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# OKOTOKS Western Wheel weekend

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COLOURFUL PLAY — Nate Teed, 2, plays under a parachute at the Family Storytime at Ethel Tucker Park on July 6.

BRENT CALVER/OWW

## Concerns over logging not universal

*Foothills: Some believe lumber harvesting plans well-regulated, not a risk*

By Krista Conrad

Staff Reporter

Concerns over Kananaskis Country logging plans have the backing of some local municipalities, but not everyone is convinced the clear-cut plans are all bad.

A group of concerned citizens called Take a Stand for the Highwood formed from a Black Diamond-based hiking group to voice concerns about logging in Kananaskis at Highwood Junction. The logging will be undertaken by Balcaen Consolidated Contracting and is

part of long-term timber harvesting plans in patches of forest south of Secondary Highway 541 along Secondary Highway 940.

Take a Stand for the Highwood has appealed to municipal councils in the Foothills area for support in its fight to have the Province step in and alter, or put a hold on the logging plans. Both Black Diamond and Turner Valley councils stepped to join the fight, sending letters to the minister of agriculture and forestry in June.

"We want them to reconsider their decision," said Turner Valley Mayor Kelly Tuck. "We

don't want the logging done in that area at all. It definitely brings people to our area, and it's beautiful. I mean, that is our back door."

She said Turner Valley council was primarily concerned over potential issues with watershed from the removal of trees and how the landscape, and any future flooding events, could be impacted. There was also some talk about impacts on wildlife.

"There was a good discussion about the habitat of animals," said Tuck. "It was probably one of the best conversations we've had in a long time."

Black Diamond Mayor Glen Fagan echoed Tuck's sentiments, adding that his fellow council members were worried about the impact to tourism as well as the environment.

"It's right at our gateway, in our neighbourhood, and a lot of people go hiking out there," said Fagan. "There are other areas they could actually log that would be less intrusive to the landscape."

"We weren't against the logging itself, but just against the intrusion at that part of the landscape."

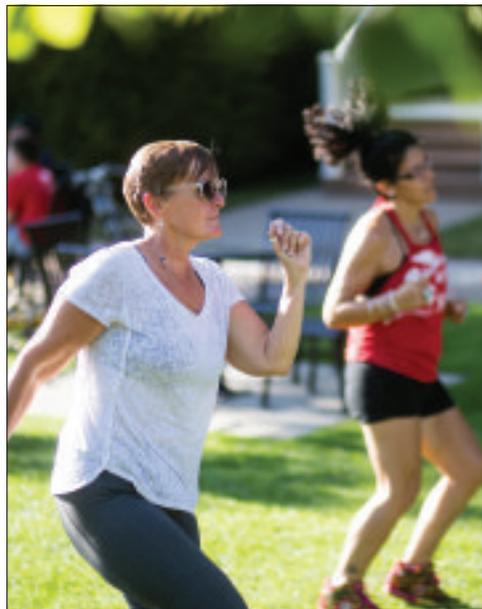
He said Black Diamond coun-

cil would like to see the plans revisited to restrict the logging to non-visual areas less frequented by tourists. Tourism is a source of revenue the Foothills region can't afford to lose, he said.

Town council is hoping to see a plan come back from the provincial government that will address documented concerns, he said.

"We understand the scope of this is actually bigger, beyond just the Highwood," said Fagan. "We want to see further engagement with the communities butting against it."

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Brent Calver/OWW

**A FITNESS BIT** — Sandy Horner, left, and Barb Bernhardsen take part in a free zumba class held by Tamara Boivin in Olde Towne Okotoks during the first Downtown Thursday event of the season on July 6.

## Logging, from Front page

MD of Foothills council, however, is not so quick to act. Some councillors want to see some more information before deciding whether to back the lobbying initiative.

Coun. Suzanne Oel said there are some concerns with the potential impact to water and wastewater management. While the MD did not send a letter to the provincial government, council agreed to work through the Highwood Management Plan Public Advisory Committee and the Foothills Water and Wastewater Collaborative to investigate any impacts to water systems.

"This is an important part of the dialogue," said Oel. "The hope is we can

consider this or influence this as a region and the Government of Alberta will hear that voice clearly."

She hoped to see Balcaen at the council table alongside its contractor, CCI Inc. out of Cochrane, to talk about the plans, but said it doesn't look like that will be possible.

