

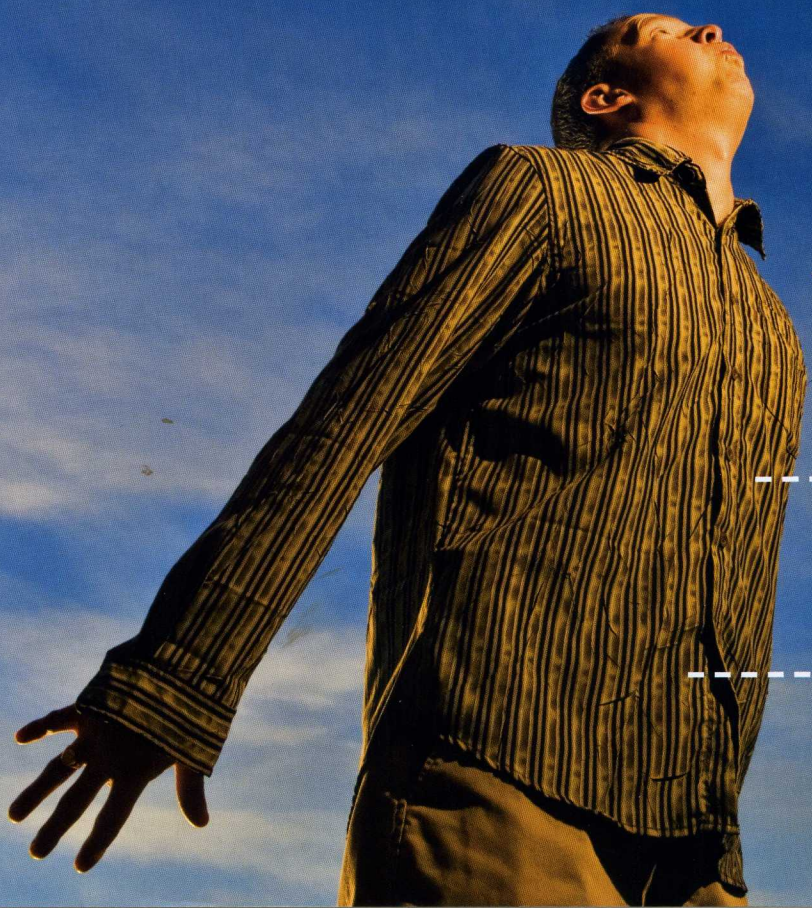
routes

a rural hip lifestyle magazine

Earth-Friendly Cayley School

*Principal Bill Holmes
Generates Big Vision
For Living Green*

Complimentary Magazine



BRIAN KELK

GLASS CREATIONS FIRED
WITH IMAGINATION

COUNTRY GARDEN CENTRES

HOT SPOTS IN THE FOOTHILLS

FOOD & FAMILY

THE PERFECT COMBO AT
LONGVIEW STEAKHOUSE

Small in Size BIG in Vision!

Students at Cayley School engage in real world learning experiences, steering a course for life-long leadership in environmental stewardship.

*By Michelle Greysen
Photos by Neville Palmer*



In the only school in the hamlet of Cayley, all kindergarten to grade three students learn to play the violin, first with a wooden dowel bow and a cardboard box. For young Hunter Enns, now playing a real violin, his whole day is about the strings experience. "They are so beautiful. The bow is very beautiful. Because everything is beautiful with violins in my day, it makes me feel good."

Kindergartner Hunter is in his second year at Cayley School and his parents are thrilled with his passion for learning. They are as proud of him as he is of his violin. They watch him day after day master his personal learning challenges in a school they say is dedicated to each and every student and their place on this earth.

6 Being dedicated to the students also means attracting and keeping students. The unique violin program began with intent to boost enrolment, an ongoing struggle for the school.

In 1919 local residents faced the hardship of no high school, which meant a financial crisis of having to send their eighteen teenagers to



Grade two students take their turn gathering and sorting recyclables from all the classrooms.

