



Pickleball is back, baby | Page 11

NOTL chamber president **steps down**, search on for interim leader

Richard Wright
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

After two years at the helm and serving as a major player in Niagara-on-the-Lake's post-COVID

business recovery, NOTL Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Niagara-on-the-Lake president and CEO Minerva Ward has left her post.

Board chair Andrew Niven will take over day-

to-day operations while the search for an interim president is conducted.

In an interview with The Lake Report, Ward said the decision to leave was her own, but would not provide in-depth details on the

timing of her last day on the job nor the reason for her departure.

"It was a decision I made to pursue other opportunities," she said.

"I don't want to say what that opportunity is, but I

am very proud of the work I have accomplished here and what the team has accomplished."

Pressed about political aspirations she has made clear on her public figure Facebook page, Ward chose

to keep her cards close to her chest.

"I don't want to go into anything further about what my ambitions are. Small town people talk. Let

Continued on Page 4

Rand heritage attributes **debatable**, former town planner says

Richard Hutton
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

While the Rand Estate has important cultural heritage attributes, just what the attributes are is a subject of debate, said a former member of staff for the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Leah Wallace is a former senior planner and, prior to that, she worked for the town as a heritage and urban design planner for 12 years from 2000 to 2012.

Since 2016, she has been a heritage planning consultant and was first retained by Two Sisters/Solmar back in 2017 after the Rand property was purchased.

Wallace testified on behalf of Two Sisters Solmar at an Ontario Land Tribunal hearing Monday.

One of the bones of contention, Wallace said, is how much remains of the old Dunnington-Grubb landscape design remains on the property and that lack of

Continued on Page 2

Cat **kidnapped**, dumped in NOTL

Neighbour admits he stole cat, police pass investigation to PAWS



Wendy Clout has been searching for her missing cat Zeus since March 4. One of her neighbours has confessed to taking the cat. RICHARD WRIGHT

Richard Wright | Local Journalism Initiative | The Lake Report

The mystery of a cat that's been missing from St. Catharines since March 4 has gotten a lot clearer after a startling, but matter-of-fact admission. Zeus, a big black and white

cat and family pet, was trapped by a neighbour and dumped near Church and McNab roads Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The Lake Report visited distraught owner Wendy Clout at her home on Bowstead Drive on

Monday, April 16 to follow up on the story, which has been widely shared on social media channels since early April.

Sitting at the family kitchen table, Clout recounted the stress and pain the beloved pet's ab-

sence has created for her family. "He is a big part of our lives," she said.

"He's just a part of the family just like our other cats are — and

Continued on Page 7

Blossoms arrive early, farmers fearful of April frost

Richard Wright
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

All eyes are on the short-term weather forecast for local stone fruit farmers thanks to Mother Nature's

unpredictable ways.

In a strange twist that saw this year's mild winter help create an early explosion of healthy blooms over the past week, forecasted low overnight temperatures over the next two weeks could create

a disastrous situation.

"Mother Nature was kind to us up to now," says Scott MacSween of MacSween Farms in Niagara-on-the-Lake. "I don't think we got much lower than -12 this winter which is very favour-

able for our crops. What we don't want in the next week is cold weather. The buds are starting to bloom. If we freeze when the blooms are out, we can lose the crop. Maybe not all, but a substantial amount."

Current Weather Network predictions are not currently calling for below freezing temperatures, but with the blooms now out and vulnerable, the predicted low single



Continued on Page 3 A peach blossom.



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Carriage house ‘in deteriorating condition,’ tribunal hears

Continued from Front Page

clarity is an issue. “They can’t be described, in my opinion, as a heritage attribute,” she said. “And the town considers it an attribute.”

Benny Marotta, principal of both Solmar and Two Sisters, purchased the estate from Calvin Rand in 2017. Marotta’s plan is to build a 191-home subdivision on the site.

The development proposal wound up before the tribunal after the town refused to grant Solmar permission to demolish some structures on the site, including the pool garden, the Calvin Rand Summer House and the old stable house.

The hearing is being chaired on alternate days by tribunal vice-chair Scott Tousaw and member Daniel Best and is expected to last until May 29. On Monday, Best led the hearing.

During her testimony, Wallace said that the carriage house, built in the 1920s, “was already in deteriorating condition” prior to the sale of the property to Solmar in 2017.

The summer house has



The land that now houses Weatherstone Court was once part of the Rand Estate. RICHARD HUTTON

been unoccupied since the sale as well. Similarly, a bath house on the property is in disrepair and would need “extensive repair and restoration.”

But Solmar’s plan would see the bath house restored and moved to a preserved commemorative park surrounding the historic Dunnington-Grub landscape and pool, Wallace said, as it

would show “its relationship with the pool garden.”

Other structures, she said, including the carriage house and the summer house, could be demolished: they don’t have heritage value due to renovations (the carriage house, for example, was renovated to include an apartment) and the summer house did not feature any significant design elements

and was made from materials typical of its 1970s construction.

As Solmar lawyer Mark Flowers indicated during his opening statement on April 9, the Rand Estate lands have parcelled out over the years and sold off, including land that has already been developed.

Walls surrounding the estate, meanwhile, are

deteriorating and have been replaced with wooden fencing in places by previous owners of the property, Wallace said.

“Christopher Street and Weatherstone Street used to be part of the estate,” she said.

In earlier testimony, the panel heard from Eleni Beyene, an environmental engineer from Soil Engi-

neering Ltd. Beyene’s firm took soil samples at the Rand site, near the former stable house.

Samples taken from the north and east of the site found soil contaminated with “petroleum hydrocarbons” but couldn’t confirm “100 per cent” if other parts, particularly beneath the building itself, were also contaminated without drilling underneath the home itself.

“To determine if there is potential contamination, demolition of the building may be required,” she said in response to questioning from Andrea Mannell, co-counsel for Solmar.

In addition to the town, other parties to the hearing include the group Save Our Rand Estate (SORE) as well as Blair and Brenda McArthur, the owners of Brunswick Place, which is located next door to the Rand property.

The hearing is being live streamed at youtube.com/@ontariolandtribunal/streams.

It is expected to last until May 17. Parties on both sides will bring forth their own experts and witnesses to back their case.

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Roundabout rears its head in regional update to NOTL council

Richard Hutton
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

When the region's director of transportation stood in front of council last Tuesday, it was inevitable that a controversial roundabout planned for St. Davids would come up.

"This project is in detailed design right now," Frank Tassone told councillors in a presentation on upcoming capital projects in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

He appeared at the April 9 committee-of-the-whole meeting to share the projects Niagara Region has planned for the town over the next five years.

He said that the region — as it did with the recent road reconstruction in Virgil — will be turning to businesses and the public, including members of the St. Davids Ratepayers Association, for input on just how the roundabout will look.

"(In Virgil) the town came forward with a million dollars of funding to be able to facilitate upgrades and landscaping," Tassone said. "Upgraded crosswalks and things that are outside of the region's realm."

The Virgil road reconstruction, however, did spark concerns from some businesses, which complained about how long that project took.

But now that it's done, Tassone said, "I think the results of what you're seeing there is that the community is generally very happy with the way things turned out."

In St. Davids, the roundabout planned for the intersection of York and Four Mile Creek roads has raised the ire of local businesses, residents living in the area and members of council.

The region will be going ahead with the project, Tassone said, and added that a similar approach is being taken as with the Virgil reconstruction, meaning a steering committee made up of stakeholders will become involved once the roundabout has been constructed.

"When we looked at putting out the design assignment for the roundabout, we also implemented and included those types of meetings for that area," Tassone said.

"Once all of the hard infrastructure is in place and designed, we will be convening that steering committee with the local community ... to let everyone have their say and have some type of role in designing what the landscape looks like."

Coun. Adriana Vizzari wanted Tassone to pin down a time when work would start on the roundabout.

"Do you have a more concise timeline than five years or are we just waiting for five years?" she asked.

In response, Tassone said the region is 15 per cent complete on the design.

"As soon as we can complete the design we'll be moving into relocating utilities and looking at purchasing any necessary property which I anticipate will likely happen in 2025," he said. "Construction funds, I believe, are set aside in 2027. However, it's a little premature to know right now whether we'll make that timeline or not."

Vizzari also wondered if the region had considered any other alternatives.

In response, Tassone said an environment assessment was completed, which concluded a roundabout will be built there.



Frank Tassone, director of transportation for Niagara Region, and NOTL regional Coun. Andrea Kaiser address councillors at Tuesday's meeting. RICHARD HUTTON

The roundabout is just one of a number of capital projects the region has scheduled for Niagara-on-the-Lake over the next five years:

Reconstruction of Niagara Stone from Line 1 to East-West Line. Funds are set aside in the 2025 budget to start the work but the project will "spill over" into 2026, Tassone said;

A revamp of Airport Road from Niagara Stone to York Road;

Two projects in the detailed design process are works scheduled for intersection improvements at Niagara Stone and Line 4 as well as Niagara Stone and Airport Road;

Townline Road from Stanley Avenue to Four Mile Creek Road. The project, which will include a roundabout at Stanley and Niagara Stone, has reached the detailed design phase;

York from the diverging diamond intersection at Glendale Avenue to Niagara Stone (in partnership with the Ministry of Transportation) as a part of the Garden City Skyway twinning project. The ministry recently issued a request for proposals from five first qualified for the project;

Four Mile Creek Road to Queenston Street will be "packaged together with the roundabout," Tassone said;

Lakeshore Road from Townline Road for Four Mile Creek Road;

Glendale from the Welland Canal to Homer Road, currently in the detailed design process;

Line 4 bridge work is planned for 2025 and into 2026, and;

Lakeshore Road culvert work in 2026.

In terms of road safety, the region will continue with its road safety initiative, Vision Zero — in addition to speed and red light cameras, it includes such initiatives as community safety zones, safety reviews, school zones, pedestrian crossovers, bollard programs and education.

"Our Vision Zero program is much more robust than automated enforcement," Tassone said.

Speed enforcement efforts with speed cameras "has shown some great results," he added.

"We went from having approximately 181 infractions per hour when we launched the program to, four months later, down to 60 infractions per hour."

In NOTL, the speed camera has moved from its location on Niagara Stone Road near Crossroads Public School to York Road, near St. Davids Public School.

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All eyes on the weather, hopeful Mother Nature will be kind

Continued from Front Page

digit temperatures are a reason for growers to fret. Seeing blooms for stone crops at this time of the year are about 10 days early, says MacSween.

"Right now, we have a full

crop and everything looks good. We will be crossing our fingers for the next two weeks."

MacSween's 250-acre farm produces peaches, apricots, cherries, nectarines, and plums.

Earlier this year, Okanagan stone fruit farmers in British Columbia were faced with similar challenges following a frigid January that killed off the spring blooms. Growers there were predicting that the result would

mean a loss of up to 90 per cent of their crop.

The Okanagan and the Niagara Region share similar temperate climates, which are ideal for the growing of stone fruit crops, and many other variety of fruit cops.



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East & West Line will drop to 70 km/h

Richard Hutton
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Drivers will need to slow down on a section of East and West Line between Four Mile Creek and Lakeshore roads after councillors decided to reduce the speed limit on that stretch of road to 70 kilometres an hour.

The speed limit is 80 km/h but residents living in the area say most drivers take that as a suggestion, rather than the law.

