

Rainfall creeps up toward record for July

LOUISE SMITH
Of The News

Melinda and Peter Bensler were up at 3:30 this morning watching water flood into their basement and shop just outside Redcliff.

About five centimetres covered the shop floor and about 2.5 cm was in the basement where the two boys slept, Melinda said.

The Benslers were able to move most items away from the water before they were damaged.

Melinda blames Redcliff for not pumping out lagoons, which filled with rain and overflowed into ditches.

The ditches already had water, which ran off toward the Benslers.

"It's a lake from here to the road."

Randy Giesbrecht, municipal manager for Redcliff, said the town ordered pipe and a pump two weeks ago and will be installing them this week.

In the meantime, water levels will be lowered with a portable pump of Redcliff's and pipe found by the Municipal District of Cypress, he said.

The town pumped out the lagoons four or five weeks ago with rented equipment that is no longer available. He said having to pump the lagoons twice is unusual.

"Nobody expected it to be this bad."

Four to six houses on Broadway North in Redcliff also have flooded basements.

Medicine Hat received 19.4 millimetres of rain this weekend to put July's total so far at 106.6 mm, said Rick Shewchuk, weather information specialist for the Lethbridge weather office.

The record amount of precipitation for July was 138 mm set in 1927, he said.

Another 20 mm should fall on the city today, but the sun will come out by Tuesday afternoon.

Conditions will be improved for the rest of the week, he said.

Campgrounds in Cypress Hills Provincial Park are drying out after 58.8 mm of rain fell in two hours Sunday afternoon, causing a flash-flood from Beaver Creek, said David Ferrier, ranger in charge.

Twenty campsites with about 2.5 cm of water were evacuated to higher ground. There was no damage as most people were in trailers or motorhomes. People in tents were already packing up, he said. Just one loop of campsites still has water in it.

The park has had 175 mm of rain so far, which is more than the previous July record of 144 mm set in 1977, Ferrier said. Average annual precipitation for the park is 490 mm. June and July alone this year have had 350 mm, he said.



Samaritan assaulted

A Lethbridge woman, on her way home from Medicine Hat, was pulled from her car and sexually assaulted Sunday after she stopped to aid a man on the side of Highway 3 near Taber.

The 25-year-old victim stopped on Highway 3, east of Taber about 15 kilometres, around 1 a.m.

She believed the man, standing on the side of the road, was out of gas and stopped to help, said Taber RCMP Const. Gary Clark in a press release.

When she stopped, there were two men. One entered her car and the other pulled her from the car, took her around the back of it, and sexually assaulted her, said Clark.

"At this point another westbound vehicle came by, hit the brakes and carried on," said Clark.

"The two males became scared and took off westbound toward Taber."

The victim was returning from a function in Medicine Hat.

The attackers were driving an older pickup truck, tan or light khaki green in color, with amber lights on the roof.

RCMP are asking for assistance and seeking the driver of the westbound vehicle who slowed but did not stop.

The first suspect has dark hair, longer at the back collar. He is clean shaven, of medium build and about 30 to 40 years of age. He is about 5 feet 8 inches.

The second suspect is about the same height, of medium build, with a paunch. He has a thick moustache, dark hair and is also 30 to 40 years of age.

Rules are rules in Redcliff Another petition fails

STEPHEN MEYER
Of The News

A second petition calling for Redcliff to merge with Medicine Hat has been ruled invalid because of legal technicalities.

June David slapped the town with a 400-name petition on June 29 asking for council to request annexation by the city. But according to the town, more than 50 per cent of the names on the petition were incompletely signed or illegible.

The reason is that most of the people who signed the petition did not include the name of the town in their address.

"I'm not surprised, not really," says David.

"They're going to try every trick in the book."

David received a letter this morning from municipal secretary Terry Hurlbut informing her of the ruling.

The town consulted the Edmonton legal firm Brownlee Fryett for an opinion on the petition, says Hurlbut.

The firm specializes in municipal law, he adds, and confirmed a valid address must include the name of the municipality.

"It's more than just a technicality," he says.

"The question that comes to me is strictly whether the petition is legal," he adds. "The answer is either yes or no."

He says some of the names had Medicine Hat addresses, a couple had only box numbers, and there was one address in England.

Only 19 names had a valid and complete address including the name of the town, he says.

"She's going to call it nit-picky, but it's not legal and I don't have a choice," he says.

