Imperial Oil Review
NUMBER 2, 2003 Volume 87 Number 448

2 JUST A PULSE AWAY by Allan Lynch
8 ROOTS IN A NEW LAND by Wayne Schanaz
14 A BIG IDEA COMES TO LIFE by Russell Felton
20 CHANGING WORLDS by Shona McKay
26 DAVID BOWEN-HALLIDAY by Graham Chandler
28 CLOSE TIES by Tim Heenan
31 IN CLOSING

EDITOR/Sarah Lowley
ART DIRECTOR/Carol Young-Ireland + Associates
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR/Dennis Berger
RESEARCH/Charles Bowland
COVER ILLUSTRATION/Mark Tofal

Published in English and French by Imperial Oil Limited, 111 St. Clair Ave. W.,
Toronto, Ontario M4W 3J3. Permission to reprint articles, photographs and illustrations
must be obtained. The Imperial Oil Review is published electronically on the Imperial Oil
Web site (www.imperialoil.ca). The contents of the Review are indexed in the Canadian
Periodicals Index, ISSN 0120-0314. Reprinting by Ireland + Associates, Colour separations

© 2003 Imperial Oil Limited

1 IF UNDELIVERABLE, RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED.
CHANGE OF ADDRESS RETURN LABELS BELOW WITH YOUR NEW ADDRESS.
Agreement number 40004421

North American Neighbours
Just a Pulse Away

From fighting forest fires to teaching kids about fire safety, volunteer firefighters are filling an essential role in many communities across the country

BY ALLAN LYNCH

Conrad was standing in the middle of the charred remains of St. John's Anglican Church in the historic centre of Lunenburg, N.S. It is the spot where he had stood on his wedding day 22 years earlier. Eight months after the fire that devastated one of Canada's oldest churches, there was still a lingering smell of smoke.

The once pristine white clapboard church that had dominated this square was now reduced to a skeletal frame, covered by a massive white plastic sheet to protect the remaining structure from the weather. The square itself had become a fenced construction site, with salvaged items from the church - pieces of charred architectural trim, for example - carefully placed on the grass under ancient oak, maple and chestnut trees.

Inside the church, the limp lead vases that once held thousands of pieces of centuries-old stained glass hung like ripped spider webs.

Says Conrad, who served as chief of the 55-member Lunenburg Volunteer Fire Department until the end of 2002. "One of the hardest things I ever did in my life was give permission to break the stained glass windows." His calculation, albeit desperate, decision to put water onto a fire this way was difficult and "pretty emotional," he confesses. But breaking the windows was the only way to enable the firefighters to see into the building.

When the firefighters had arrived, all they could see were embers shooting out from the bottom of one of the church's corner pillars. They made their way into the building and up to the choir loft, hoping to gain access to the fire. There was a great deal of smoke. They could hear the fire crackling and feel the heat, but they couldn't see flames. "At that point, we knew the fire had to be in between the walls or in the ceiling," says Conrad. Given the threat posed by 10 heavy chimes hanging in the wooden tower over the church's main door and the possibility that the ceiling would collapse, Conrad decided it wasn't wise for anyone to
remain in the building. "Breaking the stained glass windows was the only way to direct streams of water into the church," he says. But the flames remained elusive, although eventually the firefighters were able to see the glow from the ceiling. "We just couldn't get at the fire," Connel explains. "The church burned down, but there was practically no fire visible."

The battle was impeded by the remodelling and renovations the church had undergone during the building's nearly 250-year history. A copper roof added in the 1980s proved a particular problem, since it created a gap between the old and new roofs where fire could thrive largely unseen.

In the end, the fire devastated St. John's, leaving only a partial wall, the choir loft, the wide-plank floor, the lower portion of the tower and the front doors. The altar and a number of pews were also saved. Fortunately, these original elements were sufficient to enable the church to be restored to its pre-fire look, entitling the building to retain its federal and provincial heritage designations.

"It was Halloween night, 2001," says Connel. "We normally have a group of volunteers at the fire department to take care of things like trash cans and leaf fires. That particular evening we had our fair share of nuisance calls, but there had been nothing dramatic. All of a sudden, shortly after midnight, when the firefighters and the RCMP were here at the fire hall having a lunch, our pagers went off. At the same time, one of our firefighters who'd passed the church came running through the door and told us the church was on fire."

In minutes, the department responded with a dozen firefighters and two trucks. Over the next 21 hours, 147 volunteer firefighters from 13 departments across western Nova Scotia — some travelling 116 kilometres — joined the battle. Firefighters pumped so much water on the fire — nearly 23 million litres — that they came within four hours of depleting the town reservoir.

"With any site, you want to preserve and salvage as much as you can and do the least amount of damage possible," says Bruce Parks, Lunenburg's 31-year-old assistant deputy fire chief. "But sometimes you just lose the battle. The night St. John's burned down, emotions were running high — not only the firefighters, but those of the 100 or so people watching. We eventually brought in an excavator so we could break into the four corners of the building and get at the fire."

Located an hour's drive from Halifax on Nova Scotia's Atlantic Coast, Lunenburg (population...
2,600, holds a UNESCO World Heritage Site designation. Like most small communities in Canada, it is served by a volunteer fire department. According to the Volunteer Firefighters of British Columbia, there are 12,000 volunteer fire departments across Canada. They may be volunteers, but it’s a mistake to think these firefighters are only a few steps behind professional firefighters. Volunteer firefighters devote substantial amounts of time to their volunteer fire department. 42,000 volunteer firefighters staff nearly 1,000 fire departments across Canada. They may be volunteers, but it’s a mistake to think these firefighters are less than professional. Volunteer firefighters devote substantial amounts of time to training – upwards of 200 hours a year.

The recent devastating forest fires in British Columbia and Alberta are a reminder of the dedication and passion for forest fire protection among volunteer firefighters. Walsh was one of many battling the fires, which had destroyed more than 260,000 hectares by the end of September.