"I have three young children who will be attending Crossroads (Public School)," said resident Kurt Neumann.

"I can't let them stand at the end of my driveway and wait for the bus. I can't even get the mail at the end of my driveway without the risk of being blown off the road."

Neumann spoke at Tuesday's committee-of-the-whole meeting, commenting on a staff report detailing the results of a speed monitoring study on East and West Line.

When the town conducted the study last June, it monitored the speed of vehicles travelling between Wagg and Four Mile Creek roads where the speed limit is 80 km/h, he said.

The study found that the



East & West Line resident Kurt Neumann spoke to concerns about speeding on that road. RICHARD HUTTON

average speed of drivers was 71 km/h and the "results would indicate that the current speed limit is performing as intended."

The East and West Line problem was made worse by a reduction of the speed limit on Line 1 to 60 km/h brought about an increase in traffic on East and West Line from drivers looking for a quick route to St. Catharines, Neumann said.

That point was echoed in the staff report that said lowering the speed limit to 60 km/h would "push traffic" to other east-west roads in the area, "which are less suitable to supporting the traffic volumes and speeds accommodated by East and West Line."

Wally Dingman, who has lived and operated a business on East and West Line for 48 years, said when

he first came to the area, "traffic was light" but the situation has changed.

Drivers, he said, are travelling at speeds upwards of 110 km/h.

"That's just the average," he said.

While the report said staff was to look at traffic from Four Mile Creek to Lakeshore, that wasn't done, Dingman said.

"The town looked at the traffic moving between Wagg Road and Creek Road and Creek Road and Concession 4," Dingman said.

"Neither of those spots are problem spots."

He said the speed on that section of East and West Line was dropped to 70 km/h six years ago whereas the problem is mainly on East and West Line between Lakeshore and Concession 6.

"The reality is that it is an open stretch of road, it's dead straight and you think you can see ahead," he said. "You think you can see what's happening."

When councillors considered the staff report, Coun. Wendy Cheropita put forward a motion that the speed limit on East and West Line be reduced to 70 km/h from Four Mile Creek to Lakeshore and that staff monitor speeds and come back with a report.

Coun. Nick Ruller agreed.

"I have concerns that we missed that stretch of road with the speed minder data," he said. "It would be nice to see information that comes out of there."

Coun. Maria Mavridis, meanwhile, was prepared to go further.

"I think we need to look at all the roads — speed limits, etc. — but my only concern that only reducing it to 70 (km/h). People are still going to go 80 and the night time drivers that go 100, 120, they're still going to do it."

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said while he appreciated making road safety a priority, the issue should be analyzed and considered for the town collectively and not "piece-meal" as has been the case.

hutton@niagaranow.com

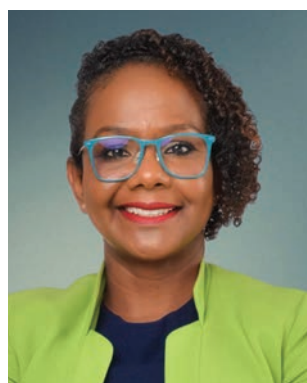
Ward says she will seek opportunities elsewhere

Continued from Front Page

them speculate," she said. Ward arrived in NOTL in March of 2022 in the wake of the biggest shutdown of public life the world has ever seen.

With businesses shuttered and people remanded to their homes and essential destinations due to the COVID pandemic, addressing labour shortages and promoting the community's business and tourism industry were top concerns for the NOTL chamber when she took over.

Ward has been "an integral part of the organization's journey and has made significant contributions in advancing the interests of our business and tourism community,"



Minerva Ward.

Niven said in the press release.

When contacted directly to ask if Ward had been forced out due to her political goals, he deflected the question.

"I would prefer not to comment on private discussions regarding the terms of Minerva's departure," he said. "I have not seen Minerva's

Facebook page and cannot comment on her personal life outside of Tourism Niagara-on-the-Lake and the Chamber of Commerce."

As for the permanent leadership of the organization, it could be some time before a replacement for Ward is found.

"We are in the process of identifying possible candidates for the role through a selection committee," said Niven. "This will be an interim role while a more formal process begins to find a new president. For the short term I will be the main contact until an interim president is selected."

Niven is ensuring members and stakeholders of the organization that its

commitment to Niagara-on-the-Lake — and its economic health and outlook — is top-of-mind during this time of change and hinted at a new-look chamber when the dust settles.

"We are in the midst of finalizing our strategic marketing plan which will include a visual rebrand and enhancement of our digital marketing assets," he said.

Some of these strategies, he said, will include using data to better understand visitor behaviour and tailoring marketing efforts accordingly, continuing to plan and development seasonal initiatives and programming and working to improve the experience for NOTL's visitors through better infrastructure.

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NOTL health clinic set to open April 22

Richard Wright
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

The long wait to see a nurse practitioner in Niagara-on-the-Lake will come to an end April 22, bringing with it a much-anticipated walk-in clinic.

Its official name will be the NOTL Health Care Clinic.

For those who already have a family doctor, the facility — located inside the Village Medical Centre on Garrison Village Drive — will not be an added benefit. Patients who are not rostered with the Niagara North Family Health Team are the target group.

NOTL's population is about 18,000 and about 8,000 people are not rostered.

"We are trying to service people who don't have care," said Mary Keith, executive director of the NOTL health team.

"If you are a tourist (or a resident without a doc-



Niagara-on-the-Lake's new walk-in clinic will be located in the Village Medical Centre on Garrison Village Drive. RICHARD WRIGHT

tor) or have moved here and your doctor is in, say, Toronto, then it is OK to come to the clinic."

That list of permitted patients includes international students and farmworkers.

So, what kind of health care services can residents expect from the new clinic and its nurse practitioner, Amy Bolduc?

In simple terms, Bolduc will provide chronic, pre-

ventive and urgent care. She can make diagnoses, order and interpret diagnostic tests, prescribe all medications and perform medical procedures such as stitches.

"This is great for the community," says Keith. "A lot of people put in a lot of effort to get this position back."

The person who previously held the position in NOTL was redeployed due to stresses put on the health

care system by COVID-19 and never replaced.

The clinic will be open Monday to Friday between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. but not on weekends.

While commonly referred to as a walk-in clinic, appointments can be made.

It will not have the same phone number as the medical centre. People in need of its services are asked to call 289-272-0441.

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- Maintaining registration in the extended class requires ongoing education, training and complying with a high-level quality assurance program.
- In Ontario, the average nurse practitioner works for 16 years as a registered nurse before returning to school to complete a master's degree or post baccalaureate certificate to qualify as a nurse practitioner.

Nurse practitioner information from Niagara North Family Health Team — niagaranorthfht.ca.

NOTL well represented on Grape Growers of Ontario board

Richard Wright
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's Matthias Oppenlaender and Kevin Watson have been re-elected to positions of chair and vice chair of the Grape Growers of Ontario, the organization announced April 12.

"Having strong leadership and experience is so important and that's what Matthias Oppenlaender and Kevin Watson bring to the

table," says CEO Debbie Zimmerman. "

Oppenlaender was first elected to the top post in 2016. Watson has held the vice chair position since 2022. Oppenlaender is also treasurer of the Canadian Grapevine Certification Network, he represents the grape growers on the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association board of directors and management committee and is the chair of the that organization's finance committee.



Matthias Oppenlaender has been re-elected as chair of Grape Growers of Ontario. FILE/DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Watson's additional experience includes being on the grape growers' advisory and metrics committee and is the organization's representative with FARMS (Foreign Agricultural Resource

Management Services).

Three other NOTL residents will also serve on the grape growers board following the elections. They are Steve Pohorly and Erwin Wiens.



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Scotsman Hotel owners seek permission to add **sixth guest room** to rental property

Richard Hutton
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

There will be more room at the inn if owners of the Scotsman Hotel get their way.

Susan Wheler, who was representing Blair and Brenda McArthur, owners of the five-room inn located at 95 Johnson St., said the couple wanted to add a sixth room to the establishment.

The McArthurs are seeking to have zoning, which currently permits a “five-room country inn,” changed to accommodate the extra guest room.

Town politicians were considering the request and an accompanying information report from staff as part of a public meeting during the April 9 committee of the whole meeting.

The home has operated as a country inn since 2002. The McArthurs are the third owners of the business after they purchased it in 2021.

Since that time, numerous interior and exterior improvements have been



Blair and Brenda McArthur, owners of the Scotsman Hotel on Johnson Street, are seeking permission to add a sixth guest room for their business. RICHARD HUTTON

made with the assistance of the municipal heritage committee.

“The residence has always had six bedrooms,” Wheler said. “However, the current zoning dating back to 2002, permitted only five guest bedrooms to be licenced.”

Currently, there are eight parking spaces on the property — two for the

owners, five for guests and one for an employee.

To accommodate the extra guest, the employee space would be converted to a guest parking spot with no alterations required to the site.

“That was because the owners at the time (in 2002) had hired an employee ... so hence, the requirement for an employee parking space.”

That further answered a question Coun. Sandra O'Connor had asked earlier to John Federici, senior planner for the town, who was presenting an overview of the proposal.

O'Connor had wondered if one of the resident spaces could be removed to make way for the extra guest space.

“Does that make any difference?” she asked.

“I don't think there would be any difference in that case,” Federici said.

Wheler, meanwhile, said the request for the extra room conforms to both the town's official plan and its comprehensive zoning bylaw.

The report was received for information and the proposal will return to council at a later date in the form of a recommendation report from staff.

Prior to the public meeting, a virtual open house was held on March 25 and was attended by one person who was in support of the application.

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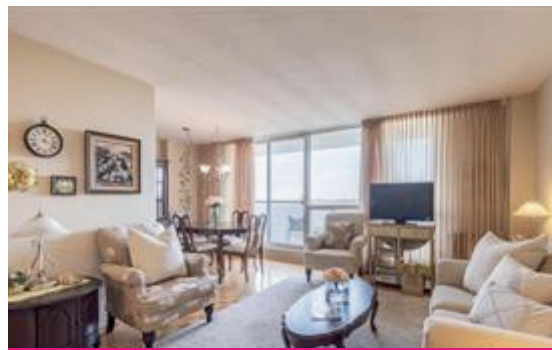
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REAL ESTATE

Neighbour **secretly** trapped cat, brought it across canal to Niagara-on-the-Lake

Continued from Front Page

we have two dogs. They are all part of the family. You can't replace him," she added.

"There are a lot of cats but, you know, he's got his own personality. He's a sweet cat."

The day Zeus went missing, Clout was woken by him poking at her in bed at 4:30 a.m.

"He got me up early. I let him out, and he always comes back at 7 or 7:30 (a.m.) because I leave the house at 8:30 to go to work. And he didn't come back and I knew something was unusual. I called him and called him before I left for work. He didn't come."

When she arrived home from work, he still wasn't there.

The next day, when the family realized Zeus was wasn't coming back, the search began by putting up posters around the neighbourhood and wandering about, calling his name.

The search continued for five weeks. And that's when the mystery around Zeus's disappearance became clearer.

On April 10, Clout and her husband Sean stepped out to do some yard work and overheard a conversation between neighbours.

"It was so nice, me and my husband were in the backyard doing clean up and my next door neighbour was in her backyard," she said.

"I heard her speaking to the guy beside her, and all of a sudden I heard him say, 'big black and white cat' and then I heard him say, 'got rid of' — so right away my ears perked up. Me and my husband both heard it."

