

From small town Ontario to small town Saskatchewan

By Sarah Sobanski

On April 6, Canada came to a halt.

A small town hockey team had been en route to a playoff game. Their bus collided with a transport truck.

There were 29 people on the Humboldt Broncos' bus, a team from the Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League. Fifteen members of the team, including its head coach, were killed in the crash. The other 14 were taken to hospital. Some suffered terrible injuries, such as Ryan Straschnitzki who was paralyzed in the crash. Some suffered critical injuries, such as the team's physical therapist Dayna Brons who died in hospital less than a week later, bringing the death toll to 16.

Where do you start when something like this happens? How loud is the wakeup call putting life in perspective?

This tragedy had such an impact on Canadians, and across the world, because it's unimaginable. For the youngest of us, it's the thought of losing teammates or friends. For the older of us, it's the thought of losing a child in a way you'd never think to. Lives taken too young, hopes and dreams and futures stolen.

For Bancroft however ? a town not much smaller than Humboldt ? it hits even closer to home. Those are boys you can imagine working in local stores or volunteering at the local fire service. Those are coaches you can imagine teaching aspiring athletes from all different teams ? because there's not people with enough time to coach all the area teams but every kid in the community deserves to play, so we make due. These are familiar faces that are now missing from that community, holes that can't be filled.

And so the entire nation came together to show their support for the families and community that was devastated. Broadcasters offered their voices for the Broncos' next season. The Stanley Cup was sent to Saskatoon. Fredericton restaurant staff collected tips to send to the families. Professional athletes spanning popular sports hosted moments of silence, visited the hospital, sent signed jerseys and dedicated wins to the Broncos. The House of Commons made tributes and hosted a moment of silence. A GoFundMe for the families was started and raised \$12 million in the first nine days it was open, the largest in Canadian history.

Then, on a smaller, humbler scale, people bought flowers, doughnuts and T-shirts in the Broncos' colours where proceeds would go to the families. They put their sticks out by their front doors and sported jerseys in the Broncos' honour. That's where Bancroft came in.

In my time with the paper, I have never seen the community respond so quickly to a social media post. I asked people to share their support for Humboldt, some of whom you'll see later in the paper, and they couldn't wait to do so.

At our schools and businesses April 12, it was hard to find people who weren't wearing jerseys.

But I don't think it really hit home for me, until a moment of silence was held at the TG Memorial Student Teacher Hockey Game.

This tragedy happened hundreds of miles away, and yet it came home to our own arena.

It's important that we remember coming together like this. It's important that we remember we're human like this ? that we can all have something so much in common with each other and be so similarly impacted.

Bancroft has lent its heart to Humboldt. There is no greater support.