



# The Lake Report

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Niagara-on-the-Lake

# TREES



A tree service worker saws through healthy trees at 200 John St. behind the Randwood Estate, on a property expected to be the future location of a subdivision by Solmar Development Corp. (Richard Harley)

## Marotta clears trees, residents gather in protest

Richard Harley  
Editor

A group of about two dozen Niagara-on-the-Lake locals gathered in front of the gates to the Randwood Estate on the morning of Nov. 6 to protest the cutting of trees on the properties.

The cutting began last week on the property behind the estate, and those who attended the rally, many of them local and living in the vicinity, believe developer and property owner Benny Marotta was outside his rights to cut the trees down.

Dan Kelly, who lives on Weatherstone Court — which backs onto the Randwood Estate — said he's been following the proposals for a six-storey hotel on the properties, as well as rumours of a subdivision behind them, and that many residents are against the proposed developments.

"We consider these two properties to be the premium estate properties in Niagara-on-the-Lake, if not Ontario, and feel that they should not be developed. They should be restored because the history in this community is very important to all the residents that live here," Kelly said, noting many residents have been against the changing of the zoning to allow for a six-storey hotel, proposed by Two Sisters Resort Corp.

The Town's current bylaws allow for the trees to be removed. Kelly said it appears Marotta is trying to clear-cut the properties before the newly elected council is sworn in.

"What we've seen going on here is basically just a clear-cutting. There are photos of massive trees that have been cut, and you can tell in looking at the photos that they were healthy trees. The diameter of these trees is about three feet," Kelly said.

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# Queenston residents continue to battle jet boats

Penny Coles  
Staff

The jet boats may be tucked away for the winter, but Queenston residents are not standing down on the battle against the operation's move to their village, hoping to find some relief by next summer.

For almost three decades, the Old Town dock area residents have borne the brunt of the increasingly popular attraction's impact on their neighbourhood, with a few jet boat departures being offered from Queenston. But this past season the Whirlpool Jet Boat operation shifted the bulk of its tours to Queenston, and the balance has changed, with the villagers who live along the tour bus route finding their quality of life suffering severely, said Jim Armstrong, president of the Queenston Residents Association.

"It's impossible for some residents to enjoy their porches because of the noise, dust and diesel fumes from the buses," he said.

Locally known as the sand dock, from years gone by when it was operated as such, the location for the ramped-up jet boat business attracted buses from 10 a.m. to dusk daily this summer, with tours continuing until Thanksgiving weekend.

Sue Stecyk lives on the corner of Dumfries and Queenston Street in the village. She and her husband chose the property after looking extensively in Niagara Falls and St. Catharines, but fell in love with the quaint, quiet village and built their house there 37 years ago. It was the perfect location — it even had an elementary school nearby for the children they would later have.

For years, "everything was fantastic," she said. The village successfully fought off development and remained a quiet bedroom community.

But it is no longer possible for them to enjoy their outdoor property during the jet boat season, says Stecyk. Buses come "screaming down the hill," from the Niagara River Parkway, screech to a halt at the stop sign, and spew diesel fumes about 30 feet from their home.

Last Aug. 19, she clocked the buses. Although there are often large tour company coaches passing by on their way to the dock, that day there were just the buses operated by the jet boat company, bringing passengers from Niagara Falls. She counted 76 "passes" through the intersection — that's buses going either way, roughly five minutes apart, she said.

"The constant flow of buses



A Whirlpool jetboat after being lowered into the water at the Queenston Docks. (Richard Harley)

with diesel fumes pouring out every time they come to the four-way stop has destroyed my life in the summer. We stay indoors with the air conditioning on."

During the election campaign Stecyk said some candidates who came to her door assured her they would help, but she's not sure there is a solution, she said, "other than putting a for-sale sign on my lawn."

Jet boat president John Kinney said he wouldn't quantify the number of buses arriving each day. He said passengers come from the floral clock in Niagara Falls, picked up by one of his shuttle buses, or in one of the large tour buses from Toronto, Niagara Falls or the U.S. side of the border. He said he has one boat leaving the dock every half hour. He knows the buses are an issue for village residents — that battle goes back years, when he began running a few tours from Queenston — but when he tried to meet with the QRA during its annual general meeting last spring, hoping to explain his plans for the summer, he was told there was no time for him on the agenda, he said.

"We said 15 years ago we'd do what we could to minimize the impact" of the jet boat operation on neighbours, "real or perceived," said Kinney. By moving the bulk of the NOTL operation to Queenston, he added, the jet boat tours have reduced the impact on residents living down-river from Queenston, on members of Smuggler's Cove Boat Club and on other boaters on the river.

Kinney said about 40 per cent of his total operation is run from Queenston, another 40 per cent from Lewiston on the other side of the river, and 20 per cent from Melville Street, but Queenston residents fear he may continue the escalation of his business at Queenston until he no lon-

ger needs the Melville Street dock, which he leases from the Town.

There is no question the level of jet boat activity has intensified from the days of the Niagara Escarpment Commission tribunals, which saw Queenston residents heavily involved in trying to stop or scale down the operation. The result was that Kinney was twice denied a development permit to construct a building at the sand dock to use for office space, ticket sales and an orientation centre for passengers. Although the intensification of the business was discussed, there was no attempt to limit it in decisions of either the first tribunal or the appeal.

Kinney doesn't need a building any more — he has the Niagara Belle, originally a boat that would take dinner and sunset cruises out on the river, with a liquor licence and a restaurant, along with a second boat now permanently moored at the dock. He uses it for office space, orientation, and even has retail space for souvenirs. Passengers can still have a glass of wine or a small meal — it's not fine dining, he said, but rather is set up for the "grab and go crowd" — and Queenston residents are welcome to wander down to the dock and have a drink and a bite to eat while enjoying the sunset from one of the Niagara Belle decks.

The Niagara Belle meets all marine requirements and is certified for operation, he said. The NEC, which denied him a building on shore, has no control over what the boat is used for, because it's on the river, he added. "All the legal challenges are in our rear-view mirror."

Armstrong's not so sure of that. That's what he hopes to pursue this winter — convincing the NEC it is their jurisdiction. There are few other options that he can see.

It would be an expensive fight for the QRA to take to court and wage alone, and it's not their fight, he believes — it's the responsibility of the NEC to fulfill its mandate and control the intensification of what is going on at the docks. He has met with representatives from the NEC, and one of the QRA members has prepared a brief for the provincial agency, outlining what is going on at the dock and asking them to get involved in limiting it.

Although there have been rumours about town that Kinney wants out of his Melville Street lease to move his entire operation on this side of the river to Queenston, he said that's not the case. Business has been scaled down from that location, but he hopes to continue with an Old Town presence "in perpetuity," he said.

Town CAO Holly Dowd said there have been no "formal discussions" about the lease. Kinney could get out of it with two years written notice, or could at any time if he's willing to pay two years' rent in lieu of notice. The Town has the same options to get out of the lease, Dowd said.

Without giving an exact account of the cost to Kinney, Dowd said the term of the lease, going back to 2013, was for \$140,000 a season, plus an annual escalation clause based on the consumer index cost of living increase.

While she has heard the complaints from residents about the buses in Queenston, there is little the Town can do to stop them, although she has agreed to meet with the QRA to discuss the issue.

Armstrong agrees there is little to be done about the buses — it's not as if there is a better route for them through the village. The buses do sometimes come in another way, get lost, wander around town then have a very

difficult time making the turn down to the dock — the village roads are just too narrow for the size of the buses. He's seen buses back up onto residents' private property trying to make a multi-point turn, he said. The only solution he sees is for the Niagara Escarpment Commission, which has a new committee, to review the use of the dock and hopefully agree the operation should be "ramped down."

"We hope to get before the chair of the committee, and then at a later date before the entire committee to plead our case. The committee members are new and can look at it with fresh eyes if they choose to do so. That's where we stand now. We'll never give up. We're following the proper process and we'll see where it takes us."

Kinney said while he plans to continue to have a presence on Melville Street, he would like to see other activities share the waterfront, as residents have requested over the years.

He denies the move is an effort to put distance between the operation and the complaints from dock area residents. Rather it's for a variety of reasons based on business factors, he said, including proximity to Niagara

Falls and the shorter distance for both the buses to transport passengers and boats to travel up the river, making for faster turn-arounds and less fuel burned.

He indicated he expects to negotiate for a continued, although scaled-down presence in the dock area, leaving room for other opportunities that could benefit residents. "We will try to look at a different format. That doesn't mean we want to pull up stakes."

The paddle boats and kayaks operate on the lake and river, he said, and are a welcome addition, with no threat of danger from the jet boats. He would envision more opportunities for residents to access the waterfront, such as a place to get a cup of coffee or a glass of wine, which they are unable to do now. "We're not the least bit threatened by those types of activities," said Kinney. "There are 17,000 people in town who should have more opportunity to enjoy the river and the lake. We can and should be part of that."

The Town has invested in millions in waterfront property in recent years, but it still offers nothing for residents, he said. "Right now it's just a place for geese to relieve themselves."

## Growing Mental Wellness launches with safeTALK workshop

Lauren O'Malley  
Staff

The group behind the new Growing Mental Wellness initiative has decided to take immediate action, and help youth in Niagara-on-the-Lake with a suicide alertness workshop.

GMW is aimed towards youth in our community who are in need of mental health support, and find themselves falling through the cracks. Red Roof Retreat will be housing the program, and is co-ordinating this workshop as a launch event in partnership with the Family Mental Health Support Network of Niagara.

On Monday Nov. 26, anyone 15 or older is encouraged to attend a free safeTALK workshop at the community centre, from 5 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Karen Post, GMW program co-ordinator, says, "This is so important because sometimes you don't realize what's right under your nose until it's too late." In this case, "too late" can be fatal.

This workshop teaches people how to identify suicidal thoughts and tendencies in others, including family members, friends, classmates,

colleagues — and even strangers. Once identified, resources are offered so participants will know how to connect people with the support they need.

"We talk about mental health and we talk about being supportive. This is one way to start that action," says Bethany Poltl of the Lord Mayor Youth Advisory Council, who intends to attend the event.

The safeTALK program was developed in 2006 and has been used in more than 20 countries. The Niagara facilitator is Dan Silver, a family mental health counsellor.

The GMW program will continue to expand as needs arise in the community, says Steffanie Bjorgan.

Anyone in need of immediate mental health support should know there is help available. Pathstone Mental Health has a 24/7 crisis hotline at 1-800-263-4944. The Pathstone website also has many resources.

Distress Centre Niagara phone lines are open 24/7: 905-688-3711.

Kids Help Phone can be reached at 1-800-668-6868. Kidshelpphone.ca is and has a number of resources, including live chat.

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# Marotta clears trees at 200 John St., nearby residents rally in protest

*Continued from Front Page*

"I think as a resident of Ontario, as a resident of NOTL, all you need to do is come down and look at this property to realize that any attempt to develop it along the lines of what he's proposing should just be completely unacceptable," said Kelly. "The design of the hotel is very reflective of chain hotels such as Embassy Suites. So we feel that there is no attention being made to try and integrate this into the architectural style of the town, and there's an outright attempt to just clear-cut this area here."

About a year and a half ago, Marotta invited neighbours of the estate, along with some town councillors and local arborist Buddy Andres, to walk around the Randwood properties. He assured them he would only be taking down trees that were diseased or dead, although removal of a small number might be necessary for development of the property. In that case, he would replant, he said at the time.

Protesters gathered at the two entrances to the estate on John Street and the one entrance on Charlotte Street. The largest group was at the main gates on John Street, where the vehicles of the tree removal crews were lined up to enter and begin their work. Protesters chanted songs such as, "I don't know but I've been told, Randwood trees are very old," but were unable to prevent tree removal workers from entering the property with chainsaws.

Marotta, owner of the property, said the trees being cut down are only on 200 John St., and that he's within his legal rights to clear the land. He noted there is no official development plan proposed for that property, which is already zoned residential, meaning he doesn't currently require an arborist report on the trees. Once Marotta submits a plan for the subdivision he will need an arborist's report, but until that time he is legally allowed to clear the land.

Marotta said he expected people to protest the cutting. "There's a lot of people that have nothing to do, but rather cause problems and embarrass the town, trying to stop someone that follows the rules, follows the bylaws. So I just hope that they don't break the law."

He said the clearing of the trees is permitted by the Town's bylaws and the NPCA, and that he "won't al-



Protesters gather outside the Randwood Estate. (Richard Harley)



A logging truck is seen leaving the Randwood Estate.

low" anyone to interfere with "what needs to be done."

"It's nothing to do with the Rand (Estate) ... in the back we're doing what is allowed under the bylaws and as per the conservation authority."

"The official plan was approved by the Region, the Town and we're just following the law."

Marotta alleged some of the protesters were putting materials into the locks of the gates so workers couldn't get on the property.

He said he's unsure exactly how many trees he's taking down, and that healthy trees were also removed.

"We didn't count them but whatever we feel needs to go

down, we'll take it down," Marotta said.

"Whatever we do, it's not breaking any rules or bylaws or anything like that."

Several police officers were on scene for more than an hour, including a Niagara Regional Police sergeant who was called in to make decisions regarding the rights of the protesters.

Lord Mayor-elect Betty DiSero, who attended the scene, chatted with protesters at the gates before addressing the police sergeant.

She asked if he would agree it was a "lawful, peaceful protest."

He agreed, and police left the scene without incident.

When they left, the tree removal crew also drove away with their equipment, including a Bobcat excavator.

Lord Mayor-elect Betty DiSero said one of her goals as leader of the new council will be to update the town's tree bylaw, specifically to outline a procedure for developers to follow in extenuating cases like Randwood.

The rules, she said, would hopefully be that if designation is sought for a property, all development must halt until the Province makes a decision, within a reasonable time frame.

- with files from Lauren O'Malley and Penny Coles.

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## Editorial: Trees can be protected

Richard Harley  
 Editor

All last and this week, trees, mostly healthy, some very old, were removed to make way for what is expected to be a subdivision.

There has been no application for a subdivision made to the Town's planning department, so for the developer, this is the perfect time to remove the trees, with no tools from any level of government in place to stop it.

Residents are protesting the removal of trees on specific properties that were the focus of this week's concern, but this is not the first developer to send in the chainsaws before the official planning process begins.

We can only hope it might be the last time residents feel so powerless over the loss of trees.

This situation is the very reason why the last term of councillors started talking about a tree bylaw four years ago. Along the way, they learned such a bylaw cannot be aimed only at developers — it has to include all private property owners, although it can, and would have been limited to urban areas.

This was the struggle. The intent of the early

discussions wasn't to stop a resident who needed to cut down a tree to install a backyard pool, or because it was overhanging a neighbour's fence. It was to stop developers from clear-cutting before embarking on a planning process that requires, at different stages, reports from arborists, tree protection plans, and opportunities for council and the public to become involved in the discussion of whether trees can be protected or will be removed.

This at great expense and inconvenience to the developer who just wants to get on with the project.