Clout went to her neighbour, who confirmed what they were told — that the neighbour two doors down had trapped their cat.

Her husband then went to the trapper's house to find out more.

According to Clout, the neighbour repeated what was overheard earlier and added that he had trapped the cat and attempted to call the humane society but eventually dumped it across the Welland Canal on the Niagara-on-the-Lake side.

The Clouts called the police, who referred them to PAWS (Provincial Animal Welfare Services) to investigate.

An investigator responded and following a conversa-



Wendy Clout with her cat Tinkerbell. One of Clout's other cats, a big black and white three-year-old named Zeus, has been missing since March 4. RICHARD WRIGHT

tion with the neighbour, informed the Clouts there was nothing that could be done. The cat in question could have been any cat. There was no way to prove it — even with photos and a confession.

"I just backed into the driveway so the neighbours don't see it, took him over to the other side of the canal. Because there is water between here and there. They won't come across the water."

NEIGHBOUR
CATNAPPER

Feeling defeated, Clout reached out to The Lake Report with hopes that a published story would jog the memory of someone in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

While the interview was taking place at Clout's home, the neighbour's blue new-model pick-up truck drove past the house and stopped at the end of the street. A reporter approached on foot and asked about Zeus.

After initially refusing to answer questions, he then quickly reversed his stance and opened up with a detailed confession. He refused to give his name.

"I went to the humane

society and told them I have a cat problem," he began.

"When you take a dog for a walk you have to carry a bag with you to carry your s---. They let cats run around. It makes a mess all over. They piss on my windows, on the cellar, they pissed on my wheels. And I have to put up with that."

The man said he "told a bunch of cat owners here, 'If you don't look after them, I am going to look after them.'"

Clout said she was never approached about her cat and had never met the man before the incident.

The man said after trapping Zeus, he went to the Humane Society of Greater Niagara on Fourth Avenue, adding he parked across the street so they wouldn't see his licence plate.

He said he was told not to bring the cat there because they had too many cats and they would just "put them to sleep" after three days.

When contacted by The Lake Report, the humane society's executive director Tania Firmage said that didn't happen.

"We would take anything from that jurisdiction," she said.

"We have room for strays and would not have turned anyone away."

She added they do not euthanize animals.

The neighbour claims that after being told not to bring the cat in, he took matters into his own hands.

"I have live traps for skunks and stuff. I went

down to the dollar store and put cat food in it. The next morning, I knew I was going to have him," he said.

"I just backed into the driveway so the neighbours don't see it, took him over to the other side of the canal. Because there is water between here and there. They won't come across the water."

Asked again if the cat he trapped was a big black and white cat, he said yes.

"I said if I would have known whose cat it was the first time, I would have brought it over to them in the trap and say, 'Look it! Smarten up or I am going to take it.'"

After Clout heard the recorded confession, she again reached out to PAWS, hoping it would push the agency to do something more.

"I haven't heard back," she said on Wednesday, April 17.


"It doesn't feel like they have the authority to do anything, so why is it even referred to them?"

The Lake Report contacted the Niagara Regional Police to ask why this file was referred and not considered a criminal matter. They did not respond by press time.


A PAWS investigator named Chelsea, who would not provide her last name, was also contacted and asked why the investigation wasn't moving forward.

She referred all questions to that organization's media relations department, which did not respond by deadline.

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Contributed by Patty Garriock

“May my heart be open to little birds who are the secret of living.” - e.e. cummings

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Sharks in Lake Ontario



John DeLorenzi captured this shot of Shark sailboats in the water — a sign of nicer weather in NOTL.

Editorial

More ways needed to skin a catnapper

Richard Harley
 Editor-in-Chief

As reported in this week’s issue, and widely circulated on social media, a neighbour of a St. Catharines couple admits he kidnapped their cat Zeus and dumped it in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

When approached by a reporter, the man, who refused to provide his name, didn’t show any remorse or shy away from owing up to what he did.

He thinks he was “in the right” and entitled to cause emotional and likely inadvertent physical harm to a living being.

Whether we’re getting the full story or not is another question — but let’s assume he did in fact drop the cat off alive and well.

Now what? A couple is left wondering about the fate of a beloved household pet.

That is repugnant.

The couple phoned the police about the incident, which is not only theft of property, but also of a living, breathing creature.

But police brushed off the investigation, passing it on to Provincial Animal

Welfare Services, known as PAWS, a governing body that has limited resources and a poor track record when it comes to laying charges.

We understand that’s the process. If it involves an animal, it’s PAWS territory.

But the word “shameful” doesn’t even begin to describe how pathetic it is that in Ontario it’s our policy that a police force should treat a laptop, car or other non-sentient item with a higher value than a lifeform.

Disgraceful. Despicable. Deplorable.

In fact, since PAWS took over from the Ontario SPCA and Humane Society, there has been a significant drop in animal abuse-related orders and charges.

And that’s not because there is less animal abuse. Much like domestic violence, abuse cases are likely on the rise since 2020.

That’s a huge problem.

It seems animal theft or cruelty is a crime that goes unpunished — and some organizations and individuals seem to be OK with that.

If, like us, you’re not OK with that, we urge you to

write to our politicians, such as MPP Wayne Gates, MP Tony Baldinelli, and to governing bodies themselves, such as the Niagara Regional Police Services and PAWS.

Because what are people like Wendy Clout to do when a remorseless thief steals their household pet and dumps it off in a ravine?

Well, short of vigilantism — which we don’t condone, even though it would be on the top of our list if someone ever decided to touch our pets — there is almost no recourse.

We need some form of real protection for animals in this country.

Canada, Ontario, Niagara Region, St. Catharines, Niagara-on-the-Lake. Every level of government in this supposedly civilized country should get with the program, prioritize animal welfare and enforce strict laws for hurting, stealing or in any way abusing an animal.

Many consider animals’ lives just as valuable as humans’ lives. Some would argue they’re more valuable, because animals don’t do things like kidnap people

and dump them in ditches. Aside from starting a revolution and advocating for change to protect animals, there is something else we can do.

Keep an eye out near McNab Road and Church Road, not far from the Welland Canal, for any signs of a long-haired black and white cat.

With luck, a better person than this repulsive neighbour can do the right thing by helping to reunite Zeus with his owners.

We hope we see that day.

And regardless if it comes or not, we hope to see criminal charges against the neighbour who openly admits to stealing the cat.

All the evidence needed is there. He has admitted his guilt, not only to neighbours, but also to a reporter.

We’ll be happy to provide the recording to law enforcement, if necessary.

People who have no regard for the safety and comfort of animals, and who would steal in an effort to deliberately cause harm to an animal, should face hard consequences.

editor@niagaranow.com

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LETTER OF THE WEEK

Like it or not, site plans should be public

Dear editor:
This is in response to my neighbour Jason Chesworth's letter, "Public site plan is for a private home," in the April 11 edition of The Lake Report.
All addresses are public information. You could find them in a phone book. Real estate ads publish pictures with home addresses. Google them. Look one up on Canada411.ca.

You identify a property by using an address. Your point about the address makes no sense. I did not include the name of the owners.
The reason I asked for a copy of the site plan in the first place was to see if the proposed new house adjacent to our backyard would have any effect on our property or our daughter's property next door.
The owners of the prop-

erty refused to meet with us or give us a copy of the site plan to review.
Thus we went to the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, which also refused to provide a copy.
As well, the town refuses to answer my question: What private and personal information is included on a site plan?
Kip Voegt
NOTL



Shh! The Town of NOTL doesn't want you to see documents that belong to the public.

Israel and Hamas have much to answer for

Dear editor:
This is in reply to Sophia Voogt's April 11 letter, "Hamas was wrong but so was the Israeli government."
Voogt makes reference to my previous letter ("Hamas must be accountable for its actions," March 21), which was a direct response to a letter from Kit Andres about the duty of Mennonites to condemn violence.

Her letter did not offer a single word condemning Hamas and the horrific massacre of Israelis on Oct. 7.
As Ms. Voogt also states, what Hamas did, even though it was not right, must be treated in context. This is also far from a serious condemnation of the horrific massacre carried out by Hamas.
Indeed, it graphically demonstrates a serious bias and one-sidedness. A few comments are in order.
She claims that Israeli Defence Forces reports are untrue and have no credibility. In support of this she refers to the UN, (which to many is itself now seen as a biased and one-sided organization that also shows no credibility).
Unfortunately, as many know, truth sometimes becomes the first casualty in a war.
Regarding the Palestin-

ian claim — "From the river to the sea" — Hamas has sworn publicly to kill all Israelis and destroy the State of Israel. So what the CBC has to say, while it may be comforting to some, is rather meaningless when the intent is obvious and clear.
As I previously stated, Hamas has chosen to embed itself in civilian areas so that with any IDF response, casualties and collateral damage will inevitably be high.
It is naive to say Hamas will naturally disappear if the oppression of Palestinians ends. Hamas, despite the conflict, still enjoys majority Palestinian support as well as electoral legitimacy.
Israel is in a terrible war with Hamas and is surrounded by enemies who choose to fire rockets at it indiscriminately without any warning and who have no regard for casualties — a fact that is conveniently ignored by many.
We all have biases and come with different viewpoints. In my opinion, both Israel and Hamas have a great deal to answer for.
However, being one-sided is not being honest and does nothing to help resolve or end this very complicated issue.
Derek Collins
NOTL

ing humanitarian aid.
Another significant majority were in favour of Israeli reoccupying Gaza.
I wonder if any member of the audience asked these two brave young people for their opinion or solution.
It is my long-term hope to see young Palestinians from Gaza, who have had equally horrific experiences, come to Canada to embrace young Israelis such as these two and call for a complete end to the slaughter on both sides.
I fear this may be a forlorn hope.
Richard James
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'Rights' – The good, the bad and the consequences



Keith McNenly
Special to The Lake Report

In the cinema now is a film on reggae singer, songwriter and human rights activist Bob Marley. Activist music, poetry and novels have all played their part in the human struggle against oppression.
"Rights" are key to human evolution and political/social history.
We perceive our "rights" from the perspective of the era we live in, the evolution of the human species, and in the exercise of politics and power.
Having rights is fundamental to life on our planet and the human condition. In fact, human rights and rights in general are the most fundamental element in the evolution of human society.
Many believe rights are legislated by governments, and before that were benevolently handed out by kings and peers of the realm. Closer to the truth, we evolved with the right to do whatever we had to do to survive as individuals and as a species.
It was kings and governments who removed our

rights of self-determination, so when they legislate new rights upon us they are simply reversing laws that originally took away our otherwise right to do a thing.
The right to vote originally was restricted to land-owning adult males. Giving females the right to vote is a misnomer, it really was removal of the earlier restriction establishing voting exclusively for males.
Rights are politics and politics are rights.
My thoughts of political party ideology fit into this generalization:
Small-l liberal thinking posits that people should have nearly complete freedom and that businesses need to be carefully regulated.
Small-c conservative thinking posits that businesses should have nearly complete freedom and people need to be carefully regulated.
Conservatives are generally of the view that restriction on business simply makes running a business cost more.
On the other side of the argument, liberals believe business needs to be regulated because strictly profit-oriented corporations may endanger workers with inadequate safety measures; may harm people and the environment with improper but cheaper disposal of by-products; and sometimes could produce less costly and less-safe products.
Seatbelts, for example,

were campaigned against by the automobile industry because they increased costs and cut into shareholder profits. Tobacco companies encouraged smoking.
Almost 100 years ago, in the dark days of the Depression of the 1930s authoritarian leaders arose in Europe, bolstered by propaganda and the promise of better times, willing to employ violence against a convenient supposed enemy within.
Once in power human rights were stripped from citizenry. It took a world war to return to democracy and to restore human rights.
Human history is simply a record of how the human mind works, a record of greed and power. History has less to say about things, times and places, but is rather about leaders, good and bad, and those eager to follow them.
There is no fascist leader who has our human rights in his heart to implement. Their primary goal is personal greed and power.
Rights are gained slowly and incrementally over generations, even millennia, but can be lost in just an election cycle.
Backsliding from what was once believed to be the inevitable march of humanity into a more fair, more equitable, democratic future now seems less assured. South of the border, democracy and autocracy appear to be in a dead heat for not just the USA, but for the free world.

