

Holiday Hello

Russell, Heather, Dylan and Ben Thomas
114 Demers Drive | Fort McMurray, Alberta | T9H 2B1

2012

The annual process of putting together our *Holiday Hello* gives us the opportunity to reflect on the year. It's amazing how much we pack into twelve months. It's so easy to forget small details and moments. Searching through picture folders rekindles the embers of memory, allowing the narrative to unfold.

We took a different approach to our February fun in the sun in 2012, joining Heather in the small coastal community of Melaque, Mexico. She spent her days doing yoga teacher training and her evenings with us. The boys and I spent our time in the Pacific, on the beach exploring this southern getaway, popular with Canadian snow birds. It was lovely, and a welcome departure from the all-inclusive Riviera experience we had tried the two previous years.

Easter was spent back in Kamsack, arriving safely after going from rip roaring blizzard to pouring rain. It was great to see the entire family, but especially Dad, who had returned to his regular self.

We returned to Saskatchewan in the summer, spending time in Watrous, Kamsack and the Meadow Lake area. We also ventured into Manitoba. It was so great to see Heather's Grandma and Grandpa, as well as many members of the Wagner clan in Winnipeg. We ended our summer adventures at Lac des Isles with Neil, Susan, Michael, Kathryn and Julia. Certainly one of the highlights of those three days was the cherry-pit spitting contest which explains the middle picture to the right.

The fall and early winter have been busy for all of us. It seems that when September begins, the engine of life slams into fourth gear, with no down-shifting till the week before Christmas. From Heather's teaching and client schedule to Russell's deputy mayor duties, there was no shortage of events, concerts, receptions and myriad other commitments to fill the days and nights.

To get caught up in more detail, you're welcome to check out the online version of the *Wood Buffalo Update*, an ongoing family correspondence now heading into its sixth year.

www.woodbuffaloupdate.blogspot.com

Russell continues to write several blog posts a week on all kinds of different topics. He has crafted over 600 posts since he started on Boxing Day 2009. Some are funny, some are sad, but all reveal a little bit about our life in Fort McMurray - "a hometown, not a boomtown," as Premier Redford likes to say. Once in awhile, he even manages to stir a little controversy, whether intended or not.

www.middleagebulge.com



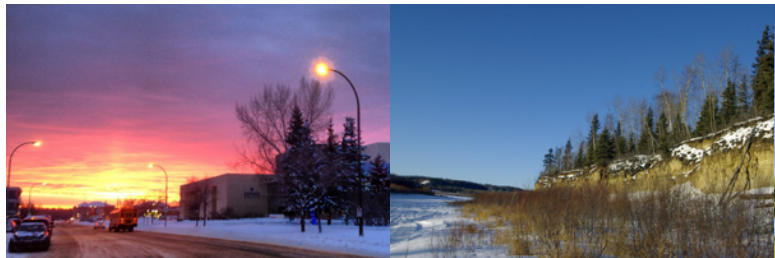
Dad on the Mend

The previous year came to an end with the kind of scare that nobody wants - a cancer diagnosis. Dad faced the battle of his life and for his life, and came out on top. He responded incredibly well to his medication and gained in strength and resolve as 2012 rolled along.

He naps a bit more than before, and he is more cautious about what he eats and the kinds of activities he does, but overall he is doing remarkably well.



"How things go from this point on is largely about what happens above the shoulders," said his family Doc a year ago. Based on the results, he is doing exactly the right things.



Ben is in grade 4 at Dr. Clark School. He has been learning how to play guitar and write music. Since his birthday in May, he has decided to become a musician.



Over the year, Ben has learned to build more detail into his structures on Minecraft. Speaking of building, Ben is a little engineer. He has a Minecraft idea book that he writes all his ideas in and every weekend, he builds a blanket fort in his room!

Ben likes to draw, paint, sculpt, read, write, invent, create, sleep, play, think, earn money, learn and see beautiful modern buildings.

Ben has experienced wonderful music moments; he has a true gift. One weekend, when the Big Spirit Festival was happening, he saw a sign saying "Music Workshop Saturday and Sunday." Ben wanted to go to the Saturday workshop. The next day, Ben went to the workshop and sat in a chair. He saw the band getting ready. When they were done, more people came. Ben was the only one with an instrument! The band started by asking what everyone's name was, then they asked what genre of music every one liked. Ben was the only one who said "Jazz."

He was asked to play a song with them and he did. After the song, he asked if he could play his own song and he did. That night, when he was watching them play, they called Ben up on stage. He was nervous, but he went on stage anyway.



