

books

HE HAUNTS US STILL

Trudeau bio focuses on personal side

» Page 4

faith

LINES ARE OPEN

Godtalk wants to hear from its listeners

» H13

BUY ~ SELL ~ TRADE ~ RENT



57 Osborne St movievillage.ca 477-5566

HISTORIC REWRITE » 12



feedyourintellect

Winnipeg Free Press

EDITOR: BUZZ CURRIE 697-7577
buzz.currie@freepress.mb.ca
winnipegfreepress.com

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2009

H1



ALLEN ABLE

first column

VIEW FROM THE WEST

Hummer: the pride of China

WASHINGTON — An American flag the size of Labrador flaps defiantly and loudly in the breeze. Below it, serried ranks of fabled automobiles gleam impatiently in the autumn sun: Lotus, Corvette, Camaro, the hot-tempered pride of what once was General Motors, the beggared corporation that once was the pride of America itself.

And there are more star-spangled icons out here in the dealer's lot: a row of Hummer H3T "mid-size" pickup trucks, lolling and basking like sauropods, waiting for someone to hand over US\$41,000, turn the key and unleash the beast within.

The H3 is the runt of the Hummer line, a feather-weight compared to the original H1 and downsized H2, yet still frightening enough in your rear-view mirror with its toothy grill-work and ham-sized tow bars, a Jeep ballooned.

Built in Louisiana, a step-child of the High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle that helped achieve a walkover for the United States Army during the first Gulf War of the first George Bush, today's Hummers remain an archetype of macho extravagance, the cynosure of a fuel-hardy age. As a Schwarzenegger on wheels — the Terminator drives an H3 hybrid — the Hummer is American ingenuity and arrogance amalgamated, or at least it was until this summer.

Continued
Please see H6

TUBERCULOSIS: THE FORGOTTEN DISEASE / Part 1



Alphonse Denechezhe with his daughter in his mother's living room in Lac Brochet. He sleeps on the couch, a son and daughter bed down on the floor. Denechezhe fears he has 'the sickness' and hopes he's not spreading it to his children.

THE KILLER NEVER LEFT

Government would rather you didn't read this series

The Free Press began an investigation into TB on Manitoba reserves in spring 2008, but the story stalled when provincial officials refused to disclose the number of cases.

Free Press health reporter Jen Skeritt's freedom of information request for the number was denied. Provincial officials claimed releasing it could harm its relationship with the federal government, which is responsible for health care on reserves. The province's ombudsman upheld that decision.

The ombudsman's March 2009 report said federal health officials and some First Nations chiefs were concerned releasing the information would jeopardize their ability to manage the infectious disease. Federal officials also argued the information could stigmatize the communities.

"It's an excuse they're using to cover up inadequacies," said Dr. Earl Hershfield, former director of the province's TB-control program.

It took months of in-depth research — via sources, documents and visits to remote communities — for the Free Press to discover which reserves have been hit by TB and why. This is the story.

Visit the interactive TB website at winnipegfreepress.com/tb to:

- » Watch videos and see slideshows from Lac Brochet;
- » Scroll through 100 years of TB history in Manitoba;
- » Click on interactive maps to learn about TB in other parts of the province.



Jen Skeritt

PHOTOGRAPHY BY WAYNE.GLOWACKI@FREEPRESS.MB.CA

Long forgotten, TB explodes on northern reserves

LAC BROCHET — It's minutes before 10 a.m., and Alphonse Denechezhe has just finished his morning spit into a plastic cup.

He puts it next to the others on a wooden shelf in the living room, near where his young son and daughter are sleeping on mattresses. Denechezhe, 42, will take the samples to the nurse, but it could be weeks before anyone knows whether his recent coughing fits and night sweats are what he fears.

Denechezhe calls it "the sickness," the disease that just won't go away.

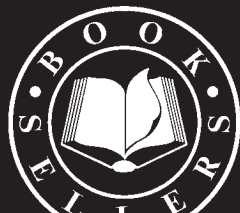
He's watched tuberculosis devastate his family and plague his community for years.

Continued
Please see H3

TV hyperbole: Networks, cable firms clash / H12



For our complete event listings:
mcnallyrobinson.com



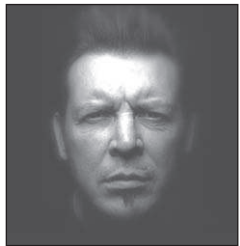
Grant Park 475-0483
Polo Park 943-8376

WILLIAM BOLLEY



Launching
A Sobering Moment
Monday November 2, 8:00 pm
Grant Park

THEO FLEURY



Talk & Signing
Playing With Fire
Tuesday November 3, 6:00 pm
Polo Park

ROSINA SINOPOLI



Launching
Beloved
Wednesday November 4, 8:00 pm
Grant Park

JON WALDMAN & GREG OLIVER



Launching
Slam! Wrestling: Shocking Stories from the Squared Circle
Thursday November 5, 7:00 pm
Polo Park

ERIN BOLGER



Signing
The Happy Baker: A Dater's Guide to Emotional Baking
Saturday November 7, 2:00 pm
Grant Park

TUBERCULOSIS: THE FORGOTTEN DISEASE



MANITOBA ARCHIVES

Before antibiotics, fresh air and rest were the main treatment for tuberculosis. These patients are on the veranda of the Ninette sanatorium in 1912.