At home, Progressive Conservative Premier Doug Ford has stated publicly he wants to appoint "like-minded judges."
Rights are not given by governments, they are taken away by governments. Rights are particularly vulnerable when right-wing leaders decide to remove rights by appointing potentially biased "friendly" judges.
Just what is a "like-minded judge" in Ford's eyes?
Why is an independent judiciary so concerning to our current premier that he would emulate the devolution of the rule of law now so visible south of the border?
An Ontario electoral system with just one right-wing party and with a vote split on the left between three opposing left-wing parties makes it easier for the Tories to win office.
But even that advantage isn't a guaranteed electoral victory so, would voting challenges and a right-leaning judiciary fill a perceived gap?
Perhaps the new movie "Bob Marley: One Love" or Russian freedom activists mourning the death of politically murdered Alexei Navalny or the troubling erosion of democracy in the U.S. will alert Ontarians that our legal institutions are not as secure as we once thought.
Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Keith McNenly was the chief administrator of the Town of Mono for 41 years.



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We're **not seeing** 'more homes built faster'



ARCHITEXT

Brian Marshall
Columnist

This week I'd like start off by borrowing a page from my colleague, Ross Robinson's playbook, and do a little "rambling" about things which arguably challenge folks who own their own home and those who would like to become property owners.

Both groups are struggling with affordability — the former with the home ownership carrying costs and the latter with the high threshold to enter the market while paying record high rents.

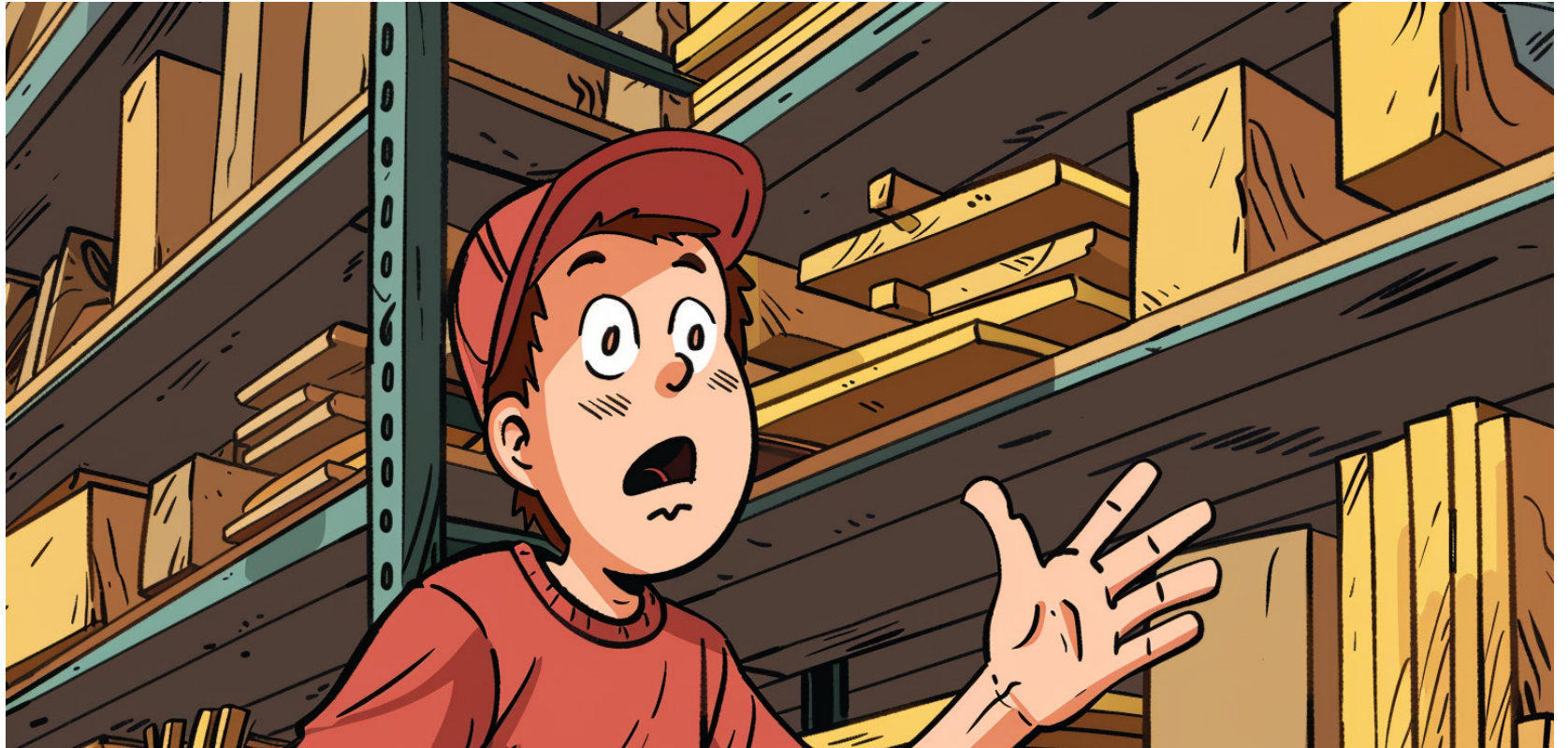
So, let's begin with RBC Economics' recently released report "the Great Rebuild" wherein they quantified ownership costs as a percentage of household income at 60 per cent and predicted that this may fall to 56.4 per cent if interest rates declined — as expected — to 3 per cent in 2025.

Since it is unclear to this columnist whether RBC was referring to pre- or post-tax household income, one is forced — by common practice in these type of calculations — to assume it is 60 per cent of gross income.

Understanding that, one wonders how folks can afford to put food on their table with the pittance left over from their net income?

Certainly the most generous estimate of average annual household income in the Niagara Region is reported at \$90,200 (in 2020). So, the net of that amount after federal and provincial income tax levies is \$63,761.

And, 60 per cent of \$90,200 equals \$54,120. That's right folks, from a net income of \$63,761, some of your neighbours need to fund feeding



Brian Marshall says we need to address the carbon tax and cost of building before we can hope to solve the housing crisis. MIDJOURNEY

themselves, their kids, pay for any additional "discretionary" purchases — like clothes and stuff — and etcetera, on a mere \$803.42 per month.

Is it any wonder that families living in their own home are struggling to make ends meet and many in the younger generations have given up on ever owning a home?

Speaking of costs, last month a group of Canadian economists published an open letter regarding our federal government's carbon pricing policy. In this letter they stated "Canadian carbon pricing has a negligible impact on overall inflation."

They went on with, "According to the Bank of Canada, carbon pricing has caused less than 1/20th of Canada's inflation in the past two years."

Now, I am no economist — lord knows, I had a brief fling with calculus about 50 years ago and it was apparent we were not suited to one another — but I am forced to question both the letter writers and the Bank of Canada's position.

Let's consider, on a simplified level, one of the residential building industry's primary materials — the lowly spruce 2x4 and 2x6 board.

Used for everything from framing to roof trusses, the

raw material is harvested according to IBISWorld's report "Logging in Canada — Market Size, Industry Analysis, Trends and Forecasts" by small (0 to 5 employees) localized companies which operate within a 322-kilometre radius of a sawmill.

Nearly all of the equipment used in commercial logging is petroleum-fuelled. These operators are too small to enjoy any form of government relief on the carbon tax, so, this cost is passed on in higher prices paid by the sawmills.

The felled logs are loaded onto trucks — also petroleum fuelled — and transported over roads to the individual sawmills. Roughly one-third of all transport trucks on the road in Canada are owner/operators and the majority of transport companies are relatively small. However, whether small or large, when the price of fuel goes up, so too does the cost of freight.

Thus, the sawmill pays more for their incoming raw materials. Since the majority of softwood lumber is processed through major facilities owned by large corporations which pay carbon tax on an "output-based" system calculated on the last 10 to 20 per cent of their emissions, and operate primarily on electricity, we

will assume only a small additional impact on their price-of-goods-sold.

However, since their margins are calculated on a percentage mark-up, even this small impact, when added to increased input costs, has a compounding effect on prices.

The finished goods go back onto a transport truck for delivery to distribution centres and/or major retailers. We have already visited the increased cost of freight, but again, these additional costs have a compounding effect on the price of goods sold to the end-user — it is just not a straight-line calculation.

Just to put this transportation add into perspective, according to Canadian Trucking Industry Statistics reported through Gitnux, the industry in Canada consumes 2.1 billion gallons (9.6 billion litres) of diesel fuel annually. The carbon tax at, say 14 cents per litre, adds an additional cost of \$1.34 Billion dollars to the price of goods shipped to a retailer ... Not an insignificant amount for most of us — particularly when compounded through the supply chain.

Returning to our simple 2x4 which, at the beginning of 2020 could be purchased for \$2.99, is now priced at \$3.98. If we apply and compound the annual

inflation percentages (2020 to 2023) to this product, it should now be available at \$3.16. So, where is the source and justification of the additional 25 per cent in the retail pricing of this completely "made in Canada" product?

Certainly, since we have followed down the flawed rabbit hole of economic globalization, we must accept an international normalization of our economic inflation, but, even using the global inflationary numbers, we can only shave the 25 per cent to about 23 per cent.

So, we must ask ourselves, what is the justification for this gross country-specific up-charging on a domestic product come from?

I can only speculate it is due to the prevailing policies of our governments.

And, we could trace this through every industry sector.

Think about the farmer, a primary producer, who must bear the burden (and pass it on) of the additional fuel cost to operate their machinery and suffer the increased cost of necessary inputs (like fertilizers) — which is a whole and complicated consideration in and of itself.

What does our compounding cost consideration do when goods arrive on the grocery shelf?

I will leave it to you, my educated readers, to extrapolate this across your ever-rising monthly bills.

To round out this week's observations, it really should be noted that in 2022 and 2023 housing starts in Canada fell by 11 per cent (31,000 units). Here in Ontario, a similar trend has occurred. In 2021, Ontario saw 92,284 starts, which dropped to 91,885 in 2022 and dropped another 7 per cent further to 85,770 in 2023.

Between the higher interest rate and rising cost of living, it appears that real estate developers decided to play it safe in an uncertain market.

While our politicians take every opportunity to do photo ops trumpeting programs underwritten by deficit spending to address this country's severe — and growing worse — housing shortage, their policies appear to be ineffectual.

