WINTER 2024

ST. VITAL MUSEUM

THE HISTORIAN

600 ST. MARY'S ROAD, WINNIPEG, MB R2M 3L5 (204) 255-2864 INFO@SVHS.CA

THOUGHTS FROM THE PRESIDENT

We held a successful AGM at Norberry-Glenlee Community Club on Saturday, November 16th.

This past 12 months has found us expanding our reach and creating an environment and a destination that people want to visit and become connected to. We built upon decades of effort from those who came before. This renewed energy is in large part because of all of those who currently believe in and support the museum…our directors on the board, some wonderful volunteers (can still use more!), those who made donations or bought memberships or calendars, and everyone who came to the museum including our record crowd at the barbeque.

Here are a few other highlights from this past year.

- Our **membership** has more than doubled this past year
- **Finances** - After consecutive years with financial losses totaling $14,506 in 2022 and $12,389 last year, we have been able to completely stop the bleeding and have an excess this year. We secured grant funding for multiple projects and exceeded every revenue stream from previous years (donations, advertising, calendar sales, membership. Thank you to everyone who helped make this a reality.
- The new **displays** from Oak Hammock Marsh have been mostly integrated into the museum and are looking good! We were the first Manitoba Museum to take advantage of the opportunity to upgrade.
- After not being able to open expanded hours in the summer of 2023, this summer three **students** graced our building and for over two months we were open five days per week. Their energy and skills helped us improve the museum in multiple ways.
- The **web site** has been changed to a new WordPress site so we can now update the site without finding a specialist who knows HTML code.
- Many new **signs** adorn the walls of the museum thanks to a Manitoba Heritage Grant along with a wonderful portable sign to be used off site.
- We are **touching more lives and engaging more people** than ever before. Doors Open Winnipeg in May and a successful barbeque and Open House in August generated big crowds. Booths at the St. Vital Agricultural Fair in August and at St. Vital Centre in November brought increased awareness of the museum to more people.
- Four issues of the **Historian** were delivered.
- We have re-written our **by-laws** to bring them in line with current standards and completed a **Strategic Plan** to help us with next steps.

Our Museum continues to flourish. New artifacts, if they are connected to St. Vital, are accepted - old ones are updated. We have three locations in our galleries where visitors take the most pictures: the jail cell, the 1939 fire truck, and the Red River Cart. The cart is in need of restoration and we have secured a company that specializes in that exact process. We need to generate $2500 in donations to cover the cost of restoring the cart to the original condition of the carts in the 1800s. Please feel free to help us achieve that goal.

In the future, we hope to reach out to even more people in the community. The outreach opportunities are endless, and we remain hopeful that a vibrant relationship with the Louis Riel School Division and other educational institutions will enhance the profile of the museum for generations.

Is there still a lot to do? You bet! What we have done together, though, has been impressive! This year-end report is a time to celebrate! Thank you to everyone for all of your support and efforts!

And have a wonderful holiday season!

With gratitude.

John Hindle

Inside this issue:

BOOKS AND LIFE

Some years ago, I bought a used book from Family Book Exchange which had re-located to a spot on St. Mary's Road. The visit brought back a flood of memories.

When I was a boy, we lived in the working-class neighbourhood of Weston that was not very close to a public library. Every second week, a mobile library trailer parked in the service station directly across from our house – the Book Mobile. Children were allowed to borrow up to eight books at a time. I loaded up every time and spent the following two weeks ploughing through them all. During their next visit, I would take another eight.

My orderly but naive young mind thought that it was a requirement that all the books be read in full before being returned. And, being intellectually hungry, I always took the full meal of eight books. I was not very discriminating as to what I borrowed; fiction, history, science…whatever. Having a library almost literally on my doorstep helped start me on a lifelong love of books and learning.

> *You can get lost in any library, no matter the size. But the more lost you are the more things you'll find.*
>
> *~ Millie Florence, Lydia Green of Mullberry Glen*

Fast forward to the 1970's, and I was living, on and off, with my parents in their apartment above the Royal Canadian Legion offices on St. Mary's Road where my father worked. My mother was an avid reader of Harlequin romances. She would send me to the Family Book Exchange located two doors down from our apartment, where I would trade the books she had read for a fresh supply. The Family Book Exchange also had other types of books for sale, so I binged on classics, philosophy, history, science and whatever. I am thankful that living beside the Family Book Exchange allowed me to again lose myself in the comfort and beauty in those books.