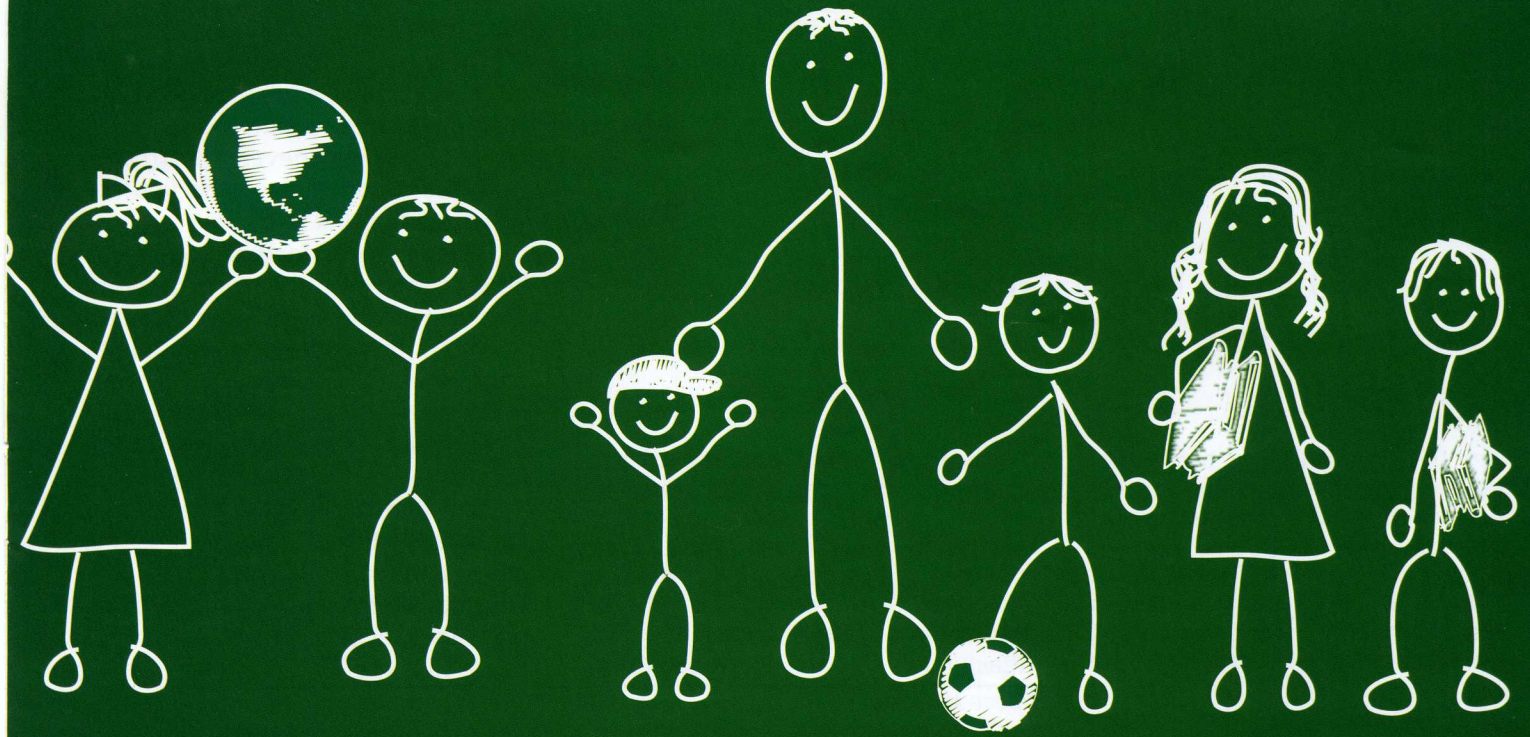
board in neighbouring High River or Nanton, in order to get a proper education.

Parents banded together and persuaded the village council to let them use the town hall for free. They successfully obtained some provincial grant monies and personally shared the \$2000 cost of a teacher for

the year.

In 1920, a two-storey, three-room school was built keeping families together and standing as testament to the community's commitment to education.

Fast forward almost a century later to 2004 and the school faced



a different set of challenges, including cuts to the funding grant for the school-bussing program; which transported one third of the 140-student population. Additional negative factors included a decline in the number of students and a sense of loss of the hamlet's historic roots, as the last remaining grain elevator was demolished. But once again, local residents rallied, forming "The Friends of Cayley School and Community Society." By hosting a fundraising banquet and auction, the society raised over \$50,000 and the vital bussing program was saved.