“We were basically just surrounding the town with fire trucks and trying to keep the fire outside,” says Walsh, who was stationed temporarily in Barriere, B.C., a community of 2,800, 60 kilometers north of Kamloops. “We had 91 pieces of apparatus and 120 personnel, probably 95 percent of them volunteers. We evacuated all the townpeople. The only ones left were members of the Barriere volunteer fire department.”

When Walsh first went to Barriere, the firefighters were working 24-hour shifts. “We tried to get people to volunteer to work full-time, but it was impossible,” he explains. “But other than that, the firefighters showed up and did their best.”

In furthering the volunteer fire department’s role in the community, Walsh notes, they need to help people more than make up for the demands of the job, the interrupted lifestyle the job entails, having a significant impact on recruitment.

Jim Hayter, the 55-year-old chief of the Alvinson District Fire Department in southern Ontario, describes his work with the department as a hobby but admits that being on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year takes its toll on people. “I had a guy on the weekend who walked in and gave me a letter that said, ‘I’m done. It’s too much. I have another life. I have kids in hockey.’ When you have kids, you obviously need to make your family your priority. But if you’re a firefighter, there’s no cutting back. You can’t not do all these things. If you go to a fire, and you go into a burning house, Ontario’s agricultural belt, Hayter’s nightmares are silo fires. “Silo fires are very hard to fight,” he says. “Firefighters can’t go inside the silo because they could get buried by the grain. You have to wait to put it out or clean the silo out by breaking it into the side, and once you clean it out, you have to keep dosing the silage. We’ve spent two or three days on them.”

“Cost fires are another agricultural nightmare,” Hayter says. Neighboring departments have lost trucks as they were driven across fields to reach a fire. “When we call for mutual aid, it’s probably our most dangerous.”

The burning wheat stubble can set the track on fire. Straw is very flammable. “If you get out of control, it can cause a lot of damage. You have to keep it from spreading, and that can be tremendously difficult, because the fires almost always happen on hot, windy days and move, as they say, like wildfire.”

Larenburg’s mayor, Lawrence Leonard, says the department is well-prepared for fire department in the North. “During our last serious fire, the temperature was around 40°C, says Hayter’s Strands. “Everyone was wearing, and when it gets cold, steel helmets become impractical. When it’s very, very cold, we’ve had to warm up the top of the fire hydrants with a torch to get them open.”

“We’d be better to have more of the top of the fire hydrants with a torch to get them open.”

To counter the freezing problem, Hayter’s tanker trucks have “honey pots” under them to retain engine heat, which is a critical factor for any tanker and pump. In Larenburg, a smiling Conrad says his department once learned an unusual lesson: “If you pump the water in, you’ve gotta pump it out, because otherwise your fire department will go from being number one to being number two.”

Yet in spite of the personal liability, erratic hours and dangerous work, women and men have become firefighters, consistently citing as their most attractive aspects of the job the desire to be useful, the challenge and the camaraderie.

While there are core techniques all firefighters learn, Canada’s geographic diversity means our firefighters have to adapt to their geographic region. “We’re a small fire in a very windy area. We’re a small fire in a very windy area.”

For example, firefighters in an area with frequent winds might be more likely to deal with small, but fast-moving fires, while those in an area with frequent rains might be more likely to deal with large, but slow-moving fires.

For example, firefighting in an area with frequent winds might be more likely to deal with small, but fast-moving fires, while those in an area with frequent rains might be more likely to deal with large, but slow-moving fires.

Women firefighters make up 20 percent of the fire department workforce in Canada. “We’re a small fire in a very windy area.”

“We’re a small fire in a very windy area.”

For example, firefighting in an area with frequent winds might be more likely to deal with small, but fast-moving fires, while those in an area with frequent rains might be more likely to deal with large, but slow-moving fires.

Women firefighters make up 20 percent of the fire department workforce in Canada. “We’re a small fire in a very windy area.”

“We’re a small fire in a very windy area.”

For example, firefighting in an area with frequent winds might be more likely to deal with small, but fast-moving fires, while those in an area with frequent rains might be more likely to deal with large, but slow-moving fires.

Women firefighters make up 20 percent of the fire department workforce in Canada.
Roots in a New Land

Famous for its orchards and vineyards, British Columbia’s South Okanagan region is home to a thriving Indo-Canadian community

BY WYNE SCHMALZ

The South Okanagan region lies a little more than 200 kilometres east of Vancouver, beyond the hectic Fraser Valley and the breathtaking Cascade Mountains. This is fruit and wine country. Along the highways and back roads, brightly painted signs beckon you to local produce stands, where thongs of people mill around baskets overflowing with fruit and vegetables of every description. Here, vines reach back into the far hills while all around are thick groves of fruit trees, plump with apples, peaches, cherries and pears. Hot, extremely dry summers and temperate winters make the southern portion of the Okanagan Valley – an area dangerously close to, but largely unharmed by, the devastating forest fires of this past summer – a particularly choice location for growing a wide variety of fruit.
Today, by local accounts, between a third and a half of all orchard owners in the South Okanagan are Indo-Canadian.

It is also a choice location for people from India - particularly the northern state of Punjab - to settle. According to Statistics Canada, more than 3,300 people in the South Okanagan identify themselves as South Asian, and most have roots in Punjab, the "granary of India," which produces more than 25 percent of that country's wheat, 13 percent of its cotton and nine percent of its rice. Today, by local accounts, between a third and a half of all orchard owners in the South Okanagan are Indo-Canadian.

People from the largely Sikh state of Punjab first came to British Columbia in the late 1890s. The Sikh Lancers and Infantry regiment had attended Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in England and stopped in the province on returning to India, having travelled across Canada by train. Attracted by the opportunities this country offered, a number of the soldiers later returned to British Columbia, settling for the most part on the coast. But it wasn't until the 1960s, when the Immigration Act was amended to make skills and qualifications, rather than country of origin, the basis for selecting immigrants, that a substantial number of Indians began to immigrate to Canada. For Punjabis, the South Okanagan was an obvious choice. Its agriculture provided the opportunity to secure familiar work, and its climate was more moderate than that of the rest of Canada.