This, I suspect, is a result of their other policies cutting the legs out from under the consumers and their commercial "partners."

One thing for sure, we aren't seeing "more houses built faster!"

Brian Marshall is a NOTL realtor, author and expert consultant on architectural design, restoration and heritage.



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Virgil's outdoor pickleball courts to **reopen**

Richard Hutton
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Pickleball is returning to the outdoor courts at Centennial Sports Park in Virgil in June.

The six courts first opened in 2019, took the place of four tennis courts at the Four Mile Creek Road complex, but they have sat unused after a noise complaint by a nearby resident wound up with the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake and the NOTL Pickleball Club being taken to court and fined \$1,000 each for breaching the town's noise bylaw of the time.

Play will resume on the courts on June 17.

According to the report on the matter, staff have been working with the pickleball club on ways to mitigate noise from the sport.

Pickleball has exploded in popularity in recent years and it is no different in NOTL, where membership in the club has grown to 580 participants since it was established in 2017.

Some of the factors considered for cutting down noise levels included



Pickleballers will be able to get their fix on outdoor courts at the Virgil Sports Park starting June 17. RICHARD HUTTON

a reduction in the number of hours courts will be available for both club and public use, controlling access to the courts during certain times of the day, noise-reduced paddles and the installation of acoustic panels to help reduce noise from the courts by as much as 15 decibels.

But the approval didn't come without some reservations, however, as Coun. Sandra O'Connor wondered whether the town had planned to inform residents living in the Lambert's Walk condominium overlooking the courts.

It was Oana Scafesi, a resident of Lambert's Walk, who had complained about noise from the courts

and took legal action against the town and the pickleball club.

"I couldn't find anywhere in the report that said there was some kind of engagement of the local residents there to let them know what has been done in the noise mitigation," O'Connor said, introducing an amendment that would commit staff to informing Lambert's Walk residents of the reopening.

Kevin Turcotte, the town's manager of parks and recreation, said there hadn't been any consultation but "council did revise their noise bylaw in 2022 and in that revision, sound coming from a town-owned property for recreational activities are exempt."

But Coun. Erwin Weins was opposed to the O'Connor amendment.

"This was very public, both locally and internationally," Weins said, referring to the court action brought about by Scafesi.

"I think there's been enough engagement in regard to pickleball and to what we want to do. There's a certain obligation on our residents to be engaged."

The Lake Report contacted Scafesi, who divides her time between homes in NOTL and Toronto. She was reluctant to speak about the issue.

"I have to refrain from commenting on it," she said. "I don't want to be rude or misunderstood from talking about the issue. I just want to be in a peaceful environment."

To cover the cost of the acoustic panels, the town has applied for a Trillium Grant for \$32,000, \$10,000 of which would go toward the cost of the panels.

Should that grant request be denied, the \$10,000 to cover the cost will be transferred from capital reserves.

hutton@niagaranow.com



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CALL 1-800-511-7429 TO BOOK!

Restrictions: Subject to availability. No cancellations, refunds or exchanges. Phone or in-person sales only. Tickets purchased prior to this offer are not eligible for discount and may not be exchanged for Town Preview tickets. Cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer. Handling fee applies. Limit of 4 tickets per household. Offer ends May 24, 2024.

Indigenous cultural exchange draws a crowd at BioBlitz

Julia Sacco
The Lake Report

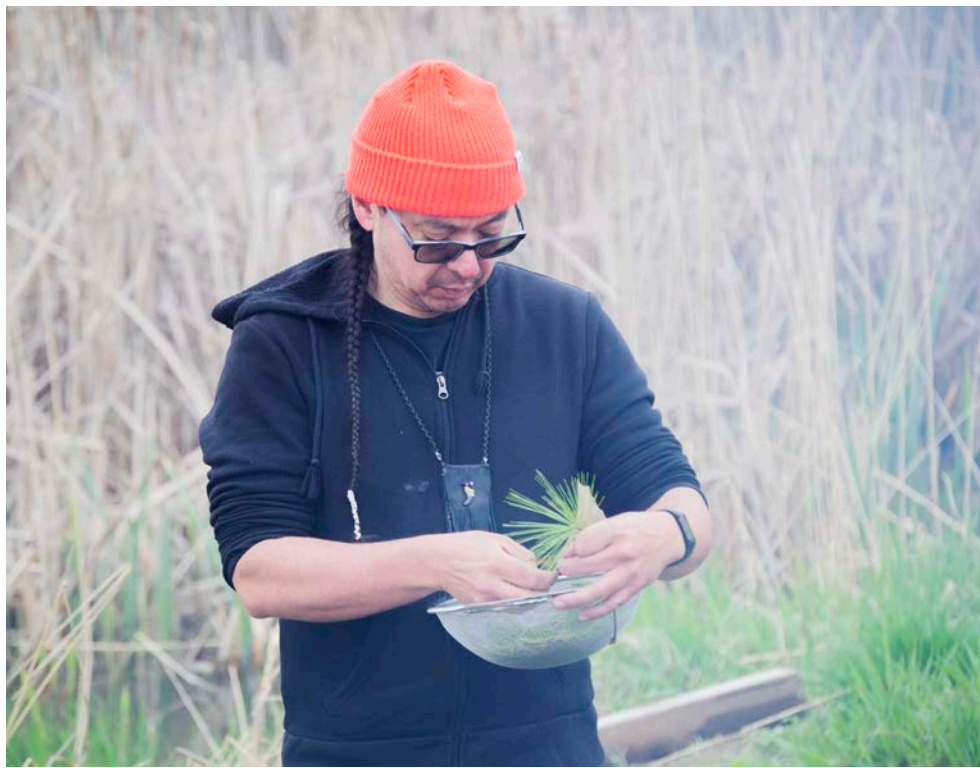
Nature lovers came together on Saturday during Niagara College's ninth annual BioBlitz to learn more about the wildlife and vegetation that occupy the school's backyard — which has been on this land for hundreds of years.

Attendees got to explore the Niagara-on-the-Lake campus' grounds and all of the plants, insects and animals found in the UNESCO-designated World Biosphere Reserve.

The entire day, which ran from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., included several hikes, lunch and an Indigenous cultural exchange led by Aria D'alimonte, Sandra Mandamin and Karl Dockstader of the college's Indigenous education department.

A crowd gathered around the fire for an hour as Dockstader, Mandamin and D'alimonte shared traditional recipes and stories.

Attendees had the chance to try freshly brewed cedar tea after they helped harvest cedar leaves from their surroundings. They also



Karl Dockstader is a member of the Oneida nation (Bear Clan). During Saturday's BioBlitz he discussed how cedar tea helped bring Jacques Cartier's group of explorers back to health when their ships were frozen in ice for five months. JULIA SACCO

popped their own wild rice with a choice of toppings.

While they shared this food, Dockstader told stories of their properties and histories, including one of how cedar tea helped cure European settlers of disease — which, he said, included explorer Jacques Cartier

and his crew.

"When he came to these territories, his crew was about to die of scurvy, a disease that they were not familiar with," he said.

"His crew was about to pass away, so the Indigenous people in those territories went and prepared

either cedar tea or white pine tea for these explorers — and magically, it seemed to the explorers, they were cured of their illness."

Now, it is more common knowledge that that cedar tea is high in vitamin C, the vitamin necessary in curing scurvy, he said.

"It's almost like Western medicine is catching up to Indigenous ways of knowing," Dockstader said.

After the presentation, many stuck around to chat with Dockstader, D'alimonte and Mandamin.

Clara Nogueira is an environmental management student at the NOTL campus and moved to Canada from Brazil for her studies.

It was interesting for Nogueira learn about Indigenous culture so openly, she told The Lake Report, compared to how things are back home in Brazil, where there is also an Indigenous population (1.69 million people, according to 2022 government census numbers).

"Brazil has a huge community, but the difference is that here there are more actions to protect the communities, while in Brazil there are basically no efforts," she said.

It's very frustrating."

This year's cultural exchange marked the Indigenous education department's second year partnering with BioBlitz.

"We're bringing together

scientists, community members and our students," said Taryn Wilkinson, the college's sustainability manager. "The goal at the end of the day is to learn about the outdoors, what we have on campus and also to identify species."

When species are identified, she added, the college will have a better idea of what is on campus grounds, allowing it to make better decisions about how the space is used and increase respect for the environment.

Nogueira said she enjoyed several aspects of the day's cultural exchange.

"I love that they gave us different cultural aspects of their culture while also explaining the dance and the food and the tea — I loved it."

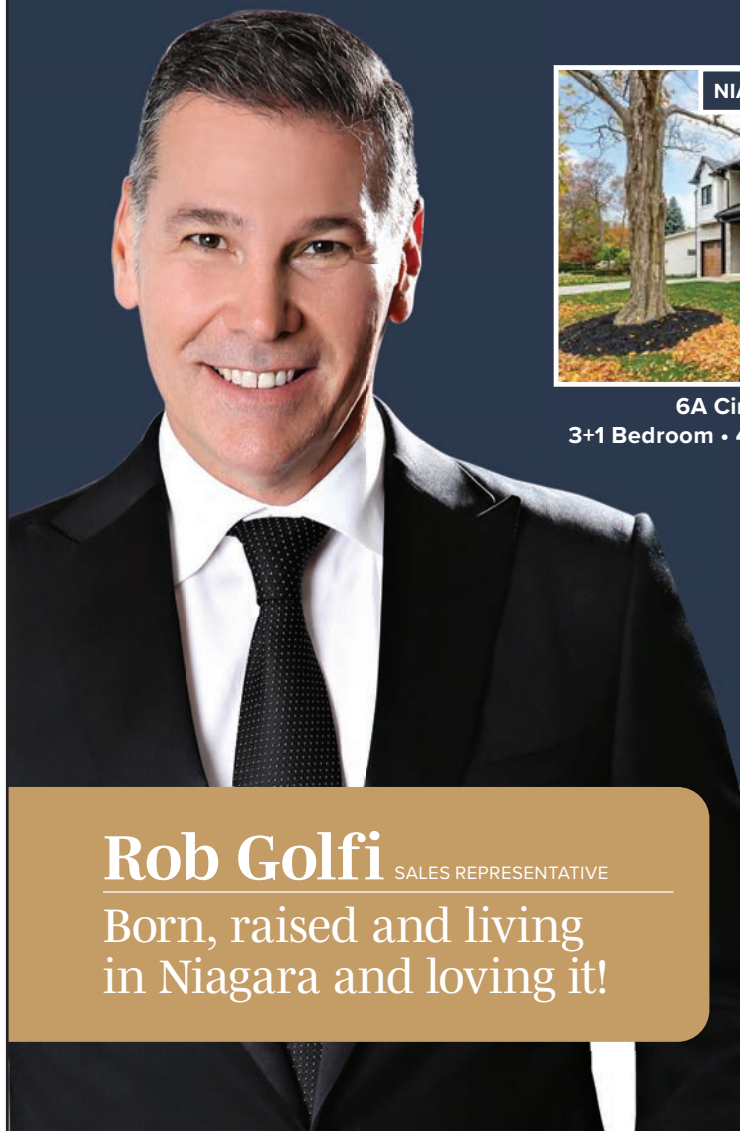
The goal of each presentation, Dockstader said, is to provide a space for people to learn.