Both the Book Mobile and the Family Book Exchange came back into my life, upon my retirement. I even volunteered at the Family Book Exchange for several months. Sadly, a few years later the Family Book Exchange went out of business. Here's hoping we will see it reborn again some day.

The Book Mobile reappeared in a different format. One recent summer day, I inquired at my local Winnipeg Public Library branch as to whether the Book Mobile still operated. I was told that something similar existed. The new service is called the Mobile Library Program, and consists of a van that visits a few locations in Winnipeg. One of those sites was in St. Vital at the Marlene Street Community Resource Centre.

The staff were pleased to know that the public library service had long ago helped me to develop a love for books. They believed that the magic of books (and more modern media) was still doing its work for clients – young and old, some of whom faced

Books and Life, (Continued)

challenging lives. The Mobile Library Program is only one of a number of services at the Marlene Street Community Resource Centre.

The two places in which I lived and grew…Weston as a young child and St. Vital as a teenager and young adult are forever connected in my mind and my heart by my memories of the healing and nourishing power of books and their ideas. And by memories of the good people of the Winnipeg Public Library Service and the staff of the Family Book Exchange.

John Hodgert, St. Vital Museum volunteer

Two individuals in front of the WPL Mobile Library Program van.

Celebrating Books and Reading during the Holiday Season

I want to introduce you to an amazing cozy winter traditions that celebrates reading, books, and taking a moment to just devour a book (or three): Jólabókaflóðið or Iceland's Christmas Book Flood

In a country that has embraced their cultural history of storytelling through both oral and written traditions it is no wonder the Jólabókaflóðið of Iceland has taken a hold of readers and booklovers around the world.

Jólabókaflóðið is the annual event when the Icelandic publishers release newly published books, after a free Bókatíðindi (translated to Journal of Books or book news) is sent to all households with all the releases, which are then purchased as Christmas gifts to be exchanged and consumed, with a hot beverage of choice, as part of a cozy and romanticized tradition.

What may surprise some is that the roots and origins of Jólabókaflóðið are not as deep when compared to other Icelandic traditions.

Its origins come from the post-war economy that Iceland faced after the Second World War in 1944 in combination with heavy restrictions on imported items, which paper did not have, and thousands of Allied troops occupying the country, that books became a hugely popular and successful wartime gift.

Today Jólabókaflóðið might not have everyone reading a traditionally published book before bed, or during the day, as part of these festivities but the love of storytelling will forever be part of the Icelandic culture for generations to come.

Breanna

CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

I grew up in the new part of St. Vital (at least it was new back in 1955!) on Portland Avenue and there was a lot of love and joy in our home around the Christmas season!

It started with the annual Christmas tree hunt about three weeks before the big day. We'd pack up the station wagon and the family would head to the designated provincial tree-cutting area. We would traipse into the forest and cut down two trees with an axe. The trees always looked much better standing than they did when they fell to the ground. But no matter…they were our trees. We paid our $0.25 and Dad said we all earned a cup of hot chocolate. More than once, after we got the trees home, dad would drill holes in the trunks and insert a few branches to make them look better. Charlie Brown had nothing on some of our trees!

The kids had their own tree in the basement with the unbreakable ornaments but everyone would participate in decorating the upstairs tree. Dad would put on the lights, all of which could have burned the house down with the heat they generated. The bubble lights had to be positioned just right to get them to bubble, but that first moment when they started to work was magic. I felt so warm and fuzzy as I stared at the Christmas tree and those bubble lights. A ton of tinsel was the last touch to the wonderful transformation that always bewitched me.

Hindle children (Dianne, John, Val, and Garry) at the Christmas tree, 1956.

I was pleasantly surprised a couple of years ago when I was gifted some bubble lights to use on our current tree!

Then there was the arrival by Canada Post of our presents from relatives in Collingwood, Ontario. It was always such a production. The presents were hidden in Mom and Dad's bedroom until Christmas Eve, when they could be carried under the tree – one present at a time just before we read *Twas the Night Before Christmas* together. Christmas morning had its own special traditions including one person opening a gift at a time. Christmas dinner included my favourite oatmeal date cookies. There are so many wonderful memories.

