

Grandparents in the family tree

Pete & Shelley Aarssen - April 2025

We are writing this at the close of another March break. Never did we think that it would be such a significant week until we became grandparents of school aged children. In the family tree, grandparents are like the trunk that holds all the branches together. Many other analogies of the trunk come to mind, like it's the closest to the ground, it has a rougher bark and often holes unlike the branches above but let's not go there! We are the custodians of family culture, values and traditions, in other words, we hold the family together and that's a very impressive place to be. It also comes with challenges and responsibilities.

While out on our excursions to a local restaurant, the art gallery and the Pinery we found that we were not alone. Many other silver foxes were parading their young ones around and keeping them busy during what is sometimes a long and boring week for them. Our friend and fellow grandma along with her six granddaughters invited Shelley over with two of our granddaughters for a high tea. There was a craft intended to brighten someone's day, some yummy snacks, a lesson on etiquette and of course tea! What a joy to see the smiles on all their faces! Our local art gallery is such a treasure and yet when we visited our granddaughters had it all to themselves. The staff were very engaged and helped them on their scavenger hunt. It was both cultural and fun. Stones and Bones museum was always a highlight in the past but sadly, it is closed. We hope that someone with the passion of the previous owner will take it over. The short drive to the Pinery Park was worth every minute, though our three-year-old grandson was quite upset when he found out there was no playground equipment at this so-called park. The experience of having little chickadees land on their hands and seeing a live large snapper in the tank of the visitor center was such a highlight. We had a tailgate snack and proceeded to the trails with five grandchildren in tow. Nature even in the early spring is so beautiful. Tundra swans, Canada geese and various species of ducks were a delight to all. The best was when it was time to go back to their parents and they asked to stay with us longer. It makes us know that the bond is tight but still needs future time together to strengthen it, especially for the youngest members of our family.

Here's the high points of grandparenting:

1. Plays a crucial role in shaping the character of the young
2. The experience of unconditional love
3. Source of wisdom through story-telling and life experience
4. Emotional support through unhurried time together fostering personal growth.
5. Provide exposure to differing perspectives on life which encourages critical thinking skills in the young
6. Joy that is reciprocal. We find joy in their growth and achievements and they find joy in the companionship with us creating a strong bond that benefits both.

In conclusion, it is worth the effort to give time to our grandchildren even though we may not have the energy we had when raising their parents. This slower pace is actually appealing to a young person who sometimes just needs a hug and a listening ear.