

SEDA debaters win Championship!

For the first time in the history of the Junior Nationals, started in 1986, a Saskatchewan team has emerged victorious from the rigors of competition.

The 2011 Junior High National Debate Championships began on Thursday May 12 with the arrival of the delegates in Regina. There were 34 teams altogether, with four team from each of British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec. There were five teams from both Alberta and Nova Scotia, and as host province, Saskatchewan sent eight teams. There were over 30 coaches, parents and family members also attending as observers.

SEDA staff and volunteers were busy all day picking up arrivals at the airport. Delegates each received a handbook for the event and magnetic bookmarks from the Lieutenant Governor tucked into folders provided by Saskatchewan Lotteries and a dark blue water bottle donated by SaskTel. K5 Water Supply in Estevan donated jugs of water for the weekend. Six Winnipeg delegates and their coach braved the flooded plains and drove directly to Estevan, while most of the Saskatchewan delegation traveled to Estevan Friday at their own leisure with their families.

Early arrivals had the opportunity to explore Regina before joining everyone at the Luther College Residence on the University of Regina Campus. Delegates took great advantage of the informal dorm atmosphere to get to know each other, including a few pick up games of basketball. Some delegates even rushed to purchase Cougar sportswear before leaving.

Friday morning began with a tour of Government House, where delegates explored the grounds on a geocaching scavenger hunt and toured through the historic home of past Lieutenant Governors. The interpretive center provided much fun, as a group of delegates dressed the guys in olden day dresses and the girls in tuxedo tails and caps to pose in the prop carriage.



The two and a half hour bus trip to Estevan flew by as delegates had a chance to visit, and to get a sense of the prairie landscape, including the many new “lakes” along the highway caused by the excessive water. As they got closer to Estevan, they caught glimpses of the iconic oil wells pumping away as well as some of the other industrial equipment.



After a quick stop at the Estevan Comprehensive School to grab Quiznos subs and some cookies, the delegates were back on the bright Yellow and Blue Moose Mountain Company busses. It was a short drive out to the Shand Power Station and the Prairie Mines. Equipped with hardhats, safety glasses and yellow foam earplugs, one half of the group toured the impressive power plant. After a short explanation of the process, delegates wandered through the intricate maze of piping and the massive turbines, boilers and steam condenser units. They did not have a chance to tour the greenhouse.

The other group stayed aboard the bus for the trip to the Prairie Mines across the road, where an engineer guided the bus through parts of the mining field dry enough for a tour. Delegates learned about the strip mining process, saw the huge buckets attached to the dragline excavators, rode past the enormous trucks used to haul the coal (all sitting unused due to the flooding of the area) and followed the route to the coal dump area at the Shand Power Station. The groups then switched to experience the other tour. Both places provided delegates with a wealth of information and detailed statistics about the mining and power industries that rely on fossil fuels. From the high vantage point of the Station, the flooded Valley was quite a sight.

After the tours, delegates returned to Estevan to check-in at the brand new Best Western Plus hotel right down the road from the Estevan Comprehensive School. With just minutes to get to their rooms and change, delegates had to quickly board the bus again to rush to the school for the official opening ceremonies.

Delegates were officially greeted by the enthusiastic and dedicated members of the Estevan Comprehensive School debate club, lead by former Junior Nationals attendees Shaylee Foord and her partner Amber Dechief (2010), plus Adam George and Jordan Walliser

(2008) who handed out lime green shoulder bags from SaskPower, filled with goodies from the Town of Estevan and other community supporters.

The Cafetorium served as the main gathering place all weekend. The opening ceremonies introduced the delegates to the official hosts of the Nationals, coaches Lori Cline-Flath and Margaret Duncan, plus SEDA staff Lorelie DeRoose (Executive Director), Megan Moncrief (Administrative Assistant) and Jennifer Buxton (North Debate Consultant). Kehan Fu (Juniors 2009 – 8th place team) and Stefan Belev (Sr Nationals attendee) also made the trip down from Saskatoon to volunteer. The club members were also called on stage and recognized. Co-host Pam Dechief was unable to attend Friday night.

Special guests Mike Little, Principal, Lynn Chiple, Estevan City Councilor, Doreen Eagles, MLA Estevan and Ed Komarnicki, MP Souris-Moose Mountain each brought greetings and stayed to judge. The pasta and Caesar salad supper for everyone was prepared by the School's industrial cooking club. While judges were being briefed, Kehan and Stefan went through the basics of cross-examination style and answered any questions the delegates had.

Finally, teams were randomly paired off (with provincial protections) to debate both sides of the prepared cross-examination topic: *This house believes Canada should rely on renewable fuel sources instead of fossil fuels*. With 17 rooms to fill with officials, most rooms had three judges, with just a couple having one or two and every room had a moderator/timekeeper. In a city hit by unprecedented flooding, the community support was amazing, including donations from Spectra Credit Union and TS&M Supply.

As they were leaving the school, debaters each grabbed white t-shirts with a simple stalk of wheat and the Junior Nationals place and date on the pocket crest, printed in the School's distinctive dark red and blue colours. Adult delegates had a choice of farmer caps, donated by Redhead Equipment, Nelson Motors and Equipment, Senchuk Ford Sales Ltd., Bourassa & Sons Ltd, Apex Industries and Murray GM. The long day finally concluded with everyone making the short walk back to the hotel.