But because discussions of a tree bylaw went back and forth between staff and council so many times, with some confusion of what was really wanted and how to accomplish it, time ran out. The bylaw presented during the last meetings of council was complicated and aggressive. It would have presented an expensive burden on home owners who want that backyard pool. It required so much more work — dead trees versus healthy, desired species versus undesirable, permits required, arborist reports, how to stop clear-cutting developers without infringing on the rights of

home owners. After lengthy debate, it was not approved, but rather left to the next council to decide. It wasn't put off to avoid making a decision. It was to get it right, because once approved, everyone would have had to live with it.

Residents will surely continue to watch the John and Charlotte Street properties. There is a further protest planned for later this week — a parade of people marching with black arm bands, mourning the loss of trees. They'll continue to gather when they hear the chainsaws, they will be powerless, and they'll be angry at the developer.

But their anger is misdirected. Why wouldn't he do on his own property what he's perfectly in his rights to do? In preparation for a subdivision that his neighbours won't want, any more than they want to live beside a six-storey hotel, both of which are likely to go ahead, with few planning tools to stop them.

We can blame past councils for approving a hotel on the Randwood Estate, for not approving an Official Plan, or for not passing a tree bylaw, but none of those issues were simple, especially in a small

town with a small staff where people do the best they can but things move slowly. And blame at this point is not productive. It won't change what has happened, and may continue to happen, in one of the most beautiful and historic properties in town.

What we can do is hope that a bright, new council, with energetic and passionate people who made promises they certainly fully intend to keep, can put some controls in place that will protect the trees of the future, and ensure developments yet proposed will be appropriate for this unique heritage town.

At this point, those newly elected councillors await their first meeting, ripe with enthusiasm for the tasks ahead, but possibly without fully grasping the pace at which government moves and the difficulties involved in accomplishing something such as simple as tree bylaw, which really isn't simple at all.

Yet change can and will occur, and as most often, with painful lessons learned to move it forward.

[editor@niagaranow.com](mailto:editor@niagaranow.com)

## Letters to the editor:

### Trudeau jeopardizes marine protection

Oct. 31 was Halloween. Unbeknownst to many, something else frightening happened this day. The federal government led by Justin Trudeau disbanded the Ontario Division Marine Security Enforcement Team (MSET).

MSET had bases in Niagara-on-the-Lake and Hamilton-Niagara. It was a key component in protecting Canada's border along the Great Lakes, defending national security, and combatting transnational organized crime. MSET patrolled smuggling routes, and intercepted guns, drugs, contraband tobacco, and other illegal items destined for organized crime in Canada.

This decision by the Trudeau Liberals to disband MSET is wrong. It compromises the safety of our country and the integrity of our immigration system by limiting the vision and capability of our authorities to crack down on illegal activities taking place on our Great Lakes.

The timing could also not be worse, when guns, gangs, and human trafficking are immediate and growing concerns. Disbanding our marine protections is unacceptable, and will have scary implications long after Halloween ends.

**Rob Nicholson, MP for Niagara Falls**

### Sent to Premier Doug Ford regarding the reappointment of the Niagara Parks Commission chair

Mr. Premier,

I read in The Lake Report that the time is approaching for the appointment of the chair of NPC. The incumbent's term is expiring and according to the article may reapply. I encourage you to read the article.

The record of Janice Thomson is one of outstanding consistent success. Only a fool or a Liberal would not reappoint the incumbent if they want to continue this legacy of ever-increasing success.

I have sent a copy of this letter to Ms. Thomson in the hope that I encourage her to reapply. I have also sent a copy to The Lake Report for their follow-up reporting.

I do not envy the mountain you have to climb to clean up the mess left by the Liberals.

If it were up to me I would terminate all deputy ministers who stoically stood by and watched the disaster occur in their departments.

Next to go would be all those appointed to commissions, boards, tribunals, etc. Unfortunately this blanket termination could sweep away some very competent incumbents.

As you are neither a fool nor a Liberal I encourage your government to confirm this record of outstanding success and reappoint Janice Thomson.

**William L. Cochrane**

### In response to Helen Arsenault's letter to the editor regarding "A Q&A with Benny Marotta"

Helen Arsenault, do you not realize that when you describe the Cannery Park sub-division using the words "ugly, tasteless, uninspiring" with "zero curb appeal" that you're talking about someone's home? The place where they live, the place where they raise their children. I understand that you don't like this sub-division. I understand that you don't like Mr. Marotta. I don't know Mr. Marotta, but I'm willing to bet he doesn't live there. I don't live there either, but I know there are a lot of young families living there. I know there are people who worked hard to buy a home there. People that are proud of their homes and their neighbourhood.

So in the future, I ask that before you start slamming someone's choice of home or street, think about the people that live on those streets and in those homes and treat them with respect, or at least - include your address so they can critique your home's curb appeal.

**Bill Farnell**

## Why NOTL has a lord mayor

Betsy Masson  
 OPINION

When I moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake 15 years ago, I was puzzled as to why the head of the Council was called the Lord Mayor, not simply the Mayor. I knew that the title Lord Mayor was granted by the English monarch starting in medieval times to cities such as London, York and Edinburgh and more recently, large cities such as Birmingham and Manchester. But why was NOTL the only municipality in Canada to use that title? Publicity about the town gave the explanation that it was because it was the capital of Upper Canada for four years in the 18th century. This made no sense. Why didn't Halifax, Fredericton, Quebec City, and Toronto have Lord Mayors?

I decided to investigate in 2012 after the incident when Councillor Martin Mazza repeatedly addressed Dave Eke as Mr. Mayor. Martin later explained that the reason for this was "I have only one Lord." I think that com-

ment should be put on a list of famous words spoken in legislative bodies along with Patrick Henry's "Give me liberty or give me death," and Winston Churchill's "This was their finest hour" speech during Second World War.

I started my research in the Janet Carnochan room of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library, a light-filled room with newspaper files, historic maps, and books dating to the early 19th century, which, regrettably, no longer exists. Going through the Niagara Town Council file which began with documents going back to 1860, I noticed that official correspondence was signed by the mayor, Town of Niagara but about 1921 changed to the lord mayor, Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake. But there was no accompanying explanation as to how the mayor had become the lord mayor.

So I turned to Joy Ormsby, the town historian, who told me the following:

In 1921, the mayor of Niagara-on-the-Lake went on a trip to England and came back with the idea that he should be known as the lord

mayor. He therefore went into Toronto, had a medalion made, started wearing it to meetings and signing his correspondence as lord mayor, Niagara-on-the-Lake. The mayors thereafter followed suit and in 1969, when the Town and Township were united, it was written into the provincial Municipal Act that the head of government be known as lord mayor.

So if you hear that Niag-

ara-on-the-Lake is the only municipality in Canada (and, in fact, all of North and South America) to have a lord mayor because it was the capital of Upper Canada for four years, please remember it's not true. It's because a self-aggrandizing mayor (whose name I will not reveal but Niagara history sleuths will soon figure it out) took a trip to England.



### A proposed change to NOTL's coat of arms

In describing the coat of arms, the distinct language of Heraldry of the World includes (with reference to the lions) "both standing on a grassy mount set with peaches and grapevines fruited proper issuant from three bars wavy Azure, Argent and Azure".

I'm tempted to petition the Town to bring the coat of arms into the 21st century, replacing the grassy mount, blah, blah with this image of a logging truck nestled (as they say) between the lions, thereby officially incorporating stark evidence of the Town's complicity, in the developer/owner betrayal of the community at the Rand Estate, and elsewhere in the rapid deterioration of the Town's tree canopy.

**Michael Howe**

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# Tree removal within property owner's rights

Penny Coles  
Staff

The many concerned residents asking why Niagara-on-the-lake town staff have not stopped extensive tree-cutting now have the answer, but it's not what they were hoping to hear.

The removal of trees from John and Charlotte Street properties required no permit and broke no laws, an extensive investigation by the Town has revealed.

Lord Mayor-elect Betty Disero said Monday Town staff looked at "all the options" to block further tree removal.

"We're not leaving one door open in terms of what (the property owner's) rights are and what our rights are," she said.

But at the end of the day, they found no agency regulation, and no municipal, regional or provincial legislation that could stop the work. Benny Marotta of Two Sisters Resort Corp. has the right to cut down trees on his four properties with the exception of elements of the historic Dunington-Grubb landscape on the three John Street lots. "As far as we can tell, that landscape doesn't extend to Charlotte Street," said Disero.

With the recent election, the Town between council terms and no meetings scheduled until December, Marotta picked the time to take down trees when the Town was at its weakest, Disero said. A tree bylaw that could have been passed by the last term of council was deferred to the new council to decide.

Marotta said his timing had nothing to do catching the Town at a "weak moment." He wanted the work done this fall, and his crew had a two-week window to do the work. It will continue until Friday, he said, when he hopes the cutting will be complete, although there may be "some minor work" to be done, and the crew could be back in the winter.

He is proposing to build a six-storey hotel with amenities on two properties. The other two are expected to be developed as a residential subdivision, but there is no application for that before the Town yet.

Monday afternoon, the Town released information about the tree removal based on contact with the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, the Ministry of Natural Resources, and the Regional



A transport truck filled with freshly cut logs can be seen leaving the Randwood Estate, days after residents gathered outside the four gates of the properties in protest of the cutting. (Supplied photo/Thomas Elltoft)

panning department.

The Town had staff onsite on several days, including CAO Holly Dowd, and staff from bylaw enforcement, operations and planning departments. They also asked heritage experts to visit the site and consulted with the Town's lawyers regarding trees covered by the heritage designation application.

The tree-cutting occurring recently, said Disero, was mostly on the west side of 200 John Street and 588 Charlotte Street, the expected location of a subdivision.

More than a year ago, Marotta had trees removed from the east side of 200 John Street, requiring a permit from the NPCA because part of the lot is in the Greenbelt. He said he planned to plant grapevines on that portion of the property.

But the NPCA said the west side of the John Street lot and 588 Charlotte do not include any features protected by the Niagara Region tree and forest conservation bylaw, so no permit is required for the tree-cutting that has taken place on those properties. Trees and debris removed from the watercourse was also permitted, the NPCA's forester Dan Drennan said, after visiting the site with an NPCA compliance officer.

NPCA staff have inspected the site on several occasions, and have walked the entire One Mile Creek and the swale connecting to One Mile

Creek, determining the area is not covered under the Regional tree bylaw "and the tree removal that has taken place does not constitute an interference with a watercourse."

NPCA staff said they would continue to monitor the situation.

With neither a Town or Regional tree bylaw that covers the destruction of trees on private property, there

is nothing to stop the activity on those four properties, the Town concluded, with the exception of the trees which are part of the Dunington-Grubb landscape, and are protected by the Town's heritage designation application.

The Town report alleges "there may have been significant damage" to key heritage attributes listed in the Town's heritage designation, including other landscape features.

The Town is not releasing any more information about what may have been damaged. Heritage attributes listed in the heritage designation application, in addition to trees and plantings, include features such as a stone path, a sunken lily pond with a sculpture, and arched stone bridges.

Marotta is appealing the heritage designation, and while the application is under appeal he is not permitted to do any work to the heritage elements. He said Tuesday he hasn't touched anything that is part of that significant heritage landscape.

The protected area is marked off, he said, and when he walked the site Monday with two Town staff members and a heritage consultant, "They said, 'well done, you've done great, we have no issue with what you're doing,'" said Marotta.

Asked specifically whether any features other than trees, such as a stone path, could have been damaged during tree removal, he said, "We did not touch anything within that Dunington-Grubb landscape area. Nothing was touched."

Dunington-Grubb was a landscape design company in the early 1900s responsible for beautiful private and public gardens of the time, including many of the mature trees, plantings and the boxwood hedge on the Randwood Estate.

Both the Town and Marotta have now referred the matter to their lawyers.

As for the huge logging trucks residents have witnessed carting away many thick tree trunks, Marotta said the trees were mostly pine, many of them damaged. He plans to donate them to Mennonites to make furniture, he said.

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# Circle Street resident opposes 'inappropriate' development

Penny Coles  
Staff

Michael Burns hopes newly elected councillors will follow through on their election promises.

Specifically, he's concerned about whether they will act on their determination to stop inappropriate development, because nowhere are large, two-storey houses less appropriate than on Circle Street in the Chautauqua neighbourhood of small, cottage-type homes, he says.

He also hopes new councillors are concerned about tree protection, as many stated they were during the campaign period.

Burns lives across the street from a small house on a large Circle Street property. The property owners have applied for a severance to create a new lot, and also a zoning amendment for a reduced setback from 7.5 metres to less than 2.5 metres to allow for a large house with a height of 27 feet to be constructed at the front of the newly created pie-shaped lot.

In addition to the reduced setback, the zoning amendment application asks for changes to the lot area, lot frontage and lot depth.

There has been no decision yet on the applications, which are subject to public input

during the planning process.

Burns has problems with the proposal. His main concern is the damage he believes such a large house will do to the Chautauqua streetscape, and which will become the new view from his front window.

He's also worried about the impact of construction on a 75-foot sugar maple tree he believes could date back as far as 1880. He's afraid the digging of the foundation of the house will sever its roots on one side, and believes the house itself will be too close to the tree canopy.

He fears the branches on that side will have to be cut to accommodate the building — the house is about eight feet from the mature sugar maple, which has a 24-foot crown. The disturbance to the tree, which he suggests would cause "catastrophic damage," could bring it down — toward his house, and reaching his front window, he estimates.

Burns is not an arborist, but he's done some research on the severance and planning application for the Circle Street proposal, and what he hasn't found is an arborist report that thoroughly details the impact of the construction proposal on the site's trees and a protection plans to avoid that. The application

for a severance includes a report which calls for hoarding around two silver maples, but he doesn't see that as sufficient to protect them during construction.

Burns feels the size of the house on the small lot is inappropriate and will spoil the streetscape.

The planning impact analysis report submitted to the Town says "the proposed new building lot is consistent in size and configuration with lots within the Circle and within the surrounding Chautauqua - Mississauga Beach Area."

About the house, the report says the scale and massing of the house is well-suited for the proposed new lot and conforms to the setback requirements of the bylaw with the exception of the front yard, and the architectural style of the house has been designed to reflect the heritage and character of homes within the Chautauqua - Mississauga Beach area.

Burns has also sought clarification about two documents that have been submitted to the Town as part of the planning impact analysis. One document dated in July appears to be part of the June 21 application, with no notation that it has been revised, and one page of the arborist report included in the appli-



Damage to trees is one concern with a proposed severance on Circle Street. (Richard Harley)

cation seems to differ from the original. He is hoping what he sees as discrepancies will cause the Town planning department to take a better look at the application.

Town planning director Craig Larmour said planning staff "are in communication

with Mr. Burns and are aware of his concerns."

The Town is in the middle of the public consultation period for the application, he said, with an open house scheduled for Wednesday, Nov. 21, at at the town hall at 5 p.m. and a public meeting

Jan. 7 at 6:30 p.m., also at the town hall.

"All of the concerns of the public and agencies will be evaluated and addressed within a recommendation report to council," Larmour said, although not before February at the earliest.

# Upper Canada Lodge expected to close, Pleasant Manor to expand

Penny Coles  
Staff

Niagara Region, which operates Upper Canada Lodge in addition to seven other long-term care homes, is expected to announce a decision about the future of the Niagara-on-the-Lake facility in January, but it does not appear interested in keeping it open.