David adds Hurlbut is right — she does consider it nit-picky.

"I feel they're being small about the whole thing," says David.

"I think they had to be really looking for a problem."

The petition asks council if necessary to put the question to voters in a plebiscite.

A valid petition signed by five per cent of Redcliff residents, 188 people, would have been enough to force the town to address the amalgamation issue.

In two days outside the Redcliff post office, David says she collected 400-410 names on a petition calling for the town to merge with the city.

Hurlbut says the new petition is basically null and void.

Mayor Bill Duncan feels the ruling had to be made because unless a petition is 100 per cent legal it could be challenged in court and any money spent by the town would be thrown away.

Council could hold a plebiscite on its own.

FLASH-FLOOD — Steve Kwas uses a garden tractor to clear clogged storm sewers in front of a motorcycle shop on King-way Avenue S.E. on the weekend. Harlan Kraus attempts to drive through the underpass on First Street S.E., but ends up backing out. Jehremy Girling plays with a friend's dog, Bruno, on the edge of a small lake at Division Avenue S. and Sixth

Street S.E. Medicine Hat has received about 20 millimetres of rain this weekend. Some residents are cleaning up flooded basements from water in backyards or from backed-up floor drains, says Herb Arndt, manager of environmental utilities.

— News photos Shaughn Butts

Tears flowing as Selena Lapp puts on the Stampede Queen crown



TEARY-EYED — Selena Lapp, the 1993 Medicine Hat Stampede queen wipes a tear from her eye as former queen Wendi Lund prepares to pin a banner on her while contestants Kelly Sauter and Jerri Davies watch the crowning.

— News photo Shaughn Butts

MAUREEN MacNEILL
Of The News

Tears were flowing into a river at the Medicine Hat Stampede Queen crowning Saturday evening.

Five girls rode and spoke and charmed for a week, but in the end only one could win. Selena Lapp was that winner.

Between smiling and crying, Lapp was able to tell the crowd, "this is a dream come true."

For a little comic relief, Lapp put her plain tiara on retiring queen Wendi Lund's cowboy hat. Meanwhile, Lund mounted the real thing on Lapp's hat to the cheers of about 1,000 who attended the event at the Cypress Centre.

"Ooh! I feel naked now!" said Lund as she walked away.

The new queen's first priority is the Medicine Hat Exhibition and Stampede. "I'm not ready for it yet, but I will be by Monday," said Lapp shakily.

Carmen Schick, the 1993 Stampede Princess, also wiped away a tear as she stood shakily in her blue dress and accepted her belt buckle and tiara. Retiring princess, Nichole Hope, was quietly

dewy-eyed.

"It'll be an adjustment to be in the centre of attention," said Schick. "But I love rodeo so much and I want to promote Medicine Hat and the rodeo."

Schick said the hardest part of the one-week competition was horsemanship. Her horse got sick and she had to train on a new animal the last few weeks.

Tears were also coming from some of the contestants who lost the challenge. And there were even a few organizers and judges dabbing at their eyes.

"Oh sure, you're going to come talk to a has-been," said Lund later, winking playfully as she was approached.

"It was hard to give up. I had to force the crown off my head."

Lund won't stop there, though. She is going to run for Miss Rodeo Canada, a title held this year by 1991 Medicine Hat Stampede queen, Dode Minor. Minor made an appearance at the event, to the joy of the crowd.

The Medicine Hat competition is very worthwhile, said co-ordinator Laurie Sharland prior to the crowning.

"This is the only city in Canada that has produced three Miss Rodeo

Canada's.

"Other past queens have become astute business women, community leaders and good moms."

Not bad, claims Sharland, for a competition which began in 1956 in the back of a flatbed truck in a Safeway parking lot.

"Now contestants get more gifts than the original queens and princesses."

The gifts this year are worth a total of about \$20,000 including the queen's tool saddle. As well a \$2,000 scholarship is available to the queen and a \$1,000 to the princess, to attend Medicine Hat College.

But being a part of the competition is not easy for the girls, said one of three personality judges, Rob Grisonich. There are also two horsemanship judges.

"I never knew how much they had to go through. . . It takes a strong girl to do some of that."

Grisonich said it was tough to have to make a choice because he got to know each of the five contestants through the week prior to the crowning.

"It was not a fun time for any of the judges," to pick a winner.