

Friends of the Field Station - 1997*

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A shortened year for this year's Executive began on June 21, 1997 rather than on April 26, 1997 as had been planned. Unfortunately, the Flood of the Century put a bit of a kink in the plans, but the Field Station survived and the rescheduled meeting made it possible for me to be in attendance. I had agreed to stand for the position of President but had been away in Sweden at the time of the original date.

June 21 was an auspicious occasion marking the official opening of the new building at the Field Station, Ki-pi-chi-win. Many people were in attendance at the opening ceremonies including University of Manitoba President Szathmáry and The Honourable Reg Alcock, MP for Winnipeg South, the federal constituency for the University of Manitoba. The opening took place at 11:00 a.m.

The Friends' AGM was held after lunch. The first order of business was to pick up the reins and get things organized for the 1997 Pignic at the Field Station. But valuable input from the community had already been received over lunch from a citizen of Portage la Prairie who said, "Why don't you have a Friends mall day at the Portage Mall during the winter? Bring a computer with your interactive website on it to engage the young people. Show Portage people that the Field Station exists and is proud of it."

The organization of the Pignic occupied us for the next six weeks, and thanks to the care and generous input of Friends and the Field Station staff, we pulled off another unique experience. Though the day was blustery and cold for an early August weekend, several dozen people ventured out into the Marsh by canoe during the afternoon. The barbecue was delicious (and well delivered thanks to Russ Mead, Richard Orlandini, and Bill Turnock), served in Murray's with the accompanying food prepared by the regular chefs, Shirley and Doreen.

Llew John organized the Portage la Prairie Mall Day on February 7, 1998. This function helped us to relate to the many fans we have in the Portage area. The Portage la Prairie Natural History Society provided support and the mums and dads who had taken their Brownies and Cubs out to the Field Station ensured that the youngsters

recognized who we were. It was a great success.

Two weeks later, we had Winter Day at the Field Station. The weather was unusually warm, but that did not stop the enthusiastic participation of a few members from Winnipeg and a good sized group from the Natural History Society in activities organized by Russ Mead. The Royal Winnipeg Rifles were there as paying guests on a winter training exercise demonstrating, among other things, the finer points of igloo construction.

One function which we are staging this evening and which we intend to do more of this coming year is to provide an opportunity for scientists who work at or in conjunction with the Field Station to tell us about their accomplishments. After the smorg this evening, Dr. Bill Turnock will tell us about some of his activities on the beach at Delta Marsh. He will give us a short talk on 'Lady Beetles on the Beach'.

This year's executive has put a great deal of energy into the activities of the Friends. Vice-President Mora Gregg turned her not inconsiderable librarian talents to getting the Field Station Library into shape. Secretary Laura Philip made certain that the minutes of meetings were prepared and delivered, that the mailouts got done, and that the membership lists were brought up-to-date. Treasurer Connie LeBlanc took care of the finances and was instrumental in making the Pignic happen. Members at large, Bill Philip and Ivan LeBlanc launched the canoes for the Pignickers, provided backup to the executive meetings, and took the T-shirt order in hand so that our supplies would be replenished for the coming year. Llew John provided the Portage connection as already mentioned. And Bill Turnock, as a volunteer assistant to the Executive, provided valuable input in a variety of ways during the year. A heartfelt 'Thank you' to all of you for your first class work this year.

Membership in the Friends of the Field Station clearly has its benefits. Members get to enjoy activities at the Field Station in an atmosphere of belonging. There are social events in Winnipeg from time to time. But the most important benefit is to the Field Station itself because of the increased awareness in the community, both the University community and the community at large. Reduced funding for postsecondary education and research has threatened the continued existence of unique facilities such as the Field Station. Membership in, and

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activities of, the Friends of the Field Station provide an important support mechanism for the Field Station. Your membership and financial contributions are the first link in the chain. The programs we put together as a group of friends looking out for the Field Station help to finance projects such as the new building, to promote the use of the Field Station for revenue generating activities such

as workshops, symposia, and retreats, and to make the surrounding communities value its existence. You can make a difference: keep your membership current, join if you are not already a member (\$10.00 will do it), come out and enjoy the functions and bring your friends. Maybe they will become Friends, too.