

Reid Williamson

Vernon Winter Carnival Scholarship

Every February, the winter carnival touches the hearts of every community member in one aspect or another. The event has grown into a cherished tradition, drawing thousands of visitors from across the region and beyond. The importance of this event is fascinating, touching on aspects of community spirit, tourism, and the celebration of local culture and heritage. As I begin to turn the page of my own book, and start a new chapter of life in university, I look back on the memories made during the times of the carnival, and the warmth of unity felt by the coming together of the community during the cold of February. It brings in all, from far and wide, big and small, the winter carnival is truly an event for all.

As I reminisce about the winter carnival, the abstract colours of the hot air balloons tracing the sky fill my mind, the ice sculptures at Silverstar come to life in my head, as if they were real beings. The love, and comforting warmth of community felt during these times is unmatched. The Vernon Winter Carnival allows locals to showcase their talents, celebrate shared experiences, and bond over mutual pride in their hometown. As a result, the carnival strengthens community ties and helps build a sense of belonging.

For me, however, the Coca-Cola Classic Hockey Tournament is a cherished memory. I remember walking into the frigid Civic arena, and looking at all the teams from all around North America coming together to play for the championship, and share the sense of community with "Vernonites". This tournament is a staple in shaping who I am as a person, and it is all thanks to the Winter Carnival.

Another memory I can recall from the winter carnival is visiting the ice sculptures at Silverstar with my late Grandfather. This memory touches close to my heart, I can still remember the grins on our face, the warmth of the hot chocolate in our hands, and the glistening of the beautiful statues. This memory replays in my mind everytime I think about him. It doesn't reflect on sadness, but instead the joy of the winter carnival and the great time we had before he passed away not too long after.

As a kid, I would yern for the parade, like all other kids of course lining the streets, with arms extended, in hopes of getting a free handful of candy from all the beautiful floats going by. The sound of the loud bagpipes leading the parade could be heard from miles away, and the eager anticipation of the floats grew larger and larger as the bagpipes grew louder and louder. Watching the parade, I noticed the smiles that traced everyone's faces. Everyone could share a laugh or

two at The Shriners as these old, but lively, men tucked themselves into these little cars and drove around, handing candy out to all the kids.

These memories I cherish as they are some of my earliest. I can confidently say that the young, college bound, man that I have turned out to be is larger because of the winter carnival and I couldn't be more thankful for the opportunity to live in a time where I can enjoy the carnival.