Gurmit Singh Klar was one of the first Indian immigrants to move to the South Okanagan. He arrived from Punjab in 1972, settling in the city of Penticton. "When I first arrived, there were only five or six Indo-Canadian adults in the Penticton area," he says. "We could all gather in one room." Now, more than 30 years later, the city has a thriving Indo-Canadian community and its own Sikh temple.

Klar reflects on the journey that brought him to the South Okanagan. "I grew up in a small village in Punjab," he recalls. "We had an 85-acre [35-hectare] farm that my parents operated with my father's brother and his wife." The extended family grew cotton, sugar cane, wheat, maize and grain, a lucrative crop. Mechanization was not prevalent in Punjab at the time, so like most farmers in the state, the Klar family used oxen to plough the fields, seed- ing crops by hand. "At harvest time, oxen dragged a large platform called a palan over the wheat to crush it," Klar explains. "Then we would flail the grain in the air with a three-sided pan to separate the chaff from it. Everything was done by hand."

One of the greatest differences between Canada and India, Klar explains, is that here, extended families do not tend to live together. "In India, my family and my father's brother's family shared the same house, and we got along very well." There was a clear separation of duties. Klar's mother supervised all household matters, while his father took responsibility for everything outside the home. "My father was the undisputed head of both families," he recalls. "Everyone called him 'Father,' even my cousins, who called their own father 'Uncle.' Nobody questioned this arrangement. Our needs were met and we were happy."

Klar, however, did not remain on the farm. His father placed great importance on education and sent him to school and then to university, where he eventually earned a master's degree in food science. Klar worked as a food technologist near New Delhi for a year and a half before joining relatives in Canada.

Initially, his plan had been to further his education at the University of Alberta, where he was accepted into a doctoral program. But the cost proved too high, and he moved instead to Penticton, where he could live with relatives and look for work. "I had a roof over my head," he says, "and no financial worries."

During his early years in Canada, however, life was not all that Klar had hoped it would be. He applied for a number of positions as a quality control technician with food companies but without success. Finally, the need to earn a living caused him to abandon his efforts to find a job in the field for which he was trained and take whatever work he could get. At first he drove a taxi, then picked fruit, and finally settled into a job at a recreational-vehicle manufacturing plant, starting as a floor sweeper but quickly working his way up to the position of floor manager.

Gurmeet Dhaliwal, who now lives in the town of Cayton, about 35 kilometers southwest of Penticton, also grew up on a farm in Punjab. Unlike Klar, he knew no one in Canada when he arrived in 1972 and decided to go to the South Okanagan area because he had heard there was work in the orchards. "I went from door to door to see if anyone needed help," he says. "Within a couple of days, I had a job. I liked it better here than in Vancouver. It was so beautiful, the summers were hot, and I really liked working in the open air."

Today, Gurmail and his brother Jagmail, who came to join him in 1975, own a 30-hectare farm together.

Like many immigrants, Gurmail was drawn to Canada because it offered opportunity. "I had heard that if you worked hard in Canada, you could make a good living," he says. "And it's true. In India, it wouldn't have mattered how hard I worked. I would never have been able to have the life I have here."

The move to Canada provides many Indo-Canadians with opportunities that would not have been available to them in India. It also exposes them to attitudes and social customs that are vastly different from those with which they grew up. For Bob Sidhu, who lived in various other parts of Canada before moving to the South Okanagan in 1976, the new Canadian ways were refreshing.

"In my younger years I was very rebellious," he explains. "My father, being a military man, was a very regimented fellow. We lugged heads for a while, then I picked my suitcase and left. The biggest change I noticed when I got here is that you would see men and women hanging out together. That didn't happen in India, no matter how liberated you were."

Sidhu was also amazed at the openness of Canadian society - you could speak your mind without fear of reprisal - and how polite and respectful people were.

"I remember a friend came over from India to
Children born here grow up being exposed to the Punjabi language and the customs of their grandparents. They become a bridge between the two cultures.

Although they adopt Canadian customs, most Indian immigrants, like other immigrants, maintain some traditions from their homeland. One tradition that many uphold is that of the integrated family unit. "It's not unusual for three generations of a family to share the same home," explains Channa. In these circumstances, she says, children born here grow up being exposed to the Punjabi language and the customs of their grandparents. They become a bridge between the two cultures for their family and often play a large role in helping older immigrants adjust.

There is no doubt in Gurmeet Singh Klar's mind that his decision to settle in Canada was the right one for him. "In India, more people are on the take. There's more corruption," he says. "I love the house where I grew up, but beyond that I have no emotional connection to India. Canada is paradise."

Despite living in "paradise," Klar does feel that racial discrimination prevented him from pursuing a career for which he was eminently qualified. And so, when he had children, he decided to break with a common Sikh tradition to help ensure that his children's heritage wouldn't jeopardize their futures. "In a Sikh family, most boys are given the middle name Singh, which means 'lion.' Girls often have the middle name Kaur, which means 'princess.' But I didn't want to give my children those names, because if they filled out an application for a job, they would immediately reveal themselves to be Indo-Canadian."

Instead, Klar gave his son the middle name Austin. "I was sitting outside the delivery room and heard a nurse say over the intercom, 'Dr. Austin to the delivery room.' So I chose Austin."

Sandy Austin Klar is now 26 years old and taking his PhD in psychology at Central Michigan University in the United States. He went to India once, as a young child, and at some point would like to visit the place where his parents grew up. Apart from that, he says there is little that draws him to the country of his ancestors. "My father and mother have so many ties to India," he says. "But my ties are all to Canada. The only real connection I have with India is through my grandparents. But I see them reasonably often."

