

THE Poplar Meadows STORY



The Bulkley Valley is in the northwest Central Interior of British Columbia. This valley was called home for the We'suwet'en people for many centuries. The first European to venture into the valley was Simon McGillivray of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1833. By 1866 a telegraph line was completed crossing the Bulkley Valley and in the years 1890 through 1892 government surveys were conducted in the newest Province in the Canadian Confederation. A.L. Poudrier and his party revamped a telegraph trail into a viable wagon road as well as sections suitable for packhorses. During the years of 1897 to 1901, prospectors followed the trail on their way to the Klondike Gold Rush and noted the valley's agriculture, mining, and timber potential.



upgrades were made to the thirty-mile wagon road and by 1911, a weekly Aldermere-Hazelton stagecoach route was established.



In 1902, a delegation proposed that the British Columbia government offer homesteads in the valley and set up a plan for one hundred families to each receive one hundred acres of free land for every three hundred and twenty acres cleared. But freight costs were prohibitive when enticing many new settlers to the area. The government then offered veterans from the Boer War quarter section land grants, but unfortunately many sold their land to speculators, creating large tracts of undeveloped land. By 1910

Topley is a small community situated on Highway Sixteen (the Yellowhead Highway) between Burns Lake and Houston, British Columbia. It is there where the story of this family and success begins. In 1965, Frank and Dianne Strimbold established Poplar Meadows Angus with the purchase of breeding stock from River Bend Ranch at Smithers... four of Wharten's best calves, along with their mothers. Although the couple knew little about genetics, they were some of the best bloodlines in the breed... one could call it beginner's luck. When Frank was asked why he chose Angus, he often replied, "Angus cows have calves like chickens lay eggs... you just have to count them in the morning."

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Our son Taylor on his wedding day last August with wife Alaina. Bull is May-Way Breakout 1310.

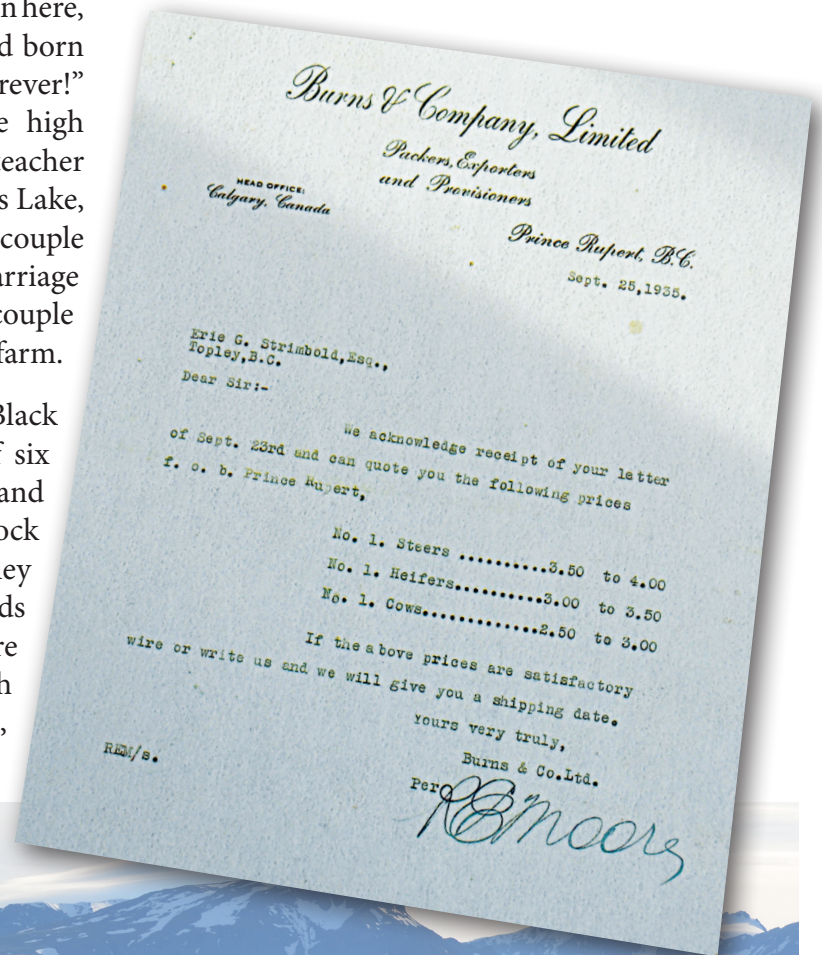
Frank was born in the Bulkley Valley into a pioneer family. His grandfather, Archie McInnes, staked land on his way to the Klondike and he and his wife, Jesse, moved to North Bulkley in 1906. Frank's father, Eric, came to the area from Alberta and married the McInnes' daughter, Ivy, while Dianne moved to the

area with her family. Tanya relates, "Dad was born here, and his mother's sister was the first white child born in the Bulkley Valley, so they have been here forever!" Frank and Dianne both attended the same high school in Burns Lake. Dianne went on to take teacher training and was fortunate to get a job in Burns Lake, while Frank went off to the lumber camps. The couple were married in 1963 and following their marriage Dianne taught school for a year and then the couple moved to a one room house on the Strimbold farm.

