



**Media Release – For Immediate Release Thursday, November 15, 2018**

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## **Century Mark of County Farm Families Recognized**

Three families who've carried on the farming tradition in the County for over 100 years were recognized during a presentation at today's Agricultural Services Board meeting.

The Martins, whose original homestead is in the Beaverlodge area, and the Sarmagas, farmers near Bezanson, – received the Heritage Homestead Award honouring families who've farmed for a century and retain ownership of their homestead land.

The Bues, Valhalla-area farmers, were recipients of the Pioneer Farming Family Award, which pays tribute to families who've lived and farmed or ranched in the County of Grande Prairie for 100 years, on land they own or have rented.

“The County is steeped in agricultural tradition,” said Sonja Raven, Agricultural Fieldman. “The longevity of these families in farming is remarkable and what they've contributed to the region is an incredible legacy.”

Gavin Martin says the award is a point of pride. “It gives you a sense of your base and roots – where you've come from – and a feeling of building, something to pass on to our girls.”

Gavin inherited a love of farming from his father, James, and now works with uncle, Gary Scorgie, and other family members to tend to 5,000 acres and a 500 cow/calf operation. Included in that acreage is the original homestead of his great-great grandfather Charles McNaught from 1911 and his wife Amy's family farm near Sexmith, first homesteaded by Jean Lozeron in 1913.

“It's 63 kilometres from one end to the other. That's quite a jaunt, but it's worth it,” says Gavin, who serves as secretary on the Wembley Seed Cleaning Association.

Janet Sarmaga was interested to learn the history of her husband Garry's family through the nomination process. The couple now farms five quarters of land, oats, hay and have 100 head of cattle. Stephen and Mary Sarmaga first homesteaded near Bezanson in 1917.

Although she grew up in the City of Grande Prairie, Janet enjoys living and working on the land.

“When we were dating and attended marital counselling before being married, we were asked what we dreamed of doing and we both said, ‘farming’. I always wanted to farm. It's not a 9-5 job but it's so rewarding. I like to be out in the country, away from the hustle and bustle.”



Garry's sister Gayle Unsworth continues to live on the original quarter section. Byron Bue sees the award as excellent recognition for the people who developed the land.

"My grandfather, Olaf, was 19 when he came over from Norway. That was quite an undertaking. It's great to pay tribute to the homesteaders who built this country."

Olaf Bue began homesteading in 1917 in the Valhalla area.

Byron has farmed for more than 30 years and continues to maintain the family farm. Some of his favourite memories of being on the land came as a child with his father, Elmer.

"As a young boy I remember hauling bundles by horse and hay rack on a wagon to the threshing machine. It was neat to experience that, to see it first hand. It gave me a real appreciation for the work."

Applications for the 100 Years of Farming Awards are accepted throughout the year. For more information about the 100 Years of Farming Awards, and to apply or nominate a family for an award, visit [www.countygp.ab.ca/100years](http://www.countygp.ab.ca/100years).

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**For media enquiries:**

Contact [communications@countygp.ab.ca](mailto:communications@countygp.ab.ca) to schedule an interview with Sonja Raven, Agricultural Fieldman.