

Who needs a passport?

by BRIAN LOCKHART

A friend of mine had a grandfather who grew up on a farm in Saskatchewan at the start of the 20th century.

His parents were real pioneers who carved out an existence on a farm they cleared themselves.

Early pioneers were one tough bunch of people.

When the grandfather got older, he acquired his own farm and started his own family.

A new migrant family moved to a nearby farm property in the spring, and he went over to meet them. They were, he thought, from Eastern Europe. They didn't speak much English, but enough that they could understand each other.

They kept tabs on each other, as people in rural areas do. It was mid-winter, and the temperature plummeted to one of those super cold spells that can happen on the prairies where water droplets freeze in the air and you have to dress properly to withstand the freezing cold temperatures.

One day the grandfather realized he hadn't seen the new family for a couple of weeks. He noticed there appeared to be no activity at all on their farm.

Growing concerned, he decided to visit the farm to see if they were alright.

He found the entire family deceased. They had run out of heating fuel and froze to death.

He told my friend, that it wasn't uncommon for this to happen at that time. People arrived on the prairies from other countries with no idea of how cold it can really get and if they didn't properly stock for the winter, there was no way to get more fuel for heat.

Two US men are now on trial in Minnesota on human trafficking charges. It is alleged they were the masterminds of an operation that smuggled Indian nationals across the border from Manitoba.

In January 2022, RCMP found the frozen bodies of an entire family - mother, father, a young boy, and a toddler, in a field as they tried to cross illegally into the US when it was -32°C.

They were not prepared for the weather, not by a long shot.

The pipeline of smugglers bringing Indians into the US illegally across the border has increased sharply over the past couple of years.

US Border Patrol has already arrested more than 14,000 Indians as of Sept. 30, this year.

It's no wonder border control is such a huge issue in the US these days.

Many of these people arrive in Canada on falsified student visas ? they aren't even on our shores legally.

An investigation into the family that froze to death reveals they weren't desperate refugees fleeing war or some natural disaster that left them homeless. They were actually doing quite well in their own hometown.

Apparently, in that part of India, advertising to the locals that they can get you smuggled into Canada, the US or Australia, is easily done ? as long as you have money.

Indian authorities have reacted to this incident, apparently arresting three people there, but it is just a token effort.

It has just been reported that another human smuggler, linked to the deaths of people who drowned while trying to cross the St. Lawrence River, was issued a new passport by the federal government after he was already ordered to surrender travel documents as part of court-imposed release conditions. He was still operating as a smuggler after his arrest.

Federal MP Tom Kmiec, Conservative critic on immigration, refugee and citizenship, was quoted as saying, ?It's just a complete failure. How bad is our national security infrastructure when we can't catch the most basic things in our system??

Human smuggling is a dangerous thing for a lot of reasons. If you are paying criminals a lot of money to take you somewhere, you have to be ready to find yourself in a very bad situation very quickly.

There have been several instances of illegal migrants being locked in the back of trucks only to be left in the desert in the southwest US and abandoned to die from the heat.

There has to be blame put on the parents in these cases of family smuggling as well. What kind of a parent willingly places a young child in a dangerous situation, in the company of criminal strangers?

Remember the tragic photo of the three-year-old lying face down on the beach in the Mediterranean? His parents placed a vulnerable child on a boat that was not seaworthy.

Ottawa has done a terrible job of securing our borders and needs to start treating human trafficking as a serious crime.