It's one of three Regional homes requiring extensive upgrades to meet Provincial standards. The Region has decided to ask the Province for funding to expand the other two, Gilmore Lodge in Fort Erie and Linhaven in St. Catharines, with the intention of turning them into community hubs for seniors.

Asked about the future of Upper Canada Lodge, Regional communications consultant Katie Desharnais said, "We can confirm we are unable to redevelop on the current Upper Canada Lodge site as the site constraints do not meet the



Upper Canada Lodge. (Penny Coles)

ministry's redevelopment criteria."

Pat Darte, who sat on the Regional task force looking into funding possibilities for long-term care, said although the Region has not officially announced the closure of Upper Canada Lodge, not redeveloping it indicates the decision has been made.

Upper Canada Lodge can accommodate 80 residents, and the Region is looking for money to redevelop larger homes that could offer a continuum of care and be more economical to run, said Darte.

Only about half of the residents at Upper Canada Lodge are from NOTL,

Darte said. Although there are other elderly locals scattered across Niagara in other facilities, the numbers don't justify the Region spending the money required to bring the NOTL home up to code by 2025, the deadline set by the Province.

Dennis Dick, on the board of Pleasant Manor in Virgil, says there are plans for a new state-of-the-art long-term care facility on four acres of undeveloped land on the Elden Street site. Pleasant Manor has recently been rebranded as Radiant Care Pleasant Manor, and is governed by a nine-member volunteer board of directors. It is a private, not-for-profit charitable organization. Provincial funding is already in place to accommodate 128 residents, said Dick.

Construction could begin tomorrow and would provide "more than enough beds" for NOTL seniors requiring long-term care, he added. But with additional

space needed region-wide, the build is being delayed while the Pleasant Manor board lobbies for more funding to build a larger facility for up to 224 residents.

The end result will be determined by the Province, and the board is hopeful some of the funding announced by Premier Doug Ford recently for long-term care will end up in Virgil. The plan is to create a campus-style facility with everything from rental apartments, wellness suites for those who need temporary medical attention, seniors day care, and long-term care to allow aging in place. They're even looking at adding a child daycare centre, said Dick.

"I get the impression the Region doesn't want to be in the nursing home business," he added. "If we can get our new facility up and running, there won't be a need to revamp Upper Canada Lodge."

NOTL has the most

seniors per capita in the region, and "obviously we want to care for the seniors here." Expanding Pleasant Manor will help ease the pressure on Regional long-term care homes and hospitals, he said.

Determining which patients get those beds, whether in a private, not-for-profit or Regional home, is handled by the Niagara Community Care Access Centre, said Dick, according to need, which is why NOTL residents are sometimes sent to out-of-town homes, and others from different municipalities end up in NOTL. "When a bed becomes free, we don't get to choose who gets it. It's based on who needs it most."

The cost of long-term care is set by the Province, and is the same at for-profit, not-for-profit and Regional homes, with Provincial subsidies available for those who require help.

Ford has also promised an end to "hallway medicine,"

and that means more long-term care for seniors who are now in hospital while they wait for an available space in a nursing home, said Dick.

"We can get people out of corridors in our hospitals by providing more nursing home beds for those who don't have anywhere else to go."

The need for long-term care is not going away, he added. "There will likely be a glut of baby boomers who will need beds. We need to build for them now."

This story has been edited. The story originally falsely stated Pleasant Manor was recently taken over by Revera Retirement Living and Long-term Care Services. In truth, Pleasant Manor is operated by Radiant Care and has not changed hands, but was rebranded. More information about Radiant Care can be found at, <https://radiantcare.net/>.

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## Region needs to update smoking bylaw to include cannabis, vaping

Penny Coles  
Staff

Anywhere it's legal to smoke tobacco, it's legal to smoke pot — that has been the message from the Niagara Region public health department since cannabis became legal last month.

But strictly speaking, that's not quite accurate. Because the 2013 Regional smoking bylaw has not been updated, and does not include cannabis or vaping, there are corners of the Region where those two activities are "technically" permitted, while smoking tobacco is not.

Dr. Andrea Feller, the Region's associate medical officer of health, said Niagara has been "leading the way" in Ontario with stronger rules to limit smoking in public places. When the Province first introduced legislation to ban smoking in some areas,

the Region went further with its own bylaw, adding some public locations the Province hadn't included, such as parks and playgrounds, bus shelters, sports fields and around Municipal and Regional buildings.

In 2017 the Ontario government updated its smoking bylaw to include cannabis and vaping, and added most, although not all, of those locations Niagara and other regions in Ontario had included in their own local bylaws.

In September, the new Conservative government announced Ontario residents would be able to smoke recreational cannabis where ever the smoking of tobacco is allowed, with some exceptions for vehicles and boats.

"Right now, that's the easiest way to think about it," said Feller. "That's the way we're suggesting people see it, although there will be a

few places where the Provincial bylaw and the Regional bylaw don't match up."

There are "technical and really confusing discrepancies," she said, adding it would be "a distraction" to the intention of the bylaw to outline the differences.

They do exist, though, meaning, for example, there could be some corner of a park, a distance away from a playground, where the Regional bylaw bans smoking tobacco but not yet cannabis or vaping.

The Regional public health department didn't want to move forward with a review of its bylaw until the provincial update was completed — it turned out to be stronger than expected, with additional smoke-free locations focused on protecting children, said Feller. The Region-

al review process will include public consultation and the possibility of looking at additional locations to include as smoke-free places.

"It's quite a process to update a bylaw. There's a public process, and it wouldn't have made any sense to update it (to match the 2017 provincial bylaw) knowing it could change again," said Feller.

Working closely with staff from Niagara municipalities, the public health department could be ready to present a bylaw to the new council by January of February, she said.



## NPCA governance issue to be resolved by next Regional council

Penny Coles  
Staff

At the final meeting of Regional council for the term, traditionally held after an election to allow outgoing members to say their goodbyes, the controversy of Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority governance was left to the new council to debate.

The last term of the 15-member board included 12 politicians. Only three members were citizens, one from Thorold and two from Hamilton, which also falls within the NPCA jurisdiction.

An auditor general's report released about a month before the Oct. 22 municipal election was critical of the board make-up, suggesting the heavy reliance on political appointees was at the root of some of the issues that have alarmed the public and caused a loss of trust in the agency.

Elected officials have overly involved themselves in day-to-day operations of NPCA, the report said, and expenses increased while funding of conservation services dropped.

While the board composition falls within the provincially legislated framework, the report said, "the board's policies and practices are not aligned with leading governance practices, which



Regional chair Alan Caslin and CAO Carmen D'Angelo. (Screen shot of regional council)

has limited the effectiveness of the board's oversight of the NPCA."

The agency's board members, the report went on to say, confirmed "they act primarily on behalf of their municipality when making NPCA board decisions." The report cited the recent controversy over the Thundering Waters development of wetlands in Niagara Falls as an example of elected board members having "difficulties balancing their competing municipal and NPCA interests and responsibilities, compromising their ability to make objective decisions in the NPCA's best interest."

The report recommended the NPCA board should have more appointees with the appropriate skills, experience and training to oversee the

agency's activities effectively.

At the last meeting of Regional council before the election, Pelham mayor Dave Augustyn hoped to make a motion that would reconfigure the NPCA board, with a heavier weight on qualified citizen representatives over elected officials, but the meeting ran late with a closed-door session and the motion was not brought to the floor.

Augustyn's motion, read by Regional Coun. Kelly Edgar at last Thursday's council meeting, said that Niagara residents deserve openness and accountability regarding how their tax dollars are spent by the NPCA, and how effectively the region's natural environment is being protected by the agency. Since appointed politicians on the board may not have conservation and environmental

expertise, the motion said instead of offering the appointments to Niagara regional councillors and mayors, each municipality should advertise the board position and make recommendations based on candidates with appropriate skills, with the change in the appointment process to take effect following the 2018 municipal election.

Edgar suggested the auditor general's report "pretty well says it all" — that there is a need to include qualified citizens on the NPCA board.

But before the discussion of reforming the NPCA board make-up could continue, a motion was made by St. Catharines Regional Coun. Tim Rigby to defer the decision to the incoming council.

Answering a question from Walter Sendzik, mayor of St. Catharines, D'Angelo assured councillors he didn't see a problem with scheduling that discussion to occur before the Dec. 13 appointments of councillors to Niagara agencies and committees.

Gary Burroughs, Niagara-on-the-Lake's outgoing regional councillor, voted against the deferral, and said he was disappointed the decision hadn't been made before the end of the term; Pat Darte, on Regional council as lord mayor of NOTL, voted for the deferral, which was approved by a vote of 13 to 10.

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# Voices of Freedom Park open

## Park monuments will honour history of black Canadians

Richard Harley  
Editor

A crowd of about 80 people gathered on Regent Street in the cold mist on Nov. 2 to celebrate the official opening of Voices of Freedom Park in Old Town.

The park, previously used as a lawn bowling green, is now open to the public.

Inside, visitors can stroll a path to a series of metal monuments which tell the tales of many black Canadians who helped influence Canadian history by fighting for racial equality and contributing to the abolition of slavery in the country.

Betty Disero, lord mayor-elect and co-chair of the VOF Park committee, spoke to the crowd, noting the significance Niagara-on-the-Lake had in ending slavery. She told stories of Chloe Cooley, a freed slave who was taken back to the US by her former owner, and of Solomon Moseby, who was incarcerated in Canada but managed to flee after locals both white and black rioted in the streets to stop him from being extradited to the US.

Disero thanked all involved in the creation of the VOF Park, including committee co-chair John Hawley.

Wilma Morrison, honorary chair of the VOF committee, also spoke to the crowd.

Morrison, who recently found out her great-grandfather was born in NOTL in the 1800s, said, "See, black people were here before the 70s," receiving a good laugh

from the audience.

She said it's an honour to have been named honorary chair of the park committee, and spoke of a time when she once tried to advocate for the history of black Canadians, "But no one was there to listen."

"I don't think anyone really understands what we've been through in the past 90 years. And to see this see this become a project and success — and the support from the community — that's the wonderful thing," Morrison said.

"It's been an honour and a joy to be a part of it, and I thank you all so much — all of the people who contributed to building this monument ... I really couldn't ask for more."

Those who attended were also given a commemorative coin marking the opening of the park.

The afternoon also saw words from Landscape of Nations director Tim Johnson, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism Pablo Rodriguez, St. Catharines MP Chris Bittle and NOTL's outgoing Deputy Lord Mayor John Wiens.

"The Canada-US border is very real here in Niagara ... but Freedom's Line of course, is much more than a determined and enforced legal border. It's also a metaphor for life and liberty. It's an aspiration, a set of ethical and moral principles, and a daily challenge to everyone in society to break the lingering bonds of intolerance, ignorance, racial prejudice and hatred," said Johnson.



Wilma Morrison (right) speaks to the crowd during the opening of Voices of Freedom Park in Old Town Niagara-on-the-Lake. Lord Mayor-elect Betty Disero (left) welcomed Morrison as the honorary chair of VOF Park. (Richard Harley)



Voices of Freedom Park on Regent Street. (Richard Harley)



Janice Thomson and Richard Baker celebrate the opening of Voices of Freedom Park in Old Town. (Richard Harley)

The afternoon also saw a performance of Bob Dylan's "The Times They Are a-Changin'" by vocalist Alana Bridgewater and pianist Robi Botos, and a reading of "Remembering Canada's Best Kept WW1 Secret: The No. 2 Construction Battalion," performed by Allan Louis, a Shaw Festival actor.

The concept for VOF Park was created by Raymond Tung, the Town's urban design specialist, and is designed to be an interactive experience "both visually any physically," according to a Town media release sent Nov. 2. The release said a web developer has been hired by the VOF committee to produce an online app that

will let park-goers take part in a mobile walking tour of all black history sites within the town, beginning with the Voices of Freedom Park.

An educational component dedicated to the history of black Canadians is also in development for schools visiting the Niagara Historical Society Museum, planned to launch in Black History Month (February, 2019).

The VOF Park project received \$338,000 from the federal government — through the Building Communities Through Arts and Heritage Legacy Fund, administered by the Depart-

**"It's an aspiration, a set of ethical and moral principles, and a daily challenge to everyone in society to break the lingering bonds of intolerance, ignorance, racial prejudice and hatred."**

TIM JOHNSON

ment of Canadian Heritage — for its role in showcasing local arts and history.

"The Government of Canada has been a proud partner of Voices of Freedom from the outset," said Rodriguez. "Projects like this one help foster connections across communities and encourage us to build a stronger future for everyone. Our government will continue to work hard to promote inclusion, and show how diversity is a source of strength and pride."

Funding for the park has also come from a variety of sources including a Canada 150 grant and an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant from the province; a Niagara Investment in Culture grant from the Niagara Region; funds from the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake; and private donations from local businesses and residents.

The private donations were crucial to the completion of the

park, the Town release said.

Kevin Turcotte, parks and recreation manager for the Town of NOTL, said he would like to thank the hard work of everyone involved in the VOF Park project — "town council, donors, the Voices of Freedom committee, Town staff and the many contractors that were involved in constructing this park. This project wouldn't have happened without your support ... A special thank you to Dawland Farms and Landscaping who have worked tirelessly into the night over the past few weeks to ensure the park is ready for the official opening."

"We look forward to preserving this beautiful park for the years to come," Turcotte said.

This year marks the 225th anniversary of the 1793 Act to Limit Slavery in Upper Canada.



## Phragmites could end sustainability of specialty crops

Penny Coles  
Staff

When the new council meets in December and begins budget discussions, Dennis Dick is hoping there will be some money put aside for equipment to control the growth of phragmites, which is overtaking storm water management ponds, ditches and drains across the municipality.

Despite discussions about eradicating phragmites going back more than two years, Dick said the nuisance weed is growing virtually unchecked. Eradication is probably impossible, but the Town needs a plan that will at least control it, he said.

Dick, a farmer and operator of a small business that installs and repairs septic systems, was chair of the Town's agricultural committee during the last term of council. He hopes to be appointed to the committee again, and control of phragmites (pronounced frag-MY-tees, which is both the singular and plural of the word, if anyone is wondering) is high on his list of priorities. Otherwise he fears for the future of the town's drainage ditches as an essential source of irrigation for local farmers, he said.

The invasive plant grows near or in water, and has an extensive root system, as long



as the plant is tall — it can grow up to 10 feet — and with the toxins it produces, it can choke out or kill native plants.

The roots are clogging local watercourses, and when water being carried away from grapevines and orchards through underground drainage pipes reaches a drain blocked by phragmites, the pipes back up and fields end up too wet, said Dick. That's not good for the tender fruit and grapes, the specialty crops NOTL can grow given its soil and climate conditions.

If left uncontrolled, the roots will block drains and ditches to the extent that there will be no water for irrigation, he added. "If that happens we won't be sustainable as a farming community that deals with specialized crops."

Until recently, the two

options for getting rid of the weed were spraying with a chemical on open ground away from water sources, or cutting it. Spraying is too dangerous for nearby crops that are irrigated by drains and ditches, and the Town has tried cutting, however without getting rid of roots it grows back more aggressively.

