

## Empowering Manitoba youth: interviews

The Manitoba Summer Games are in full swing! For more information on the games, [see our story](#) from last week.

*Hydrogram* spoke with a few more young athlete participants such as **Felix**, son of **Susan Collins** (Indigenous & Community Relations), who discovered a passion for sailing when team sports were on hold during the pandemic. Sailing isn't as breezy as some might think, though, it takes serious mental fortitude.



*Felix out on West Hawk Lake, taking in the picturesque scene.*

*Alt-text: Felix sits in a small sailboat out on a lake surrounded by a forest.*

### **What got you interested in sailing and when did you start?**

This will be my fifth year sailing. I started the first summer of the pandemic. My parents don't sail and didn't know anything about sailing, but we had seen the Winnipeg Sailing Centre at Fort Whyte. It was one of the only sports you could do that summer — due to restrictions. I did a week-long camp and I liked it, so I kept at it.

Now I sail with Sail Manitoba's team. We do weekend training sessions and races at the different clubs in Manitoba. Last year I went to Gimli, Pelican Lake, West Hawk, Victoria Beach, and Falcon Lake. My favourite is West Hawk because there are lots of little islands that you can race around and hide behind.

### **Have you participated in any sailing competitions in the past?**

Yes. I've competed in the Manitoba Provincial Regatta a few times, the Centennial Cup, and Sail West. I'm a year too young to qualify for the 2025 Canada Games but I want to be in the next one.

The boat I sail is called an Optimist. I'll be in an Opti this year and probably next year unless I grow a lot by then. Then I'll move up to a boat called an ILCA, which used to be called a Laser. I like sailing single-handed boats, so I think I'll stay in an ILCA. Some people race double-handed boats that need two sailors, but I'm less interested in those.



*Felix posing with an Opti in Gimli.*

Alt-text: Felix standing in front of his sailboat while on the beach.

### **What is your favourite part about sailing?**

It's a sport that requires athleticism and strategy. You have to pay attention to the wind, the water conditions and the other racers. When you start a race, you have a plan for how you're going to tackle the course and where you're going to make your tacks, but conditions can shift really quickly on a lake, so you need to keep your focus and adjust to the changes.

I love being on the water, the feeling of going fast, and the independence of sailing. There's a coach boat that will help you if you need it, but sometimes you can work it out yourself. In my first race at Gimli a few years ago, I hadn't rigged my boat properly — the knot at the end of my mainsheet rope wasn't tied

tight enough and came undone. I was bobbing out there with my sail flapping in the wind and I was hanging off the edge of my boat trying to grab it (while trying not to tip) so I could get it rigged again. I got it in the end but didn't place very well that day.

I used to be really worried about capsizing (capsizing is a totally normal part of sailing a boat like an Opti). When I was 9 or 10, I struggled to right the boat when I capsized because I was so small, so I sailed super cautiously to avoid capsizing. Luckily, it's easier now that I've grown a bit, but it can still be tough. Last year I was sailing at Falcon and the wind really picked up, I had capsized and just couldn't right the boat in the wind. I had to swim my boat into the public beach, but it was fine.

When you're sailing, every day is going to be different, so it's always interesting. If people are interested in sailing, they should try it. You don't need a boat to start off with (I don't have one). The sailing schools at the different clubs have boats that you can use.

From the lakes to the courts, *Hydrogram* passed the ball over to **Jaxon**, son of **Jazmen Larocque** (Safety/Health & Environment), to tell us about his favourite sport: basketball.



*Jaxon catching air, reaching for the dunk.*

Alt-text: Jaxon jumping up and preparing to place a basketball through the hoop.

**What got you interested in basketball and when did you start playing?**

My older brother played basketball while I was in middle school and that really got me interested in trying out the sport. In Grade 8 I started playing it myself and had a blast.

**Are you excited for the Manitoba Summer Games? What are you looking forward to the most about the event?**

I am very excited to play in the Summer Games. I think it's going to be a great experience. I am really looking forward to seeing all the different events and all the athletes that will be attending. I am mostly looking forward to playing against the other high caliber basketball teams.

**What is your favourite part about playing basketball?**

As much as I like being part of a team and seeing how well we play together, I really love to dunk the basketball. It's a great rush and it gets the team pumped up!

**Do you have a basketball hero, if so, who?**

I do enjoy watching Victor "Wemby" Wembanyama, he plays for the San Antonio Spurs in the NBA. I also really look up to my older brother as he has taught me a lot about the sport.



*Unstoppable!*

Alt-text: Jaxon jumping up to knock the basketball away from his opponent while playing a game in a gym.

Coming at us from the field of dreams is **Bonnie Fortin's** (Business Solutions) son, **Jake**. He played with the Interlake Orioles in the AAA division this summer and has been picked up by the Western Canadian Baseball League with the St James A's!



*Going for the grand slam!*

Alt-text: Action shot of Jake hitting the baseball.

**What got you interested in baseball and when did you start competing?**

I'd say it's in my blood, I always liked it - we went to the diamonds a lot when I was small where I got really interested in it.

**Are you excited for the Manitoba Summer Games? What are you looking forward to the most about the event?**

Yes I am, I am looking forward to staying in athletes village and meeting other athletes.

**What is your favourite part about baseball, what fuels your passion?**

My favorite part of being on a team is hanging out and learning from each other.

**Do you have a baseball hero/inspiration, if so, who?**

Yes, my dad [Troy](#). He was drafted to The Minnesota Twins when he was younger and was the first Manitoban to be drafted to the MLB! He also played with the Goldeyes for a few years.



*Like father, like son. Jake is a catcher, same as his dad.*

Alt-text: Action shot of Jake in his catcher gear, throwing the ball from home base.