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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## BIG PAYDAYS HIGHLIGHT CANADIAN COWBOY CHRISTMAS

Top rodeos celebrated big anniversaries while eleven Canadian Professional Rodeo Association competitors celebrated wins of over \$10,000 this past weekend. The Williams Lake Stampede rang in their 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year while the Ponoka Stampede celebrated 80 great years. Airdrie wrapped up year 49 and is preparing for a big celebration for next year's golden jubilee with 50 years of rodeo action in the city of Airdrie.

These top rodeos meant big paydays for competitors that were lucky enough to take home winning paychecks. Between the three rodeos this weekend, there was just shy of \$700,000 in prize money up for grabs with the top eleven competitors taking home the lion's share of the money.

The biggest CPRA payday went to Bareback Rider Caleb Bennett. The Tremonton, Utah cowboy collected \$17,542.02 unofficially after placing third at the Airdrie Pro Rodeo and riding three top bucking horses to win the Ponoka Stampede.

When combining cheques both North and South of the border, no CPRA competitor had a bigger smile on his face than Louisiana's Shane Hanchey. Not only did Hanchey win the Ponoka Stampede and Airdrie Pro Rodeo, but after totaling his cheques from Cody, Wyoming, St. Paul and Molalla, Oregon, Oakley City, Utah, and Greeley, Colorado, the Tie Down Roping put \$32,293 in his bank account.



*Shane Hanchey winning Showdown Sunday of the Ponoka Stampede's 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Hanchey saved his horse "Riata" for the high paying event.  
Photo Credit: Jeremy Wombold Photography*

## Canadian Professional Rodeo Association

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Hanchey, like many other competitors, knows that this time of year is crucial to the success of your rodeo season as it offers the most rodeos, many with large amounts of prize money to be won.

“I was really just looking forward to the summer and being able to go as hard as I have ever been able to go. Obviously with the results, it jump started my season,” said Hanchey.

The reigning Canadian Champion and 2013 World Champion Tie Down Roper has been a long-time fan of what many competitors consider a “bucket list” rodeo.

“[Ponoka] is different than any other rodeo you go to, North or South of the border. It’s just something about it, ever since I’ve been there the first time in 2010, I’ve always had good luck there for some reason,” said Hanchey who has qualified for the Showdown Round 4 out of 6 times he has entered the rodeo, “For some reason or another I was never able to win the showdown, luckily that changed.”

Another top winner last weekend was Holden, Alberta’s Rene Leclercq and her horse Flirt for Diamond, aka “Flit”. The village of under 400 people can be proud of their Ladies Barrel Racing phenom that took home \$14,659.52 after pulling a cheque out of Williams Lake, Airdrie and winning Ponoka this past weekend.

Leclercq placed 12<sup>th</sup> at the Williams Lake Stampede winning \$505, 5<sup>th</sup> in Airdrie for \$1175 and her most notable cheque came after she won the Ponoka Stampede’s \$7500 Showdown cheque, 4<sup>th</sup> place in both the long round and the average, for a total of \$12,978.52 from Ponoka.

When asked if her whirlwind weekend has sunk in yet, the 21-year-old replied:

“Not really, I’m still excited and can’t believe it all happened. I’m just trying to let it all sink in still. It was crazy, I just couldn’t believe that it happened, when I actually won I didn’t even know what to say, it was a complete shock.”

Leclercq has been on the outside looking in for the last couple Canadian Finals Rodeos, finishing 18<sup>th</sup> in 2014 and ending the 2015 season in heartbreak after missing entries for the Pro Rodeo Canada Finals in Calgary. Leclercq watched her competition pass her at the Pro Finals and ultimately ended up in the 15<sup>th</sup> spot for the season.

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“It was a tough one,” Leclercq said of missing the finals last year, but after the win this weekend she says she’s happy she’s seated herself in a much better position this year, “It’s kind of a relief because I’ve been working my butt off trying to get there. I’m definitely not going to slow down, I accomplished one dream winning such a big rodeo and now I’ve got to move on to the next and hopefully I can just go hard and maybe come in to finals number one.”

It took \$14,666.96 to qualify for last year’s CFR and when Leclercq’s big win this weekend is added to her current season total, she is well over that mark already with \$16,894.80. With the dream of competing at CFR in her grasp, Leclercq marvels at the opportunity she has before her.

“It would be amazing, it would be unbelievable. I couldn’t even imagine going down that alley, I’ve dreamed about it since I was a little kid, it’s what every little barrel racer dreams about and the fact that I can almost say I’ll run there, it’s beyond exciting,” concluded Leclercq.

Other notable money earners this weekend include: Saddle Bronc Riders Clay Elliot (\$13,216.55), Jacobs Crawley (\$11,705.57) who went head to head in a ride-off at the Ponoka Stampede, fellow Bronc Rider Zeke Thurston came in just behind the two with \$11,577.00 won. Bareback Rider Jake Vold claimed the second highest paycheck in his event with \$13,091.13 total, while your top Steer Wrestler of the weekend was Stephen Culling with his \$12,127.40 cheque.

Two other Ladies Barrel Racers won over the ten thousand dollar mark this weekend with Leclercq’s travelling partner, Kerilee Noval, collecting \$11,035.86 and Carmine, TX cowgirl Taylor Jacob also winning \$10,429.57. The only Bull Rider to make five digits this weekend was back-to-back Canadian Champion, Dakota Buttar, who will take home \$10,350.69.

Up next of the rodeo schedule is the Coronation Pro Rodeo July 8 and 9, the Benalto Stampede July 8 to 10, and the Taber Pro Rodeo July 9 and 10. For a complete CPRA rodeo schedule and list of results go to [www.rodeocanada.com](http://www.rodeocanada.com).

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### **About the Canadian Professional Rodeo Association**

The Canadian Professional Rodeo Association (CPRA) with headquarters in Airdrie, Alta., is the sanctioning body for professional rodeo in Canada. The CPRA sanctions over 50 events annually with a total payout exceeding \$5.1 million. Follow us on Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat at @prorodeocanada, like Canadian Professional Rodeo Association on Facebook, or online at RodeoCanada.com.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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