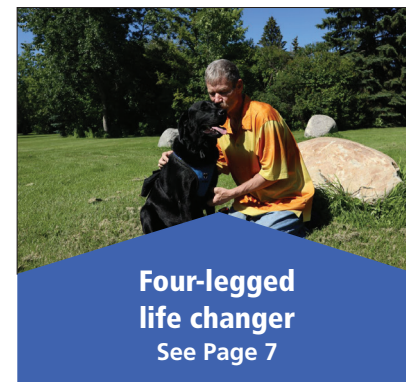




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# Sylvan Lake boy is overcoming trauma after a cougar attack near Rocky

**By Lana Michelin**  
BLACK PRESS NEWS MEDIA

Not one to hold grudges, Cason Feuser's new favourite animal is the cougar.

The seven-year-old from Sylvan Lake was mauled by a cougar near Rocky Mountain House last weekend. He now has more than 200 staples and stitches on his head and neck from the attack — but considers it kind of a Spiderman experience.

"He says he was bitten by a cougar so now he has his powers... we call him 'Cougarman,'" said his mother, Chay Feuser, on Friday.

Only days after his 3.5 hour surgery at Stollery Children's Hospital in Edmonton, Cason's amazing resiliency is evident.

The boy, who was released from hospital on Tuesday, cried when he first saw his swollen, scarred image in a mirror. But by Thursday, he was confident enough to attend a Sylvan Lake Gulls baseball game with his parents and close friends.

Chay admitted she initially wanted to tell Cason he couldn't go to the game. But a nurse had advised her to allow her son to do whatever "normal" activities he was interested in doing — so she relented. "And we had a great time!"

The active boy also wanted to do handstands, play hockey and run around with his friends and their Nerf guns — but Chay had to draw the line while his wounds were still healing. "I said, 'Let's just go play Nintendo instead.'"

She's glad to see Cason's two sisters and friends rallying around him. "I think the non-stop social interaction is a big help."

But there have been after-effects. Chay said her son was at first afraid to go to sleep, saying he saw a "white paw" coming at him.

She also noticed Cason is now uncomfortable trailing a lineup of people. He runs forward to become part of the fold.

Cason was the last child in a group that was heading back to the trailer when jumped by the cougar on Sunday night. He and his sisters had been camping out with a family friend

near Baptiste River, north of Rocky Mountain House, while his mom was in Dawson Creek, visiting her husband at his worksite.

Chay credits her friend, Alishea Morrison, a nurse, for saving Cason's life. The cougar's teeth and claws "just missed an artery, just missed his jugular, hit his eye, but just missed his eyeball," said Chay.

If Morrison had been inside the trailer instead of standing outside, she fears a more tragic outcome could have resulted.

Morrison struck the cougar's head with a rock just as the large animal was trying to "jolt" Cason to break his neck, said Chay. "What if she was in the trailer making snacks? What if she wasn't there to staunch the bleeding?"

Among the many "small miracles" that happened that day, was the presence of Morrison's dogs, who were beside her when she approached the cougar. Otherwise, Chay believes the wildcat would have lunged at her friend after letting go of Cason.

