

The  
**Lance**

Published weekly by:  
Canstar Community News  
1355 Mountain Avenue  
Winnipeg, MB R2X 3B6  
Ph: 204-697-7021  
www.canstarnews.com

## MANAGEMENT

Managing Editor

**John Kendle** 204-697-7093  
john.kendle@canstarnews.com

Sales Manager

**Barb Borden** 204-697-7389  
barb.borden@freepress.mb.ca

## ADMINISTRATION

Main Switchboard: 204-697-7009  
Delivery Service: 204-925-3300

## EDITORIAL

Deputy Editor

**Darren Ridgley** 204-697-7098  
darren.ridgley@canstarnews.com

Lance Staff Reporter

**Simon Fuller** 204-697-7111  
simon.fuller@canstarnews.com

[f](https://www.facebook.com/TheLanceWpg) facebook.com/TheLanceWpg

[@LanceWPG](https://twitter.com/LanceWPG)

Fax: 204-953-4300

## NEWS TIPS

Email [news@canstarnews.com](mailto:news@canstarnews.com)

*The Lance* welcomes letters to the editor by email or regular post. All letters must include a name, address and phone number for verification of authorship. Email letters to [letters@canstarnews.com](mailto:letters@canstarnews.com)

# Step, jump, wade, or swim?



**Michele Kading**  
COMMUNITY  
CORRESPONDENT

## ST. VITAL

Growing up in the 1960s my friends and I would make toy rafts to float in a nearby ditch.

Flowing water was a novelty. Natural creeks had long since been replaced by ditches as the prairie was first farmed, then urbanized.

Wanting to know more about the natural world, I studied physical geography and biology at university. I learned how man-made waterways (ditches, drains, and canals) differ from natural waterways. Unlike man-made channels that follow straight lines, natural water systems form tree-like patterns. To understand and study the pattern, geographers assign an order number (zero to 12) to each stretch of waterway.

Picture the river as a tree that is lying on the ground.

Swales (zero-order) are low-lying channels that hold water for a short time after each rain. Most of the water soaks into the ground. Swales and their associated wetlands are the leaves of our tree.

Brooks (first-order) carry excess water from the swales downstream. Brooks are small enough to step over. They are the twigs.



Photo by Michele Kading

Winnipeg's Seine River is large enough to be classified as a river rather than a creek or a stream.

Creeks (second-order) are created when two brooks join together. Creeks are too big to step over but they can be jumped. They are the small branches.

Low order waterways (zero, first, and second) are called headwaters. They account for at least 80 per cent of the length of waterways. These nameless swales, wetlands, brooks, and creeks are largely unmapped, underappreciated, and unprotected.

Streams (third-order) are created when two creeks join together. Streams are too wide to jump but are shallow enough to wade across. They are the large branches and often warrant names. Sometimes the terms "creek" and "stream" are reversed. Winnipeg's Sturgeon Creek, Truro Creek, Omand's Creek, and Bunn's Creek are large enough to be streams but we call them

creeks.

Rivers (fourth- to 12th-order) are too deep to wade. Crossing rivers requires swimming or a boat. Rivers are the trunk of our tree.

Based on stream order, Winnipeg's Seine River is a river — but only a small one. In the spring, it is too deep to wade and too fast-moving to swim. By summer, the Seine appears shallow enough to wade across but even this is not recommended. The wide mudflats, soft, muddy bottom, and slippery rocks make wading treacherous. Although long-time residents recall swimming the river when they were young, this is not advisable because of pollution.

It is best to enjoy the river from the shore, a canoe, or kayak.

*Michele Kading is a community correspondent for St. Vital and the executive director of Save Our Seine.*