Brett Ruck, the Town's superintendent of environmental services, said there is no Town program to control phragmites. Work conducted to date, including cutting, has been done as maintenance requirements or as testing on the plant. There is no money budgeted for 2019, he added — that's a decision for council to make. The plant is currently being cut to prevent clogging of municipal drains and ditches and flooding on private property.

Dick hopes the Town will

be able to purchase equipment that will get rid of the plant, roots and all. He describes it as a big cutting bucket with a long arm connected to a tractor. The bucket gets under the roots and pulls them out, along with the rest of the reedy plant, which then has to be trucked away and destroyed.

If council will approve the purchase, he said, the equipment can be used full-time, year round, to mitigate and control the impact on local drains, ditches and ponds. "It's not going to be a one-year or two-year project. It will continue to be a challenge going forward."

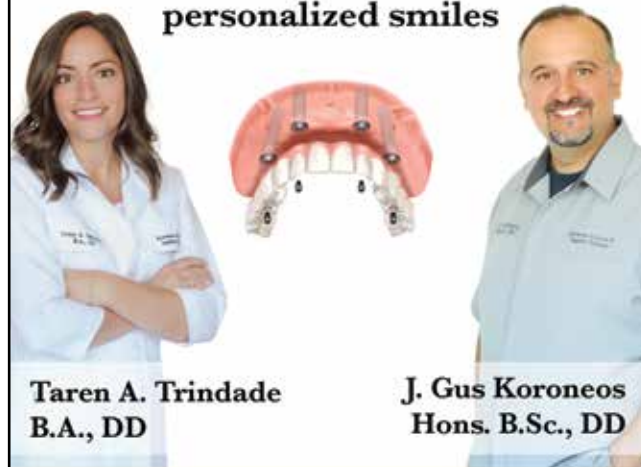
The invasive weed spreads quickly, by seed on the wind or by animals and birds. Recreational and construction vehicles can also spread seeds.

As council was winding down for the last term, several councillors spoke of the need to deal with phragmites. Town officials attending the August Municipalities of Ontario conference met with Rural Affairs Minister Ernie Hardeman, who is tackling the problem of phragmites. The Town intended to invite Hardeman to see the seriousness of the situation first-hand, hoping for help with a co-ordinated province-wide phragmites control program, and provincial funding.

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#### Time Capsule: Negro Burial Ground

On Mississauga Street, between the Avondale plaza and The Lake Report's office once stood a baptist church erected in 1830 through the exertions of a former British soldier named John Oakley.

Today a plaque commemorates the grounds (called the Negro Burial Ground; yeah, it could use an update for 2018) and the contributions the church made to Canadian history.

Oakley, although white, became pastor of a predominantly black congregation.

In 1793 Upper Canada had passed an act forbidding further introduction of slaves and freeing the children of those in the colony at twenty-five. This was the first legislation of its kind in the British Empire.

A long tradition of tolerance attracted refugee slaves to Niagara, many of whom lie buried in the graveyard.

When the new Voices of Freedom park opens Friday, it won't be Niagara-on-the-Lake's first place commemorating the area's significance in history for all, especially black Canadians.

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## Ideas? Submit them.

The Lake Report has asked local residents which issues matter most to them, and how they'd like to see them solved. We have provided a blank slate for residents to identify five specific areas of concern to them. Let us know what matters by either filling these questions out and mailing them to PO Box 724, LOS 1J0 (NOTL post office) or by emailing your answers to [editor@niagaranow.com](mailto:editor@niagaranow.com) with the subject line "My ideas for NOTL."

We've already had a number of responses. The paper will publish the five most common issues, as well as submit them to the Town and the newly elected members of council. To be tallied and included, all responses must be submitted by Nov. 20.

1. Issue: \_\_\_\_\_  
Fix: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Issue: \_\_\_\_\_  
Fix: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Issue: \_\_\_\_\_  
Fix: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Issue: \_\_\_\_\_  
Fix: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Issue: \_\_\_\_\_  
Fix: \_\_\_\_\_

Pick five local issues that are important to you, and let us know how you'd like to see them handled.



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# Queenston bake sale to offer holiday spirit

Lauren O'Malley  
Staff

The Queenston Residents Association is offering a chance for folks to fill their freezers and bellies with goodies at its annual bake sale on Dec. 1 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Queenston Public Library.

The library will be stocked full of baked goods such as squares, loaves and cookies, while the freezers will be stocked with the perennially popular tourtieres and chicken casseroles for which the event has become known.

"We started testing out the market for them with just a few to begin with," said Marilyn Armstrong, chair of the QRA's fundraising committee, "and they just took off."

"The demand was definitely there. We sell out of them every year."

The committee of ladies, accompanied by dedicated locals, spends a couple of days making the pies and casseroles — with a lot of chatting involved.

"We made 164 tourtieres this year, and we've sold more than 90 of them already," said Armstrong with pride.

The recipe is an old family

gem from one of the residents of the community, and features ground pork and ground beef with a special blend of spices nestled into a flaky pastry crust.

The chicken casserole, another popular item, features chicken in a creamy sauce with a bread crumb and cheese topping.

Of the 160 casseroles, more than half have been pre-sold.

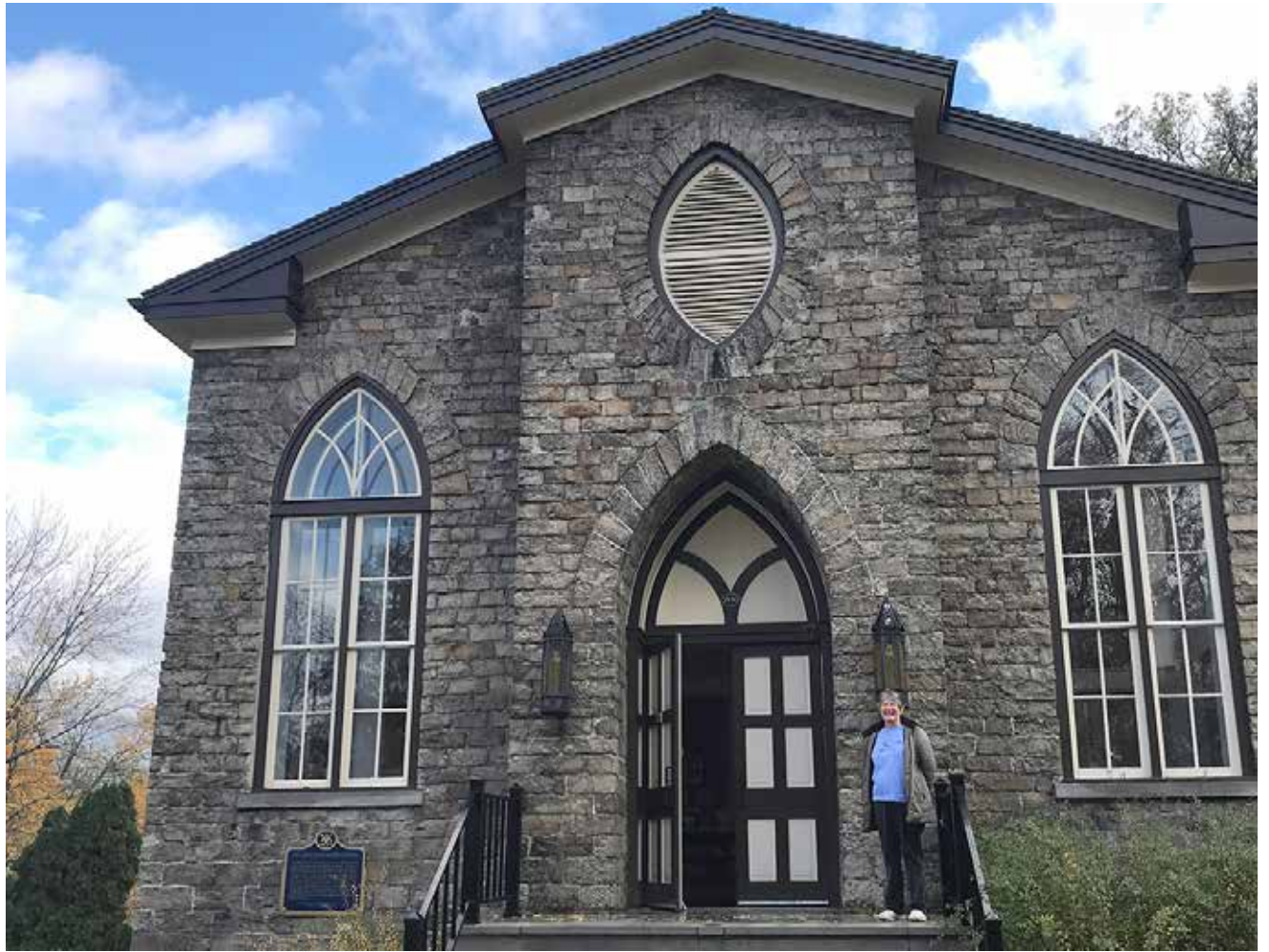
The sale will feature gently used donated Christmas decorations as well, with donations being accepted until one week before the sale.

The money raised will go toward preserving the village of Queenston, as well as donations to local charities such as Newark Neighbours and the Red Roof Retreat.

Lately some money has been earmarked for the fight against the Whirlpool Jet Boats' use of buses to bring customers through the town.

Last year the sale netted \$5,500, and the QRA hopes to reap a similar amount this year.

Tourtieres are \$20 each, chicken casseroles are \$25, and both can be ordered by calling Armstrong at 905-262-0268 or by sending her an email at [armstrong@bellnet.ca](mailto:armstrong@bellnet.ca).



Marilyn Armstrong in front of the Queenston Public Library. (Lauren O'Malley)

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# Yellow Door receives \$13K grant

Richard Harley  
Editor

Yellow Door Theatre Project students were given another reason to sing Nov. 4, when Wise Guys Charity fund presented the local charitable organization with \$13,000 towards renovation efforts at its location in Virgil.

After taking up residence at 504 Line 2, the company is slowly transforming the former fitness studios into a versatile rehearsal, special event, and performance venue – no small task for a new charity, run on volunteer steam and grant money alone.

The \$13,000 will be used to implement seating and curtains in the studio, a space that not only serves the young students and performers of Yellow Door, but is available for community use as well.

“Our organization is growing, and in order to serve our performers and the many local residents who have approached us about rehearsal space, a studio to teach classes, or a place to host a special event, we need some cosmetic improvements to our studios,” says Yellow Door Artistic Director Andorlie Hillstrom.

“This very generous contribution will help us reach



From left to right, Elisabeth Cornett, Greg Kirchofer, Paul McBride (Yellow Door board members), Chris Sinclair (Wise Guys) Dale Merrill (YD board chair), Catherine Skinner (YD board), Andorlie Hillstrom (YD artistic director), Kara-Lee Simpson (YD board). (Supplied photo)

those goals, and it also shows the region that Yellow Door is a worthwhile cause to support. We are teaching young people skills that will help them beyond their time on stage, and growing future leaders for our Niagara communities.”

The Wise Guys (and Wise Girls) Charitable Fund

has been around for nearly thirty years and is committed to raising awareness and financial support for local causes in Niagara. The organization hosts a variety of fundraising events throughout the region, and then disperses funds raised to various charitable organizations seeking support.

Board of directors member, Chris Sinclair (Brand-Blvd) was on hand to present the cheque to the Yellow Door board.

The young cast of the upcoming production of Robin Hood was also in attendance, as were several parents and supporters from the community.

# Bridge tournament draws hundreds

Jill Troyer  
Special to TLR

Local bridge enthusiasts along with players from Buffalo, Toronto, and Southwestern Ontario made the first tournament at the NOTL Community Centre a big hit. More than 250 participants filled the tables over three days, Nov. 9 to 11.

Newly formed Unit 255 of the American Contract Bridge League (ACBL) hosted the match. It is made up of two bridge clubs, the NOTL Bridge Centre and the Bridge Centre of Niagara, based in St. Catharines.

Organizers expected a maximum of 220 tables to be filled over the course of the weekend, but that was well exceeded for a total of 267 tables. Unit president Muriel Tremblay was delighted with the positive feedback from participants, without a single complaint as the tournament drew to a close on Sunday. Tremblay was also pleased

there were players with a very broad range of experience levels participating.

Roughly half of the participants were local, such as Rob Kischuk.

“I’m only four minutes away, so this is fantastic for me.” Before joining the NOTL Bridge Centre a year ago, he played at several different clubs in Toronto.

He now plays two to four times per week at the community centre between tournaments.

“The NOTL club is the most friendly and well-run club I’ve ever seen.”

Participants from out of town stayed over for two nights, contributing to local hotels, bed and breakfasts, and a wine and cheese party on Saturday evening promoting Niagara wines.

The next tournament will be in St. Catharines in February, and NOTL bridge fans can look forward to another tournament at the local community centre in June.