Healthy food has a high price tag

UNIVERSITY of Saskatchewan researcher Paul Hackett, who studies the historical spread of disease in First Nations, says federal government policies have encouraged aboriginals to be sedentary for more than a century. Reserves were created to make First Nations abandon migratory patterns, and residential schools taught children to shun traditional ways and adopt a westernized lifestyle.

The result came with a price. The number of Manitobans suffering from Type 2 diabetes, caused in part by unhealthy food and lack of exercise, has doubled in the last 20 years. Prevalence of Type 2 diabetes in First Nations in areas such as Island Lake has skyrocketed — rates among aboriginal women tripled, rates among aboriginal men quadrupled.

Diabetes puts people at greater risk of contracting a host of diseases, including TB, but the cost of healthy food in the north is out of reach for many people. While many residents still hunt wild game for the bulk of their protein, some families rely on store-bought food flown in from Thompson or Winnipeg.

There's little difference between the price of soda and processed foods in northern and southern Manitoba, but fresh produce and perishable items are at a premium in the north. In Lac Brochet, four litres of milk cost more than \$13, a bag of apples and bananas is close to \$10.

A Northern Store employee said the community has asked for years to no avail for subsidies to make milk affordable. Big families need lots of milk for the children and can't always afford to buy enough, he said. Fresh milk often spoils in the store because few people can pay the hefty price.

"The bad stuff is the cheaper stuff, the processed foods you can bring in on a winter road in a semi, store it for a long period of time," said Hackett. "I heard Kool-Aid is one of the cheap things people use to give to babies."

"There's bad choices being made, but sometimes the bad choices are inevitable."



Northlands First Nation in Lac Brochet, one of Manitoba's most remote communities, has earned a dubious distinction as a global TB hot spot. It and several other Manitoba communities health officials will not name recorded some of the the highest rates of TB in the world since the mid-1970s.

More than a decade ago, Denechezhe watched his ex-wife nearly die of TB of the brain in a Winnipeg hospital isolation room. He and all 18 people who lived in the same three-bedroom house tested positive for TB, too. He was supposed to wear a mask and take medication for nine months to cure his "sleeping TB."

But Denechezhe doesn't trust medication, not even Tylenol. He stopped taking the TB pills when he couldn't handle the intense side-effects of nausea and fatigue. He failed to finish his medication again two years ago, after a nurse warned him the disease could strike at any time.

Now, he's been coughing for weeks and worries he's already infected his young son who started coughing days go.

"Maybe it'll kill me. I don't know," said Denechezhe. "But this sickness seems to be carrying on. We get rid of it for a little while, but it seems to pop up left and right."



Lac Brochet is one of several Manitoba communities that have recorded some of the highest rates of TB in the world.

It's been more than three decades since the last sanatorium in the province shut its doors and tuberculosis faded in the minds of most Manitobans.

But TB never went away. It is still rampant in First Nations communities in northern Manitoba. It's a medical illness propagated by non-medical factors, tangled in a historical and political web that has long neglected the poverty that helps TB survive.

TB is a barometer for overall health: Where there is poverty and suffering, there is TB. Plain and simple, it is a symptom of poverty, a byproduct of overcrowded homes, malnutrition and poor overall health.

That same deadly mix let H1N1 flourish in the north this summer and made TB a scourge on Manitoba reserves for a century.

Medical experts warned for years that a major problem would arise in the north if TB outbreaks and the living conditions that contribute to them were not addressed. The warning went unheeded, and the disease exploded in places such as Lac Brochet five years ago. Now, Manitoba has one of the highest TB rates in the country.

In northern Manitoba, living conditions on some reserves are often described as Third World — many houses are decrepit, some don't have toilets or running water, and multiple families are crammed under one roof. Inadequate hygiene, rotting walls and close quarters make reserves ripe for the spread of an airborne disease. When one person gets sick, everybody gets sick.

In 1937, TB officials noted that overcrowded homes and poor living conditions on reserves con-

tributed to the high rate of disease among First Nations people. In 2009, as many as 18 people are crammed into three-bedroom houses at Lac Brochet.