"I think the line that has been impressing upon people is learning from Indigenous people — not learning about Indigenous people," he said.

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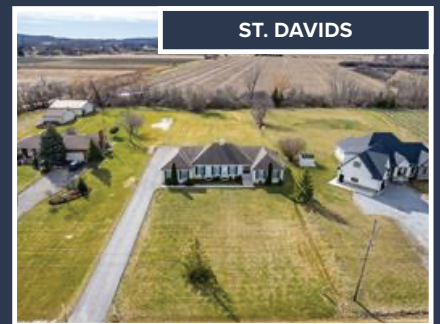
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Historical Neighbourhood Walks return this May

Staff
The Lake Report

Tickets are on sale now for this May's return of the Neighbourhood Walks series, a chance to learn more about the history of Niagara-on-the-Lake embedded in your surroundings.

An annual series hosted by the NOTL Museum, there will be five walking tours held next month, exploring specific aspects

of the town's history and character, led by different tour guides each week.

Here are the dates for each walk, the subject of exploration and the guide:

May 3: Voices of Freedom — The history of Black settlement in early Niagara, with Jan King-Watson

May 10: St. Davids — The captivating stories of this NOTL village, with Megan Gilchrist

May 17: Queenston — The historic importance of

this long-standing community, with Linda Fritz

May 24: Queen Street Homes — A look at the ever-changing and evolving history of this heritage street, with Denise Ascenzo

May 31: Architecture — Professional insight into the architectural nature of the town's buildings, with Brian Marshall

The museum offers regular weekend historical walking tours from June to

September, but the Neighbourhood Walks maintain an appeal to local sin particular.

Tickets are \$10 for members of the museum, \$8 for enhanced members and \$15 for non-members. All walks begin at 6 p.m.

To register and for more information, call 905-468-3912, or email Amy Klassen at aklassen@nhsn.ca.

Early registration is encouraged as space is limited.

Appreciate nature at upcoming Pumphouse exhibit

Staff
The Lake Report

The beauty of the natural world evokes many feelings in different people: awe, serenity, excitement, curiosity, sometimes even humbleness.

Contemporary artist Cheryl Bailey, whose works depict the flora and fauna of scenic landscapes, uses her work to express her love of the natural world and to advocate for the importance of environmental sustainability and biodiversity.

Bailey's paintings are the subject of an upcoming exhibition at the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre this May, entitled "Meadow Signs, Mountain Highs."

This solo exhibition will be open from May 1 to 26 in the Joyner Gallery, where the public will have a chance to view Bailey's work and admire the colourful vistas depicted in her art.

"Mountains and meadows become symbols of human transcendence, reflecting upon spiritual and physical possibilities," states a media release from the arts centre on the exhibition. "Bailey's paintings distill visual complexity into carefully choreographed simplicity, merging flattened shapes with surface textures and a powerful black underpainting."

Bailey, from Oakville, is an elected member of the

Ontario Society of Arts and currently serves as a director on its board.

Her work has been part of exhibitions at several venues in the province, including the McMichael Canadian Collection, as part of five group exhibitions, the Lieutenant Governor's Suite at Queen's Park, the Art Gallery of Northumberland, the Orillia Museum of Art and History and more.

Her latest exhibition is currently taking place this month in Etobicoke at the Neilson Park Creative Centre.

Often working in the medium of acrylic on canvas, Bailey's work showcases nature's tapestry, from mountains, rivers, hills, valleys,

forests and farmland.

"Drawing from her expertise in biology and ecosystems, she champions the integration of native plants in gardens to revitalize pollinator populations and foster biodiversity," the media release states.

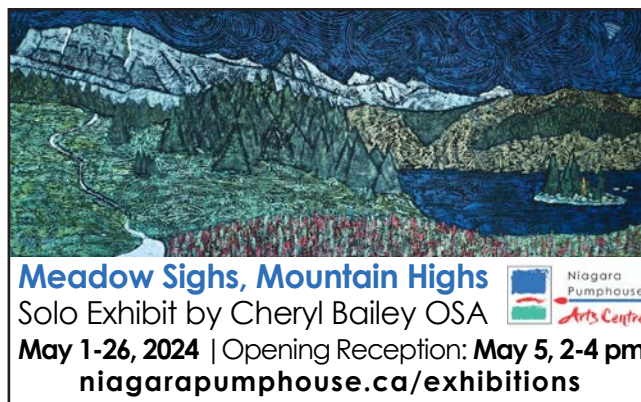
The opening reception for "Meadow Signs, Mountain Highs" will be held on Sunday, May 5 from 2 to 4 p.m., with Bailey offering remarks around 2:30 p.m.


Refreshments and nibbles will be provided, including fine wines from Château des Charmes.

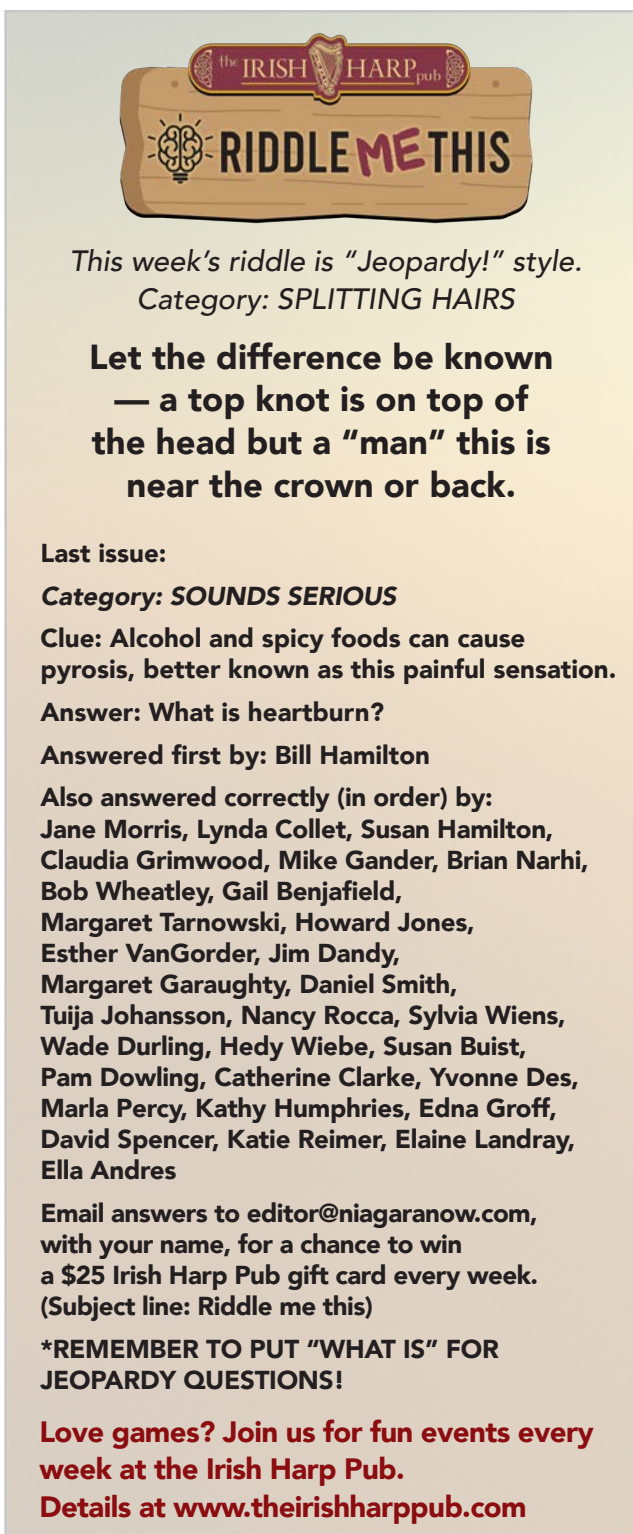
More details about this exhibition can be found at the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre website, niagarapumphouse.ca/exhibitions.









Inspirational pilgrimage to Augusta and the Masters

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

For many golfers, a visit to the place that bills itself as the Home of Golf — the Old Course at St. Andrews — is a bucket list destination.

Anyone who travels to Scotland can realize that dream and with some luck, play the Old Course.

Equally awe-inspiring, but much harder to attain, is a visit to the Masters, in Augusta, Georgia.

The April event is the first of pro golf's major tournaments and the only way to get in — short of paying scalpers a hugely inflated price — is to be invited by someone who is a "patron." That's Augusta's preferred parlance for "ticket holder."

Last weekend, eight area residents, including myself, were able to attend this year's Masters courtesy of a Niagara-on-the-Lake couple who have been patrons for more than a quarter-century.



Left: NOTL residents John Kozik and Linda Anderson-Kozik at the Masters on Sunday afternoon. No cameras or mobile phones are allowed but the tourney offers free pictures at Founders Circle near Magnolia Lane. SUPPLIED Right: Tiger Woods waves his cap on the 18th green Sunday to acknowledge the cheers of fans as he finished his round. Huge crowds followed him around the course. CHLOE KNOTT/AUGUSTA NATIONAL



They attend every few years but otherwise share their tickets with people in the community. They're well-known in town but prefer to remain out of the limelight.

So, this year my wife May Chang and I, plus John Kozik and Linda Anderson-

Kozik, spent Saturday and Sunday watching what could be one of the last competitive appearances by Tiger Woods at Augusta.

And make no mistake, everyone wanted to see Tiger.

On Thursday and Friday, Niagarans Martha and Don Cruikshank, and Robin and

Kevin Foster, took in the tourney.

An almost religious reverence surrounds the Masters, from the hokey, hushed tones of the TV commentators to the earnest club members and thousands of staff and volunteers who ensure everything runs smooth as silk.

It's a throwback to earlier times.

No mobile phones, no photos, no running, no shouting. But inexpensive food (hearty sandwiches \$1.50 to \$3), you can leave your folding chair unattended and return hours later to find it undisturbed, and a folksy southern friendliness permeates the event.

The reverential aura feels more than a bit overdone, but it's part of the experience. Though let's not forget or whitewash Augusta National's previous long-standing prohibition on women members and of racial minorities before that.

The club and the tournament seem to have stepped into the 21st century and finally turned a corner on those issues.

Seeing the lengthy standing ovations and cheers for Tiger Woods everywhere he turned, whether on the practice range or on the course, was heart-warming.

A Black man whose forebears would never have been allowed to set foot on the course let alone win the tourney five times is recognized and respected for all he has done in and for the game.

No matter your opinion of golf — a game of skill played by talented athletes, an odd sport that's apas-time for the rich and moneyed class, or somewhere in between — you can admire the efficiency and organization displayed by those who put on the Masters.

They know how to move people, literally.

Whether clearing the parking lot of tens of thousands of vehicles within about 30 minutes, smoothly guiding a crowd of about 40,000 through the front gates and security starting at 7 a.m., or shepherding souvenir buyers or hungry patrons, Augusta does it with aplomb.

(But with all those people creating literally tons of garbage daily, noticeably absent is any sign of recycling. Everything just goes into Augusta-green trash bags. That's a sad throwback.)

Then, of course, there's the golf. Having been to a few tourneys (such as the Canadian Open and the PGA Championship) over the years, I find the pure athleticism of these players impressive.

Last Saturday morning, prior to their rounds, on the practice range, everyone from Vijay Singh to Canadians Adam Hadwin and Corey Conners, and amateur Neal Shipley, warmed up firing laser-like bombs at will or dropping shots to within feet of the flags.

