



Contributed photo

From left: Hailey McGuire, Morgan Gee, Sarah Elson, Patricia Robertson and Stevie Mazur at the world qualifiers in Edmonton last November.

It's the world for dancers

FORT ST. JOHN – Five dancers from the Watt School of Irish Dance are training hard for the World Championships in Belfast Ireland, March 23-30.

The five advanced dancers qualified for this prestigious event at the Western Canadian World Qualifying which was held in Edmonton in November.

Sarah Elson, Hailey McGuire, Stevie Mazur, Morgan Gee and Patricia Robertson will join about 4,000 dancers from around the world - all hoping to make their mark at this major event.

The girls have had a successful year at the North America Championships held in Ottawa with Mazur making it to the podium placing fifth in her age group.

Gee and Robertson placed in the top 20. Joining the advanced dancers at a regional com-

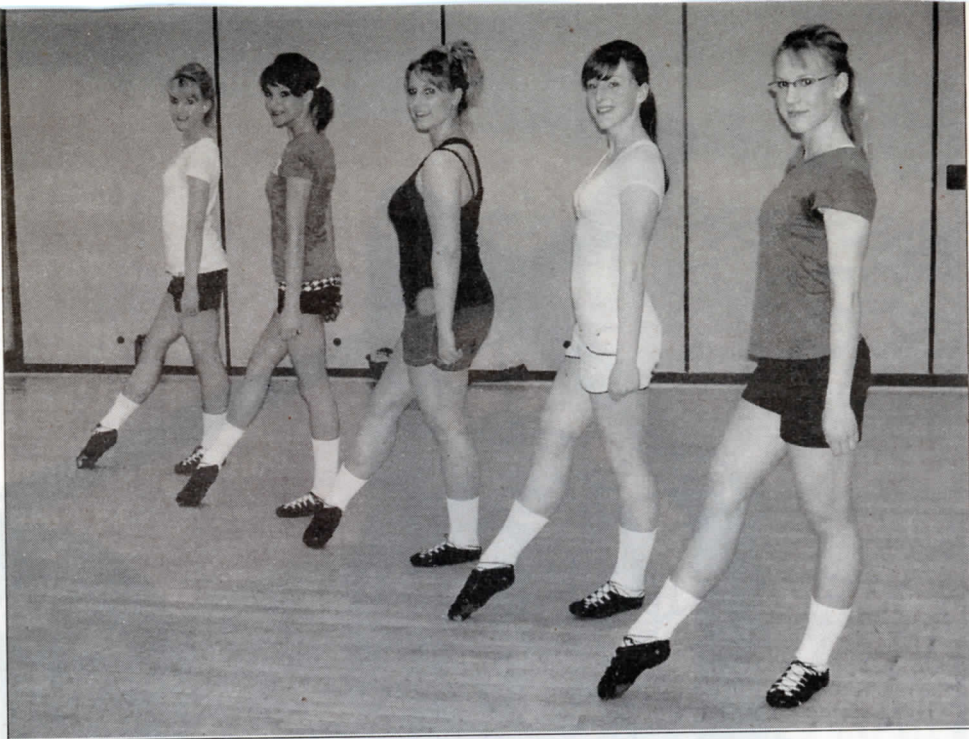
petition in Edmonton recently were intermediate dancers Sarah Kantz, Megan Hansen, Robyn Bickford and Jessie Bickford, who returned home with many medals.

A larger group of dancers hope to attend the April competition in Sherwood Park, AB. They will be joined by some of the beginner dancers from the school taking to the stage for the first time.

The Watt School of Irish Dance has seen its dancers do well on the North America and world stage. Some have gone on to perform with major dance shows like Lord of the Dance and the US show, Celtic Fusion.

Twenty years later the teacher says it's good to see the young dancers of today have the same goals and expectations.

- Contributed



Hailey McGuire(16), Morgan Gee (14), Sarah Elson (18), Patricia Robertson (14) and Stevie Mazur (15)

Local dancers following dream to Ireland

Five dedicated Irish Dancers from FSJ are following their dreams all the way to Belfast, Ireland to compete in the Irish Dancing World Championships. The 38th Annual Oireachtas Rince na Cruinne is the highest level of Irish Dance competition in the world. This year the event will draw close to 4,000 athletes; all hoping to dance their way to first place.