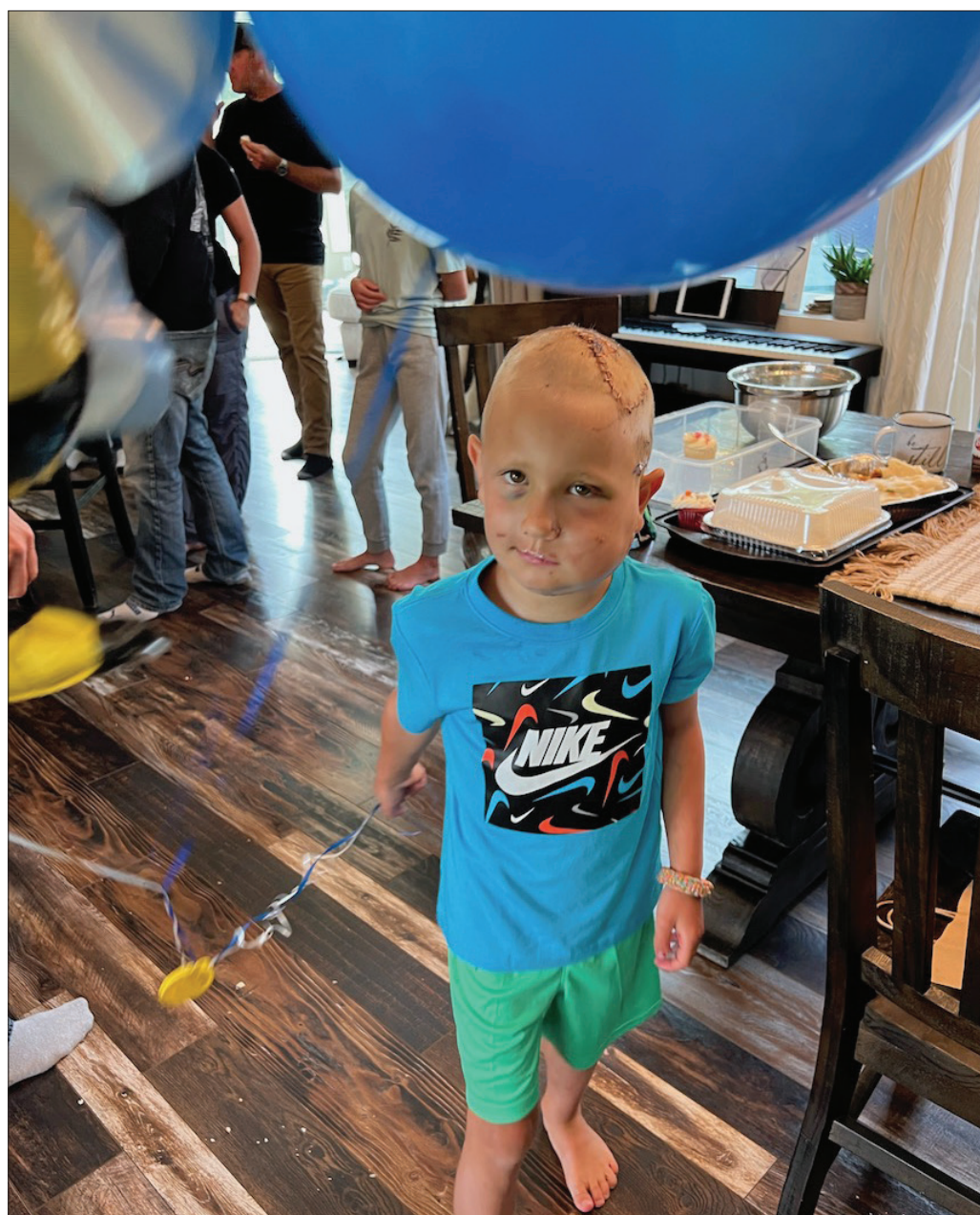
Fish and Wildlife enforcement inspector Rob Kohut called this kind of attack very rare. The cougar, which has since been tracked and euthanized, was a young and healthy animal. Usually large wild cats are elusive and shy away from human contact, which is why they are rarely seen, even though they travel through forested areas all over the province, added Kohut.

Chay admitted that she's been leery of cougars ever since the occasional one's been spotted around Sylvan Lake. Now her anxieties are in over-drive.

She said she never wants to travel anywhere without her children. And living on an acreage with lots of bush also makes Chay feel afraid to allow her kids to play outside. But she knows she will eventually have to give Cason and his sisters the freedom to explore nature on their own.

She's looking into counselling options for her son and other family members.

Meanwhile, Cason is expected to recover with few physical signs of the attack after his staples are removed later this month and his hair grows back.



Cason Feuser, age 7, from Sylvan Lake, enjoyed a welcome home party after his release from hospital after a cougar attack this week. (Contributed photo)

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