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JONESVILLE SCHOOL 100TH ANNIVERSARY

Today there was a special event in Jonesville School. Current students from Beechy School, former students of Jonesville School, former teachers of one room schools, as well as community members and guests attended an educational and fun activity at the original school building constructed in 1913. It is estimated that nearly 150 people were in attendance. The building has been preserved as a museum ever since the school ceased operation in 1960. It is open to the public continuously. Please help us preserve the memories.

The first meeting to create a school district was held in 1909, only a year after the first homesteaders filed in the district. The school was not built until 1912. The lumber was hauled from Herbert a distance of 40 miles which involved crossing the South Saskatchewan River on a ferry. Jonesville School #2852 opened its doors to students in 1913 and continued until June of 1960. It is located three miles south of the present day village of Beechy on the SW corner of SE 6-22-10 W3rd. The only buildings on the site are the school and a coal shed and a recently constructed outhouse. The school has been maintained as a museum for the past fifty years or so. During its operating years, there was also a two room teacherage, a barn, boy's and girl's outhouses, softball diamond and backstop, and a large sturdy swing. The school yard is located next to the Snakebite coulee. During spring runoff it would be a source of wonder as students rejoiced in the arrival of spring. Some years the ponded water would be the supply for a bucket brigade as students tried to bring the gophers out of hiding, only to be met by a gang of kids seeking their demise. Sketchy stories also surfaced of some skinny dipping taking place in the water holes during noon hour. Reference was made to a nine hole golf course laid out around the coulee in the adjoining pasture, by Walter Ferniuk, teacher in 1949, for use by the students.

On this day the K -6 students from Beechy School arrived at school at 11 AM. They were welcomed by Melvin Wiens chair of the Jonesville Museum Association. The Union Jack was raised on the flagpole as assembled students and visitors sang "God Save The King" as earlier students may have done. Then all recited "The Lord's Prayer" as often was the practice in days gone by.

The K - 3 students then entered the classroom and took their assigned seats in old style desks. Their teacher for the morning was Mrs Florence Lloyd who was dressed in a long black skirt and a white blouse. They spent some time noting the changes that have taken place in the world in the last 100 years, as well as some fun activities.

Meanwhile outdoors, the grade 4 -6 students in groups of two interviewed former students of one-roomed schools. They used prepared questions to gain an understanding of how the school experience of their elders contrasted with their own.

The grade 7 -12 students walked from Beechy School to Jonesville School a distance of 31/2 miles, arriving just in time for lunch. This was part of their physical education activities as well as a

commemoration of the fact that many children walked to school in former years. The Museum Association prepared and served everyone present with BBQ hot dogs, cold lemonade and ice cream cones.

The audience was given an opportunity to contribute to the organization "Free The Children" which is working internationally towards freeing children from being conscripted into various armies by rebel groups in different countries. Beechy School is supporting this project. \$105 was received for this cause.

After lunch the children in K -6 returned to school via school bus. The Grade 7 -12 students were part of the audience for a panel discussion. The topic was "What were the challenges for both students and teachers in the educational process in a one room multigrade school?" Panel members were former one room school teachers Alena Saxton of Crescent Valley School, located north west of Lucky Lake, Ruth Halstrom of Howendale School located about 7 miles south west of Beechy, and Jack Lloyd of String Butte School located between Gull Lake and Shaunavon. Joyce Braun a student at Minnie Lake School about 13 miles west of Beechy and Neasden School located about 8 miles west of Beechy represented the student view.

A consensus seemed to emerge that given the time and with the limited available resources that the majority of students received a well rounded education. It was observed that the small schools often exhibited a family atmosphere more than an institutional one. Students with special needs could not be accommodated very well, and age appropriate physical education was lacking.

An exhibit of documents and other memorabilia were on display in the school after lunch. These have been carefully preserved off site by Katie Peters an initiator and builder of the Jonesville Museum. Katie Peters was a Jonesville student during the thirties. It was a delight to see her continuing enthusiasm towards preserving the past.

It has been said that if we don't understand where we have come from it will be difficult to plan for the future. I believe the event that took place today has helped to prolong that collective memory in the minds of the young people of this area.