His Indian heritage does, however, play a part in his life. He enjoys Indian movies, for example. "I've picked up a lot of the Punjabi language from them," he says. "My Indo-Canadian friends are also into them. It's a bonding thing — at home watching movies, talking about things. It's neat. Lots of the actors that Mom and Dad knew are still around today."

As for his career plans after he obtains his degree, Sandy admits there is a good chance he will remain in the United States. Regardless of where he eventually ends up, however, he says, "I will always think of myself as Canadian. His roots are as firmly planted in British Columbia's fruit and wine country as those of the fruit trees that many Indo-Canadian families nurture."
A Big Idea Comes to Life

Saving energy and reducing emissions, Imperial is investing $250 million in cogeneration facilities that produce electricity from clean-burning natural gas and use the exhaust heat to make steam.

BY RUSSELL FELTON

AT FIRST GLANCE, IT LOOKS LIKE something from the set of a low-budget, 1950s-era science-fiction movie—a squat structure of steel girders, boxes and cables, with a number of conical, ribbed “horns” stretching skyward as though to send and receive radio waves from some distant galaxy.

The location, an airfield site in Alberta’s lake and forest country dotted with pools of nodding “horned” pumpjacks, only adds to the faintly fantastical impression.

The real purpose of this peculiar-looking structure—which is, in fact, only one piece of a larger puzzle—is rather more prosaic. Yet it is futuristic in its own way, representing as it does a response to an important question: how can we continue living the way we do and at the same time consume less energy and protect the environment?

Increasingly, this question is challenging the insights, perseverance and pocketbooks of scientists, governments, businesses and consumers around the world. The “horns” on the structure are in fact electrical insulators serving turbines and steam-generating equipment, and they may provide part of the answer.

Together, the various structures form the new 170-megawatt electrical cogeneration facility built by Imperial Oil at its massive oil sands operation at Cold Lake, Alberta. The facility was constructed as part of the most recent expansion of the operation, which has been developed over the last 18 years in a series of phases, each contributing about 10,000 barrels of heavy oil, or bitumen, a day. Known as the Mahpees project, the latest expansion, which encompasses phases 11 to 13, was completed in late 2002 at a cost of $650 million and will increase production of bitumen from the Cold Lake operation by an average of about 10,000 barrels a day for the next 25 years.

The new cogeneration facility uses natural gas piped into the site to fire turbines that generate electricity. Heat recovery units capture exhaust heat from the turbines (energy that is not recovered in typical power-generating plants) and use it to convert water into steam—lots of steam. And steam is essential to the production of oil at Cold Lake. Injected at high pressure into a bitumen-saturated subterranean sand bed up to half a kilometre under...
ground, steam heats the brine and is pumped to the surface of the ground.

The cogeneration facility produces enough heat to make steam for the 30,000-barrel-a-day Mildred Lake crude project. It also generates more than enough power to meet the electricity needs of the entire Cold Lake operation. In fact, only about 60 percent of the electricity consumed within the site. the rest is sold to Alberta's power utility at the prevailing market rate. In total, the cogeneration facility will meet 100,000 typical Canadian households - the equivalent of a medium-sized city - even during peak demand periods.

The decision to build a cogeneration facility at Cold Lake was made possible, in part, by deregulation of the electricity industry in Alberta, which began in 1996. However, the energy savings from cogeneration are even more substantial - in the 30 to 50 percent range.

This increased efficiency also leads to reduced emissions of greenhouse gases, notably carbon dioxide, and other pollutants that result from the burning of fossil fuels. More than half of Albertans' electricity is generated by coal-burning plants, while the Cold Lake cogeneration facility uses clean-burning natural gas. If all power for the Cold Lake operation were to be generated using coal, carbon dioxide emissions would be as much as 20 percent higher. Given that oil sands development and production are critical to Canada's energy security and future economic growth, energy and emissions reductions of this scale represent a major advancement.

The real key to lowering global greenhouse gas emissions is to develop, on a global basis, innovative, commercially viable technologies to improve energy efficiency and reduce emissions. Investments of the scale required to develop and implement these environmentally beneficial technologies can only come from a healthy and growing economy.

Tim Heintz, Imperial's chairman, president and chief executive officer, made this remark at the company's annual meeting of shareholders in April 2003. He noted that Imperial has improved the energy efficiency of its petroleum refining operation in Canada by about 40 percent over the past 30 years. Refining now consumes about seven percent of the energy contained in a barrel of crude oil. "The energy we have saved in our refineries is equivalent to the energy needed to provide heat, light and power to about 400,000 Canadian homes every year," he said.

With a design that minimizes the environmental footprint, pipelines at Cold Lake carry steam to well pads, where it is injected into the reservoirs.
kilograms) of steam per hour—and about 80 percent of the electricity it requires, with the remaining 20 percent to be purchased from the provincial utility.

"The important thing to remember about cogeneration is that it is not just a win-win situation but a triple-win proposition," says Curt Riley, who as Imperial's engineering services manager, is overseeing the development of the new cogeneration facility in Sarnia.

"It results in operating, economic and environmental benefits—and not only for Imperial. Consumers, the local community and society as a whole all gain from it."

Riley points out that cogeneration has, in fact, been used in petrochemical refineries in various parts of the world since the 1950s. But for many years, regulated electricity markets in Ontario, as in Alberta, presented complicated economic and regulatory barriers to companies generating their own power. Since deregulation began in North America in the early 1990s, however, those barriers have been gradually disappearing, while at the same time, cogeneration technologies, notably the turbines, have become more efficient and less costly to construct and operate.

"Simply put, in a deregulated market environment and with recent technological advances, it has become more economical for us to produce most of the electricity we need within the plant," Riley says. "The conditions and energy cost savings made the timing right for an investment of this magnitude."

The major environmental benefits that will result from cogeneration at Sarnia will come, says Riley, from significant reductions in the plant's emissions of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides, both of which are components of urban smog as well as other pollutants such as compounds of nickel and vanadium. These reductions will occur as the unit takes over much of the plant's steam production from existing boilers that burn petroleum coke and heavy fuel oil. It's estimated that emissions of sulphur dioxide will be reduced by as much as 50 percent, and emissions of nitrogen oxides by about one-quarter.