I tried to carry on some traditions when I had my own family and I hope my children have similar fond memories of the special ornaments, lights, yearly picture… To this day, I go all out with decorations and lights and am always on the lookout for something new. My daughter and son make fun of me when they see all of my efforts. I guess deep down that is part of the reason I try so hard – just to make them laugh and share in this special time together.

I hope you find whatever brings you joy this holiday season. I extend to you and yours the warmest of holiday cheer. I hope everyone finds some peace and contentment this year. And don't forget to cherish some old traditions or to start some new ones.

John Hindle

Meet the Board: Cal Hawley

At our AGM in November, we welcomed Cal Hawley as the newest member of our board. Cal has been a resident of St. Vital for more than 30 years. He and his wife, Tara, raised a family of three children and are now proud grandparents.

Over the years, Cal has been a coach and administrator and has held leadership roles in various national, regional and provincial sport championships and industry conferences.

Cal retired from the Manitoba public service in 2021 after more than 30 years of dedicated service. He has a wealth of experience in program leadership, policy development, information technology and governance.

Tara, also recently retired, is going to volunteer at the museum. She was a physical education teacher in the Pembina trails School Division for over 20 years.

The museum is excited to welcome two high-quality individuals to our volunteer team.

Photo of Tara (left) and Cal (right) Hawley enjoying an evening out!

Thank you, Retired Board Members

During the AGM held on November 16, 2024, several board members, some who had served the St. Vital Museum for many years, stepped down from the board.

They had assisted in many areas of the museum including our display committee, developing the annual calendar, applying for a variety of grants, and so much more. They will be missed.

We would like to take this opportunity to give a huge thank you to Kerry Pedrick, Don & Judy Berthman, and Brent Thomas for all the time, support, and dedication that they gave to the museum during their time on the board.

In Memory of MARJORIE DOYLE

It is with saddened hearts the St. Vital Museum staff, volunteers, and board members would like to extend our deepest condolences to Marjorie Doyle's friends and family for her sudden and unexpected passing.

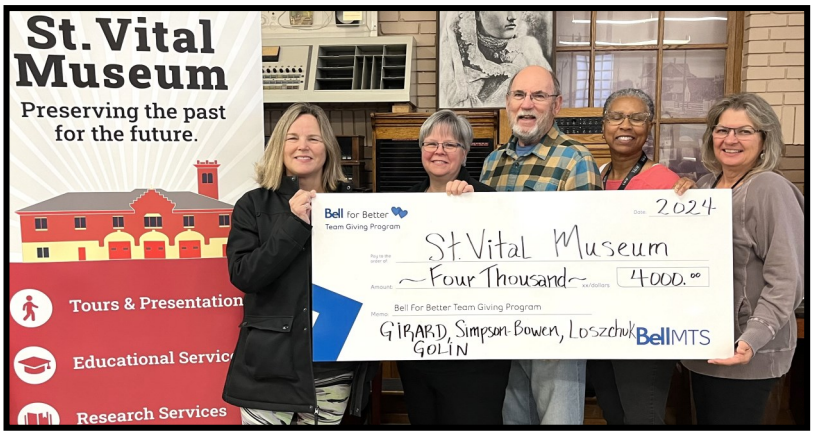
Marjorie worked tirelessly behind the scenes on both the Historian and the annual calendar for the last year and a half to make them look amazing. The space she leaves behind within our team is large and will be tough to fill.

Marjorie grew up in St. Vital and shared stories with our other volunteers of her childhood that were entertaining and enlightening. Her positive nature and talents will long be remembered.

WHAT A GIFT!

Donations we receive at the St. Vital Museum warm our hearts and bring a lot of joy to the museum volunteers. Any amount is appreciated. We feel a part of something bigger when that happens. Donations are a key piece in funding museum operations.

Recently, we received a series of generous donations that brought a sense of amazement to all of us at the museum. The amounts totaled over $4,000! An amount like that does make a difference. So where did a donation that size come from?



Pictured left to right: Karen Girard, Sharon Golin, John Hindle, President of the St. Vital Museum, Andrea Simpson and Donna Deeton Loszchuk.

