this isn't much  
 But I don't mind  
 Because they made it  
 Every line and every touch  
 Compared to what I have endured  
 With all the lies and hurt  
 I know their heart is pure  
 I take the bow  
 Leaving the little gift in my pocket  
 And admire the little thing  
 It's not the first choice  
 Nor the main event  
 But a tiny wrapper  
 That gives beauty  
 And holds together my present  
 And this I would have never known  
 If it had not started  
 With a Rose.

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