Tall or small, young or not so youthful, they all seemed ready to shoot well under par. But in reality, many of them struggled on one of the world's toughest courses. That's the way the game goes.

Every player was on the practice range at least 90 minutes before their tee time.

Except one, the man everyone wanted to see. Exactly an hour before he was due on the first tee, surrounded by a phalanx of four security guards, Tiger marched directly to one of the far practice greens to chip.

The roar that rumbled

through the 1,500 or so fans in the viewing gallery and along a nearby walkway told you who had arrived.

Fifteen minutes later, as he moved to a spot on the range 30 feet in front of us, he was greeted with a prolonged standing ovation and rowdy shouts. Just as he was on every hole all week.

In contrast, when an emaciated Phil Mickelson came out, fans offered a polite but muted greeting.

Northern Ireland's Rory McIlroy (a fan favourite who was cheered loudly) and "Lefty" practised back-to-back, shot for shot, but didn't acknowledge one another.

The LIV versus PGA Tour animosity might have had something to do with that.

Walking the Augusta course, besides witnessing exceptional play and classic holes filled with decades of lore, one is immediately impressed with how hilly it is. The walk is a workout.

It's well-known that the unforgiving greens are smooth as glass, but the fairways' spectacular elevation changes simply don't translate in the two-dimensional realm of a TV broadcast.

The pilgrimage to the 88th Masters provided many indelible memories, among them: a dominant victory by Scottie Scheffler, the world's top golfer; the major tournament debut of runner-up Ludvig Aberg of Sweden and Tiger prowling the course en route to an unimaginable dead-last finish.

So many came hoping to see one last charge by Tiger but left realizing the man who once dominated the sport is a shadow of his former self.

Still, he remains one of the best to ever play the game and they love him for it.



PUBLIC NOTICE

**ROAD CLOSURE –
CONCESSION 6 ROAD**

WHAT: The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, through its contractor Walker Construction, will commence with the road reconstruction of Concession 6 Road, North of Mewburn Bridge (Niagara-on-the-Lake / Niagara Falls Limit) to North of Warner Road.

A detour route will be provided around the site for traffic. This closure is necessary to facilitate a shorter construction schedule for road reconstruction.



WHEN: The road closure will begin on Monday, April 29, 2024, and be in place for seven weeks.

CONTACT: Any inquiries concerning this road reconstruction can be directed to Mike Komljenovic, Engineering Supervisor, at mike.komljenovic@notl.com or 905-468-3266 ext. 240.

Emergency Services have been informed of this closure and have developed a plan to ensure emergency service to the properties in the closure area remains unaffected.

Thank you for your patience and cooperation.

Expert counter says eclipse crowd hit 50K



Ross's Ramblings

Ross Robinson
Columnist

From the Path of Totality to the Sea of Tranquillity, this week I'd like to share reflections on our 2024 solar eclipse.

Enough back patting and finger pointing. Our much anticipated eclipse has come and gone.

Understandably and unavoidably, the eclipse took on a life of its own, and hopefully the lessons learned will come in handy for our next total solar eclipse on Aug. 23, 2044. Let's be patient.

After months of hyping and hoping, many of



Any and all emergencies were covered in the Falls.

us seized the chance and enjoyed the afternoon.

Wanting to get the real story, I rode my bike to the brink of our amazing Horseshoe Falls, and spent two hours immersed in the eclipse experience.

We were gently dampened by the cool mist near Table Rock.

Was Queen Victoria Park crowded? Definitely not. And not because of the weather and clouds.

For a myriad of reasons, there were not nearly a million visitors — more like 50,000.

We have all read about over hyping, the declaration of a preemptive state of emergency, negative media

attention and other mistakes. Hindsight is always accurate.

Maybe the Niagara Region should have declared a "declaration of preparation."

Whatever. Damned if you do and damned if you don't.

NOTL was busier than normal for a few days in early April. Huzzah!

The day after the eclipse, I had a record number of guests on my Free Walking Tour. Some 26 guests from New Jersey, Quebec, Colombia, Pittsburgh and the Greater Toronto Area. Most of them visiting Niagara for several days.

I asked the young lady visiting from New Jersey for her thoughts regarding

the big event. She and her new husband had driven up for a three night honeymoon planned around the eclipse.

She eloquently replied, "The four minutes of the eclipse were the second most disappointing four minutes of my honeymoon."

Following directions is definitely not my strong suit, so I was unable to construct a pin hole camera to protect my eyes.

Conscious of the danger of the sun, and a bit peckish, I bought a Tim Hortons caramel glazed sprinkle donut and gently squeezed it from the edges until the donut hole was really small.

This became my eye protection, and later, my snack. With a medium hot chocolate. What a country we live in.

In conclusion, thousands of Niagarans made our total solar eclipse a memorable event. They seized the moment, joining friends and neighbours for block and backyard eclipse viewing parties.

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College students **buzzed** about helping bee farm

Richard Wright
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Students at Niagara College's Daniel J. Patterson campus in Niagara-on-the-Lake went from learners to experts Monday, April 15 in a showcase of experiential learning and mutual benefit with a local business.

As part of their advanced communications class, students from the horticulture technician, greenhouse technician, and landscaping programs were tasked to come together in small teams to come up with solutions to one of two problems facing NOTL's Honey Fields bee farm. The issues at hand: pest control and comfort at the farm's new open space for visitors.

The goal for instructor Tania Fera-Gent was to activate the student's creative minds to find solutions, but to also use what they have learned from her class to be confident and comfortable exchanging ideas with groups and/or individuals using various communications tools, such as visual and audio presentations.

After weeks of preparation and research, students set up on a second floor classroom and presented their findings to fellow



Pest control is a big issue for Honey Fields. The beekeeping and honey production outfit turned to Niagara College greenhouse tech students to solve problems. RICHARD WRIGHT

students, college administration and Erin Rowaan, owner of Honey Fields.

"We love working with the community and having the opportunity to be here. To see them so invested in something like a honey bee is pretty cool," said Rowaan. She was particularly impressed with how well-versed the students were with the of the challenges facing the local bee and honey industry.

"A lot of them focused on the varroa mite, which is one of the biggest pests that we have to control when we are working with bees. It is something we have to stay on top of or we could lose

all of our hives. It was really interesting to see the different ideas," she adds.

"They have the methods that we generally chose to use, but something new that a lot of them mentioned was having mite-resistant colonies. It is a newer thing just coming into the bee industry now. It is trying to use genetics to produce bees that are naturally resistant to the mite as opposed to using some of the other chemical options which can be tricky to balance because you are trying to kill an insect on an insect."

Harmanpreet Kaur, 23, had his mind on the ills of chemical use when creating

his presentation. One of the practices he highlighted is applying homemade icing sugar to the frames of the hives. The sugar, which lacks the starch put into store-purchased icing sugar and therefore doesn't clump in the humidity of the hive, disrupts the varroa mites' ability to cling to bees due to the fine granules, preventing their suction on the bees.

David Atherton, dean of liberal studies at the campus, took in the presentations and was duly impressed with the students and very proud of the practical leaning methods being used by the college.

"Going from station to

station, you can really see how much work the students have put into this, and you can see how much they appreciate us coming in to hear all about it," he said.

"But more importantly it is connecting with our local employers and our local farms and engaging them with these real-life student projects," he added.

New to Honey Farms this year is a honey store on the company's property. Plans are to use about an acre of the space to build a place for people to use and enjoy while visiting the farm.

If they chose to take on this aspect of the project, students were tasked – on instructions from the farm itself – to offer design plans for the space.

"Their criteria is for an educational space, to improve drainage, and to have a lunch area-type vibe," said 18-year-old Mary McKellar, a horticulture student.

So, along with her project teammates, Anna DeDreu, Hannah Vandermuellen and Kyla Joseph, they did just that. The elements of their design and presentation consisted of the educational space "where the overhead shade and trees invite people and students to an environment that has an abundant amount of infor-

mation on the product and production of honey."

The public space "will have areas for people to enjoy lunch or rest under trees. Also, space to have quiet time enjoying the view of the oasis theme land when it is time for a break."

On the tourism side of things "this property will have many attractions that people want to see. For example, to increase revenue by having flower fields being there for the bees and for people to take pictures."

Vandermuellen can't think of a better way to learn than the experiential methods being used by the college.

"The teachers are all super hands on and they care about us. They are introducing us to projects like this, giving us one-on-one time with employers and bringing people to the college to give us industry-based knowledge, not just book knowledge."

Rowaan agrees with Vandermuellen's assessment of the way the college is preparing students for life after graduation, and for the way those methods benefit business owners like herself.

"We value the relationship with Niagara College. I will certainly be implementing some of these (ideas)," she said.

Niagara College kicks off major **\$50 million** fundraising campaign

Staff
The Lake Report

Niagara College has launched a multi-year fundraising campaign aimed at helping the postsecondary institution with a number of initiatives.

The college announced its campaign, called Together, which has been created to raise \$50 million for expansion of facilities, improvements to student access, to provide diverse and inclusive learning environments, global competencies and perspectives, and productivity and innovation.

The college launched the campaign on April 6 at its annual Renaissance Gala at Fallsview Casino. This event has raised more than \$3.5 million in its 32-year history.

"We live in a changing world that is marked by significant needs — for frontline health-care workers and skilled trades-people, increased access and enhanced experiences for students," said Sean



Niagara College president Sean Kennedy (at podium) is joined by Niagara College staff and students at the launch of the Together Campaign. SUPPLIED

Kennedy, the college's president. "Niagara College is uniquely positioned to address these challenges, but we can't do it alone."

The campaign has six parts: solving the skilled trades crisis, solving the health-care crisis, empowering students to achieve their dreams, creating a more equitable and diverse college, graduating tomorrow's global citizens and closing Canada's productivity gap.

"We're calling on our community to join us in embracing this historic op-

portunity to build a successful Niagara," Kennedy said.

A multi-year effort, the goal of the fundraising is to support a range of projects and initiatives: new and expanded health and skilled trades facilities to increased scholarships and bursaries, new classrooms, alumni and student spaces, new housing and student services opportunities, expanded support for Black, Indigenous and students of colour, new study-abroad opportunities, expanded applied research and more.

Three significant dona-

tions were announced at the gala on April 6.

The Joyce Family Foundation has donated \$1.5 million to create the Joyce Family Foundation Healthcare and Skilled Trades Bursary program at Niagara.

The program will provide tuition and ancillary costs for several skilled trades, nursing and health-care students each year who come from the Niagara Region.

These bursaries will be renewable for each year of the recipient's program of study.

The Joyce Family Foundation is a private, family foundation, created by legendary Canadian entrepreneur Ronald V. Joyce to enact philanthropy that gives back to his community.

The McCall MacBain Foundation, meanwhile, has contributed to the campaign, but has asked details of the donation not be made public.

The McCall MacBain funds will help to graduate more nurses, personal support workers and paramedics.

The gift will be used to launch the ConfideNce program, which will address anxiety and stress for students in applied health programs while also providing new resources to help these students' success after graduation.

The McCall MacBain Foundation is named for John McCall MacBain and his wife, Marcy McCall MacBain, who founded the foundation in 2007 to provide scholarships and other educational opportunities.