Cogeneration at Sarnia will also reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario. The fact that the Sarnia plant will generate most of its own electric power rather than buy it from an outside supplier means that the plant's actual emissions will go up rather than down. However, since much of the electricity the plant currently purchases is generated by coal-fired facilities, it is fair to say that on a net basis, greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the Sarnia operation will be significantly reduced. In fact, it is estimated that replacing coal-burning generation outside the plant with efficient gas-burning cogeneration within the plant will reduce greenhouse gas emissions in that region of Ontario by about 500,000 tonnes a year.

When the Sarnia cogeneration unit begins operating in 2004, cogeneration facilities owned by Imperial, including the company's share of Syncrude, will have the combined capacity to generate almost 400 megawatts of electricity, an amount that is equal to one-fifth of the total generating capacity of the province of Nova Scotia.

"There are some who believe that oil companies aren't interested in conserving energy, but nothing could be further from the truth," says Brian Fischer, Imperial's vice-president, products and chemicals. "Paradoxically, it takes a lot of energy to produce energy, and we are acutely aware of the fact that energy consumed in our operations—to run pumps and to heat crude oil for processing and to make steam—is energy that is not available for sale. Every litre of fuel that we can save in our operations is another litre that we are able to sell."

"Cogeneration is part of that ongoing search for efficiency," Fischer adds. "The fact that Imperial is investing $230 million in cogeneration at Cold Lake and Sarnia confirms our belief that technological solutions can be found to meet the challenge of consuming less energy and reducing emissions without sacrificing our basic literacy or our expectations. We think this is a good sign for the future."
Changing Worlds

For a decade, Best Buddies has been pairing people with developmental disabilities with university and college students, enriching the lives of everyone involved.

BY SHONA MCKAY

Early one Friday evening, Elizabeth Ross, 20, and Sandra Ryan, 17, met at Regent Mall, located just off the Trans-Canada Highway in Fredericton, N.B. After an hour of window shopping, the two young women headed for the bright, airy food court. Seated side-by-side, Elizabeth, a red-haired and freckled Anne of Green Gables lookalike, and Sandra, blond and shy, but with a ready smile, dined on McDonald’s and Dairy Queen fare and chatted animatedly about everything from boys to school to favorite movies.

It was the very ordinariness of the scene that made it remarkable, explains Roger Ryan, a 44-year-old civilian mechanic at Canadian Forces Base Gagetown in New Brunswick. Sandra is his only child and has Down Syndrome. "In elementary and middle school, Sandra had a life much like other children," he says. "She was at school all week and was often invited to birthday parties and to play with the other children on the weekends." But life changed when Sandra went to high school. "The other kids stopped including her in social activities," says Ryan. "The situation wasn’t helped by the fact that she’s an only child. For a long time, Sandra had no one her own age to talk or laugh or go places with. She spent most of her time alone in her bedroom. But then Lizzie came into her life. Thanks to her friendship with Lizzie, Sandra has become a different girl. She’s blossomed."

It was not happenstance that brought Sandra Ryan and Elizabeth Ross, an undergraduate arts student at Fredericton’s St. Thomas University, together two years ago. Rather, it was a unique and exceptional program called Best Buddies. Established in the United States in 1989 and in Canada in 1993, Best Buddies is a volunteer program that endeavors to promote friendship between students from university, college or high school and adults with developmental disabilities.

Daniel J. Greenslade, chief financial officer of the Toronto-based I.F. Greenein Design/Build Inc. and current chair of Best Buddies Canada, believes such relationships can change worlds. Says the executive who brought the organization to Canada: "From the beginning, it was apparent to me that Best Buddies has the potential to do great good. Through friendship, people who are all but shut away become active members of the community. We are all the richer for that."

Best Buddies was founded by a member of the Kennedy family, Anthony Kennedy Shriver, when he was a student at Washington’s Georgetown University studying theology and history. The son of Surgeon General Shriver, founding director of the Peace Corps, and Eunice Kennedy Shriver, founder of Special Olympics, he is also the nephew of Rosemary Kennedy. The third child of Joseph and Rose Kennedy, Rosemary was born with a mental disability. "My whole life, I was a witness to the compassion and caring my mother and the other members of my family showed to my aunt and other individuals with disabilities," says Shriver, now a 37-year-old father of four. "I saw how their actions and friendship made a tremendous difference in the lives of people less fortunate than most of us."

Shriver, who currently lives in Miami and serves...
as president and chairman of Best Buddies International Inc., appears both pleased and bemused that what started as a college project has evolved into a major charity. “At the beginning, I had no thought that my idea would last beyond my university days,” he says. “But it had a life of its own.” Indeed, since its official founding in 1989, Best Buddies has touched the lives of more than 500,000 volunteers and people with mental challenges in the United States, Canada and a number of other countries, including Greece, Ireland and Egypt.

“Best Buddies is a program that benefits everyone involved,” says Barbara Hejduk, Imperial’s contributions manager and president of the Imperial Oil Foundation. “Definitely it helps people with mental disabilities to become more involved in the larger community, but it also helps the other young people involved. Student buddies have the opportunity to develop planning, social and leadership skills. They also learn the value of contributing to the community.”

It was the program’s potential to effect positive change that led Imperial to donate $50,000 to Best Buddies during the past two years. The money is being used specifically to help the organization expand its presence on Canadian campuses.

Currently, Best Buddies Canada has 1,800 members spread among chapters at 67 educational institutions in all 10 provinces. “We started with one chapter at York University in Toronto in 1993 and then spread east and west,” explains Carol Martin, Best Buddies’ executive director, who works out of the organization’s Toronto headquarters. “And in September 2001, under the name Vouz Copins, we began to offer the program through French-speaking institutions across the country.”

