



Fifteen Years Later, and Still Going Strong

*by Elaine Byblow
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Grande Cache Search and Rescue, a quiet presence in the community of Grande Cache, Alberta, is still going strong for almost 15 years. The longevity of the organization can be attributed to the Grande Cache spirit of community, commitment and volunteerism. Search and Rescue stays strong in Grande Cache because of the membership's ability to work together as one cohesive group and the members' assurance that proper training and supplies are always in place. The group has been beneficial to a variety of agencies such as the local RCMP, the Grande Cache Fire Department, EMS crews, the Canadian Forces, and other Search and Rescue organizations.

In 2011, the Town of Grande Cache recognized the need for the local SAR group to have a headquarters, and donated a partially constructed building to the non-profit group. Two years later, thanks to many generous donations and many hours of volunteer labour, the building has been brought up to code and is in its final stages of construction. Without the generosity of local industry, this never would have happened. Permits, inspections, and construction costs were well beyond the dollar amount the group could have raised alone.

Like many SAR organizations in Alberta, government resources are not part of the day-to-day funding. Many searches are carried out using members' personal equipment and out of pocket expenses. This can add up when a search becomes extensive. Even though members use most of their own equipment and cover most of their own operating costs, the group relies on corporate sponsorship for the specialized equipment they need to get the job done. In two of their most recent rescues, GC SAR utilized their new all terrain rescue trailer, rope equipment and chain saws, all donated by local industry. Without these donations, these operations could not have been carried out safely and effectively. Group members have taken advantage of every opportunity to learn skills in search fundamentals, standard and wilderness first aid, tracking courses, slope rescue techniques, swift water rescue and various other rescue protocols necessary to carry out successful searches and rescues.

With the eight rescues carried out in the past year, and the three rescues carried out so far this year, GC SAR has utilized most of their donations and are currently fundraising to complete the final phase of their headquarters in addition to their regular expenses involved in keeping rescue equipment current and up to SAR Alberta standards.

The group is grateful for the financial help they have received in the past and they feel confident that the spirit of community that exists in Grande Cache and its surrounding areas will continue to help support what has become an essential service. If you would like to learn more or support Grande Cache Search and Rescue, please visit their website at <http://www.gcsar.ca> where you can contact any executive member.