The history goes back to 1938 when MTS local retirees became Chapter 50 of the Telephone Pioneers of America. Their mission was volunteering, fellowship and meeting the needs of the community. Back then, they were well known for their volunteer labour but not so much for fundraising and donations to charities. In late 2019, they learned that the group could benefit from the Bell for Better Giving Program.

In a nutshell, they can turn their volunteer hours into donations for their favorite registered charities.

One of the St. Vital Museum board members who is a key museum volunteer, Sharon Golin, took advantage of this program. Sharon and a team of her BELLMTS retiree friends met the criteria and were able to direct these funds to the museum.

We would like to thank Sharon, Andrea Simpson Bowen, Donna Deeton Loszchuk, and Karen Girard for all the efforts they put in to making Manitoba a better place including the work they put into the Red Heart Pillow project for cardiac patients at St Boniface Hospital. And for choosing the St. Vital Museum as a benefactor of those efforts. The four women are pictured with museum president, John Hindle.

Thanks again ladies for all you do and for your support of our museum!

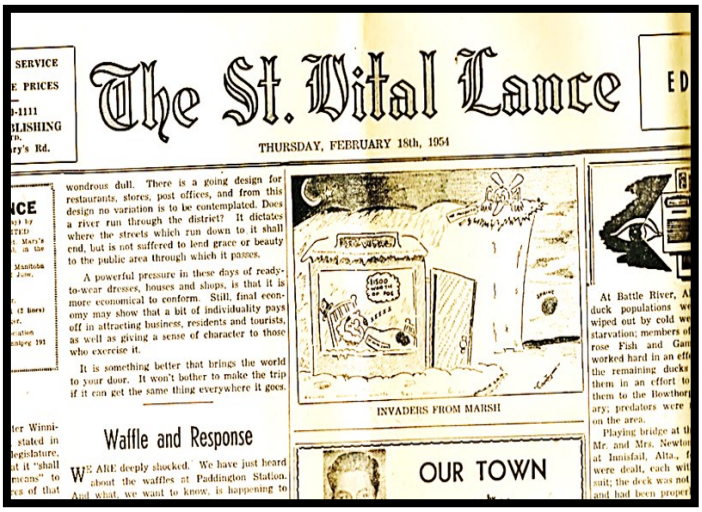
Jack Countryman, Lance 1954

Jack Countryman is a Winnipeg icon who walks the streets of the city every day. He drew this cartoon for the St. Vital Lance paper in 1954 when he was 19-years-old.

He was asked to create a cartoon depicting an issue of the day. The previous summer, the City had spent $1500 fogging for mosquitoes which was deemed by some to not be enough commitment to control the mosquito population.

Jack came up with this cartoon.

At the museum we value the historic nature of the St. Vital Lance, the local paper that was published for so many years.


The St. Vital Lance

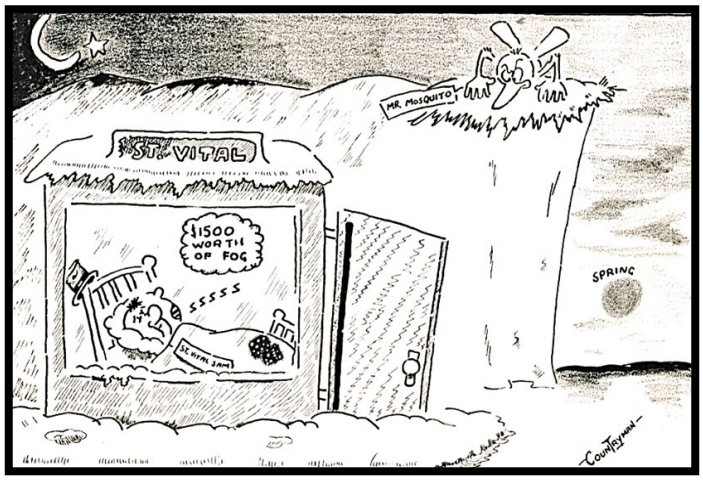
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18th, 1954

Waffle and Response

INVADERS FROM MARSH

OUR TOWN

Image of the 1954 Lance issue that had Jack Countryman's cartoon. Cartoon is above the OUR TOWN advertisement and under the St. Vital Lance title.



Enlarged image of Jack Countryman's cartoon originally published in the 1954 Lance issue pictured above.

How Streets Get Their Names - St. Vital Edition

One question I get asked fairly often while at the museum is if I know how a street in St. Vital got its name? I love doing the research to figure that out if I do not readily know the answer.