Hundreds of bridge players gathered for the first local tournament at the community centre. (Jill Troyer)



Hundreds of bridge players gathered for the first local tournament at the community centre. (Jill Troyer)

Content provided by:



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<p><b>Public skating</b> - 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. - Meridian Credit Union Arena</p> <p><b>An Afternoon of Music</b> - 2 p.m. - St Saviour's Anglican Church, Queenston</p> <p><b>NOTL Ukesters Sunday Ukelele Workshop</b> - 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p><b>Frank Deresti &amp; The Lake Effect</b> - 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. - Silversmith Brewing Co</p>	<p><b>Little Red Tail Hawks</b> - 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. - Niagara Regional Native Centre</p> <p><b>Community Pot Luck and Drumming Night</b> - 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. - Niagara Regional Native Centre</p> <p><b>Council Orientation</b> - 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. - Council Chambers</p> <p><b>Beer &amp; Books: The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald</b> - 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. - The Old Winery</p>	<p><b>Rotary Club of NOTL</b> - 12 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p><b>NOTL Golden Age Club</b> - 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p><b>CARP meeting</b> - 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. - Royal Niagara Golf Club</p> <p><b>The Makeshift</b> - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p><b>Make Some Noise</b> - 4 p.m. to 4:45 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p>	<p><b>NOTL Newcomers C</b> - NOTL Community C</p> <p><b>Movie: Phantom Th</b> to 4 p.m. - NOTL Publ</p> <p><b>Drop-in painting</b> - 3 - NOTL Community C</p> <p><b>Public Talk: The His Rodman Hall and it by Darren Schmah</b> Willowbank School o Arts</p> <p><b>Fall Trivia League</b> - p.m. - The Exchange</p>
<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>
<p><b>Public skating</b> - 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. - Meridian Credit Union Arena</p> <p><b>NOTL Ukesters Sunday Ukelele Workshop</b> - 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p>	<p><b>Let's take a listening walk and create journey sticks</b> - 8:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. - St. Michael Catholic Elementary School</p> <p><b>Little Red Tail Hawks</b> - 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. - Niagara Regional Native Centre</p> <p><b>Community Pot Luck and Drumming Night</b> - 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. - Niagara Regional Native Centre</p> <p><b>safeTALK suicide alertness</b> - 5 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p><b>Council Workshop</b> - 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. - Council Chambers</p>	<p><b>Royal Oak Community School open house</b> - 3:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. - 176 Wellington St.</p> <p><b>Table tennis</b> - 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p><b>Rotary Club of NOTL</b> - 12 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p><b>NOTL Golden Age Club</b> - 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</p> <p><b>The Makeshift</b> - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</p> <p><b>Urban Design Committee</b> - 5 p.m. - Council Chambers</p> <p><b>Baha'i Community of NOTL</b> - 7:30 p.m. - Mori Room NOTL Community Centre</p>	<p><b>Simply STEAM Stor</b> a.m. to 12 p.m. - NOT</p> <p><b>Drop-in painting</b> - 3 - NOTL Community C</p> <p><b>Open house for Qu reconstruction</b> - 4 p Town of NOTL Operat</p> <p><b>Board Information</b> p.m. to 8 p.m. - NOTL</p> <p><b>Fall Trivia League</b> - p.m. - The Exchange</p>

Know of a local event? Tell us. Submit it directly to [www.niag](http://www.niag)



# CALENDAR



# November



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Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<b>15</b> <b>Painting without brushes</b> - 8:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. - St. Michael Catholic Elementary School <b>Drop-in bridge</b> - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre <b>Minecraft Club</b> - 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Public Library <b>Building with Brandon</b> - 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. - NOTL Public Library <b>Akwe:go Afterschool Program</b> - 4:40 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. - Niagara Regional Native Centre <b>Committee of Adjustment Hearing</b> - 7 p.m. - Council Chambers	<b>16</b> <b>P.A. day (no school)</b> - <b>P.A. Days</b> - 10 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. - NOTL Public Library <b>Healthy Kids Community Challenge: Power Off &amp; Play</b> - 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. - NOTL Public Library <b>NOTL Duplicate Bridge</b> - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre <b>An Afternoon at the Movies - A Wrinkle in Tim</b> - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library <b>Knit-a-Bit</b> - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library	<b>17</b> <b>Raising Healthy Teens - Rules</b> - 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Public Library <b>St. David's Lioness Christmas Holiday</b> - 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. - St. David's Lions Club <b>Open house</b> - 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. - Niagara College <b>Public skating</b> - 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. - Meridian Credit Union Arena
<b>21</b> <b>Club</b> - 1:30 p.m. - Centre <b>Read</b> - 2 p.m. - Public Library <b>3 p.m. to 5 p.m.</b> - Centre <b>Story of the Gardens</b> - 4:30 p.m. - Restoration <b>6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.</b> - Brewery	<b>22</b> <b>Babies and Books</b> - 11 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Public Library <b>Drop-in bridge</b> - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre <b>Minecraft Club</b> - 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Public Library <b>Building with Brandon</b> - 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. - NOTL Public Library <b>Akwe:go Afterschool Program</b> - 4:40 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. - Niagara Regional Native Centre	<b>23</b> <b>Healthy Kids Community Challenge: Power Off &amp; Play</b> - 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. - NOTL Public Library <b>The Wild</b> - 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. - NOTL Public Library <b>NOTL Duplicate Bridge</b> - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre <b>Knit-a-Bit</b> - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library	<b>24</b> <b>Raising Healthy Teens - Relationships</b> - 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Public Library <b>Christmas luncheon</b> - 10:45 a.m. - 434 Hunter Rd <b>Public skating</b> - 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. - Meridian Credit Union Arena
<b>28</b> <b>Time</b> - 11 a.m. - Public Library <b>3 p.m. to 5 p.m.</b> - Centre <b>Queenston Rd.</b> - 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. - Lions Centre <b>Session</b> - 6 p.m. - Public Library <b>6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.</b> - Brewery	<b>29</b> <b>Babies and Books</b> - 11 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Public Library <b>Drop-in bridge</b> - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre <b>Minecraft Club</b> - 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Public Library <b>Building with Brandon</b> - 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. - NOTL Public Library <b>Akwe:go Afterschool Program</b> - 4:40 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. - Niagara Regional Native Centre	<b>30</b> <b>Apple sauce make and taste</b> - 8:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. - St. Michael Catholic Elementary School <b>NOTL Newcomers Club</b> - 9:30 a.m. - NOTL Community Centre <b>Artful Treasures</b> - 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. - Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre <b>Rotary Holiday House Tour</b> - 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL <b>Healthy Kids Community Challenge: Power Off &amp; Play</b> - 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. - NOTL Public Library <b>NOTL Duplicate Bridge</b> - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre	<b>1</b> <b>Raising Healthy Teens - Common Psychological Concerns</b> - 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Public Library <b>Queenston Bake and Christmas Sale</b> - 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. - Queenston library <b>Christmas Craft Show</b> - 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. - Royal Canadian Legion Branch 124 <b>Rotary Holiday House Tour</b> - 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL <b>NOTL Social Club</b> - 10 a.m. - Sweets & Swirls Café <b>Public skating</b> - 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. - Meridian Credit Union Arena

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# NOTL's jam and jelly maestro sets herself two more first-place awards



Kim McQuhae shows off two of her award-winning preserves, a sangria jelly and her first-place award-winning golden plum lychee jam. Behind her is a wall of awards she's won at various Royal Canadian Winter Fairs, including 17 first-place awards for canning and numerous awards for showing her Highland cattle. (Richard Harley)

Richard Harley  
Editor

For more than a decade, Kim McQuhae has been taking home first-place awards from the Royal Canadian Winter Fair.

This year was no different; the local farmer earned herself two firsts this year in the fair's jam, jelly and pickle competition — one for her golden plum lychee jam and one for her maple, pear and pecan jam, made with Forty Creek whiskey.

For McQuhae, the craft of canning has become an art, one she treats like a science, having by now created a large binder of "mad recipes," including recipes she's literally dreamt up, like a water chestnut marmalade (another one of her award-winners).

Mozart used to write songs without being near a piano, and McQuhae functions rather the same when it comes to her recipes, writing them down first and seeing if her visions bear fruit. If they don't work out, she makes simple notes

in her recipes so she can either scrap it or tackle it again.

"Didn't set," and "not crazy about the texture," are some examples.

When it comes to figuring out what's going to do best in a competition, McQuhae says that's not always such a simple task. A lot of it comes down to trusting your gut, trying to take the judge's pointers from past years and seeing what other kinds of jam are winning. And with the nine categories she enters in, it can be tough, and change from year to year.

She went in with a "really confident feeling" this year, having tested her jams out on customers at the farmers' markets at which she sells.

"But I didn't clean up this year," she said, with an air of disappointment in her voice.

She recalls notes from last year's judges on her best-selling jam, a balsamic, caramelized onion and roasted garlic jelly.

They suggest she chop

the pieces finer, which she did this year, however this year, she didn't do any better for it.

It's not easy to figure out what the judges are looking for in each category, she said, and with 18 judges, there are a lot of different palettes to cater to.

When she decides what she's going to enter for the year, she has to put the jam in an unlabelled jar, with a simple recipe list, so the judges don't know which jam-maker's product they're tasting.

McQuhae has passed the blind test every year since 2007, having 17 first-place ribbons, and taking home the title of premiere exhibitor in 2017.

It's reached the point where she's stopped really counting anything besides a championship win, though she's won a plethora of other awards too. This year she took home another 10 awards in a variety of categories. Ironically, she said, her best seller only ranked 12th place.

A full list is in a chart at

the bottom of the story.

The competition, McQuhae said, saw more than 400 combined entries.

She doesn't know where her passion for jam making came from, being the first person she knows of in her family who has been

so avid about it. Part of it, she speculates, is having chosen a rather organic life, raising animals at her farm Gryphon Ridge Highlands and growing vegetables in the summer.

Wherever it came from, McQuhae's preserves speak

for themselves, with the awards to prove their tastiness.

You can get in touch with McQuhae at the local farmers market in the summer or by giving her a call at Gryphon Ridge at, 905-468-5603.

## McQuhae's 2018 Awards

Golden Plum Lychee - 1st place

Maple Pear Pecan - 2nd place

Vanilla strawberry mint jam - 3rd place

Sangria jelly - 3rd place

Blackcurrant raspberry jam - 4th place

Blueberry lychee jam - 4th place

Jalapeño blueberry jelly - 4th place

Blueberry lemon jam - 5th place

Vanilla pink grapefruit marmalade - 5th place

Strawberries and cream jam (made Godiva white chocolate liquor) - 6th place

Peach Bellini jelly (peaches and champagne) - 6th place

Balsamic, caramelized onion and roasted garlic jelly - 12th place



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# Santa Claus is coming to Old Town

Lauren O'Malley  
Staff

As the annual Christmas parade in Niagara-on-the-Lake approaches, those involved in the floats have some big decisions to make.

For those of us that aren't, one easy choice is to purchase a button in support of the parade.

"The first sign you'll see of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Christmas parade is the sale of the promotional buttons," says Bob Cheriton, a member of the Christmas parade committee.

"We've been selling them to fund the parade since time immemorial," he says. He adds, "This year's button design, by local artist Tanya Peterson, is drop-dead gorgeous."

The committee approached Peterson about donating the artwork from an existing painting of her choice. "She was excited to participate," says Cheriton. Peterson's mother Trisha Romance provided original artwork for the pins for several years in a row. Other artists — always local — have included Angie Strauss and members of the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre.



Santa Claus waves from his sleigh as it passes the Cenotaph during the Christmas Parade in 2017. (Richard Harley)

"It's quite an honour to have my artwork used for the buttons this year," says Peterson. "It's a bit of a family thing."

She selected a painting from 2011 of her then-young nephew. "We chose it because it seemed so appropriate: a child's wonderment at the first sight of snow — or at seeing Santa Claus." Both Peterson and the parade team are very impressed by the improvement in the qual-

ity of printing techniques in recent years, making for a very accurate and detailed miniature replica of the painting. "People are already asking me if the buttons are available yet, because they own a print of the painting and want the matching button," says Peterson.

The pins went on sale Nov. 12, and can be purchased through donation boxes on display at several locations in town: the Avondale

Food Store on Mary Street, Starbucks, the Sandtrap Pub & Grill, Hendriks valu-mart, Tim Hortons, Sweets & Swirls Cafe at the community centre, the Niagara Image Gallery in Virgil, the NOTL Golf Club and the NOTL municipal offices until Dec. 7 (the day before the parade). The "Button Brigade" — a group of volunteers responsible for the fundraising pins — will also be out with boxes of the badges for sale on Nov.

17 at both local valu-marts and Penner Home Hardware Building Centre between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.

They will be out face-to-face on parade day too. "We will have the whole parade route covered with our volunteers," says committee member John Strecker. "Everyone will definitely have an opportunity to buy a button." Well, not necessarily everyone — while they've gone up from the original 500 to 1500 pins, the number of people attending the parade is typically several times that, so if you want one of these collectors' items you might want to act fast.

The suggested donation is \$2 per. "We want to tell the community how grateful we are for their generosity," says committee member Gerry Brand. "Some people give us a twenty dollar bill and say, 'No change, thanks.'" Last year this fundraising aspect of the parade netted about \$2000.

The money is used to cover travel costs for visiting acts, as well as other minor organizational expenses. Travellers to NOTL for the 54th annual parade include crowd favourites such as the Burlington Teen Tour Band, the Top Hat Marching Band and the York

Lions Steel Band. "We are also very excited to have the Notre Dame Drumline from Welland, and the Hitmen Brass Band from Rochester, N.Y. as new entries this year," says Cheriton. "At this point we have 45 entries for our parade which puts us on track to have over 100 by parade day," he continues. "It's been like that for about 20 years — it's good to keep it that way or we'd bring the whole town to a stop."

In a town famous for the strength of its volunteering, the Christmas parade organizers are no exception. Several committees of dedicated, unpaid locals reappear every year, and manage any number of variables. "People are afraid to join us for coffee because we might recruit them to help out," says Strecker — a retired sales director from Bell Canada. He repeats in any number of ways how fortunate he is to work with such a "great group of guys." "The return rate of volunteers is 95%," says Cheriton.

Cheriton reminds everyone the deadline for float entries is Nov. 23, and entry forms can be found at the Town's website at notl.org.

# NOTL Rotary Club launches 20th anniversary holiday house tour

Lauren O'Malley  
Staff

Hold on tight to your Santa hats — Christmas is on its way, heralded in town by the Rotary Club of Niagara-on-the-Lake's Holiday House Tour on Nov. 30 and Dec. 1.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Rotary's fundraising juggernaut, with as many as 4000 people touring each of six local houses specially decorated for the season.

Lorna Penman, chair of the house tour committee, has been working on this year's property selection since January of last year. "Sometimes I hear about houses through word of mouth, and sometimes I just go knock on doors," she says. Her goal is to maintain a comprehensive mix: large and small, old and new.

Penman is passionate — and convincing, says Inge Sakzkowski, who with her husband John owns The Farmhouse on East and West Line. "It took some coercing

but Lorna was very persuasive," she says of opening her house to several thousand strangers. Penman explains there are 300 volunteers dedicated to keeping the six homes protected and respected. And ticket holders are given shoe bags (donated by local businesses) to carry their footwear through the houses, so there is minimal clean-up.

Barbara Biddell of the Garden Club of Niagara is excited about decorating The Farmhouse in seasonal greenery. "We will be using only natural decorations, nothing artificial," she says with pride.

"We are only a canvas — the Garden Club members are the painters," says Sakzkowski. The Garden Club is also responsible for decorating McFarland House, which is one of eight auxiliary properties on the tour.

There will be six houses featured, with a local designer paired with each. Eight other properties are part of the event, but not specifically on the tour.



Lorna Penman, Barbara Biddell and Inge Sakzkowski at The Farmhouse. (Lauren O'Malley)

These include Grace United Church — which is running its own fundraiser as part of the event, selling lunch at the church — Niagara Pumphouse Art Centre, and the Niagara Historical Society and Museum.

Other restaurants and wineries in town are also offering specially priced lunches geared to tour guests, including the Niagara-on-the-

Lake Golf Club Golf Club, Peller Estates Winery, and Trius Winery.

Nadja Lepere, Rotary president, says this is by far the club's biggest fundraiser, with approximately \$850,000 raised over two decades, including last year's total of \$94,000. "We're thrilled the money we raise is going to so many good causes," she says. "Our mandate is to make the

world a better place locally and internationally."

Lepere goes on to express her gratitude for all of the support the tour has had over the years, saying, "Even the ticket purchasers are part of the collaboration — each piece is necessary to the whole."

Distractions during the inevitable line-ups will include live music, and hot cocoa at

some locations. Musicians include Juliet Dunn, the NOTL Ukesters, and a harpist.

There is a cultural surprise on this year's house tour, as well as a bonus seventh property. The McArthur Estate (formerly the Romance/Peterson home) will feature special VIP evening tours — which are so popular they're already sold out. "We're so grateful to the McArthurs for generously offering these special tours," says Penman.

Another home welcoming visitors this year is King's Landing. The Tudor Revival house on Ricardo Street was once upon a time Trisha Romance's summer cottage, and will be decorated around the theme of one of her paintings, "Christmas at the Cottage."