Hailey McGuire(16), Morgan Gee (14), Sarah Elson (18), Patricia Robertson (14) and Stevie Mazur (15) have been training with the Watt School of Irish Dance for at least the past decade with their sights on winning this monumental competition. "Your whole dance career you work towards making it to the worlds... which is the top of the top", says McGuire who placed ninth in the Western Canadian Championship, the qualifying competition for the Worlds.

Like any competitive sport, training can be demanding and arduous at times. Robertson states it is "competing and the love for the sport" that motivates them to train long, rigorous hours, week after week, year after year. Competition is so important to the girls, some of them have even competed through injuries sustained while practicing.

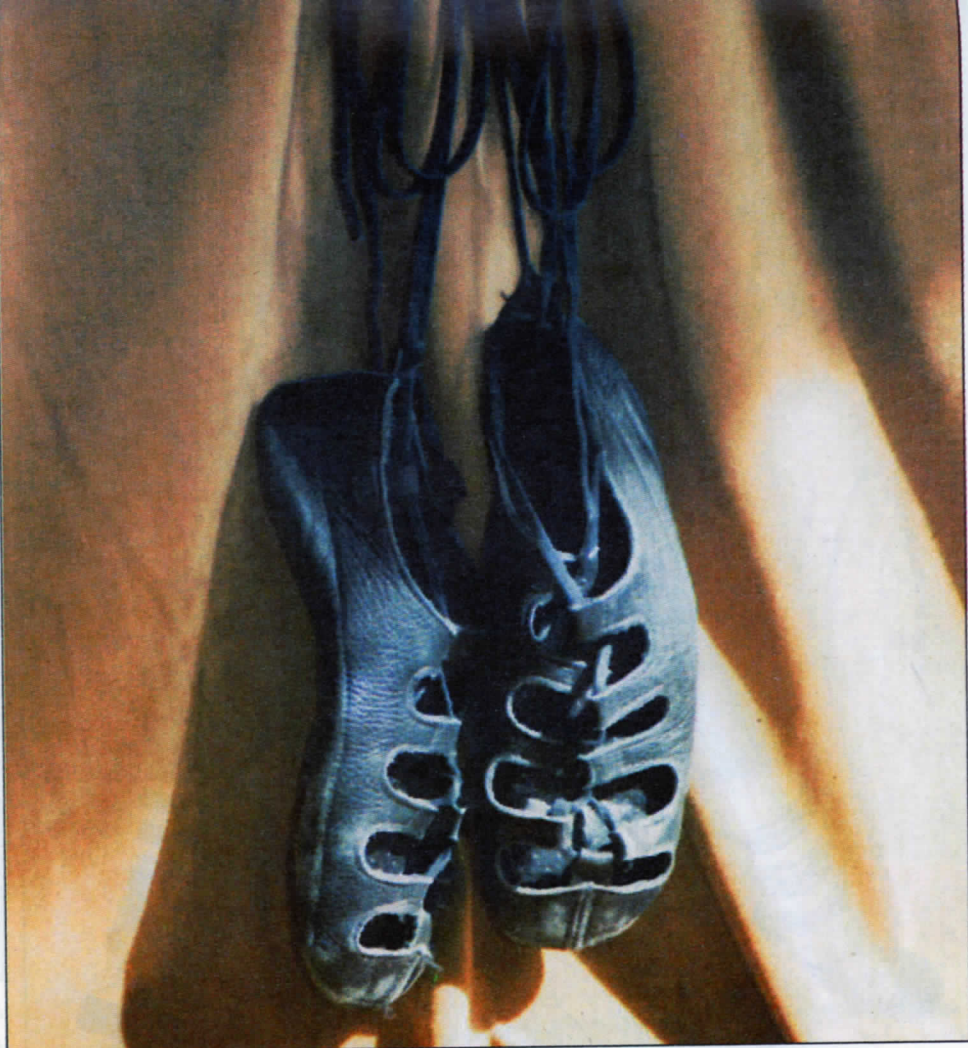
Often forgoing other sports and social events the girls say their lives revolve around dancing and without it, they would not know what to do with themselves. "You don't have much time to do other activities.... once you

get to a really competitive level you have to dedicate yourself completely to Irish Dance" says Elson, who has placed fifth in the qualifying championship this year. Gee says the sport "sometimes takes sacrifices, but in the end, it's definitely worth it".

