

Bell choir correction

In last week's issue of *The Northerner*, a picture of a bell choir mistakenly identified the players as being from Gordon Denny Community School.

In fact, the players were from Pre-Cam Community School, although the bells were borrowed from Gordon Denny.

The Northerner apologizes for the error.

Jeremy Harrison "Your Voice in Ottawa" Member of Parliament



Desnethé - Missinippi - Churchill River
Please contact me at:

(p) 306-234-2334

(f) 306-234-2339

Box 144, Meadow Lake, SK, S9X 1Y1

NOW OPEN - La Ronge Office
207 La Ronge Avenue

Ph: 306-425-2181 Fax: 425-2182

YOU GET RELIABLE RESULTS

... guaranteed... reasonable rates...

Do you need help with Your Accounting & Taxes?

Phone now to get professional
advice or estimates

425-5525

WHITROW, STOBBS & ASSOCIATES

ACCOUNTANTS

RELIABLE ADVICE & SOLUTIONS

Key Lake miner wrestles wolf to standstill

A northern miner is recovering from bruises and bite wounds after wrestling a lone timber wolf that attacked him on New Year's Eve.

Early in the evening on Dec. 31, 55-year-old Fred Desjarlais had just finished his first shift after the holidays as a heavy equipment operator at Cameco's Key Lake uranium operation, and decided to jog the three kilometres back to camp. "I thought I'd work off some of the Christmas goodies," Desjarlais recalled earlier this week.

Approximately a kilometre from the camp, Desjarlais paused for a moment when he heard a vehicle going by. A few seconds later, he heard a heavy grunting noise behind him. Turning back, he saw a lone wolf in the ditch. Desjarlais stepped away from the snowbank, thinking the wolf would stay back, but instead it came out of the ditch and began circling around him. Then it lunged at his head.

Desjarlais shifted a bit, and the leaping animal missed him and slipped a bit on the snowy road, but then it lunged for him again.

Man and beast fought for several minutes, at one point even going face to face as the wolf reared up on its hind legs and looked down at its 5'9" combatant. The wolf managed to bite Desjarlais' chest and back, and eventually sunk its teeth into his pelvic

area, but Desjarlais beat at it with his fists until it released him. By this point he was on the ground with the wolf, and he got the wolf in a chokehold, with the beast's head up against his chest.

"I could feel his windpipe, and I wasn't going to let go," he said. Fortunately, just a couple of minutes after the fight between man and wolf began, a bus carrying Desjarlais' colleagues home for supper came up the road, and seeing what was happening, the men on board began hollering and the exhausted Desjarlais released his hold.

The wolf ran off into the woods, and Desjarlais attempted to stand up but immediately fell over, in great pain from the bruising and the bites to his pelvic area as well as his back and chest. The latter injuries were more like burns than incisions, thanks to the three layers of clothing - work shirt, bunny hug and jacket - he was wearing above his jeans, but the pelvic injuries required 10 stitches.

The work crew quickly gathered up their colleague and hustled him onto the bus, and then raced him over to the Key Lake medical clinic, where both the camp nurse and site safety officer Kimm Barker were waiting. Desjarlais was stitched up and given tetanus shots, and within a

few hours was flown to Saskatoon for further medical treatment, including rabies shots that will continue until the end of the month.

The road that Desjarlais was jogging on is a frequently-travelled one, with a lot of foot traffic as well as vehicles. While the wolf encounter was a matter of "bad timing" for Desjarlais, "we're really lucky it was Fred," said Barker. "Most of our people wouldn't have been able to handle it."

"For a 55-year-old man, you're probably not going to find someone in better shape.... He may have saved the next person who was walking the road, who was maybe not as strong."

Although Desjarlais, who is originally from Buffalo Narrows, has seen plenty of wolves in his 25-year career at Key Lake, this is the closest he has ever come to one. He is still dealing with some "nightmarish thoughts" and is seeing a psychologist to help him cope with the post-traumatic stress; however, he harbours no ill feelings toward wolves in general - and they may yet show up in more of the paintings he does in his leisure time.

"What he (the wolf) did, any animal would do if it was hungry. ... They'll always be there, just like people," Desjarlais said.

That continued rela-

tionship between humans and wildlife is precisely why provincial wildlife officials will be meeting with Cameco in coming weeks, said Tim Trottier, a La Ronge-based wildlife biologist who works for Saskatchewan Environment. While the wolf in question has been shot, four or five other wolves have been spotted hanging around Key Lake on a regular basis. "Something has to be worked out for the long-term."

The behaviour of this wolf was very unusual; in fact, Trottier has never heard of anything similar, even from an animal that had been injured (the wolf apparently had a limp) or abandoned by its pack. Preliminary testing of the corpse for rabies has also come up negative, and rabies is uncommon in northern Saskatchewan, where there is a shortage of carrier animals such as arctic foxes or skunks.

Key Lake has been in operation since the late 1970s, and it is possible that with several generations of wolves having lived off garbage scraps, this animal may have lost its fear of humans, Trottier said. "It's such a safe environment - they're not being shot at or trapped.... Maybe it's a hard winter, and it thought he (Desjarlais) was easy prey."

*Carmen Pauls Orthner,
for The Northerner*