Tickets for the Rotary House Tour are available at local valu-marts, Avondales, the NOTL Chamber of Commerce, Mori Gardens, Regal Florist and Garden Centre, and online.

Plan your local travels carefully: That Christmas-gateway weekend also features the Candlelight Stroll.

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# On Nov. 11 we remember

Jill Troyer  
Special to TLR

Hundreds of people gathered on Queen Street by the clock tower Cenotaph Nov. 11 to pay their respects to those who fought for our rights and freedoms as Canadians.

The event was one of two events in Niagara-on-the-Lake, the second taking place in Queenston.

The morning saw words from local ministers, regional councillor Gary Burroughs and a reciting of *In Flander's Fields*. Former Legion president

Paul Eramian said it was great to see so many people out in the crowd this year, especially the younger generations, supporting and remembering veterans.

"They're the up and coming ones," Eramian said.

"The ceremony was excellent, it shows a sign of respect to our fallen and our serving veterans."

Lord Mayor-elect Betty Disero echoed similar comments, about the importance of respecting those who gave their lives for the country.

She said the ceremony was "somber, memorable and re-

spectful to the men and women whose lives have been lost."

She also echoed Eramian's sentiments about the amount of young people in the crowd.

"That was encouraging to see. We're also getting a lot more interest from young people in terms of community events."

To conclude the ceremony, those in attendance were invited to place their poppies on the Cenotaph to show respect for fallen friend and family members, and all Canadians who gave service to our country.



More than 1,000 people gathered in Old Town on Remembrance Day to pay their respects to those who fought for our freedom. (Richard Harley)



Paul Eramian shakes hands with a veteran. (Richard Harley)



Residents laid poppies on the base of the Cenotaph in Old Town. (Richard Harley)



Jane Catcher places a poppy at the base of the Cenotaph in Old Town. (Richard Harley)

## Sparks give something special to veterans for Remembrance Day

Richard Harley  
Editor

Some lucky local veterans received something extra special in the mail sometime around Nov. 11.

To commemorate Remembrance Day, the Sparks of Niagara-on-the-Lake sent post cards to veterans in the area, whose addresses were provided by Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 124.

The cards were crafted during a Remembrance Day ceremony in early November.

"I have never been more proud of and touched by our Sparks as I was last night," said Leslie Moulson, a volunteer leader with Girl Guides of Canada, who runs the local Sparks group.

She said the Sparks, some as young as five years old, were "totally engaged in writing post cards to veterans in the Niagara region."

"On the front, they coloured a poppy and added stickers. On the back, they wrote messages like: Thank you for your service; Thank you for our freedom; "Cat";



Spark Lea Giessler and Second World War veteran Blanche Quinn. (Supplied photo)

"Dog" — nothing says Remembrance Day like the words that you can spell without asking for help."

Moulson said 19 men and women received a card that "can't help but touch their hearts," said Moulson.

"How I wish my Dad were alive to receive one."

The Sparks then asked

questions of local resident Blanche Quinn, a 95-year-old Second World War veteran who served in Canada working in an office.

"Their messages touched the hearts of all who saw them," Moulson said.

The meeting ended with the singing of O' Canada.

The Girl Guides laid a



Cards made by the local Sparks. (Supplied)

wreaths at Sunday's service. Those not involved with the wreath-laying held pictures of soldiers from NOTL.

Moulson said the Girl Guides organization is "very active in NOTL."

"We have units of Sparks, Brownies, Guides and Pathfinders."

## Toy drive to benefit local children through Newark Neighbours

Lauren O'Malley  
Staff

Two local mothers have decided to use the skills they've learned from school fundraisers and merge them with their event planning experience to create meaningful community happenings.

Rachael Corry-Danieluk and a friend, Brenda Ferguson, both at-home mothers of three, are launching Turquoise Tent Events with a Christmas toy drive — hopefully the first of many.

The space at Kinsmen Scout Hall has been donated for the affair. "Everyone has been very generous and helpful," says Corry-Danieluk. Phil Laboudec of Phil's valumart donated a door prize — a Christmas dinner (a turkey and a \$100 gift card).

Don't tell the kids, but the guy in the Santa suit is community champion Ward Simpson, who has donated his time to be at this event. "Ward was excited to play Santa for the kids," says Corry-Danieluk.

Kids can get a free photo

with Santa — just please bring your own camera for the pictures.

Please bring new, unwrapped toys and non-perishable food for Newark Neighbours. Anyone who donates is automatically eligible for the door prize.

The prizewinner will be drawn and announced by newly-sworn-in Lord Mayor Betty Disero.

All donations will go to Newark Neighbours. Cindy Grant, NN volunteer, says the families on their Christmas basket list have shared their children's wishes: they are looking ideally for popular items such as superhero toys, Lego, Minecraft, Barbies, Transformers, Hatchimals, and arts and crafts supplies. As for non-perishable foods, everything's welcome, but if you want to get seasonal, they would appreciate Christmas cookies, or boxes of chocolates.

The photos and drive take place between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. on Dec. 2. The prize draw happens at 4 p.m.



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# Fighter pilot reminisces about Second World War

Penny Coles  
Staff

At 98, Second World War veteran Norm Howe has attended his share of Remembrance Day ceremonies.

When we paid our respect and gratitude to Howe and others who served and sacrificed for our country, he was remembering the men in his squadron who became his temporary family. As a young man, he was based in the U.K. where he flew 81 dangerous solo bombing missions to preserve democracy for its allies.

This year, he commemorated Remembrance Day in the warmth of Tabor Manor, surrounded by his family, in the chapel of the long-term care residence he now calls home. He is one of the few Second World War veterans still living and able to share his memories of those years most of us cannot imagine, and the armistice that marked the end of it.

At the age of 19, Howe left his parents and Margherita, his high school sweetheart, in Toronto, to join the Royal Canadian Air Force. Margherita stayed in Toronto, joined the Canadian Women's Army Corps, where she became an expert in night vision, and trained young soldiers while she waited for her future husband to come home.

About six months of his initial training took place in Quebec, before he was shipped overseas to Britain, where he received further instruction in preparation for flying fighter planes with a Royal Air Force squadron. A lot of the training took place on the ground, in the 1940s version of a flight simulator. Because of the bad weather, only about one in six days were flying days, he said.

After a time flying the Hawker Hurricane, Howe began missions in the Typhoon. Both were single-seat fighter aircraft, both built by Hawker, but the two planes couldn't have been more different, he said.

The Hurricane was light and comfortable, and felt a little "like riding in your aunt's car." The Typhoon was extremely heavy, and felt more like "holding a tiger by the tail. You hung on for dear life."

He flew most of his missions in the dive-bomber over Holland and France, in day time, flying at 15,000 to 20,000 feet. Once he could see the German target on the ground, often airfields or ships, he would go into a dive that took him to about 5,000 to 6,000 feet before releasing his weapons.



Howe Howe on Remembrance Day. (Supplied)

"Then you got the hell out," he said.

The Typhoon wasn't introduced until mid-1941, and was initially plagued with problems, which Howe witnessed. Although he never experienced them first-hand, fellow pilots at his base did. In its early days the aircraft had a reputation of losing its tail mid-flight, ripped off by the forces of gravity while pulling out of a dive, losing the plane and the pilot. Once the cause was discovered, plates were riveted around the tail to make it stronger and the aircraft eventually became one of the most successful Second World War ground-attack bombers.

Howe recalls rescuing an American bomber which was out over the North Sea and had been disabled. It was in the air, badly shot up but able to fly, and couldn't find its way back to base. He found it in the air, flew around it and wiggled his wings to indicate a friendly aircraft. There was a crew of seven, and he could see a lot of blood through a window, so he knew at least one was either badly injured or dead. Howe said he indicated to the pilot to follow him, and the plane limped slowly behind him as he guided it back to the base in England. The plane landed safely, he said, but he never found out how many of the crew survived.

He found himself in danger in the sky a couple of times, once shot at by enemy guns, and once by friendly fire, he said. Both times he was able to land successfully, and his plane was repaired for the next mission. They had been taught to parachute rather than risk a forced landing, but he was fortunate not to

have to — he preferred staying in the aircraft.

He doesn't recall being nervous on a mission — nerves were experienced on the ground, as he waited to get up in the air. Once he climbed into the aircraft, he concentrated on what he was doing — he didn't think about the danger ahead, just the mission he had to complete.

Life was good on the base, with a great sense of camaraderie among the men. They were well-cared-for and comfortable, but food was rationed and not very good. They were allowed one egg a month, but after completing a mission, each man who had taken part got an egg that evening. "That was a really big deal," said Howe. "We didn't have fresh fruit or vegetables, no sugar. We had beef and potatoes, and we would go out scouring farmers' fields to see what we could bring back. Our diet was very minimal."

He said there was always a sense of satisfaction after a successful mission, which most of them were. "We felt we were doing something useful. And the squadron was like a family. We lost members, but we didn't dwell on that."

He also knew that there must have been some innocent civilians hurt or killed as a result of his missions, but he put that out of his mind and got on with the task at hand. The allies, he added, certainly lost their share of civilians at the hands of the Germans.

He took part in the Dieppe raid piloting a Typhoon, leading his section in low-level attacks, and in February of 1944 was recommended for a Distinguished Flying Cross medal, which he received.

Howe returned home in 1944, travelling first to Toronto

to marry Margherita, and then moving with her to Boundary Bay on the coast in B.C., where they lived in a little rented house and he trained pilots until the end of the war. "I had a great life there, flying in the morning and playing golf in the afternoon. If I'd been single I would have stayed there."

When the armistice was declared, he and Margherita went to the officers' mess on the base to celebrate, but they were told to leave. "There were no women allowed," he said.

They came back east shortly after, first to live in Toronto and then in Ottawa for five years, where he went into the insurance business.

But he recalled that while growing up in Toronto, his family had often come to Niagara-on-the-Lake on one of the lake boats, and he loved the visits to the Old Town. The couple decided to move the family to Niagara, where he set up an insurance office, and they brought up their four kids.

Louise Howe, the youngest of the siblings, was only four weeks old at the time of the move. She remembers her childhood as ideal, and questions why so many people who grew up in town say there was nothing to do.

"There were kids, kids, kids everywhere. We'd all be playing out on the street, all best friends with everyone else. It was a great time to live in NOTL. I can't imagine my childhood could have been any better. There was the Commons, and a movie theatre, and there were always kids to play with."

Howe said it was a great time for the adults as well. He mentions many names from his generation, friends who would take turns having weekly dinners and parties, while the kids played outside. "It was a wonderful time."

Does he have any regrets? He would have liked to stay in the air force in B.C., but Margherita was pregnant, and it didn't seem like that option at that point. They made the decision to move back home to raise their family, and never looked back — it was the right choice. But to this day, when he thinks of the squadron and the missions he flew, he feels privileged to have flown such a sophisticated aircraft.

"When I was up in that plane, I used to think, 'if my mother could see me now.' I didn't even have a driver's licence."



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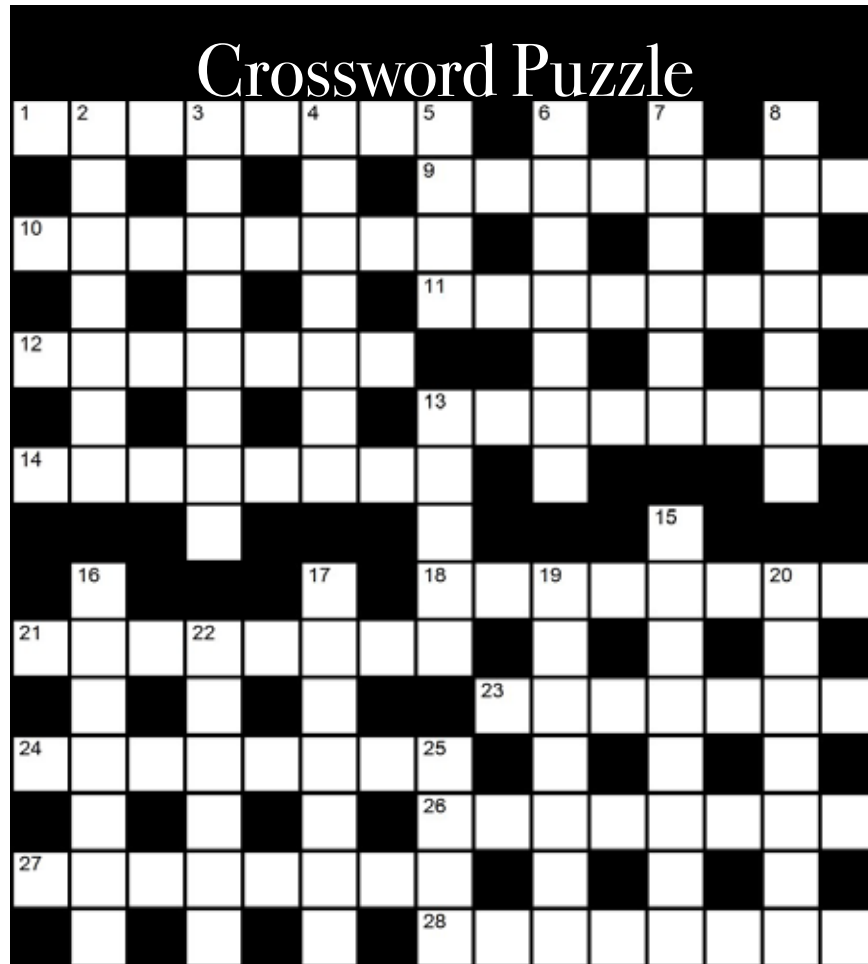
The Lake Report is looking for puzzle makers who would like to help develop this page. We are seeking both standard and cryptic crossword writers. [editor@niagaranow.com](mailto:editor@niagaranow.com)

**Across**

- 1 German liqueur (8)
- 9 Burden excessively (8)
- 10 Self-important (8)
- 11 Travelling case for clothes (8)
- 12 Refrain voluntarily (7)
- 13 Gambling game (4,4)
- 14 Private feud (8)
- 18 Acts (8)
- 21 Bald (8)
- 23 Black magic (7)
- 24 I o W town (8)
- 26 Staple of Mediterranean cooking (5,3)
- 27 Goodbye (8)
- 28 Charismatic (8)

**Down**

- 2 Responsive to drugs (7)
- 3 Midday (8)
- 4 Musician who could play the Moonlight Sonata (7)
- 5 Drunkards (4)
- 6 Musical performance (7)
- 7 Tranquil (6)
- 8 Cushion for kneeling (7)
- 13 Poaches with a torch (5)
- 15 Substantial (8)
- 16 West Atlantic island country (7)
- 17 Decreased (7)
- 19 Covering for a building (7)
- 20 Cocktail (7)
- 22 Battered (6)
- 25 Small island (4)



Want the answers early? Scan the puzzles using HP Reveal. (Must be following Niagara Now's channel.)