As he played, more people started to show up. There were now about 30 people plus the people by the carnival rides. After he was done everyone clapped. That was the best day of the summer. (Written by Ben)



Dylan made like the beanstock in 2012, and stretched into the clouds. At thirteen years old, he went through an incredible growth spurt that finds him taller than Heather and closing in on his Papa.

He continued to be a voracious reader, plowing through long novels like nobody's business. He particularly enjoys the sci-fi stuff.

Perhaps owing to his love of reading, Dylan has discovered a natural gift for writing and has penned a number of terrific stories. He has also started his own blog, where he shares his thoughts on a variety of subjects.

www.mylifemystoryblog.blogspot.com



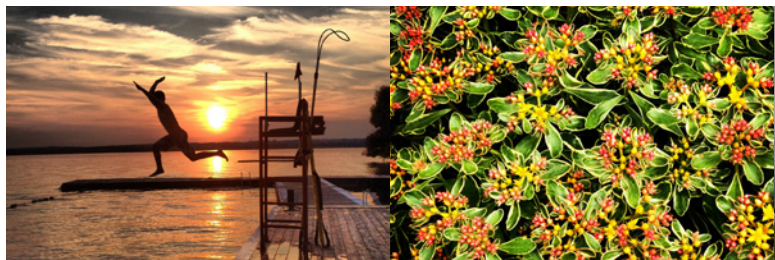
Dylan spent an unforgettable week at the Take Action Academy in the foothills near Calgary in August. "I went the whole week without missing screen time," he shared when he came home. "I can't wait to go back."

That leadership adventure helped inspire Dylan to run for Prime Minister of his school in the fall. After a great speech (captured on YouTube by his Papa), he went on to win the election.



In his final year of elementary school, Dylan is doing exceptionally well and is anticipating the transfer to high school in the fall of 2013. You can follow him on Twitter @DThomasBouchier.





Russell spent the year returning to past passions and exploring new ones. He was several months in rehearsals and production, playing the role of David Sarnoff in *The Farnsworth Invention*. It was his first time on the mainstage since most of his immediate family traveled to Fort McMurray for *Beauty and the Beast* in 2006.



He successfully auditioned to present at the TEDx Fort McMurray event in 2012. Sharing his "Social Media Timeline". He tracked how Facebook and Twitter have radically changed the way he communicates and leads. If you haven't seen the video yet, check it out on YouTube.

Spring and summer presented many opportunities for travel, fishing and stretching his creative and political muscles. Serving as deputy mayor for almost six months, Russell had lots of opportunities to connect with provincial ministers, MPs, and even a former Prime Minister.

He also traveled to Ontario for Mindcamp, a gathering of creative thought leaders from around the world. Inspired and challenged, he came away from those three days ready to tackle his new focus on arts development at Keyano College and in the community.

A return trip to the east in October for the Communities Collaborating Institute, gave Russell the excellent opportunity to reconnect with many members of the Doré clan in the Guelph area.



Heather is excited to feel her heart open a little more every day. The auspicious year of 2012 has been momentous for energetic shifts both worldwide and on a smaller scale here at home.



With a heart filled with gratitude, she continues learn valuable lessons from her clients, friends and family, her health, Spirit and all Others who choose to help and support her on this journey.



This year Heather has learned that it is OK to take a Sabbatical for Rest & Rejuvenation and that to maintain balance, it is more important than anything else. She has learned first-hand through her own challenges

what it is like for some of her clients, and is now able to relate to physical pain/injury, hormone challenges, shame/guilt, fear, anger, vulnerability, and the powers of intention and faith. Yoga Teacher Training, CranioSacral Therapy and the work of Suzanne Scurlock-Durana (*Healing from the Core.com*) are the forerunners in Heather's work modalities, and will continue to be for some time as every client and every session are a source of inspiration.

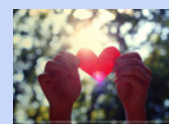


Heather has gained a new appreciation for young children and feels a gentle pull towards working with them more often. Having had a few young clients this year has proved to her that she has the capacity to hold healing space and share in their love for pure joy.



There were many firsts for Heather this year, most of them internal shifts that you can ask her about in person, as well as fun things like here, at 35 yrs old, enjoying her first-ever Mimosa with her husband/ best boyfriend (same person!) on a rare very special date weekend in Vancouver. (Thanks C & T!)

With an Overflowing Heart, she bids you all **NAMASTE**. (*The Light in me recognizes the Light in you and is nourished. We are one and the same.*)





friends & family