Her main concern is protecting creeks and fisheries, and ensuring there isn't a huge impact on the upper watershed. She said she hopes waiting until the fall won't be too late with what seems to be an expedited process.

"It's information-gathering to get up to speed on a very important topic, and it's just a matter of us not being able to get to this before the fall," said Oel. "I think they need to hear some of the concerns out there and maybe it will slow them

down a little bit."

Other councillors said they felt there wasn't really an issue with the logging plans as they're currently set out.

"From what I've heard, it's very well-regulated out there," said Coun. Rick Percifield. "This has been a plan that's been in place for 30 or 40 years, it's not a new area of logging.

"If they don't cut anything, there would be a terrible wildfire hazard. They're harvesting responsibly, I believe, and I don't see a problem here."

His opinion is shared by former MD councillor and longtime Foothills rancher Ralph Nelson, whose cattle graze in Kananaskis, north of the proposed logging site. He said the area is not in the protected park and is designated as multi-use — meaning it is used for recreation, tourism, forestry and agriculture.

After working in the area for years, he said he doesn't think there's a lot of tourism benefit to the Highwood Junction region.

"There's absolutely no tourism development there," said Nelson. "You can say people drive up there, but very few of them actually stop and get out and hike up a trail."

He said K-Country has the potential for many uses, and no single sector should be able to determine the land use in the region.

It's a slippery slope, he said — preventing the proposed logging plans there would only mean it would occur elsewhere and would likely face more opposition.

"I just wish people would be a little more understanding of a bigger picture than just their special interest," said Nelson.

# Weekend Calendar

## July 14 - 20



### SATURDAY

**15 Big Rock Garden Tour**  
A tour of nine exceptional gardens in Okotoks. Proceeds go to the Okotoks Food Bank and its Food Bank Community Garden.  
**Where:** Okotoks  
**When:** 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
**Cost:** \$10, tickets available at Sobeys.

### THURSDAY

**20 Downtown Summer Thursdays**  
Take in Art on the Lawn at the Okotoks Art Gallery and peruse local businesses open late on Thursdays through the summer.  
**Where:** Downtown Okotoks  
**When:** 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.  
**Cost:** No admission



### SATURDAY-SUNDAY

**15-16 Flower Festival**  
The Christ Church Millarville Ladies Guild hosts its annual festival, decorating the church, grounds and graveyard with bouquets of flowers and serving up tea, scones and homemade strawberry jam.  
**Where:** Christ Church, Millarville  
**When:** July 15 – 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., July 16 – 11:30 a.m.

### Little New York Daze

The Village of Longview celebrates its heritage with the annual Little New York Daze. Festivities start Saturday with a pancake breakfast at the Longview Fire Hall at 7 a.m., followed by the annual parade at 10 a.m. Family activities continue Saturday and Sunday afternoon at the Longview School and Smith/Fuller Centennial Park.  
**Where:** Longview  
**When:** July 15 – 7 a.m. – 3 p.m., July 16 – 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

### ONGOING

Okotoks Dawgs Home Games: July 15, 7:05 p.m. – Medicine Hat Mavericks and 5 O'Clock Somewhere Saturday.

**Markets:** Okotoks Farmer's Market, Fridays from 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.; Foothills Creamery Market, Sundays from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.; Millarville Farmer's Market, Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.; Makers and Growers Market, Sundays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.; High River Farmer's Market, Thursdays from 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

The Okotoks Museum and Archives hosts an exhibit entitled Okotoks – Our Place in History, a series of exhibits throughout 2017 reflecting the community's history since confederation to mark Canada's 150th birthday. Topics include transportation, wartime efforts, policing, community involvement, business and entertainment.

The museum also hosts the "I Love Canada Because..." Sticky Note Project in conjunction with its 150th anniversary celebration exhibits. Visitors are invited to contribute to a year-long sticky note project in the museum's attic, creating a Canadian flag from the notes on the large picture window. The notes will be archived as a permanent record of the Canada 150 event at the end of the year.

The Okotoks Art Gallery hosts an exhibit by local artists entitled From Cow-Catcher to Caboose – Reflections on the Railway, featuring paintings, drawings, photos and multi-media pieces focusing on Canada's vast rail system. The exhibit runs through Sept. 2. The art gallery also features Canadianisms by Brandy Saturley, with 27 paintings that tell the stories of people and places she has encountered across Canada. The exhibit runs through Sept. 2.