Saturday morning started off with another briefing by Kehan and Stefan about National style, with the first round of impromptu debate starting around 9:30. The bracketed pairings were based on the delegates' win/loss record of the previous evening. Impromptu topics for the day were: RIII: This house supports workers' right to strike; RIV: This house would make attending high school voluntary; RV: This house believes that the assassination of political leaders is justifiable; RVI: This house believes advertising does more harm than good.

As happens with bracketed tournaments, there was a bit of down time for debaters and judges to relax between rounds. Sobey's and Nutter's both made donations to help with refreshments for the break times. The roasted beef sandwiches, macaroni salad and ice cream lunch was provided by St. Giles Anglican Church. The fifth round started a little later than planned, but by the end of the sixth round, we weren't too much off schedule. Debaters then had a chance to return to the hotel to change and return to the school for hay rides and a roast beef, mashed potatoes, and chicken in mushroom sauce supper catered by E B's Dining and Estevan Bowl.



Just after supper, the semi-finalists were announced, in no particular order: Brie Dukeshire/Sarah Millman, NS; Swarochish Goswami/Joshua Handy, AB; Jake Marchand/Rory Flynn, NS; and Nasra Moumin/Areeb Salim, SK.

Debaters played some improv games at the school's tropical courtyard while interested adult delegates gathered in the plush leather-coached staff room to discuss issues involving Junior Nationals in general and specific to this year, including next year's innovative idea to host both Junior and Senior Nationals at the same time, proposed by the Quebec hosts of those events. Many changes were made to the Constitution: Clause 6, namely to make all rounds in Canadian National Debate Format, change the wording to ensure the current practice of bracketing can be used, and to ensure that none of the results are announced after each round. On behalf of all the delegates, coach Tracy Dalglish of Ontario thanked the organizers for a great event and for continuing despite the flooding crisis.

Debaters made their way to the Bowling alley and the adults joined them as soon as the meeting adjourned. With strobe lights and popular music blaring, the bowling alley was like a mini night-club, inspiring dancing and a fun relaxing time. Most debaters could rest easy knowing their debating was now done, leaving just the four teams to spend the night in anticipation for the next day's semi-finals.

Delegates once again loaded on to buses for the return trip to Regina. The grand Hotel Saskatchewan was host to our finals, banquet and awards. The semi-finalists were quickly ushered into the Library to receive the topic: *This house believes Canada is the 51st state*. All teams amicably negotiated their sides. Alberta's Swarowisch Goswami and Joshua Handy (opp) faced Nova Scotia's Rory Flynn and Jake Marchand (prop) in the Library, while a home-town crowd packed the Saskatchewan Suite to watch Nasra Moumin and Areeb Salim (prop) square off against the Nova Scotia team of Brie Dukeshire and Sarah Millman (opp).

As soon as the semi-finals concluded, the crowd in the Library quickly founds spots in the Saskatchewan Room and everyone rose for the entrance of His Honour Lieutenant Governor Dr. Gordon L. Barnhart. Everyone remained standing while the vice-royal salute was played. Then, without further delay, the teams of Moumin and Salim and Goswami and Handy were announced as winners of the semi-finals. The resolution was the same as the prepared rounds: *This house believes Canada should rely on renewable fuel sources instead of fossil fuels*, only to be debated in National style this time.

Once again, teams quickly worked out the sides, with Moumin and Salim selecting proposition. Teams were given a few minutes to review their notes and prepare for the debate, while everyone found a comfortable spot in the crowded room. The debate was also watched by two other special guests: Minister for Government Services Laura Ross and Regina Rosemont MLA Trent Wotherspoon. The Speaker of the House Don Toth was unable to attend due to pressing issues with the flood situation.

Everyone was kept in suspense while the group moved to the Regency Ballroom for the buffet luncheon. An elegant mix of salads, cheese trays, spinach lasagna, chicken in cream sauce, and a delightful desert selection was a tasty meal for the banquet. Each honoured guest brought greetings and shared personal and inspiring experiences they've had with debate and public discourse. Many comments were made by experienced coaches that this was one of the best championship finals they've seen in along time, including Senior Nationals finals!

Finally, the awards were presented, with Mr. Wotherspoon offering congratulations to the top provincial teams, the Honorable Laura Ross the top provincial speakers and His Honour presented the top overall speaker and team awards. With the two finalists on stage, it was a great pleasure for our hosts to announce the team of Nasra Moumin and Areeb Salim of Campbell Collegiate as the 2011 Junior National Champions! Nasra Moumin also captured the top speaker award, with Areeb Salim a close second. This is believed to be the first time every that a Saskatchewan team has achieved this honour since the event was started in 1986. (Nasra and Areeb were invited to attend the Legislature on Monday May 16th and were presented to the Speaker and MLAs in the House. They also met briefly with the Premier in his Office.)



With the formal departure of the Lieutenant Governor, the 2011 Junior High National Debate Championships officially concluded. Most delegates had a few free hours to explore Regina and tour the Legislature before boarding the bus one final time for their trip to the airport. Great friendships were made in a short but intense time and everyone lingered as much as possible in their good-byes.

The Nationals were a success in every way, not just because of the home team win, but due to the dedication of the volunteer hosts, their debate club, and their community for hosting an amazing event. A special thank you goes to all our sponsors and all the visiting coaches who helped out with judging.