In 1996, the museum contacted the City of Winnipeg about the origin of two streets in St. Vital — Oustic Avenue and Egerton Road, but were unable to ascertain where the names came from. Now, 28 years later, thanks to the internet, I think I have an answer for both.

Egerton Road was named after a Mr. Perdue. William Egerton Perdue! Born on June 20, 1850, William Egerton Perdue came to Manitoba in 1882, as a practicing lawyer, first working with Bain, Blanchard, Mulock and Perdue, then Perdue and Robinson, and finally Perdue and Rothwell.

After many years of dedicated work in 1918 he was appointed Chief Justice of Manitoba and served until his retirement in 1929. On January 9th, 1885 he married Mary Fairbanks MacDonnell. They had three children: Charles (1885-1903), Olive (1887-1952) and Mowbray (1890-1917). William Egerton Perdue died on 17 January, 1933, in Winnipeg.

Now let's focus on Oustic Avenue. With some help from the internet, I found a place called Oustic located near Guelph, Ontario in Wellington County.

That brings about more questions. What famous Winnipegger came from around Guelph? And better yet, how was Oustic in Ontario named? I am now asking you. Does anybody know anything about Guelph?

I've done my bit. If anyone can help answer any of these questions, just contact the museum.

Cam Dempster, St. Vital Museum Historian

From the Front Desk: Have a happy 2025

Dear members of the St. Vital Museum:

The snow has arrived in a white, whirling, fury and with that the holiday season is upon us!

It is also a time of major change for the St. Vital Museum with new board members being elected at the AGM in November. And also for myself as your curator of the museum for the last two years.

This will be my last letter to you, dear members of the St. Vital Museum, as your curator. I have been blessed to have had your support during these last two years.

My time as the curator has not been necessarily an easy one as our president, John Hindle, can attest to. I started my time here just as the former president, Bob Holliday, passed away and the St. Vital Museum was months away from not existing, as our financial

From the Front Desk: Have a happy 2025

status was drastically in peril. I am, however, leaving with our museum in a much more financially stable position.

As I look back at my time here, I feel like I have not done much or enough, especially on my first love which will always be working with the artifacts with love and attention. But John, along with my husband Mike and many others, have both pointed out that the job is a varied one and I have been able to contribute on the web site, the Historian, managing volunteers, updating social media, helping with various events all the while helping keep the museum vibrant and welcoming. Along with finding slivers of time to work on the collection.

I have recently accepted a full-time position and in 2025 I will be transitioning away from being the curator of the St. Vital Museum to a volunteer position of Collections Manager in order to make sure the person who comes after me will have a successful transition and support system.

I am looking forward to the new adventures in my new job and taking everything that I have learned while working at the St. Vital Museum with me.

Once again, I would like to thank you so much for all the support you have showered on me in the last two years. It means the world to me that I have touched your life in such a way through my small contribution.

I would like to wish you all the best for the holiday season; whether you are spending this time with friends, family, or simply by yourself. It can be a tough time of year for some regardless and my Christmas wish for you this year is that you find a tiny silver lining to make your day brighter.

See you all in 2025 and thank you for everything during these last two years.

Breanna, (Former) Curator of the St. Vital Museum

VALDINE NORDAL CONDE

Here's a musical story that currently has no ending! Valdine Nordal Conde, born in 1930, lived at 629 St. Mary's Road (current location of one of our supporters, Elm Park Dental). She was recognized as a child prodigy at the age of three. With the care and encouragement of her devoted Icelandic mother and the professional tutoring of her aunt, Mrs. S. Helgason, herself a wonderful pianist, Valdine made rapid progress.

By the age of five, Valdine played to a sellout crowd at the Winnipeg Civic Auditorium which is now the Archives Building. For years, she performed on local radio. In 1938, her fame had spread and she played with the New York Philharmonic Symphony. She achieved eight minutes of applause from the audience, with rave revues in the newspapers.

Miss Conde's meteoric rise to fame was astonishing and every year brought her greater opportunities, wider audiences, and new fame. She was nine years old when she performed the B flat minor Concerto by Tchaikovsky with the Nassau Philharmonic Symphony. The following year she appeared with the Hartford Symphony Orchestra

When twelve, she was guest soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in Grant Park, when seventy thousand people had come to attend the concert. During these years, she appeared with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and the New York Philharmonic Orchestra in Carnegie Hall She was acclaimed as one of the world's greatest living female pianists at the tender age of fifteen. She performed to astonished audiences around the world.

