

ACCESS

MANITOBA

April - June 2004

Continuing a Tradition to Strengthen and Diversify Manitoba

by Lee Gregg

December 1, 2003, saw the launch of a new **Canada-Manitoba Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)**, continuing a long tradition of the federal and provincial governments working together to benefit the province of Manitoba.

The \$50 million EPA, consisting of matching \$25 million contributions from the governments of Canada and Manitoba, will provide a mechanism for achieving greater federal-provincial cooperation and contributing to strengthening and expanding the economy.

The first economic development partnership agreement signed in 1998 saw \$40 million dollars invested in Manitoba. Projects funded under this agreement included: Smartpark, Urban Circle Training Centre, The Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature's Parkland/Mixed Woods Gallery, redevelopment of the City of

Selkirk's waterfront, Lake Winnipeg Research Consortium and Festival Park at The Forks.

The new four-year EPA will provide funding for programs and projects with a focus on two strategic priorities – building Manitoba's economy and encouraging sustainable communities. The EPA will be used to strengthen and diversify Manitoba's economy by building on existing economic strengths, enhancing the skills of Manitoba's workforce and promoting regional development.

Manitoba was the second of four western provinces to sign agreements with the federal government. The \$25 million federal allocation for Manitoba is part of a \$100 million Government of Canada investment in the West through the Western Economic Partnership Agreements.♣



The Parkland/Mixed Woods Gallery takes you on a journey across Manitoba's largest region and brings you a compelling story of the unimaginable richness of natural and cultural diversity as shown by this segment of a 27 metre diorama.

Photo courtesy of the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature.

Challenging 200

by Lee Gregg

According to Thomas Edison, “*to invent, you need a good imagination and a pile of junk.*” Today’s inventors still need imagination and junk, but they also need business savvy, perseverance and patience. Product development, market research, market testing, contract manufacturing, patenting . . . at times it can be overwhelming.

Phil Poetker, president of **Phil Poetker Designs**, knows first hand how overwhelming it can be. A successful inventor, Poetker has used the services of the **Canada/Manitoba Business Service Centre** for over 10 years to help wade through the myriad of pitfalls awaiting entrepreneurs. “The Centre helps me in many ways,” he noted. “The library resources are second to none. The information is always current and the library staff are not only very knowledgeable, but understanding and personable - an intangible that you notice when it’s not there.”

The process of taking an idea and turning it into a commercially viable product is a complicated and challenging endeavor. Poetker works closely with today’s inventors to turn

their dreams into economic reality by providing consulting services, from the pre-conceptual stage through prototyping, focus groups, manufacturing, marketing and sales.

But it’s his current project that will appeal to anyone who has suffered from flat feet, high arches, heel, knee, hip and back pain or just tired, sore feet.

Poetker has partnered with podiatrist Dr. Lorne Canvin of Canvin and Sons Footwear. Dr. Canvin provides the military with orthopedic services and became concerned with the high number of soldiers with foot problems and related injuries. Determined to find a better way to take care of soldiers’ feet, he approached Poetker to help with the research and design of a new type of orthodic (insole).

“Footwear affects all parts of the body, including the ankles, knees, hips and spine”, said Poetker. “Therefore, the function of the entire foot should be taken into account when designing footwear, which to date has not been done effectively. Our Bio-insole was designed to take into account how a body



Phil Poetker with footwear that has been manufactured with the patented Bio-insole (holding). “I want to break through the barrier that says you can’t have good fashion without discomfort.”

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Years of Tradition

moves, where the pressure falls on the feet and how this influences the rest of the body.”

The patented Bio-insole is $\frac{3}{4}$ ” thick and has superior shock absorbing qualities in the heel, the arch and the ball of the foot. Early prototypes showed that such a substantial insole would not fit in existing footwear and still leave room for the feet. It was determined that the entire shoe would have to be redesigned around the insole.

Finding a manufacturer to work with them on their new design proved difficult. For 200 years no one has challenged how shoes were made. Poetker had to deal with a great deal of skepticism from an industry that wanted to build the shoe their way.