It is more than training that has gotten these girls to the Worlds. It is a combination of passion and discipline states Jo Watt, who heads the Watt Irish Dance Society. "You have to love it, you have to be passionate about it to reach this level because it's very disciplined, "very disciplined"; you don't miss classes, unless you have an injury... (these girls) are very passionate about it... if you are not, it never works". The bar is so high in this competition, the girls are required to perform at their optimal capacity, giving everything they have to the dance; body, mind and soul.

While they face enormous pressure at the World's, Mazur says it begins internally, during training. "You put the pressure on yourself because you have the goals you want to reach". The individual goal is always to reach the highest level for yourself, and potentially exceeding that level in future competitions; always striving for number one.

The World's begin on the 23rd of March and continue a process of elimination until the winners are decided on the 30th. The hope is that the next Irish Dance World Champion will reign from Fort St. John



Pomeroy Academy of Irish Dance wins

The Pomeroy Academy of Irish Dance competed in the ISSS (Irish Sports & Social Society) Feis in Edmonton on Feb 15-16th. The following dancers participated in this regional competition:

Courtney Cowger Sarah Cowger Wyatt Weber Ryelee Hiebert Kyra Westman Tiana Warriner Jordyn Warriner Paige Campbell Kirstyn Peever Jacquie Gulevich Marin White Callan White Cacia White Shaylene Trask Randi Whitford Bailey Large

The aggregate total the Fort St. John dancers brought home was 50 medals and 13 trophies. Teacher Shaelan Pomeroy was very pleased with the results and hard work from her dancers.

On March 15, 2008 the Slainte Society of Irish Dance and the Pomeroy Academy of Irish Dance is continuing our tradition of bring the Irish Spirit to Fort St. John and Taylor with the 5th Annual St. Patrick's Day Ceile. It will

be an evening of fun, dance and entertainment.

The Irish word Ceile (ôkay-leeö) originally referred to gathering of neighbors in a house to have an enjoyable time, dancing playing music and storytelling. Today it refers to an informal evening of dancing. In Ireland, Ceiles are held in large towns and country districts where young and old enjoy together group dances.

The Slainte Society of Irish Dance and the Pomeroy Academy Of Irish Dance welcomes all our community members to join us at our Ceile and enjoy a little Irish fun to celebrate St. Patrick's Day.

The evening of desserts, coffee, tea and dancing starts at 7:00pm at the Taylor Community Hall. The tickets may be purchased in advance at Smarti Pantz (9913-103Ave) or the Taylor District office. for \$10 per adult, \$5 for a child.

Don't forget to wear green!!



Tessa Holloway/AHN

HOLIDAY DANCE

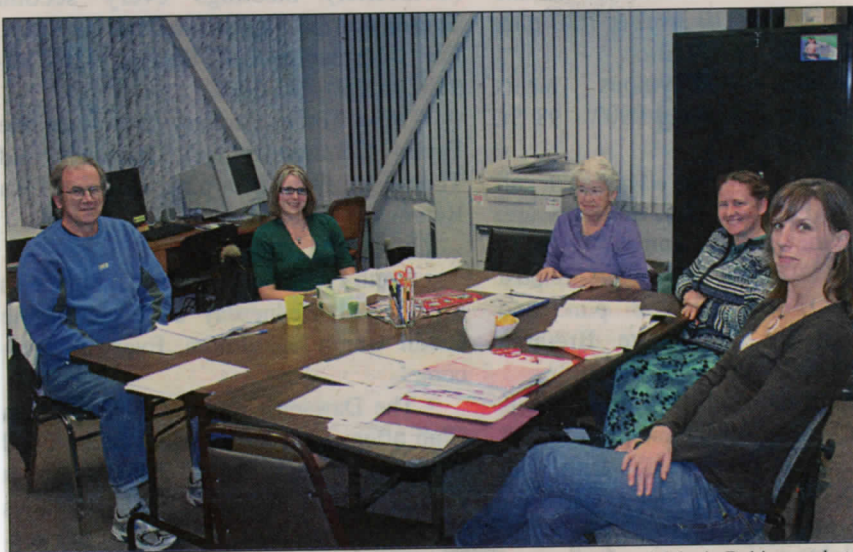
Dancers from the Pomeroy Academy of Irish Dance light up the stage at the annual Kin Club Seniors' Supper at the Pomeroy Hotel Tuesday night, with several dancers wearing unique solo dresses. The troupe recently had two local dancers qualify for the North American Irish Dance Championships next July in Nashville.