Best Buddies’ reach was extended to high schools last fall, when chapters of the organization were launched at 11 secondary schools in the Toronto area. And that number will grow to 20 this fall, says Shelley Roland, a former Best Buddy campus coordinator at St. Thomas University who is now the organization’s national program director.

Wherever they are located, Best Buddies chapters are typically administered by three volunteers: a host site coordinator (a staff person or volunteer at a professional agency or organization serving people with intellectual disabilities); a campus coordinator (a student buddy); and a buddy advocate (a buddy with an intellectual disability who is able to help raise awareness of the program in the community). Each chapter is responsible for promoting the program in the local community and carrying out the important work of matching students and people with intellectual disabilities. Volunteer administrators also have a continuing responsibility to make sure that the relationships are working successfully.

There’s no question that Best Buddies has the potential to enrich lives. Certainly it has changed the way Amy Marks views the world. Says the 24-year-old, who served as the Best Buddies campus coordinator at the University of Winnipeg before graduating with a degree in psychology in 2002: “Before I joined Best Buddies, I had no experience with people with mental disabilities. I saw, but I never knew. What I have learned is that people with intellectual disabilities so often have special abilities as human beings. They give so much. My buddy taught me to be more patient and to see the joy in small things.”

While students can gain much, it is people with mental disabilities who stand to benefit the most from involvement with Best Buddies. Elspeth Spirling is the volunteer coordinator at Miriam Home and Services in Montreal, an organization that provides residential facilities and rehabilitation and vocational services for individuals with mental disabilities. Miriam Home is also the Best Buddies host site for McGill and Concordia universities and Dawson College. “Typically, people with intellectual disabilities live in a world that is quite small,” she says. “They attend special schools or sheltered workshops and meet few people beyond the agencies or organizations that serve the disabled. They rarely venture into the larger community, and when they do, it’s usually as part of a group outing and in the company of other people with mental handicaps. They have no one to go to a movie with or meet for a coffee. They are, in a sense, isolated from the rest of us. Best Buddies helps to break through the barrier. Student buddies make the world very much larger – and more meaningful and interesting – for buddies. To see a person become part of the greater community and to feel accepted is very moving. It makes your heart leap.”

Winnipeg resident Angela Adams has an intimate knowledge of how a Best Buddies friendship
can change a life. Angela’s 24-year-old daughter, Jennifer, is currently the buddy of Red River College student Andrew Wishart. She is also the former buddy of Amy Marks. “Jen is a very busy person,” says Angela. “She works part-time at the local IGA and is very active in Special Olympics. She also teaches Sunday school. Yet, in spite of her active life, Jen has had a hard time making friends. That’s why her Best Buddies relationships are so important. The two girls go to movies or get together for a pizza or to cook dinner. They both love Mexican food. In between, they keep in touch via the phone or e-mail.

You know, before Amy, Jen didn’t speak in complete sentences – partly because somebody in the family always jumped in to help her finish a thought that she was struggling with. Amy didn’t do that. She had the patience to let Jen speak for herself. As a result, Jen has become a much more fluid speaker.

“We’ve also noticed that since her friendships with Amy and Andrea, Jen sees the world less in black and white,” adds Angela. “Best of all, Jen is having much more fun in life.”

“That’s true,” adds Jennifer. “My buddies and I will be friends forever. We’ll still be going to the movies together when we are old. We’ll get the senior discount.”

Morty Lighter also values the friendships he has made through Best Buddies. A 52-year-old Montrealer with a developmental disability, Lighter works three days a week as a maintenance person at the nearby YMCA. He’s also a regular bowler. Yet, according to Lighter, even with work and bowling, there’s an awful lot of time left over “to sit in the apartment and do absolutely nothing.”

Not surprisingly, Lighter’s friendships with his current buddy, Mike, a fourth-year mechanical engineering student at Concordia, and his former buddy, Lars Galland, who graduated from McGill with a degree in science last year, have made a huge difference to his quality of life. Last September, Lighter and Galland were the recipients of the program’s Spirit of Friendship Award. Presenters annually at the Best Buddies Gala in Toronto, the award pays tribute to a pair of buddies who exemplify the true meaning of friendship and who have become ambassadors of the Best Buddies program.

Recalling his bond with Galland, who is pursuing a master’s degree in clinical pharmacology at the University of Glasgow in Scotland, Lighter says, “Lars always came to watch me bowl at Paré Lanes in my neighbourhood on Saturday mornings and then we went to Harvey’s for lunch. We talked about sports. Hockey and lacrosse are my favourite sports. Once we even went to see the Montreal Canadiens play the Toronto Maple Leafs. I talked with Lars, my buddy, on the phone a lot too. Now we write to each other sometimes. Buddies are real gentle and good with guys like us. Buddies are special people.”

Elizabeth Ross knows that. Over the past four years, the young Fredericton student has seen how Best Buddies has helped her 23-year-old developmentally disabled sister, Martha. “Martha is very outgoing and she does have a few friends,” says Elizabeth. “But she has always found it hard to be accepted in the so-called ‘normal’ community. I remember at school, kids would make fun of her. They would call her names because she was a little different. As she grew up, it got harder for her to have any kind of social life outside the family. Having a buddy has changed that. Martha has had three student buddies from St. Thomas University, and they have done all sorts of things together. Her very favourite thing to do with her current buddy, Julia Smith, is to take the bus to the house Julia shares with other students, have something to eat and then play cards with her and her friends. Martha just loves that.”

Witnessing the real pleasure and the confidence that having a buddy gave to Martha inspired Elizabeth to join Best Buddies when she began her university studies in 2001. Reflecting on the program and her friendship with her own buddy, Sandra Ryan, she says, “Best Buddies is great for everybody. In my case, I got an opportunity to view life from a different perspective and, most important, I gained a wonderful new friend. I think my buddy, Sandra, enjoys our friendship, too.”