Patience and perseverance paid off. There are 60 new designs of men’s and women’s footwear including military and work boots, cross trainers, casual dress shoes and sandals. The sandals will be of great interest to women as they have been designed to allow you to change the straps (uppers). With one outsole, you can have any number of different colour uppers to accessorize with instead of buying several pairs. “We intend to show that you don’t have to give up fashion for comfort,” Poetker states with pride. “In fact, Canvin shoes are where fashion and comfort meet.”

What started as a project to help Canadian soldiers, and provide a significant cost savings to the military, has expanded to provide consumers with a line of high-quality footwear that is functional and fashionable. Edison would be pleased.

For information on the services offered by Phil Poetker Designs or Canvin Footwear, call (204) 955-1234.

The Canada/Manitoba Business Service Centre is a member of the Western Canada Business Service Network and is financially supported by Western Economic Diversification Canada. For information call 1-800-665-2019 or visit their website at: www.cbcs.org/manitoba. ♦



Sample of products brought to market by Phil Poetker Designs: The Skate Keeper with the D-grip Handle and the Canvin sandal with changeable uppers.

Photo courtesy of Phil Poetker

Manitoba

Don't Get Even

by Lee Gregg



MAD Creations' madly creative team: (back row left to right) Shirley Fehr and Michelle Yates; (front row) Spencer Tymchak and Jared Griman (missing Tad Kojima).

Entrepreneurial activity is generally associated with being creative, innovative and identifying opportunities within the economic system. However, when relegated to the role of managing a company, most small business owners are no longer considered entrepreneurial. And yet, after almost five years as president of **MAD Creations, Inc.**, Michelle Yates is just that.

MAD Creations is a design house, focusing on specialty design and illustration projects for the restaurant and hospitality industry. Yates provides creative art solutions for merchandising and menu display boards that are artistically unique and highly functional.

"I started MAD Creations from my basement," recalled Yates. "I had 60 images and I painted my little heart out." Yates turned to the Western Economic Diversification Canada-sponsored **Assiniboine Credit Union Micro Loan Program** and the **Women's Enterprise Centre of Manitoba** for financial assistance, and was able to move out of the basement and hire her first employee after one year.

"The Assiniboine Credit Union believed in me and my business concept when there were no tangibles to measure success on," noted Yates. "I keep a very close relationship with them and they offer guidance and financial support on a regular basis. And the Women's Enterprise Centre was a huge break for me. They believed in me and I consider them partners, as I may not be where I am today if they hadn't come through for me."

MAD Creations was launched with the same dramatic flair Yates uses for her creative illustrations. She chose to test her new products and designs at the largest restaurant show in North America – the National Restaurant Association Trade Show in Chicago. "This was my make or break test," she said. Not only did she make it, her designs were voted best new product at the event.

To those familiar with Yates' creative work, the best of show award will come as no surprise. By blending the vivid colours and playful graphics of her designs with interesting shapes, she creates signage that is eye-catching and stylish.

Within her second year of business, Yates realized that she could easily expand her U.S. sales, but would need additional staff. She once again turned to Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD) for help, but this time through

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ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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the **International Trade Personnel Program (ITPP)**, a program that provides salary assistance when hiring a recent graduate. "The ITPP is an awesome program," said Yates enthusiastically. "It helped me the most and I can't say enough great things about it."

The graduate was responsible for sourcing and acquiring U.S. distributors. The result, MAD Creations now exports 80 per cent of their products to the U.S. Previously, the company exported about 55 per cent of its products to

the U.S. Yates has negotiated accounts with such heavyweights as Kraft Food, Heinz North America, Disney Corporation, Sara Lee, Nestle, Canad Inns and in Las Vegas, with Caesars Palace, MGM Grand and The Bellagio.

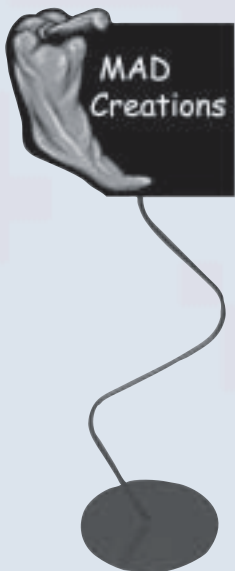
Yates' entrepreneurial flair and business acumen are still in high drive. She has diversified into design solutions for packaging, restaurant décor and corporate identity packages, increasing the company's sales by over 300 per cent from the previous year. It is no wonder that Yates was honoured with both the 2003 Women Entrepreneur of the Year for International Trade award and the Overall Excellence award, handed out annually by the Women Business Owners of Manitoba.

