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Western Weddings –Prairie Style

By Terri Mason

The beauty of prairie weddings is heightened by the sheer drama of the landscape where literally, like a good marriage, the sky is the limit.

As many brides are planning their special day for the coming year, to inspire you we present some of the 2016 western weddings of friends and subscribers that show the unique and thoughtful touches that enhanced their nuptials.

Special thanks to our brides and grooms for sharing their special day with us!

Their horses are central to Tiffany and Jed, so they were included in the wedding photos.

Tiffany Rozumniak & Jed Downie

PHOTOS BY NANCY CRITCHLEY PHOTOGRAPHY

When Tiffany and Jed were planning their summer country wedding, it was important to them that they stayed true to their rural roots. On July 16, 2016 they tied the knot on the Downie's mixed family farm and ranch operation, south of Willingdon, Alta.

With every detail attended to, the wedding was the perfect blend of country and cowboy charm.

The guests were treated to a catered reception in the machine shed, complete with a raised dance floor (using rig mats) and nearby was a bar and fire pit. At sunset, the bride and groom had wedding formals photographed with their Quarter Horse herd in the sunset. "Just like an old western movie," says photographer Nancy Critchley.



Gillian Shields & Morgan Grant

PHOTOS BY DAINYA SAPERGIA PHOTOGRAPHY

Rodeo's multi-event champion Morgan Grant and rodeo organizer Gillian Shields (2015 CPRA Committee Person of the Year) were married October 15 at the Cathedral Church of Redeemer in Calgary, followed by a western reception filled with rodeo flair.

The reception was held at Cochrane Ranche House with tables adorned with vintage rodeo posters and the unique addition of a groom's cake. The bride carried the same purse her mother used on her wedding day; her friend Pat Buckler lent her diamond earrings and Morgan's mother lent her a bracelet that once belonged to Morgan's grandmother. Gillian kept the fall chill at bay with a gorgeous fur wrap by Caroline Furs.

The couple held an additional photo shoot on their home place west of Didsbury to include their Corgi, *Piper* and of course, Morgan's multi-champion steer wrestling, hazing and tie-down roping horses *Bumps*, *Todd* and *Dun* in the wedding photos to pay homage to the sport they love, and the sport that brought them together.



The Groom's cake, a wedding tradition originating in Victorian England, is adorned with coiled "rope" icing and the Grant tartan; a nod to Morgan's Scottish heritage and southern traditions.



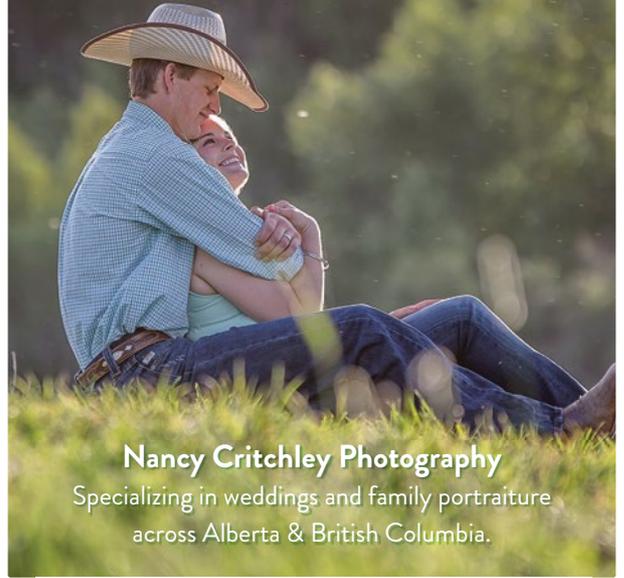
A unique way to find your seat! Each table featured a vintage rodeo poster; the table seating chart was displayed by the entrance.

The couple provided unique wedding favours of handmade soaps as gifts for the guests



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The couple created a simple altar swagged with fabric for the ceremony.

A live band adds great atmosphere, especially if your new husband happens to be a great singer!



Carlene Schmidt & Scott Meeks

PHOTOS BY SUNLEY PHOTOGRAPHY

Carlene Schmidt and Scott Meeks were married this past summer at her parents' place near Airdrie, Alta. Carlene is a well-respected working cowhorse competitor who regularly competes non-pro at shows such as The Supreme, and Scott, who hails from Clyde, Tex., is a tie-down roper who qualified for the 2015 Canadian Finals Rodeo.

They planned the wedding down to the last detail and although the storms were swirling all around them, the rain didn't fall until everyone was under the giant white tents and comfortably seated on the blanket-covered square bale couches lining the edge of the raised dance floor.

It was great food and good times until the cows came home...



Scott and Carlene created straw bale couches for their guests

Abby Parsonage & Jay Stokke

PHOTOS BY DESIREA WENINGER OF EMCLAIRE PHOTOGRAPHY

The children of multi-generational ranchers, Abby Parsonage and Jay Stokke were married August 13, 2016 on her parents Bar EJ Ranch south of the Cypress Hills. They chose Fort Walsh for their photos in homage to the couple's deep ties to the area. For years Abby worked at the Fort, which is situated close to where her great-great-grandparents, Everett and Bethea Parsonage, homesteaded.

For the couple's unity ceremony they dug a pit, started a wood fire, heated the irons and branded both their parents' brands onto a plank. Between the two brands they placed their own, representing the past but also their hopes to continue the ranching tradition in the future.



Their rural life was evident as they posed on tiered round bales, resembling a wedding cake

The couple were hoisted 15 feet in the air in the tractor bucket



The bride and groom took their place in history as they burned their brand between his and her parents. The plank is from their old corrals built by her Grandpa Parsonage and Abby's dad.