

Aussies in the Hat with Friendship Force

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Part of the Friendship Force group, including visitors and local organizers, who were looking forward to the chuckwagon races on Saturday night.

An international group from the Friendship Force was in Medicine Hat this past weekend — some all the way from Down Under.

The youngest member of the group was Elsie Sawczuk, who was visiting Canada for the first time from Adelaide, Australia. First stop for the group was Vancouver and Seattle before flying into Calgary and driving to the Hat.

“Vancouver was cold, it was raining. It pretty much felt like home. It was good, though, I really enjoyed it,” said Sawczuk.

They arrived in Medicine Hat on Friday and a full day was planned for Saturday. At midmorning, the entire group met outside the Cypress Centre so they could head over to the barns together. The visit was a prelude to the main event of the day, which was going to the chuckwagon races in the evening, which everyone was looking forward to.

“My grandma brought me on this trip,” explained Sawczuk. “I’ve never been to Canada, so I thought I’d join her.”

Many of her friends flew over after graduation to ski and told Sawczuk she needed to go as well.

“It’s a very common thing for Australians to come over for ski season after school finishes. Obviously, it’s not ski season now, but I thought I’d come and see what it’s all about.”

Friendship Force is an international nonprofit organization that brings people together from around the world for homestays to allow exploration of new countries and cultures from the inside.

Judy Morris, local journey coordinator for the visitors from Australia, New Hampshire and Dallas, was collecting signed photographs from chuckwagon drivers at the farmers market for a few of the visitors.

“There are eight people here from Australia, including Elsie’s grandmother, who is the president of the Adelaide club,” she explained.