Yates has successfully blended the roles of entrepreneur and business manager as she continues to create innovative new products and increase MAD Creations' market share under her direction.

For more information about MAD Creations' products and services, call 1-877-520-3601 or visit their website at: www.makingartwork.com.

The Women's Enterprise Centre of Manitoba is a member of the Western Canada Business Service Network and is financially supported by Western Economic Diversification Canada. For information call 1-800-203-2343 or visit their website at: www.wecm.ca.

WD and Assiniboine Credit Union jointly offer the Assiniboine Credit Union Micro Loan Program to provide better access to financing for small and start-up businesses in Winnipeg. For additional information, contact WD at 1-888-338-WEST (9378) or visit www.wd.gc.ca. ❁



The only company in North America to use interesting shapes for their marker boards, MAD Creations continues to stay ahead of the competition with its innovative designs and colourful graphics.



Available in various sizes for tabletop, countertop or wall hanging applications, MAD Creations will customize their products to include any company logo.

Product photos are courtesy of MAD Creations.

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SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Escape From t

by Lee Gregg



Customers enjoying the friendly ambience and great food at the Grindstone.

Photo courtesy of the Grindstone Coffee Co. and Giftwerks.

By combining the best of business leadership with volunteerism, entrepreneurs continue to make a positive impact with their community involvement. Portage la Prairie's Wendy Peters is one such entrepreneur.

Owner of **The Grindstone Coffee Co. and Giftwerks**, Peters has opened the doors of her business to the town's artistic community. From printing tickets to staging events that introduce artists to the public, she feels strongly about supporting local artists and providing them with a forum to promote their music, art, dance and literature.

Peters' gift for creating a community meeting place is evident as soon as you enter The Grindstone. The walls of her restaurant are adorned with the works of local artists and mingle with the smells of home-cooked soup, baked bread and enough delicious deserts to satisfy any sweet tooth.

"I'm not really a business person," Peters commented. "I see my business as an extension of my home and when people walk in I want them to feel at home, to be comfortable."

A native Winnipegger, Peters moved to Portage la Prairie in 1998 when her husband joined the family real estate business. Interested in running her own company, she converted 100 square feet of unused space adjacent to the family business into her first gift shop. Early success convinced her to take her dream of opening a coffee house and make it a reality.

Peters turned to the **Women's Enterprise Centre of Manitoba and Heartland Community Future Development Corporation (CFDC)** for financial assistance. "It was a very positive experience," noted Peters. "I had a steep learning curve and the counsellors at the Women's Enterprise Centre were very helpful and encouraging. I would have dropped the project entirely without them. And the CFDC was great. The counsellors were very supportive and were there when I needed them. I appreciated that they were flexible enough to let me run the business the way I wanted."

Located on the town's main street next to City Hall, Peters developed a 50-seat coffee house that delivers fresh food quickly, while creating a warm and inviting atmosphere. With 3,000 square feet to work with, she had enough space to include her charming gift shop and a children's play centre — a welcome addition to parents with small children.

The additional floor space also provides room to host book signings, parties and musical concerts. Not only a

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SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

The Daily Grind

restaurateur, Peters also teaches music and holds recitals in the Grindstone — the relaxed atmosphere provides her students and the town's Junior Musical Club with a competitive-free place to perform.

The Grindstone's live musical weekends include an "open mike" featuring Grindstone staff, as well as special events such as the medieval renaissance night. Sleigh rides through the *Island of Lights* Christmas light show is a favorite, and when patrons return to The Grindstone, they are entertained by a local writer reading Christmas stories. The evening is rounded out with hot chocolate, music and singing in the comforts of the coffee house.