**Last issue's answers**



**Sudoku**

	4			2		8	6	5
7			6		8			
1					4	7		2
	1	8	7	4				
		5	2		9	6		
				8	6	1	5	
9	1	5						6
			8	2				7
8	7	3		6				2





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<p><b>1182 Concession 2, NOTL \$649,000</b></p>  <p>MLS# 30697776 Michelle Reynolds** &amp; Stefan Regier*</p>	<p><b>24 Circle Street, NOTL \$689,000</b></p>  <p>MLS# 30698872 Michelle Reynolds** &amp; Stefan Regier*</p>	<p><b>4 Rampart Street, NOTL \$1,450,000</b></p>  <p>MLS# 30696155 Michelle Reynolds** &amp; Stefan Regier*</p>	<p><b>28 James Street, NOTL \$1,320,000</b></p>  <p><b>NEW LISTING</b> MLS# 30696211 Perry Quinn*</p>
<p><b>15 Ridgeview Crescent, St. Davids \$699,900</b></p>  <p>MLS# 30678957 Dan Stefels*** &amp; Katie Redekopp***</p>	<p><b>2 Stoneridge Crescent, St. Davids \$1,125,000</b></p>  <p>MLS# 30692486 Dan Stefels*** &amp; Katie Redekopp***</p>	<p><b>3 Hillside Drive, St. Davids \$679,900</b></p>  <p>MLS# 30696904 Dan Stefels*** &amp; Katie Redekopp***</p>	<p><b>9 Autumn Place, NOTL \$699,000</b></p>  <p>MLS# 30692612 Dan Stefels*** &amp; Katie Redekopp***</p>




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# FEATURES

## NOTL Nationals to host kids night

Penny Coles  
Staff

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Nationals Junior A team is inviting players from the local minor hockey league to come out and watch a home game.

NOTL Nationals owner Spencer De Wolfe, whose team got its start in September as a member of the Greater Metro Hockey League, is organizing a kids' night as a goodwill gesture, giving young hockey players an opportunity to watch a Junior A game and see what that level of hockey offers.

He wants kids in NOTL minor hockey to soak up the experience and opportunities available at the Junior A level, he said. It also gives him a chance to showcase the team, and become part of the community, said De Wolfe.

He plans to build a relationship with minor hockey, hoping some of those younger players may one day want to play at the Junior A level.

"We're interested in working with them, and helping to develop their skills. We can also act as role models."

The evening will offer refreshments, including a licensed area for parents, sponsored by Bricks and Barley, a new restaurant opening mid-December on Four Mile Creek Road by the entrance to the Virgil sports park.

De Wolfe is welcoming young hockey players to the Meridian Credit Union Arena Nov. 23 for the 7 p.m. game, with no admission charge for any player wearing a minor hockey league jersey.

Adults accompanying members of NOTL Minor Hockey will be charged regular admission.



NOTL Nationals slap gloves. (Supplied/Bruce Ideson)



## Paddling five Great Lakes in one day

Austin Broad  
Special to TLR

Three friends from Niagara recently set out on an adventure they will remember forever — paddleboarding all five Great Lakes in 24 hours.

Among the crew was Niagara-on-the-Lake resident David Postman, who joined friends Dan Dakin and Michael Taber for the challenge.

The three set out on Nov. 3 and managed to accomplish their goal by the same night, ending in St. Catharines.

They began around 7 a.m. on the largest lake North America has, Lake Superior.

From there they went through the US to Lake Michigan, then Lake Huron before coming back into Canada to get to Lakes Erie and Ontario.

All in all, their goal was fairly easy to accomplish, with a well-planned route.

"The Michigan route was a shorter drive than going to Sault Ste. Marie, Canada," said Postman. "Lake Superior, Lake Huron and Lake Michigan are all within an hour of each other so that route made sense."

"We were hoping to find some surf out on the Great Lakes, but we kind of knew that you can't really plan a trip like this expecting to get waves — it goes by the weather, not the day of the trip."



Dan Dakin, Michael Taber and David Postman. (Supplied)

The group hit the waters of Lake Ontario's Sunset Beach in St. Catharines at around 7:30 p.m. when the sun was long gone, as friends watched them finish their journey.

According to Postman, who recently moved back to NOTL, Dakin was responsible for managing most of the trip.

As Dakin tells it, it's like the start of a bad joke. "A firefighter, a professor and a writer walk into the Gunslinger Saloon," he jests, in a written story of his own about the trek.

As far as the group's research could find, standup paddleboarding all five lakes in one calendar day hadn't

previously been done, Dakin said.

"But that's not why we did it, and if someone else has done it before us, we would love to hear their story," Dakin said. "For us, this was simply about getting out there and doing something that we knew would be an amazing experience."

Dakin, a former journalist now in charge of communications at Brock University, is no stranger to organizing adventures.

His helped his wife Emily organize a journey along the Bruce Trail last year, which saw a lot of media attention.

The trio was supported by a number of organizations. "Without their support this

trip may not have been a possibility," Dakin said.

"We're fortunate to work with fantastic brands who support paddlers and are as adventurous as we are."

Taber said he would recommend a trip like this to all paddlers.

"One of the most enjoyable parts of the journey was the time spent with others who share the same passion and stoke for being on the water," he said.

"Catching a wave, no matter how small or short it is, completely dissolves all other daily stresses."

A YouTube video of their paddleboarding experience can be found at [youtu.be/S2bzXRmHwZI](https://youtu.be/S2bzXRmHwZI).



## Sharing in a Legacy...

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### ARCH I TEXT: with Brian Marshall History of glass: Part 1



Twelve over 12 window (left) with close up of crown glass pane (right). (Supplied photo)

Ever wonder why old windows have small panes of rippled glass?

Well, until the mid 1830s, window glass was made by British master glassblowers who would blow molten glass into a bubble, pierce it, and then spin it into a 4 foot disk. Called Crown glass, this art required the acquisition of both secret craft techniques and decades of experience to perfect. However, no matter how skilled the artisan, the simple physics of spinning the disk resulted in a series of curved ripples that ran through the disk and the occasional occlusion. After cooling, the glass disk was cut into panes with the curved edges and central bullion (the blowing rod juncture) usually discarded. The panes were graded based on size and clarity then priced accordingly. Typically, the highest grade glass was sold to the British upper class, while all other buyers (unless very well-heeled) could expect to receive panes of a lesser grade and of smaller dimensions. For a buyer in one of the 'colonies', the high cost of artisan made glass was compounded by shipping and breakage factors, rendering even small window panes a luxury item.

Both market demand and the 19th century industrialization ethos insisted on change and in the next Archi-text column we'll follow the 'Glass Revolution'.

Brian Marshall



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# Candlelight Stroll to brighten streets with holiday cheer

Lauren O'Malley  
Staff

As far as traditions go in Niagara-on-the-Lake, the Candlelight Stroll may be the equivalent of the star on top of the Christmas tree.

According to the NOTL Chamber of Commerce — the event's organizer — this hallmark event brings 10,000 locals and tourists together to enjoy the seasonal cheer of music and community. And the warmth of charity.

The stroll, now in its 30th year, collects donations in the form of candle purchases, and gives the money to a local child in need. This year, the focus is on mental health and inclusion. Janice Thomson, the chamber's president, says, "We thought about young people in our community as a whole, and specifically about their mental health." She continues, "We felt there really needs to be inclusion and kindness regarding mental health issues," so they researched community solutions.

The chamber's decision is to install a Buddy Bench at each of the participating NOTL elementary schools. The concept of



Thousands of people gather in Niagara-on-the-Lake for the Candlelight Stroll every year. (Richard Harley/2016)

these colourful seats is to allow school kids to signal their need for support — inclusion, a friend, a kind listener — by sitting on the bench. Their peers are encouraged to then offer their empathy to the person in need. Thomson says, "We hope that the raising of awareness of the importance of both asking for a friend talk to, and of being a friend to others who reach out, will be beneficial to the young people in our town."

The Buddy Bench concept began in Europe, and has been gaining popularity over the last five years or so in North America.

Recipients of the donations from the Candlelight Stroll are introduced at the opening ceremonies, and then lead the promenade around downtown. Thomson hopes to have groups of students represent each participating school.

Last year the event raised about \$12,000, according to

chamber event co-ordinator Nicole Cripps. The amount was particularly high: "We were very fortunate to have an anonymous donor match our funds," says Cripps.

This year the Candlelight Stroll takes place on Friday, Nov. 30. Carols and speeches begin in front of the Court House at 6:30 p.m. The schoolchildren will start the walk that circulates through 16 choirs at 7 p.m.

Students from Vineridge Academy are staffing collec-



A crowd sings Christmas carols in front of the Court House during the Candlelight Stroll 2016. (Photo illustration)

tion points for donations to Newark Neighbours. Strollers are encouraged to bring non-perishable foods, new toys (not gift-wrapped) and toiletries for the local charity.

Candles can be purchased at various locations

along Queen Street, and at the visitors centre at Fort George — where parking is available, and a shuttle is provided.

"This brightens the world at Christmas," says Thomson.

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# Chatting life, death and music with **Jesse Lamothe**



Jesse Lamothe. (Supplied photo/Lunn Photography)

Lauren O'Malley  
Staff

Jesse Lamothe freely admits he wasn't the nicest kid in high school.

When the Niagara-on-the-Lake-raised musician returned from living in England for two years, he set out to make amends.

"I called up a bunch of people and apologized," he says.

That kind of gesture takes courage, which is something Lamothe is deliberately building in his life.

The decision to move to England, for example, was made on a whim, after his wife Sarah lost her job three days before they were to finalize the purchase of a house in Niagara Falls.

"Sarah just looked at me and said, 'Do you want to move to England?' I said, 'Sure.'"

"That move adulted me up," he says with humility. "I learned that I'm very small, and the world is very big. I had so many different culture shocks — we lived in a house with a Greek, a Kenyan, and a Russian. London is a weird animal and I love it."

On their return from London two years later, Lamothe went beyond holding himself accountable for his teenage attitude — he also decided to face his fears head on. Having played some guitar and bass in his teens, he consciously pushed himself further in that direction. He started jamming with old NOTL friends like Jared Goerz and Taylor Hulley. He put together an alt-rock band called the Admiral Hardys: Lamothe plays guitar and sings lead.

Performing in an easygoing cover band helped assuage his anxiety, and he became comfortable on stage with his band mates at places such as the Mansion House and the Red Hot Chili Pepper in St. Catharines. But Lamothe's professional life remained a bit aimless.

"Sarah convinced me to get some kind of career training, so I decided to go to Niagara College," he says. "I chose therapeutic recreation because it was just vague enough. I just wanted to get out of my shell." With his diploma in hand he went job hunting, and was quickly hired at a long-term care

residence. His job is to interact with residents, mainly seniors, and keep them busy and entertained.

Lamothe soon realized the one thing every person in the retirement home loved was music. He decided to play his guitar and sing for his clients, and did some research into the kind of music they might enjoy. "I sing old songs, ones I wouldn't have touched otherwise. I never liked Elvis or Johnny Cash, but now I think 'This is music,'" he says with some reverence. "This is the real foundation. This is my musical education."

That "schooling" took him to the next level. Through word of mouth, in 2016 Lamothe heard about a comedic rock theatre show that was casting, and he asked to audition. "I felt like I avoided too much because I was afraid. So I tried out, and got the part," he says, of the role of Stacey Jaxx — an 80s rock star past his prime — in Something-Something Production's presentation of the Broadway show *Rock of Ages*.

"I realized I had never done anything like this. It was ridiculous, it was crazy," he

says of launching a theatre career in his early thirties. But Rob Burke, *Something-Something's* co-founder, says, "It was quite a challenge for Jesse, having no history of theatre work, but he did an awesome job."

Perhaps recalling his nastier days in high school, Lamothe was able to channel the character's arrogant persona. "I enjoy acting — I like hiding behind the character," he says. Online reviews from audience members sang the cast's praises.

Burke had dreams of another theatrical musical production: *Club 27* would be about four famous musicians who all died at the age of 27. Lamothe, looking for another challenge, approached Burke about being part of the cast.

"Jesse said, 'If you do *Club 27*, I'd like to try out for the Kurt Cobain role,'" says Burke. "I believed in him, and he nailed it."

Like *Rock of Ages*, *Club 27* had a limited and very successful run at Corks Playhouse Theatre, ending with a special encore presentation this summer. Burke has plans to expand the show and take it elsewhere, and Lamothe

intends to keep falling to his knees and spitting on the audience as he channels Cobain.

On the flip side he's singing Neil Diamond and BB King songs on the retirement home circuit.

And now he's facing his biggest fear of all: being himself. Lamothe started writing and performing his own songs this year. "I thought, 'What is the scariest thing I could do now?'" He booked himself a spot on stage at a singer songwriter showcase in St. Catharines.

The judges included established Canadian musicians Jacob Moon, Melissa-Marie Shriner and Ron Whitman, along with the event's organizer, Ryan Lunn. "I thought I was going to pass out on stage," says Lamothe.

But he stayed conscious — enough so that he did some meaningful networking, and shook a few hands of "people I only knew on Facebook, and here they were in person." He met local music festival organizers, and even secured himself a spot in the *Sessions on the River* live concert series.

The near future promises to

hold similar thrills and chills with the expansion of *Club 27*. Lamothe will also be working on a CD of his own songs and exploring the solo performance circuit, as well as gigs with his cover bands the Admiral Hardys (named for a pub in England) and the Model Ehs. But if his wife has her way, "She likes me to be at home," he laughs.

And the admiral has his anchor: "I feel synergy at work, always," he says about his job in the retirement home. "I'm committed to it — it's a foundation of who I am now." And that biggest fear, the one that surrounds him all the time in his job? "This work is definitely changing my viewpoint regarding death. It's okay. It's just what happens," he says calmly. "Maybe it's a reality check, maybe it inspires you to keep going, to do whatever you can."

What Lamothe can do is be a therapeutic recreationist. "My work gives me the opportunity to be the warm and fuzzy centre, bringing people back to their true happy place," he says. Perhaps keeping clear of his comfort zone has the same effect on Lamothe.



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# Niagara's History Unveiled

## First Presbyterian Church in St. Davids



Denise Ascenzo  
Featured

It was 1776 when some of the first United Empire Loyalists settled in the area of two cross roads; a north-south trail connecting Lakes Ontario and Erie and an east-west trail that followed the outline below the Niagara Escarpment.

The settlers were veterans of Butlers Rangers who fought for Britain during the American Revolution. The area was named after Major David Secord of Butlers Rangers.

This area is now known as community of St. Davids.

The first church that was established in the hamlet of St. Davids was the Methodist Church founded in 1789.

David Secord donated land for the church, a school and a graveyard which can be seen today on York Road beside St. Davids United Church.

The Methodist's first church was burned by American forces in July of 1814. A year later, the congregation started construction on a new brick church, however a rift took place within the Methodist community and the new church was not completed until 1843.

By 1884, the Methodist church was in another struggle trying to unite four different sects to become the Methodist Church of Canada. However many families in St. Davids did not like this "new" church, its new modern ways and decided to part company.

The first Presbyterian church in St. Davids came into being on May 23, 1887.

In June of 1887, 12 people held the first worship service in a stone school house. These were the early settlers of St. Davids with familiar names — Woodruff, Crysler, Secord, Black, Lawson and Watson.

Mr. George Clements, who served in the Canadian Militia during the War of 1812, donated a portion of his land to the newly formed Presbyterian Church. The church was built in 1887, using donated bricks that had come from the large smoke stack of James Counter Woodruff's sawmill.