Unfortunately, we have little information about her after World War 2. We have reached out to the University of Manitoba and the Manitoba Icelandic Community and are still looking. There might be another article in the future. We have used some information in this article from one that appeared in the Icelandic Canadian in 1945.

Valdine Nordal Conde was surely one of the most accomplished talents who came from St. Vital.

A PLEA FOR FLOOD STORIES

Spring time in Southern Manitoba. All thoughts turn to thoughts of . . . ?

Floods and sandbags! Obviously.

1950 was a high watermark in the history of St. Vital and many other places in Southern Manitoba.

But that certainly wasn't the only flood. Not even the biggest one.

There was a flood in 1948. At times, while the final crest was lower, the 1948 levels surpassed the levels in 1950.

St. Vital has faced many floods…early 1800s, late 1800s, 1916, 1997, and probably a few I've missed.

Did you notice how I managed not to say anything about a flood of memories?

If anyone has memories, or stories of floods that have been passed down through your family, of any floods that have happened, please share them with us at the Museum.

We would like to include them in our Spring 2025 edition of the Historian.

From Ballet in St. Vital to Snow Lake, MB

My husband, Don, and I were in Winnipeg for a family wedding and one of the things he wanted to do along with visiting family and friends was to visit your museum. Don grew up on Havelock Avenue and St. Vital was home until 2003 when we moved to Lethbridge, Alberta for work.

The volunteer, a gentleman with a long white beard and an outgoing personality (Cam), gave us an amazing tour. It was such an engaging experience to learn so much and register so much connectivity to names, faces and places.

Display at the St. Vital Museum of Mary Strome.

I was surprised and delighted to come upon a display of my beloved ballet teacher Mary Strome! When your volunteer learned of my connection to her, he asked me to share it with you. I am more that happy to do that as Miss Strome was a wonderful kind person who was also a stellar teacher.

When I was three years old and living with my grandparents in Toronto, they enrolled me in Miss Brown's Ballet School. When I was six and moving back to Winnipeg, Miss Brown directed me to continue my study with Miss Mary Strome of St Vital. Miss Brown and Miss Strome had danced together in the corps de ballet for the Saddler Wells Ballet in London. (That later became the Royal Ballet and is today the English National Ballet.)

Over the next 13 years, Miss Strome taught me more than how to dance. She taught me to be strong, disciplined, and how to feel the joy of those graceful movements. I travelled on the bus from St. James each Saturday. I remember on days when I forgot to bring my lunch, between classes Miss Strome would crook her finger and say, "come with me." She would take me into her lovely little kitchen and feed me lunch. When I set out on my own at 18, I could no longer afford to take classes. Miss Strome said that I must keep dancing and she granted me a scholarship for two years.

In 1984, my husband took a posting with the Royal Bank as manager of their branch in Snow Lake, MB. Through my work volunteering with the Snow Lake school choreographing their musicals, it became known that I had studied ballet. That led to many requests to teach ballet to the children in town. I found a teacher in Thompson who taught Royal Academy of Dance, Kelly Waterman, who called the RAD in London and based on my years of training and passing some exams, I received my teaching certificate and the Snow Lake School of Ballet was born.

The school thrived and children and adults got to experience the joys of this art form. I knew Mary Strome's hard work and belief in me had paid off. I know she would have been so proud that I shared that learning with others. I will always be grateful to Miss Strome for her kindness, patience and for helping me become the woman I am today.

When we left the frozen north, we moved back to St. Vital! Thank you for inviting me to share my story.

Kerry Lowe, Former St. Vital Resident

Thriving Learners ∞ Flourishing Communities

At the Louis Riel School Division, our vision is simple, yet powerful: we want all members of our community to excel as caring, confident, capable, and resilient life-long learners who contribute to a democratic and sustainable world.

Our division is more than just a school system - we're a community of learners, teachers, parents, and partners who are all dedicated to creating a better future for ourselves and for generations to come.

DIVISION SCOLAIRE
LOUIS RIEL
SCHOOL DIVISION
lrsd.net