While building a top herd of registered Black Angus, Frank and Dianne raised a family of six children: Tanya, Lia, Tony, Monica, Todd, and Nick. The children were raised in a livestock environment and all were members of the Topley 4-H Club and were able to win various awards with their livestock. Frank and Dianne were involved in a leadership role in the club and with the Bulkley Valley 4-H region. With a ranch, six kids and off farm jobs, the Strimbolds set

aside time for another love... cross-country skiing. Frank was a cross-country racer and ski jumper in his teens and the Strimbold children were enthusiastic cross-country skiers. Tony excelled at the sport and went on to be a member of the National Junior Cross-Country Ski Team. Frank was a BC sport advisor and Dianne chaired the High Performance and Athletic development of Cross Country BC.

Frank was a director of the British Columbia Angus Association for twenty years, a director on the board of the Canadian Angus Association and for twelve years served as a director for the Regional District of Bulkley Nechako. Frank passed in 2015 just hours before he was to receive his fifty-year pin.





Tanya Belsham showing off her herd

From early beginnings in a one room shack, Frank and Dianne Strimbald developed a superior herd of Angus breeding stock, a beautiful ranch, a wonderful family, and an exceptional way of life. Their influence in the Angus breed will be with us for many years and the next generation at Poplar Meadows continues to make new in-roads into the livestock industry.



The Grainery

time she received her honor pin, the highest award one could get in 4-H. Tanya represented the Province of British Columbia in the youth judging competition at Canadian Western Agribition in Regina, Saskatchewan. By 1977, Tanya had bred her first registered animal and a couple of years later sold her first female for \$425.00.

Tanya Belsham is the oldest of the six children born to Frank and Dianne Strimbald and was born the year that Poplar Meadows selected their first females. As a child growing up on the farm, she grew extremely fond of livestock and Angus cattle. Throughout her school years, she was a member of the Topley 4-H Beef Club from a pre-clubber (peewee) to the age of nineteen at which

After completing high school, Tanya had a brief stint in college then returned to the Bulkley Valley, earned her real estate license and at the age of twenty-two sold real estate in Houston, British Columbia along with her sister Lia.

At a lounge in Houston in 1994, on a girl's night out, Tanya met a young man who was a construction worker. "When he told me, his name was Monty Belsham from Fort Frazer, I was shocked, as I knew his parents. The Belshams operated a purebred bull test station which we consigned bulls to." Monty and Tanya were married in 1996 and had their son Taylor in 1998. A couple of years after their marriage, Monty started his own construction company along with three employees based out of Prince George, British Columbia. Monty and his brother built Salem Contracting into one of the largest construction companies in the province, employing one hundred and eighty people in the shop and out in the field. Over the past thirty years, they expanded their work base from British Columbia to the Northwest Territories, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and the USA. In 2012, Monty and Tanya purchased the Belsham Farm and last summer the ranch celebrated the 100th year anniversary of the family living on that property.

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From an early age, Tanya was full of competitive energy with a great love for animals. For a period of ten years, she bred Golden Retriever dogs and competed in shows throughout North America. Her Retrievers won "Best in Specialty" in Canada and the



*Afire's Blue Suede Shoes
American Best In Specialty
Show Champion
Canadian Best In Show*

United States. She sold a dog to the United States that was an American Canadian Champion who was also the dam of the Westminster Champion Golden Retriever. But in 2010 as the Poplar Meadows herd increased in size and numbers, she raised her last litter. Tanya jokes, "I decided that at least with the cattle, I could eat my mistakes."



In 2003, Tanya and Monty got serious about the Angus seedstock business... the plan to have three or four cows for their ten-acre farm (in order to keep the grass mowed around the yard) went south as the herd increased rapidly into a breeding establishment of four hundred cows to date. Tanya blames Monty for the growth, but she explains, "His theory... numbers are required to make any investment pay and be able to create jobs within the community." Tanya goes on to say, "Sometimes I regret the fact in having told him what my goals were with the Angus herd... wanting to be one of the Premier Breeders in Canada. He really has tried his best to help me achieve that goal."