One of the early photographs of the church shows a lovely white picket fence surrounding a little red brick church with sheds in the back to give shelter to the horses and buggies.

The very first minister was



First Presbyterian Church in St. Davids. (Supplied)

Rev. E. B. Chestnut, who led the church from 1889 to 1893.

Behind the church is a small graveyard. There is but one stone visible, that of Colonel Joseph Clement (fought with the Lincoln Militia during the War of 1812) who died in 1867 at the age of 76 and his wife Ann (nee Caughell) who died in 1880.

Several people I spoke with remember seeing other grave markers, but alas they do not know for certain if they were markers nor who might have been buried in the church graveyard.

In 1887, the congregation was made up of 32 families.

Not large enough to support their own minister, they shared a minister and expenses with one or two other Presbyterian congregations from surrounding communities such as Merriton, Stamford or St. Catharines.

At times even sharing was not possible and the church invited guest ministers, many of them students from Knox College.

By the turn of the 20th century, the families in the church community increased greatly, which in turn helped to bolster the finances of the church.

In 1903, on donated lands from Mr. H.C. Woodruff, the first manse (home owned by the church) was built. Now with a strong congregation, First Presbyterian Church, St. Davids could attract a permanent minister offering a manse,

a small income and even transportation allowances.

It was decided, almost 50 years later that the first manse was not habitable. In 1957 a new manse was built right beside the church, next to the Lions Club Park. The house is still there today.

However like everything else there were good times and lean times. The congregation was not always capable of supporting a full time minister and maintaining the church building. Several times during the first fifty years of the church's history discussions were held to join other congregations.

In 1921, the first vote was taken to amalgamate with the Methodist church in either St. Davids, Queenston or in Stamford. There was an overwhelming vote against it.

Four years later, the congregation was asked to consider a merger with another church, but this too was voted down.

The church and the congregation forged on, working to increase the number of families on their roles which in turn helped to stabilize the church's finances.

Then 1929, the Great Depression swept through Canada and the First Presbyterian Church, St. Davids was hit extremely hard.

Many members of the congregation left, moving to larger cities in search of work, and those that remained behind had little to offer the church. Young ministers who

were desperate to find work preached at three or four churches just to make a living.

At this time, Rev. Dr. R. J. Johnston, a minister in St. Catharines took on the duties of three other churches besides his own. He tended to Merriton Presbyterian, Port Robinson Presbyterian and First Presbyterian St. Davids congregations.

The struggles of this small church and congregation continued but was met with strength and fortitude.

The simple fun of church picnics, the fellowship of the congregation and their support of the community was astounding, according to longtime locals who know the history. There were many families who spanned several generations within the church.

One woman recalls just walking on York Road to the church took quite some time because of all her extended family that lived on the street — it was considered rude not to say hello.

The St. Davids community children's groups, Brownies, Beavers, Cubs and Scouts all called First Presbyterian Church their home.

Within the church community there were many social groups. One of the first groups, started in 1890, was the Home Mission Society which later came to be known as the Women's Missionary Society (WMS).

The WMS raised money for mission work in the "Ori-

ent," (now China), or for poor children in Africa.

The Canadian Girls in Training (CGIT) was for young women of the church, from 13 to 18 years of age. This was considered the groundwork training for them to eventually join the Women's Missionary Society.

The Young People's Society, which met on Sunday evenings, was for teens too old for Sunday school but too young to be with the adult members of the church. They were encouraged to join this group for hymns, bible readings, discussions and socializing with their peers of the church.

There was the Ladies Auxiliary, the Church Choir and the Sunday School. The Elders of the Church looked after the church business while other men looked after the physical maintenance of the church and manse.

With teas, picnics, family dinners, music nights — the church was the hub of St. Davids community.

I have several notes from people who talked about the potluck lunches, church bazaars, the lovely weddings, baptisms and inevitable funerals. Even the angst of finding new ministers, organists or doing upkeep on the church are all remembered with fondness.

Now the First Presbyterian Church in St. Davids is facing its last struggle. The church is expected to close by the end of December 2018, 131 years

after its inception.

The last full service is to be held on Sunday Nov. 25, 2018 at 3 p.m., and the final salute to the church and all the founding families will be on Saturday, Dec. 15, 2018 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

The Drummond Hill Presbyterian Choir will be joining the congregation and friends of First Presbyterian Church, St. Davids for both occasions.

Everyone is invited to join in these two final farewell services, the December service doubling as a celebration of Christmas music.

Questions about these two services can be directed to Catherine Julie at [katemac19@gmail.com](mailto:katemac19@gmail.com)


I would like to thank Mrs. Anne Marie Reghr, Mrs. Margaret Piker, Mrs. Beth Gallie, Mrs. Claudia Grimwood and Catherine Julie for sharing their memories with me.

To learn more about the topic of this story you can visit the Niagara Historical Society & Museum website at [www.niagarahistoricalmuseum.com](http://www.niagarahistoricalmuseum.com), or visit the museum for yourself.

The Niagara Historical Museum is located at 43 Castlereagh St. in Old Town, in Memorial Hall. Visit, or give them a call at 905-468-3912.

Ascenzo is a regular Niagara Now contributor. Her full profile can be found at [niagaranow.com](http://niagaranow.com).

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# COMMUNITY

All NOTL residents are welcome to submit photos and stories for consideration in this section. Send to [editor@niagaranow.com](mailto:editor@niagaranow.com)



## St. Davids vet to host afternoon of holiday pet photos

Austin Broad  
Special to TLR

Every year the St. Davids Veterinary Clinic holds an open house event where community members and their pets come participate in some holiday festivities.

Residents can bring in their pets and have their picture taken with Santa Claus. It is a great way to come out for some fun and to get involved in the community.

Donations are welcome, and all of the funds go to the lioness of St. Davids to help with their guide dog programs. There are refreshments, entertainment and a fun raffle draw on top of the other festivities.



## A Christmas Carol returns for a short time

Richard Harley  
Editor

As Niagara-on-the-Lake puts up festive lights, the Shaw Festival is also warming into the Christmas season by running a series of performances of artistic director Tim Carroll's version of *A Christmas Carol*.

The adaptation of the classic Dickens tale hits the stage

from Nov. 14 to Dec. 23 at the Royal George Theatre.

This year, the show is directed by Molly Atkinson, taking over for Carroll, and features Michael Therriault as Ebenezer Scrooge, together with Kyla Cook, Patty Jamieson, Andrew Lawrie, Marla McLean, Sarena Parmar, PJ Prudat, Graeme Somerville, Sanjay Talwar and Jonathan Tan.

After the show, following a "rousing chorus of Christmas carols," audience members can capture the memory by taking a photo on stage with members of the cast, said Shaw in a news release.

This show is recommended for kids ages six and up.

Tickets for the show are currently on sale to Friends of The Shaw and will be available to the public Dec. 8.



Sandra Hardy, Terry Hardy and Juliet Dunn. The three organized an event in November to raise money towards getting workout equipment for people who need oxygen tanks at the St. Catharines hospital. Dunn, TD Jazz Festival executive director, ran the event as part of a big band event. She said the event raised more than \$10,000, half of which will be donated to Hardy's cause. (Richard Harley/Niagara Now)

## SCENE OF THE WEEK



A bird of prey sits atop a tree overlooking the Niagara River Nov. 1. (Richard Harley)



New Heritage Trail signs were put up in November. (Lauren O'Malley)

### RIDDLE ME THIS:

What has a bed but never sleeps, and a mouth but never eats?

Last Week's answer: Water, answered first by Holly Anderson  
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## FEATURED LOCAL STORY

# Music, booking, and life: Holmes Hook



Holmes Hook. (Lauren O'Malley)

Lauren O'Malley  
Staff

"Life is all chance," says Holmes Hooke. And when you take a good look at him, you know he's had more than a few chances, and has plenty of stories to tell about them.

The Irish accent comes from his first 21 years in County Armagh, Northern Ireland. The rich baritone comes right from his chest, and is warm enough to entice one to draw nearer and listen longer. There is much to hear

The surface is simple, almost to the point of blandness — for the first forty-odd years.

Hooke leaves school at fifteen and learns a trade: he apprentices as an industrial sewing machine mechanic. A bit of a sly move, in that "there were 500 women in the factory, and five guys," the 70-year-old says with a twinkle.

Hooke moves to the big city — London — where he meets and marries Peggy. The two leave England for Toronto in 1971, where Hooke works in the "rag trade" in one form or another for a couple of decades. He also realizes he can attend university for as little as \$800 a year, so he figures he'll study English literature "just for the learning, the reading, the studying," he says. He writes "a 50 page essay on the heroic couplet," and receives an Honours B.A. from York University.

Here's where the story swerves, and the magic steps in. Chance. When he was in his early forties, Hooke and a few friends decided to put together a traditional Irish band on a lark for a St. Patrick's Day party. "I converted Don

Mills rockers to celtic music," he says. "It was that time in the 80s when Irish music was everywhere, and we were very successful." He recalls the "absolute joy" of making music, of sharing four-part harmonies. The brief glimpse of local fame.

The band lasted about as long as the Celtic trend did, and broke up around the same time Riverdance left town. But those two years gave Hooke a taste for the stage. While he was done with performing music, he was entranced by the world of spoken word performance. "Sing? Nah. Recite? Okay." Hooke started writing spoken-word poems, and performed them all over the world.

"Every time I sit down to write I never know what will happen. I'm a rhymers, not a poet or a writer," he says. "I embrace the adventure."

His poem "Plant a Tree" became a huge hit, and brought him to stages and schools, weddings and funerals. "I would perform the song — it's interactive, so everyone would do it with me — and then we'd all trundle outside and plant a tree." It even took him to a youth detention centre, where he admits he was a bit frightened. "These young tough guys, muttering amongst themselves. I thought they probably hated the whole thing. And then at the end of it one guy approached me and said, 'Hey, I really like your poem.' That was one of the best moments ever."

And there are so many more of these moments, these sparks of magic, in Hooke's life.

While travelling as a spoken-word artist, he was given emcee jobs. This led him into

and around folk festivals. And, as chance would have it, into rather important jobs in the folk music world.

Hooke was the artistic director of the Eaglewood Folk Festival, and the Vital Spark folk club. He has a closet full of awards for his songwriting, poetry, dedication and talents. And so he got to know Hugh Carson, a folk music artist. Hugh died tragically, shortly after being diagnosed with cancer. His brother Richard introduced himself to Holmes at an event, and told him about his dream of opening Hugh's Room, a folk club like no other.

Ever-intrigued by newness, Hooke visited Carson at the new space. "He said, 'Hey would you like to be the host here?'" I said, "Well, what's it going to be?" He said, "This is it." Hooke laughs. The place was a bit shambolic at that point, and was set to open in two weeks. He asked Carson what musicians he had committed to play. There were none. "I asked him who he would want to play the opening. Richard said his dream was Jesse Winchester. I called Jesse, and he was miraculously available."

The club seemed to have a veil of luck around it. "It just kept on like that," says Hooke. Carson gave him a wish list, and everything fell into place. "You kind of get hooked, like fishing when you throw out the line," he says. "In the first year it was me chasing after everyone (to get them to play at Hugh's Room); in the second year they were chasing after me for the chance to play there."

For twelve years Hooke booked the acts at Hugh's Room, as the cozy 200-seat venue rose to dizzying and legendary heights in the

music world. "Every night is a story," he says. He tells a beautiful one about folk legend Odetta.

"When Peggy and I were married, she had very little to her name. One of her few treasures was the album 'Odetta Sings the Blues.' I was determined to book Odetta at Hugh's Room," Hooke says. He worked tirelessly with the singer's managers, and finally negotiated a deal that wasn't ideal for the club, but made his own dreams come true. Little did he know what chance had in store. "Halfway through singing Amazing Grace, Odetta paused, looked out into the audience, and said, 'Does anyone want to take the next verse?'" Peggy (a performer in her own right) took up the song and... she has the most amazing voice." Hooke sheds a tear for the memory.

Odetta became an annual regular at Hugh's Room, and she and Hooke had their how-are-you-doing check-ins in the club's green room — which was not much more than a dressing table, mirror and toilet, but served as a great backdrop for many deep conversations.

Richie Havens played regularly at the club. Hooke tells the story of chatting with the singer who became the poster child for Black rights after his opening performance at Woodstock. "We were talking about how he was perceived as the Black ideal, demanding freedom, so full of anger and angst. Richie said it was a total misunderstanding. His band was formed just before the concert at Woodstock, and only knew a few songs." Hooke continues, "Richie said he was ready to leave the stage when the stage manager signalled him

to keep playing, because the next band wasn't ready. So he was just vamping, filling time," and that song and that performance branded Hooke as a freedom fighter. "We sat in the green room at Hugh's, and he said, 'Holmes, I didn't even know being black was a thing until I was 16.'"

The years at Hugh's Room were full of highs and lows. The lows were mainly to do with a complicated amount of infamy, in that Hooke was perceived as a wish-granter for musicians hoping to get a break into the industry. "I was on my way to a show in the States, and the customs officer pulled me over," he recounts. "He asked me what I did for a living, and I told him I book the acts at Hugh's Room. The officer reached back into his shack and pulled out a CD of his music and gave it to me." He laughs. He tells of riding the subway in Toronto and "CDs just appeared out of nowhere."

He's not an anonymous man, Hooks. He's a ribbon of a person, all long, thin limbs, with a large waft of white hair and a soulful beard. So he was well known and apparent to the people in the music community.

"I had 6,000 CDs," he says. "They never collected dust because there were always more for the pile." Interestingly, occasionally a CD would contain one of Hooks' own poems or songs, interpreted by another artist.

The highs, though, were very high. Odetta. Havens. Joni. Mickey (as in Rooney). Hooke says, "I felt as if all of those performances, all of that talent padded the walls and filled them up, made them just a bit thicker." He also felt the spirit of Hugh Carson helping him along.

"I realized early on that I was actually doing Hugh's job. And I felt he was with me every step of the way."

After 12 years of booking and hosting at the club, Hooke decided to move on. "There are two perspectives on how I live my life. Either I'm not that focused, or I'm always looking for the next thing," he says. "You can't survive without some real passion, and sometimes you exhaust a passion and have to move on."

That move included a physical one, to Niagara-on-the-Lake. "Chautauqua is a great place. There's always someone nearby doing something impressive," he says.

Hooke has had a lifelong passion that can't seem to be exhausted: trees. He looks at them as friends, and at their loss as the death of a relationship. Which explains his most recent endeavour. Hooks and his neighbour Leslie Frankish mounted a massive project two years ago, cataloguing every tree in Chautauqua. Neighbours, they had bonded over the diminishing tree canopy in their neighbourhood, and decided to make a presentation to Council and do what they could to remedy the situation.

The result is the Niagara-on-the-Lake Tree Fund, which has seen dozens of trees planted in Chautauqua, with more on the way. Niagara College is involved, helping to nurture more than 70 saplings Hooke raised from acorns collected from healthy local trees. Frankish and Hooke were recognized with awards from the Town, and Communities in Bloom.

Those certificates are proudly displayed, not kept in a closet.



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