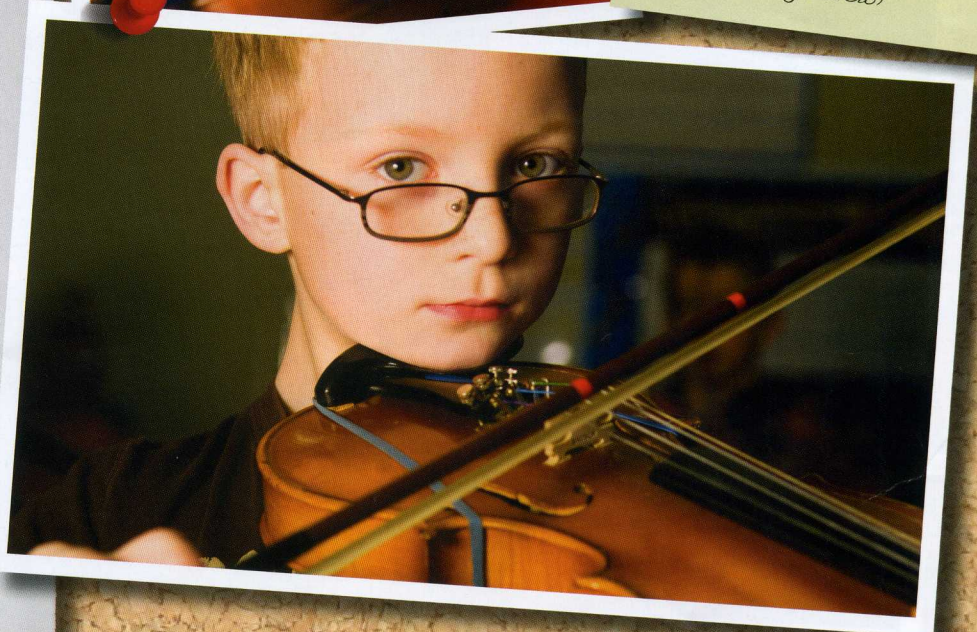
With transportation secured, school council, staff and parents partnered to develop a revitalisation plan, one that would see the school be self-sustaining in the future. Their plans put the school back on the map in a big earth-friendly way.

Launching the Alberta Solar Showcase project (lassothesun.com) in 2004, the school partnered with parents, educators and businesses to install solar modules and a wind turbine. Today the award winning Environmental Stewardship Program has grown beyond all expectations, and is the foundation for the learning



Originally intended to boost enrollment to the school, the violin program began with music teacher Ms. Faye Mascher. Mascher's husband Chuck Shifflett, a well-known luthier, procured and refurbished used violins for the program and continues to maintain them for students.

Violinists:
Grace Hofer (left)
Austin Habing (below)



and green lifestyle in the school. By 2007, the collective efforts of eleven partners came to fruition with a solar system awning that produces electricity and a horizontal-axis wind turbine that provides renewable energy.

and at home. School curriculum now includes park and wildlife conservation presentations, science fair projects that focus on energy, outdoor classes and raising awareness of their ecological footprint.

the innovative and outstanding teaching that takes place every day in classrooms across Alberta. As Holmes likes to remind the students often, "You will never be greater than the vision that guides you, so you have to think big!"

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On board from the beginning, principal Bill Holmes is immensely proud of the collective energy of technology and manpower, working in unison in his school. "The initiative has been all about things falling in place, karma, hard work and finding your place in the ecosystem," he said.

With a 'back to their roots' philosophy, staff and students also implemented simple changes such as recycling in the classroom

Since the grand opening of the program, the school has received many awards and accolades rewarding their hard work (see sidebar). Principal Bill Holmes was also honoured for an Alberta Education 2008 Excellence in Teaching Award, recognizing

So what's ahead for this progressive little school with a big green spirit? Over the next few years the students and staff, along with the community and the MD of Foothills, will partner in the development and preservation of wetlands on the north end of the hamlet.

From humble wooden dowels and cardboard boxes, Cayley School plays a special tune that proudly sings its environmental and cultural messages for this generation and for those to come. 🌱

2008 AWARDS:

- Alberta Education Excellence in Teaching Award: Principal Bill Holmes
- Calgary Educational Partnership Foundation's Mayors' Excellence Award for Multi-Sector Partnerships
- Alberta School Council's Association Excellence in Learning Partnerships Award
- Alberta Emerald Foundation's Awards program for classroom projects and schools (semi-finalist)

Students in grade seven gather to witness the inauguration of U.S. President Obama. The impact of the historic event, the President's green initiatives plans and the potential impact on Canada will fuel many discussions in the classroom.