It's no wonder that community recorded some of the highest TB rates in the world — more than 600 cases per 100,000, more than 100 times what it should be. By comparison, the national rate in Canada is five cases per 100,000. In developing countries such as Bangladesh, the rate is slightly below 400 cases per 100,000.

Last year, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs petitioned Canada's auditor general to investigate what federal health officials are doing to control the rising rates of infectious diseases such as TB on reserves. Grand Chief Ron Evans hasn't heard back. He has no idea how many cases of TB surface on reserves because federal and provincial health officials refuse to divulge the number of cases on reserves, saying to do so would "harm relations" with the federal government. It took months through sources, documents and visiting remote communities to uncover which reserves have been hit hard by TB.

This is the first time this information has been made public.

CONTINUED ON H4, H5

TUBERCULOSIS: THE FORGOTTEN DISEASE



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE LIBRARY

Ninette Sanatorium in 1939. Wartime, then on the horizon, would bring advances in antibiotics.

It smouldered for 40 years, then exploded

DR. Stuart Carey's warning was prophetic. It came after he watched the last group of aboriginal tuberculosis patients leave the Clearwater Lake Hospital in The Pas on a winter morning in 1965. The war on TB was over and won, health officials decreed, thanks to modern antibiotics. In the south, among the white population, that was true.

But the same hour the sanatorium cleared out, an aboriginal man walked into the outpatient department. He had far-advanced TB.

"In northern Manitoba, tuberculosis still smoulders slowly like muskeg fires. If outbreaks are not tracked down and stamped out one by one, a major problem could arise," Carey wrote in his last report as medical director of Clearwater Lake.

Carey was right.

TB simmered under the radar for 40 years and then, five years ago, it exploded. Outbreaks began to erupt on northern reserves where malnutrition, poor housing and crowded conditions created the perfect storm for an explosion of TB.

Manitoba now has one of the highest rates of TB in Canada because the disease has been allowed to spread rampant in the First Nations population. On some reserves, the TB rate is more than 100 times the national average.

"It was neglect," said Dr. Earl Hershfield, former director of Manitoba's TB program who spent more than 30 years at its helm.

"It's like anything else. The program is working so let's spend our money elsewhere and then the program is dismantled... it's the systems that fell apart."

The first major TB outbreak hit York Factory First Nation in 2004, where 23 people had active TB, in a community of just 400.

A second big outbreak hit Lac Brochet in spring 2005. It was so massive, 700 of the community's 960 residents had to be screened for signs of illness. Close to one-third tested positive.

By the end of 2005, northern health officials had eight remote communities on their radar as TB hot spots.

The cycle of infection hasn't stopped since then. Cases and clusters continue to crop up — the number of TB cases reported in Manitoba between January and August 2009 increased nearly 25 per cent over the same period last year.

Two major TB outbreaks were recorded in the north in 2008, but provincial health officials, who cite privacy rules, will not identify the communities. A total of 28 people were infected with TB, according to data obtained through a freedom of information request.

The same poor living conditions that let Spanish flu and measles tear through reserves in the last century are now an open invitation for TB. The pandemic outbreak of Spanish flu in 1918 hit impoverished aboriginal communities hard. In Norway House Cree Nation, nearly one in five people died. In the late 1940s, a fairly widespread measles epidemic swept through northern First

Nations communities in Manitoba, killing 34 people in Brochet in 1947.

"Do we learn from our mistakes? Do we learn from history? The answer may be no. We repeat them," said researcher Paul Hackett, who studies TB in First Nations. "We tend to think we've defeated things, we've solved all our problems and we're onto the next problem. But sometimes they're in the background."

"It's just sitting there waiting to reactivate."

The spike in cases brought back sad memories of a time when many First Nations people died of TB. That dark legacy is partly why some people, such as Alfonse Denechezhe, a Lac Brochet man who in 18 months missed 17 appointments for TB treatment, still fear seeking medical treatment.

The province's first sanatorium opened in Ninette in 1910, but First Nations were left out of TB care for nearly 30 years due to bureaucratic squabbles between the federal and provincial governments. While white patients from across Manitoba were sequestered in sanatoriums and put on regimes of bedrest, calorie-rich diets, fresh air and sunlight — the only treatment available in the first half of the century — First Nations people died of TB in droves on reserves and in residential schools.

By 1931, TB experts discovered the death rate among Manitoba First Nations people was 15 times higher than the rest of the population. Even then, overcrowded homes and poor living conditions on reserves gave TB an open invitation to spread rapidly. The federal government made sanatorium care available for aboriginals in 1939, but due to bed and staff shortages in the north, some died before their TB was detected. Others' illness reached advanced stages while they awaited treatment.