Peters has shown her commitment and dedication in the giving of time, skills and enthusiasm to the benefit of her community. This mutually beneficial relationship between the arts and business provides emerging talent with a warm and inviting atmosphere to practice their craft, while enhancing the company's position in the market. It is time well spent.

For information on The Grindstone Coffee Co. and Giftwerks, call (204) 856-2468 or visit their website at: www.giftwerks.ca.



Wendy Peters and a few of the appetizing deserts available at the Grindstone Coffee Co.

The Women's Enterprise Centre and Heartland Community Future Development Corporation are members of the Western Canada Business Service Network and are financially supported by Western Economic Diversification Canada (WD). For more information, contact WD at 1-888-338-WEST (9378) or visit www.wd.gc.ca. 🍁

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The Goose that Laid the Golden Egg

by Lee Gregg

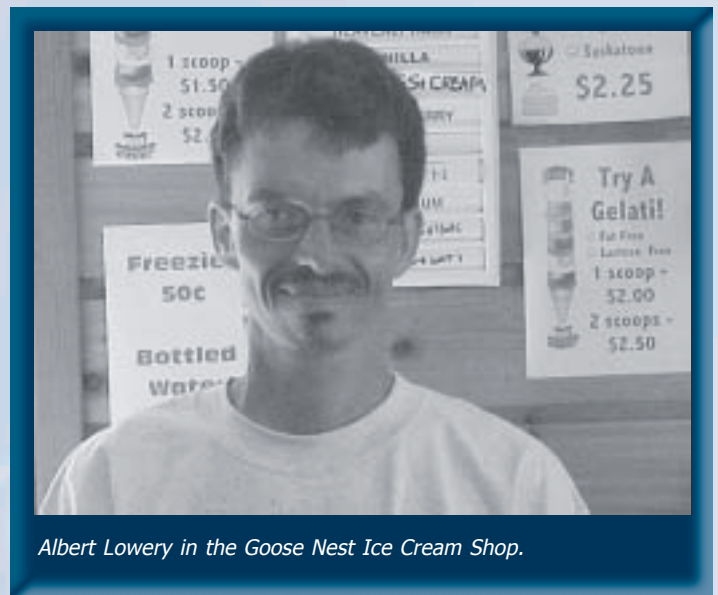
Travelling along Manitoba Highway #6 it would be difficult to miss Lundar's 18-foot Canada goose. Equally difficult to miss is the community's newest seasonal entrepreneurial business, the **Goose Nest Ice Cream Shop**.

Nestled beside this giant Canada goose is Albert Lowery's hard won dream. An entrepreneur at heart, Lowery always wanted to operate an ice cream shop, but wasn't sure where to begin. A client of Interlake Employment Services (IES), he worked with employment coordinator Karen Lindal to develop the entrepreneurial skills needed to run his business.

Lowery's skill development began by enrolling in the Entrepreneurship Workshop delivered by **Super Six Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC)**. The six-week workshop assessed Lowery's entrepreneurial strengths by identifying skills, education, employment history and personal interests. Included in the training was the opportunity to develop his business plan.

Deb Falk, Self-Employment Program Coordinator for Super Six, worked closely with Lowery and Lindal to assist in fine-tuning the business plan, identifying and putting in place additional support systems, and applying for funding under the CFDC's **Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Investment Program**. The program supports persons with disabilities to start, own and manage their own business.

"The Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Investment Program loan was used for my start-up costs," said Lowery. "This included inventory and refrigeration equipment. Without the CFDC and IES support, I would not have been able to start my own business."



Albert Lowery in the Goose Nest Ice Cream Shop.

Ice cream is a seasonal business and Lowery spent the winter months preparing for the 2004 season, including establishing a presence on the community website and improving his financial management skills by taking math courses. Other plans include new flooring, air conditioning, and, best of all, a larger selection of ice cream and ice cream novelties.

With the support of his community and a determination to succeed, Lowery has given ice cream lovers another reason to look forward to summer.

Super Six CFDC is a member of the Western Canada Business Service Network and is financially supported by Western Economic Diversification Canada. For more information about its programs and services, call 1-888-496-8932 or visit their website at: www.supersix.mb.ca. ♦