“Enjoy,” according to Sandra’s dad, Roger Ryan, is an understatement. “When Lizzie calls, Sandra runs through the house to get the phone,” he says. “Sandra’s so changed these days. She’s so much more outgoing. Instead of shunning the company of her mom and me as she did before, she now seeks us out. She chats with us. She asks us to play board games. Best Buddies is the best thing that has ever happened to Sandra. It’s made a world of difference to her — and to our whole family.”

MIKE & SANDRA MORTY LIGHTER
David Irvine-Halliday
Founder, Light Up the World

Nestled among rubberwood and jackalana trees in south-central Sri Lanka, three kilometers from the closest road, is the tiny village of Endigalaya. On this day, the 10-old families that make up this citizenry are holding a community meeting in the nearly swept forecourt of the leader's mud-walled hut. The six chairs are a luxury; power and telephone lines are as foreign as snow here. Decisions and standard rules govern the meeting: minutes are made, motions are made, and new business is discussed. Topping the new business today is the fact that some "humble" members have not been paying a recently imposed 25-nape (35-cent) monthly fee.

Endigalaya's electricity is supplied through a D-cell flashlight batteries lasted. "The average was two weeks, then they were thrown away," he says. "A back-of-the-envelope calculation told me that meant more than 300 million batteries a year were being thrown away in Nepal alone. And then there were the bulbs. It was a huge waste." So, as a pilot project, Irvine-Halliday donated a solar panel with a D-cell charger and six LED flashlights to a couple of families. Pico Power Nepal has now added LED flashlights to its line.

Irvine-Halliday's drive to better the lives of millions of people in the developing world has earned him several honors. At a ceremony in Tokyo late last year, he was given the prestigious Rolex Award for Enterprise, and following the award, both National Geographic and the Discovery Channel presented documentaries on the Canadian engineer's work. The result has been a flurry of inquiries from countries in Asia, South America and Africa. "There is hardly a country that hasn't approached us," says Irvine-Halliday.

The arrangement works well. "We provide the local companies with the technology, advice and parts, including low-cost diodes, for which we have negotiated a special deal with the manufacturer, Lumileds," says Irvine-Halliday. The local companies operate as a business but must follow the criteria established by Light Up the World, which ensures that local entrepreneurs don't overcharge. "Our control is through providing diodes," he says. "If any company is making more than a fair profit, we can cut off its supply." Light Up the World also carries out research. "At the moment," says Irvine-Halliday, "we're working on developing wind-powered turbines, more efficient circuitry for the lamps and supercapacitors as a replacement for batteries. But," he emphasizes, "we're still finding ways to improve.

Irvine-Halliday continues to think of innovative ways to help the world. On a visit to Nepal last August, he visited villages where for their conven-
Close Ties

Despite experiencing strain from time to time, the relationship we share with our U.S. neighbours is one of friendship and respect.

IN APRIL, when Canadian golfer Mike Weir won the Masters championship in Augusta, Georgia, I was struck by an incident that occurred during the presentation ceremony held on the 18th green. As Weir donned the famous green jacket presented to Masters winners, a group of Canadian spectators broke spontaneously into a rendition of "O Canada"—to loud and enthusiastic cheers from the predominantly American crowd gathered around the green.

What I found striking about the incident was that it came at a time when the relationship between our two nations was supposedly at a low ebb, at least at an official level. And I was reminded that at the heart of our relationship is abiding respect, shared principles of democracy and extensive mutual interests.

Certainly the relationship, like any other, has experienced its share of strain over the years; we are, after all, both sovereign nations, and as such it stands to reason that we will from time to time disagree. Foreign policy and trade issues such as softwood lumber and the fisheries, for example, have sometimes sparked heated debate between us in recent times. But I believe that our relationship is essentially one of deep friendship in which the many positives far outweigh the few negatives. One need only look at events of recent times for evidence of this friendship. During the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States, Canadians immediately jumped in to provide shelter and hospitality to thousands of Americans stranded when U.S. airports were closed. Likewise, during the SARS outbreak in Toronto earlier this year, U.S. health workers stepped forward to help us, coming to Toronto hospitals to provide much needed relief to our beleaguered doctors and nurses. As Lyle Vanclief, Canada’s minister of agriculture, said during a trip to Washington a few years ago, "As with any partnership, there are problems from time to time, but in times of emergency ... it is always clear that our two countries look out for each other."

Canadians and Americans enjoy a unique relationship. While we each have our own views and policies, we are more closely tied both geographically and economically than any other two countries in the world. The bilateral trade between Canada and the United States is the largest of any two nations by a very wide margin. More than $1.5 billion in goods—and 45,000 trucks—cross the Canada-U.S. border every day; 200 million people cross it every year. More than 85 percent of Canada’s exports are to the United States, and Canada, in turn, buys almost a quarter of all American exports—more than all 15 members of the European Union combined and three times as much as Japan, even though we have only one-quarter of its population.

The degree of integration that our two economies have achieved since the inception of the U.S.-Canada
Free-Trade Agreement (FTA) and the subsequent North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994 has been truly impressive. Bilateral trade has more than doubled in value, and by 2002, U.S. direct investment in Canada had grown to $224 billion, an increase of more than 150 percent. Canadian investments in the United States have grown at a similar rate. And not only have the trade agreements brought new economic benefits, but they have increased our confidence as a nation—with one eye on realizing that we can compete very well with our U.S. neighbours.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of our relationship, however, is that it is dynamic and continually evolving. And at this point in our shared history, change is indeed called for. In 2000, the Canadian Council of Chief Executives noted that the "bilateral trade, investment, regulatory, security and institutional relationship" between the United States and Canada "did not reflect the advanced level of integration between the two countries. If we are to realize all the benefits of this integration, changes need to be made to some of the policies, regulations and institutions that have a bearing on our interaction. Take, for example, border security. After the tragic September 11 terrorist attacks, the high priority that was placed on U.S. security had understandable consequences for the Canadian business environment: a temporary disruption of cross-border traffic and trade. Given our heavy reliance on U.S. markets, cross-border trade is exceedingly important to Canada. Repeated congestion at border crossings and the slowing of trade could eventually lessen the attractiveness of Canada to investors looking to serve the North American market as a whole. Clearly, it would be better for us to put an end to avoidable disruptions as soon as possible, and putting an end to them means that both countries need to work together to improve our policies pertaining to Canada-U.S. border crossing and mutual security.