Many aboriginal patients who were taken away to sanatoriums never returned. Relatives have no idea where their bodies are.

"It's probably not only me, but a lot of people are scared to go (to the nurse) just to get tested," Denechezhe said. "I'm pretty sure a lot of people are avoiding getting tested."

Fear and misconceptions about TB make it difficult for health workers to convince patients they must show up for medical appointments and take the full course of medication.

Health officials are extremely concerned about patients who don't finish all the medication or take it intermittently, because that increases their odds of relapse or the TB becoming drug-resistant and much harder to treat.

"Most of us had to have a mask on, to cover ourselves when we're coughing and stuff like that. But we didn't all follow through with everything, you know? We don't live like that," Denechezhe said.

"We don't always follow the rules. We go home and throw away the mask and that's it."



KEN GIGLIOTTI / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE LIBRARY

Aboriginal children at the Brandon sanatorium in the mid-1950s head off to the schoolroom.



The grey house looks nearly identical to the other dozen sandwiched close together in 'central' Lac Brochet on a slope near the lake. The two bedrooms and one bathroom are the only divided rooms in the house, and there is little room left for people and furniture in the small space.

Continued from H3

LAC Brochet's Dene community lives in one of the most remote places in Manitoba — the northwest corner of the province, about 200 kilometres north of Lynn Lake. A group of families broke away from Brochet to settle in Lac Brochet in the early 1970s.

Northlands First Nation was to be a remote haven where the Dene could hunt caribou, fish and live off the land. The isolation was supposed to preserve traditional ways of life. Instead, it has exacerbated a flurry of health and social problems in recent years.

Few people have jobs, and there's no way off the reserve except to fly out for a medical appointment or brave the 13-hour, white-knuckle ride on the winter road to Thompson.

Denechezhe said people are cooped up in cramped quarters during the long winter, an invitation for TB to spread.

"It's just frustrating sometimes to even talk about it, and the more you talk about it the angrier you get," he said.

In 2001, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada estimated a shortfall of 8,500 houses on northern reserves and close to half of existing homes required renovations. Since then, the shortage has worsened, largely due to limited construction and a birthrate twice the national average.

The reserve baby boom has left many young families homeless. In Lac Brochet, close to 1,000 residents live in 135 houses. People like Denechezhe are among the hidden homeless who crowd into relatives' homes because they have nowhere else to stay.

He and two of his children live in his mother's two-bedroom house with five other family members. The grey house looks nearly identical to the other dozen sandwiched close together in "central" Lac Brochet on a slope near the lake. The two bedrooms and one bathroom are the only divided rooms in the house, and there is little room left for people and furniture in the small space.

Denechezhe sleeps on the couch in the living room; his son and daughter sleep on mattresses on the living room floor.

The washer and dryer are crammed in front of one of two exits — something Denechezhe worries could be disastrous if fire broke out.

"I'm 42 years old, and I'm still living with my mom. It's not supposed to be like that," said Denechezhe, who works in the band office.

Half of Lac Brochet's houses were included in a recent study and nearly half of those housed at least one person who had contracted TB. Most of the houses are overcrowded, with an average of eight people per household — four times the Canadian average.

Continued
Please see H5

It's been a Good Week for...

Peter Donolo



... once and future Liberal backroom heavyweight. He becomes party leader Michael Ignatieff's chief of staff, replacing Ian Davey, son of one-time rainmaker Keith Davey. The politically tone-deaf Ignatieff has lately been outmanoeuvred by a piano-playing Stephen Harper, but Donolo has faced tougher PR challenges than this one. He's particularly celebrated for his turn as Jean Chrétien's communications director in the '90s. Derided by the Tories as "yesterday's man," Chrétien went on to win three majority governments. The Grits hope lightning can strike again.

Zawi Hawass

... Egypt's top archeologist. Hawass, head of the country's Supreme Council of Antiquities, persuaded New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art to return a fragment of a shrine honouring the 12th Dynasty King Amenemhat I, who ruled 4,000 years ago. The assertive and media-savvy archaeologist has been on an international lobbying campaign to reclaim from the world's most prestigious museums what he says are stolen Egyptian artifacts. These include the Rosetta Stone in the British Museum and a bust of Queen Nefertiti in a Berlin museum.

Sarah Palin

... the former Alaska governor, former GOP vice-presidential candidate and perhaps the Republican presidential candidate in '12. She reported reeling in a cool \$1.25 million from HarperCollins as "retainer for book." Palin's memoir, *Going Rogue: An American Life*, is to hit bookstores Nov. 17. Her financial-disclosure document, covering her final seven months as governor, also listed, among other items, \$1,664 from evangelist Franklin Graham's Samaritan's Purse for airfare as part of an effort to deliver food aid to remote villages last spring.