Northeast NEWS



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The Pomeroy Academy of Irish Dance dancers were kicking their heels up at the Peace River Regional District Volunteer Awards night in Taylor on Oct. 18.



Melanie Robinson photo

Five more students have completed an 18-hour course at the Fort St. John Literacy Society and will now be volunteering in the community to teach those with low level literacy and English as a Second Language. The students were congratulated with certificates on Oct. 20. From right: Christine Bourgeois, Literacy Society; Audrey Friesen, Leona McGuire, Lindsay Sahaydak, Dave Constable and missing: Myrna Harris



Kelly Lapointe/AHN

JOLLY JIG

Four-year-olds Elanor Copes and Claire Cullinan practice their steps in a preschool Irish dance class at the Pomeroy Academy of Irish Dance. There are still spaces available in the class which runs Tuesday and Thursday mornings. For more information call the Pomeroy Academy of Irish Dance at 250-787-1827.

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Pomeroy Academy of Irish Dance opens celebrations





The Pomeroy Academy of Irish Dance was in Taylor to help kick off Taylor's 50th Anniversary celebrations. Check out our website for more photos from the weekend.

Photos by Dave Thielen.



JULY 2008

Congratulations to Hailey McGuire in placing 14th in the Girls Under 17 event at the North American Irish Dance competition held in Nashville, Tennessee. We're very proud of you and your fellow dancers from the Watt School of Irish Dance. You girls have shown tremendous talent and dedication to traditional Irish dancing.

Love and hugs, Auntie Lily and Uncle Ron

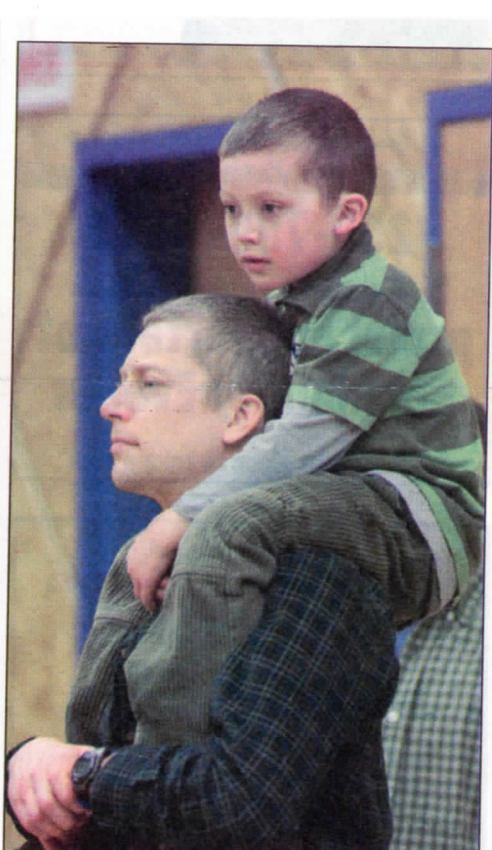


World Irish Dancing Championships 2008, Belfast



5th annual St. Patrick's Day Ceile







The 5th Annual St. Patrick's Day Ceile (pronounced kay-lee), held at the Taylor Community Hall last Saturday, was a night filled with food, music and dancing. The evening was hosted by The Slainte Society of Irish Dance and they were accompanied by dancers, starting at age 3, from the Pomeroy Academy of Irish Dance. The event has always sold out but this year was the fastest ever. Three hundred people turned out this year to watch the dances that the students have been working on all season.

The Ceile is held each year to celebrate Irish traditions and the coming of spring. The crowd was a sea of green. Nary a soul could be found who wasn't clad in St. Patrick's green and the traditional shamrock was always close at hand. After the Irish Blessing was said, the dancing began.

About half of the dancers are competitive; they dance from August to May with competitions almost every month so the dances they showcased last Saturday were very exciting to watch. After the choreographed dances, brave audience members were invited up to try some of the steps, and eventually, the floor was opened up for everyone to strut their stuff.

The Ceile may be over for this year, but rest assured, these dancers will never miss a chance to celebrate all things Irish.



Aleisha Hendry/AHN

INVESTING IRISH MAR 17, 2008

Hailey McGuire and Patricia Robertson from the Watt School of Irish Dance sell raffle tickets at PriceSmart Sunday to raise money for their trip to the upcoming World Irish Dancing Championships in Belfast, Ireland.