As the Canadian Council of Chief Executives noted, the September 11 attacks highlighted the extent to which our two countries share core values, history and institutional roots and therefore the need to confront the new global challenges that are common to both countries. For this and related reasons, Imperial is lending its support to the council's North American Security and Prosperity Initiative, which is examining the economic institutions that guide the flow of commerce and the security arrangements that underpin them.

The council is proposing that Canada take the lead in putting forward a five-part strategy for a new Canadian-U.S. partnership. The five strategic elements are as follows: reinventing the border; maximizing economic efficiency; building on resource security; rebuilding the North American defence alliance; and developing "21st-century institutions." One priority of this bilateral cooperation should be the harmonization of regulations to promote efficiency. For example, in the important area of corporate governance, a "once-taxed" rule should be adopted. A company like Imperial Oil, whose shares trade on both Canadian and U.S. stock exchanges, should, for example, have the power to comply with only one set of rules, which needs to be acceptable to both countries.

The North American Security and Prosperity Initiative represents a responsible effort to make a strong relationship even stronger and more mutually beneficial in what is a changing and uncertain world. In my view, Canadians should welcome it.

Two years ago, I returned to Canada after spending a decade abroad, a large portion of it in the United States. I lived and worked with Americans and found them to be friendly, diligent, pragmatic and hospitable. And I think that most Canadians who have had much contact with Americans would agree. Furthermore, the people I met viewed Canadians very positively, regarding us as creative, industrious and decent. And on both sides of the border, we share a commitment to the principles and ideals of freedom and democracy.

As the crowd at the Augusta National golf course showed in April, Americans often take nearly as much pleasure in our accomplishments as we do ourselves. And that seems to be a pretty sound basis for our continued mutual coexistence, cooperation and respect. 

Tom Flanagan is chairman, president and chief executive officer of Imperial Oil.

One evening a few months ago, Janene Bowes, a colleague and friend of mine in Toronto, received a call from a stranger in Halifax. "I think I may have your baby book," the caller said. A collector of antique toys, the man had bought the book from a second-hand dealer. With a number of photographs of Christmases during the 1940s and '50s that clearly showed toys, he had thought it would be useful in dating his collection.

As he became more familiar with the book, he began to think about the baby it revolved around, wondering what had become of her and why she had parted with an item of such great personal—no real material—value. Perhaps, he thought, it had been sold unemotionally, and if this were the case, it might be very much missed. And so he set about finding the person who had been that baby—my colleague. Researching the name "Bowes" in the local paper, one of the stranger's friends managed to find Janene's father's obituary. It told him that Janene and her mother were living on a small farm in Toronto. The Internet gave him Toronto telephone numbers, and he began making calls, finally locating Janene.

Halifax was Janene's hometown, and her parents continued to live in the lovely East Coast city after she had grown up and moved away. Over the last two years, she had faced the somber task of closing down and selling her childhood home. There was much to do in a short time clouded by grief, and somehow or other, the baby book found its way into a cartoon destined for the dealer rather than one bound for her Toronto home. A number of times during this past year, I had wondered where the book was, for she couldn't recall packing it. And then came the call from the stranger, followed a week or two later by the arrival of the book. "It means a great deal to me to get it back—baby teeth and all!" she wrote to the man. "We were a very close family, and the book captures a lot of memories of the special times we shared when I was young."

At lunch on the day after receiving the call, Janene related the story to me. She was, of course, delighted to know that the whereabouts of her book, but that alone was not the cause of her good spirits. She was deeply touched by the tremendous kindness of this stranger.

In our sometimes harsh world, it does us good to hear of such selfless acts of kindness—to be reminded that there is a counterbalance to the nastiness and violence we read about all too often. Encouraging, too, is the fact that the loves of most of us have at some time or another been touched by the kindness of strangers.

As my parents set off for Canada from England in 1946, they had reason to be nervous. They faced a Blake and lonely time, waiting for their furniture and children to arrive a few months hence, living in a largely empty house in a place where they knew no one. But such was not the case. When they arrived at the airport in Toronto, they were greeted by a member of the community where they were to live. The friendly stranger—the village pharmacist, as I recall—drove them to their new home, a three-hour journey from Toronto. To their surprise, they found their house fitted out with all the necessities of day-to-day living: a freshly made bed, a table and chairs, cutlery and dishes, food enough to last them a few days and so on. Various people had pulled together to ease their transition to a new life. No doubt my parents would have managed had they been left to fend for themselves, but what a difference it made to their spirits to discover that they had come to a kind and caring community—to realize that while they may have known no one, they were not alone.

Vivid among my recollections is the thoughtfulness shown to me by a tough-looking street kid when my daughter was five or six. We were walking down Toronto's Yonge Street together, and about halfway through I saw a girl of perhaps 16, asking people for money. It was a grey, wintry day, and she looked cold, so I reached into my pocket to retrieve a little change. But when I went to give it to her, she refused it. "No," she said. "You have a kid. I never take money from people with kids. You need it for them," I was told. I was touched by her commitment to doing what she could to make life better for children.

As I look through the pages of this issue of the Review, I see further instances of strangers helping strangers. There are the doctors and nurses from the United States who came to relieve health-care workers in Toronto during the recent SARS crisis, the many Canadians who offered sanctuary to stranded Americans during the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States, and David Irvine-Haldy, who spends his spare time working to bring affordable light to rural communities in developing countries. It heartens me to know that while there may be much grimness in the world, there are also a great deal of good. —Sarah Landry