

Rodeo is in her blood

MISS RODEO CANADA IS A COMPETITOR AS WELL AS AN AMBASSADOR

Melissa Villeneuve
FOR THE HERALD

Ever since she was just a little girl, Nicole Briggs has nurtured her love of horses, rodeo and western life. Last November, she realized a dream come true when she was crowned Miss Rodeo Canada 2014 at the Canadian Finals Rodeo (CFR) in Edmonton. Now she brings her love and passion, working as an ambassador for the sport of rodeo, to Whoop-Up Days.

The 21-year-old Briggs was born and raised on a farm in Gibbons, Alta., and that's where it all began. Currently she competes in team roping and barrel racing. She is president of the Canadian Intercollegiate Rodeo Association and has qualified for the finals four times.

"I began riding at the age of three on some of my uncle's horses and I got my first pony at the age of five," said Briggs. "I started competing in rodeo events at six and started roping by eight. It's just something that's been a big part of my life since then."

Briggs began competing in rodeo pageants in high school. In 2008, she ran for the title of Alberta High School Rodeo Queen and won.

"With that, I went down to the National High School Finals Rodeo in Farmington, N.M., to compete in the national title there," said Briggs. "I ended up top 10 out of 43 other girls from Canada, United States and Australia. After that, I kind of got hooked on the things that rodeo queens do in their job and their role in the sport of rodeo. I knew I wanted to run for a professional title following that. In 2012, I was Miss Rodeo Airdrie and I spent the year promoting Airdrie Pro Rodeo and with that title went on to compete for Miss Rodeo Canada in November."

Briggs said contestants vying for the Miss Rodeo Canada title must compete in categories such as horsemanship, public speaking, a personal interview, a written exam and a fashion show, where they are judged on personality, as well as appearance.

"It was amazing," said Briggs. "I've gone to the CFR ever since I was little, just living around Edmonton, and I've always looked up to Miss Rodeo Canada so to be that person now, it was an amazing feeling to be crowned."

Her job as Miss Rodeo Canada, Briggs explained, "is to really help



Herald photo by Melissa Villeneuve

Nicole Briggs, Miss Rodeo Canada 2014, is visiting Whoop-Up Days as an ambassador to the sport of rodeo. Here she stands with Walter, the horse she will ride during her time in Lethbridge.

draw people in and become fans of the rodeo."

"Miss Rodeo Canada is a really big part of my year. I attend 350 to 400 performances in my year and travel throughout Western Canada, the United States and Australia. We're an ambassador for the sport of rodeo, so we're really trying to gain new fans, promote the sport and encourage people to compete themselves, or come and watch and gain a love for it as much as we do."

Briggs is attending the University of Alberta completing a bachelor of science in animal health. She plans on obtaining a degree in veterinary medicine, with the hope of pursuing a career in equine health. Now that her reign as Miss Rodeo Canada 2014 is winding down, Briggs said she wants to go back to team roping and she wants to go professional with it.

One more rodeo appearance in Armstrong, B.C., and then a three-week trip to Australia in October will end her year. While in Australia, Briggs will represent Canadian Professional Rodeo, visit some of the pro rodeo and be on hand to watch the Miss Rodeo Australia pageant.

The Whoop-Up Days rodeo continues today at 3 p.m. For a full schedule of the Whoop-Up Days rodeo draw, visit www.rodeocanada.com.

WHOOUP-UP DAYS 2014

Wraps up today

Saturday:
8 a.m. to 11 a.m.: 14th McKillop Cubs and Scouts pancake breakfast at 2329 15 Ave. S. Donation
8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.: Texas Toast breakfast, north entrance of Exhibition Park. \$2
9 a.m. to 3 p.m.: West Fest at Save-On-Foods 401 Highlands Blvd. W. Donation
3 p.m.: CPRA Pro Rodeo at Exhibition Park grandstand. Free with admission
7:30 p.m.: DNR concert on the Gas King Stage at Pioneer Park (at Exhibition Park, free with admission)
9:30 p.m.: Helix concert on the Gas King Stage at Pioneer Park (at Exhibition Park, free with admission)
11 p.m.: fireworks finale at Exhibition Park

Opposition wary of next premier

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Alberta's Conservative government weakened public protection while Alison Redford was premier, opposition MLAs say. And if Jim Prentice becomes the next Tory leader, they warn protective regulations could become weaker still.

And power bills will get more and more expensive, adds Alberta Liberal leader Raj Sherman.

Prentice "dropped the ball" as environment minister in Stephen Harper's federal cabinet, he said. Now, as a friend and confidante of Calgary's oil executives, he can't be expected to put the long-term good of the environment ahead of the economic interests of the oil industry.

"He would be the leader for 'the entitled people,'" Sherman said during a Whoop-Up Days stop in Lethbridge.

And Sherman said despite what Prentice has said, Albertans shouldn't expect to see much change in the ruling Conservatives' current cabinet, or its political agenda.

"He's got support from all the cabinet ministers," he said. "How could he fire them all?"

Alberta's top-heavy health-care bureaucracy is in little danger either, Sherman added.

"We have too many managers managing other managers," diverting millions of dollars from front-line health care to a bloated management structure.

But with an oil and banking background, "Jim Prentice doesn't understand health care."

New Democratic Party leadership candidate Rachel Notley, also meeting political activists here this week, said oil companies gained even more power over everyday Albertans during Redford's reign. And Lethbridge MLAs did nothing to stop that happening.

"This PC government reduced the opportunity for interested parties to participate" when the government's energy regulator considers a drilling application, Notley said. "But the MLAs did not speak out."

Both of the Conservative MLAs representing Lethbridge should have been aware of citizens' concerns about drilling inside city limits, she said. But neither stood up for their community.

The government's newly imposed South Saskatchewan River basin plan puts still more power in the resource developers' hands, Notley said.

"This government will always decide with the 'best interests' of industry."

On the hydro energy front, Sherman said Albertans won't receive any benefits from the sale of AltaLink — once a locally owned company — to American billionaire Warren Buffett.

"But the real issue is (power) deregulation," he said.

In the rest of Canada, the provincial government's responsibility is to ensure a reliable supply of electricity at reasonable, stable rates.

Instead, Albertans pay peak prices through an American-style "market demand" system.

"And we're the 'energy province'?"

Smith expects little change with next premier

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There's a Conservative leadership race underway. But Danielle Smith says Albertans are paying more attention to the stories about spending and waste surrounding the Conservative government.

"Each time there's a new scandal, there's less interest in what the PCs are doing," the Wildrose leader said during a stop in Lethbridge.

College graduates eight police recruits

LETHBRIDGE HERALD

Eight Lethbridge Regional Police Service recruits officially graduated from their Lethbridge College training program on Friday.

The Police Recruit Training program,

Regional Police Service to train their recruits and contribute to the lifelong learning of these officers as we lead and transform education in Alberta," said Erica Cormack, LC's Centre for Justice and Human Services Program Coordinator, in a release.

"We are very proud of our eight newest recruits and we are confident

throughout their careers, will ensure they are prepared for every situation they'll face."

Graduates have taken courses that meet or exceed provincial standards in the areas of police recruit training and which further enhance the skill set needed to be effective in the policing field.