

Black Field in Tyndall

By Thomas Shirliffe

A dark historical drama set in 19th century rural Canada hit the screens May 28 and if you look closely, you may recognize some of the sets.

Black Field, an award-winning film by Winnipeg-born Danishka Esterhazy, is a full-length feature film set around a love triangle that involves two sisters and a mysterious man who comes to visit their farm. The film was shot near Tyndall and provides a very local feel with the towns of Beausejour and Selkirk very close by.

"It's about these two sisters who are Scottish settlers and they lose their family, their father and their brothers and they are struggling to survive in the wild Canadian frontier really, at that time," Esterhazy explained. "They are struggling to feed themselves and run their farm and the situation was very dire."

"A lot of early history in Manitoba is extremely traumatic," she says. "It was a hard, hard life and I wanted to do that history justice and show just how challenging the situation was and just how brave these people had to be to survive back then."

Esterhazy had to find a suitable setting to go along with the era that the movie was set in. For that, she turned to the prairies right in her backyard.

"I wrote the story to take place in Manitoba and in the story there is a plot point when the characters are situated between Beausejour and Selkirk," Esterhazy says. "So I knew that I wanted to shoot in that general area."

To help her with her location, her producers decided to lend a hand. Producers Kent Ulrich and Jeff Skinner own a back lot in Tyndall where they were building a western town. Her shooting got scheduled before the town was completed - giving her the 19th century look she wanted.

"We had acres and acres of open prairie that we could shoot on and it was in a beautiful spot," says Esterhazy, who couldn't believe her luck. "There were no hydro poles, highways or cars - it was pristine."

The landscape is not the only part of Tyndall that is featured in the movie, though. Apart from farmers letting Esterhazy use their land for shots, a group of local extras



Photos courtesy Danishka Esterhazy

Above: Sara Canning, as Maggie McGregor, in the film Black Field, shot in Tyndall. Below: cast members Canning with Ferron Guerreiro as Rose McGregor and Mathieu Bourquet as David Latouche.

were in the film acting as a family of Ukrainians. In total, about 100 extras were used in the film.

The film, which won an award for Best Canadian Feature at the Female Eye Film Festival, is being screened at the Cinematheque in downtown Winnipeg from May 28 until June 10.

If you're a fan of Vampire Diaries, you'll notice that Sara Canning, who plays Jenna Sommers in the hit TV series, takes a lead role in Black Field as Maggie McGregor, one of the two sisters. Ferron Guerreiro plays Rose McGregor, Maggie's sister.