HF Thunderbird 146Y

Since 4-H, they have always been around cattle shows and events, but a decade ago, they became serious about their herd and many of their dreams and goals began to fulfill. Provincially, they captured the Supreme Champion Bull and Female several times at the Inter-Provincial Exhibition in Armstrong, British Columbia with HF Thunderbird 146Y owned with Hamilton Farms and May-Way Breakout 1310. HF Thunderbird 146Y went on to win Alberta Supreme at Farm Fair International, Edmonton, Alberta. May-Way Breakout 1310 went on to be declared Grand Champion at Farm Fair and was crowned Supreme Champion at the RBC Supreme at Canadian Western Agribition, Regina, Saskatchewan.

PM Thunderstruck 22'13 was Supreme Champion Bull in 2015 at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto and was owned with Black Lane and Vos



May-Way Breakout 1310



Conley South Point

Vegas Angus. Conley South Point 8362 set a recent record being declared Grand Champion at Canadian Western Agribition, Regina, Saskatchewan and the National Western Stock Show, Denver, Colorado, being a first in the breed. Owned with Conley Cattle and Wilbar Farms.



PM Echo 8'16

PM Echo 8'16 was purchased by Blairs.Ag Cattle Co., bred by Poplar Meadows, she was declared RBC Supreme Champion Female at the 2018 Canadian Western Agribition for Blairs.Ag, Carlos Ojea, Don Romero and Roque Perez. The bull calf, PM Executive Decision 5'17, was declared Reserve Champion at the Semex President Classic All-Breeds competition at the 2017 Canadian Western Agribition. But their largest achievement was in 2017 when they captured Premier Breeder and Premier Exhibitor awards at Canadian Western Agribition, the largest Angus show in the nation! Poplar Meadows is the only breeding operation who has exhibited Supremes at Canada's major fall shows... Farm Fair, the Toronto Royal and Canadian Western Agribition. Welcome to that elite level! Now Tanya is setting the bar a little higher and wanting to take a load to Denver.



PM Executive Decision



The Sale Ring



"Some of the females that come to us from over the mountains have trouble adapting to our terrain and don't forage well in the bush, so we are always looking for genetics that have a higher degree of hardiness."





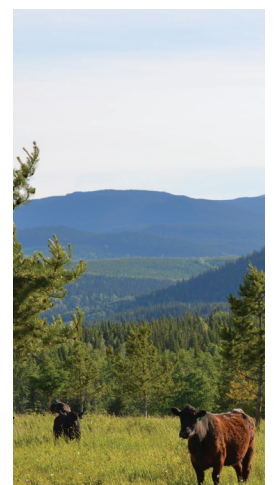
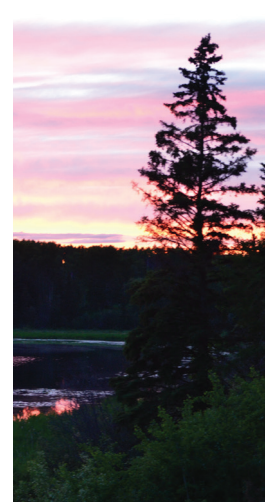
Family History Walls

The crew at Poplar Meadows only AI'd three of the four hundred females in the first month of breeding season and planted fifty-five embryos (they planted eighty last spring). Most of the matings were to their own sires but they do sample a few different bulls each spring, adding new genetics into the program.

Poplar Meadows markets more than one hundred bulls each year. In 2020 they hosted two bull sales... a yearling sale at the farm in March and a group of two-year-old bulls in Williams Lake. Each fall, they host

a female sale in October but with COVID-19, they decided to wait and see this year.

Although the walls of the office are laden with ribbons and banners, Poplar Meadows is a cowboy operation. The cow herd is run in commercial fashion; the cows must rustle in bush pastures and run in the same fashion as those of their many ranch customers. Feet, udders, and soundness are the major culling criteria and Tanya will tell you that the main thing the breed offers is fabulous mother cows!



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Where does the Angus breed need to improve? “They need to cull more bulls. People believe that just because they are papered, they have more value. Well they must have some attributes beyond just being purebred!” Ryan Currie, herdsman, and past director of the Canadian Angus Association relates, “There

are too many reproducers and not enough breeders. What makes the Angus breed great is the diversity in type and genetics.”

The success story has just begun as Tanya and Monty keep fulfilling their goals. Premier Breeders producing some of the finest seedstock on the planet... it’s a long drive for a visit, but it’s worth it for the cattle, the scenery and the great hospitality of Poplar Meadows and the Bulkley Valley.



Tanya and TB



Tanya and Ella



Monty's Hobby



*Taylor & Alaina and their girls
Saphira and Ella*



*Won “America’s Most Beautiful Roadster”
in January 2020 - 1932 Ford Muroc*