A third donor, the Embark Student Foundation, donated \$500,000 to help launch the Indigenous Student Success Pathways project, which aims to embolden Indigenous students and support their education and career aspirations before, during and after their postsecondary studies.

It will also help develop opportunities for Indigenous students and forwarding calls to action related to Truth and Reconciliation at Niagara.

"These are remarkable, transformational gifts," said Gord Arbeau, the college's vice-president of advancement. "They come from donors within and outside of our community reflecting the reach of our college outside the boundaries of Niagara, and they create a tremendous momentum as we move forward with our ambitious campaign."

More information about the Together campaign can be found at niagaracollege.ca/together.

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Have some fun



Across

- 8. Hold (8)
- 9. "Little Brown Jug" chorus openers (2,2,2)
- 10. Corpse (4)
- 11. Strength (5)
- 12. Capital of the Maldives (4)
- 13. Waterfalls (8)
- 16. Source (6)
- 18. Take to the cleaners (4)
- 20. Sudden convulsion (5)
- 21. Showing unwelcome interest (4)
- 22. Fastener with hooks and loops (6)
- 23. In a stringent way (8)
- 26. Addict (4)
- 28. Ruinous damage (5)
- 30. Repudiate (4)
- 31. Tendency to become angry quickly (6)
- 32. Maritime (8)

Down

- 1. Pyramid-like temple (6)
- 2. Covetousness (4)
- 3. Charted (6)
- 4. If you're in this, you're in the loop (4)
- 5. City at junction of White and Blue Niles (8)
- 6. Sudden impulse (4)
- 7. Culinary heaters which don't sound like it? (8)
- 14. Sarcastic doubter of sincerity and merit (5)
- 15. Thin, narrow strips (5)
- 17. Hidden (5)
- 19. Large and noisy parties (5-3)
- 20. Comforting (8)
- 24. What Nature abhors (6)
- 25. One-dimensional (6)
- 27. Highland dance (4)
- 29. Fresh air provider (4)
- 30. Orator's place (4)

Crossword Puzzle

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Last issue's answers

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The Bible, science and the nature of God



DR. BROWN

Dr. William Brown
Columnist

Richard Dawkins was once in his Oxford University office surrounded by books from floor to ceiling, when the interviewer noticed the only book on Dawkins' desk was a Bible.

Queried about this, Dawkins, well-known for slamming all things related to religion, responded by pointing out that the Bible was probably the best single source of human plots and tales of intrigue to be found anywhere.

True or not, that tale was mirrored by a National Public Radio, or NPR, interview with a professor at Boston University who, looking to her next term, intended to use the Bible as her chief source material for an upcoming graduate course in

English literature.

Why? For the same reason Dawkins gave.

Every morning since the pandemic began, one of the first things I do is to listen to the homily of the day given by one of the brothers of the Society of St. John the Evangelist.

The order was founded in Oxford in the mid-18th century. Its home monastery now overlooks the Charles River in Boston and is located but a short walk from Harvard University and a little longer from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, two of the top universities in the United States.

Again, you might well ask, why listen to a bunch of Christian Episcopalian monks on the Charles?

The answer is simple: Among their several responsibilities, the brothers counsel students and probably not a few of their teachers and beyond that offer programs which reach a wide international audience.

The homilies offer wisdom about human relationships and, in their case, a Christian God. And if every reference



to God or Jesus was snipped out of their homilies, the overall wisdom remains.

This morning was no exception: Referring to friendship and using poetic language, Brother Luke spoke of "being a safe, trustworthy person — a good companion, weep with those who weep — and calling forth another's song."

Who can argue with those words, whether they come from a Christian, Jew, Muslim, Buddhist or Hindi mouth or perhaps someone who wasn't of any particular religious persuasion?

It's probably safe to say that if there is a God of all that has been, is and will

be, that being would have created the universe, all the stars and galaxies, every particle and every force and natural law, uncertainty at the subatomic level and life in at least one place for certain and quite possibly many other places in the universe.

The same God would have created the evolution of life from simple single cells to complex single cells, to cohabiting cells, to simple multicellular organisms, to complex, even highly intelligent social species including modern humans through a combination of chance and natural selection.

That same God would also be responsible for the natural forces which shape the movements of continents, volcanic eruptions, climate shifts ranging from droughts to flooding monsoons and hurricanes and collisions with comets and other extra-terrestrial bodies, which from time to time sometimes drive many lifeforms into extinction.

Again, the same God would be the means by which life goes on from generation to generation with the possibility that mutant

genes might develop from time to time, which sometimes cause serious, even fatal diseases such as Huntington's dementia — again, all through natural processes and accidents.

Once more, that same God would have been responsible for the emergence of a sense of fairness and unfairness and a willingness to look after others in need of care, sometimes at great risk to yourself, something females of many species do for their young.

So, a moral sense is not limited to humans, but belongs to many species, as do cruelty and killing. How many predators could survive without killing animals lower in the scale?

Not many — the current top predator species, humans, regularly kills on industrial scales in conflicts to control, territory, riches, and food, and ravages the planet through climate changes related to those selfish activities.

Albert Einstein, perhaps the most famous scientist of the 20th century, was well-known for his quips about God.

His God was mostly about the sense of awe he and other theoretical physicists felt when they looked at the immensity and order of the universe.

The same Einstein felt that if there was a God, that God didn't interfere with the natural world to favour humans.

For many years I felt that way. Now I'm not so sure, but what I am sure about is that if there is a God, that God must be responsible for the whole shebang of what we understand now and will come to understand in the future about the universe, life, and the natural physical and biological laws.

Such a God will truly be well beyond our wildest imagination and any sectarian beliefs, as illuminating as they sometimes are and whatever their cultural value may be for societies when and where they exist.

Thoughts?

Dr. William Brown is a professor of neurology at McMaster University and co-founder of the InfoHealth series at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library.



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The ice jam of April 1909

This photograph shows the ice jam pressing against the wharf and range light house while an unidentified man and boy are standing on the ice in the foreground. In the annual report for that year, the commissioners for Queen Victoria Park in Niagara described the early months of 1909 as “notable for some of the most phenomenal physical occurrences ... within the last half-century.” Unusually low water levels in the first few months resulted in an ice jam at the head of Goat Island “thus practically closing off the American falls.” No damage occurred until the month of April when the highest water levels were attained and a windstorm of “very high velocity” caused the breaking up of the ice fields to swiftly float down the rapids and lower gorge, blocking the mouth of the river. Destruction followed along the shoreline on both sides of the river. It wasn’t until 1964 when a “boom” was placed in the upper part of the river, near Lake Erie, to limit the flow of ice. In 2019, many may remember the ice walls that grew over the barriers in Fort Erie. This was probably fairly similar to what had happened in 1909 as well as other years when an ice jam occurred. Perhaps the lack of a real winter also saved us from any ice jam this year.

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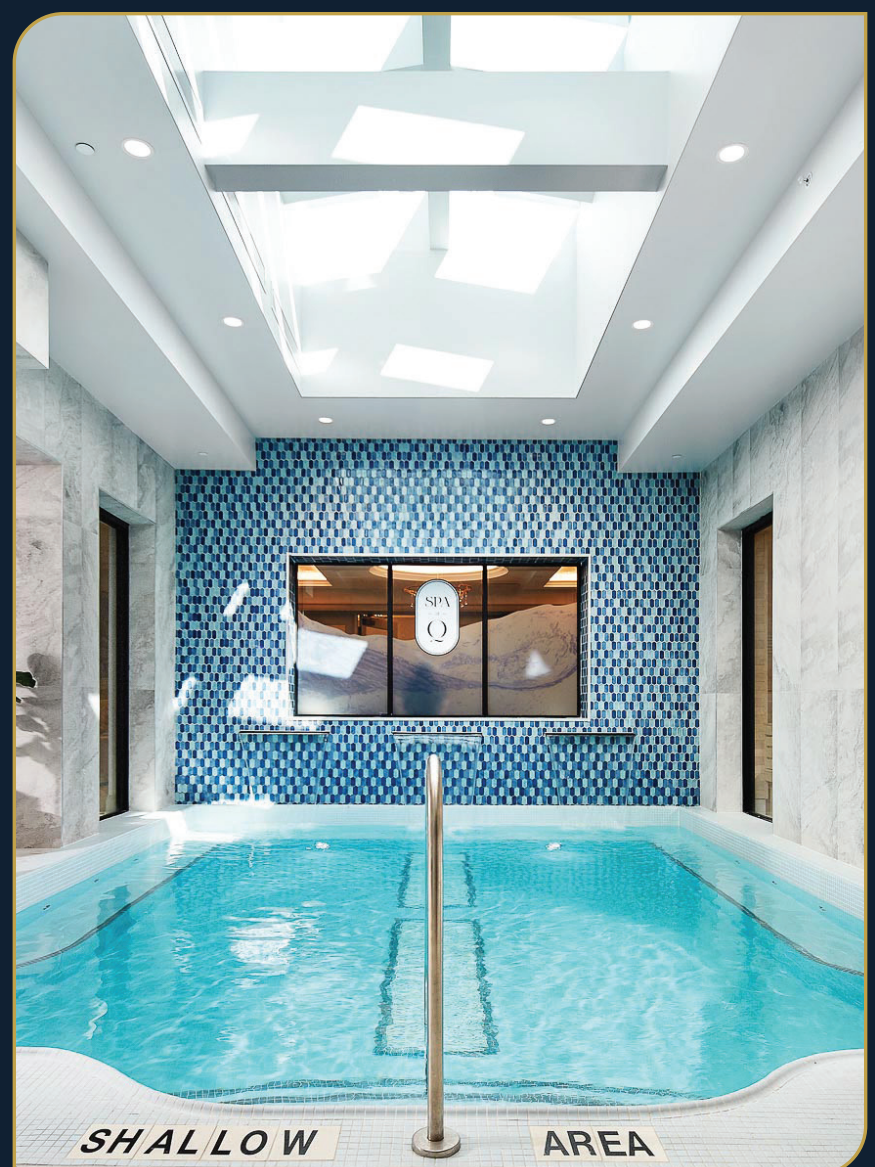
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Death Café provides answers in **comforting way**

Seminar gives advice on how to plan and prepare for your own death

Denise Ascenzo
Special to The Lake Report

It was a Friday evening, March 22 to be exact, when I attended a gathering at the community centre in town. The Death Café: a gathering of people to talk about death?

Truthfully I had no idea what I was walking into but I will say the title of the meeting raised some very curious ideas and questions.

Bonnie Bagnulo, executive director of Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Palliative Care, explained what a Death Café is.

The idea of these gatherings was started in 2011 in England. It was a way for people to talk about their or a close person's impending death. The meetings became a place for people to ask those questions that percolate around in our minds but are afraid to ask.

At the meeting I attended, people were encouraged to gather around into small groups and introduce ourselves to each other. I sat with three women who I had never met but immediately felt comfortable to be with.

Bagnulo explained that there is no set agenda, just let conversations flow, be respectful and do not judge anyone there. The main purpose of these cafés is to help people understand that you are not alone.

One of the tools used in this gathering was a unique deck of cards called an End of Life Deck. Bagnulo likes to use these cards as a way to get discussions flowing within the small groups.

Some questions might surprise you, such as: What sounds do you want to hear when you are near the end? Nature and birds, classical music, children's laughter were some suggestions.

Do you want to be with many people or just close family? Do you want to be hugged, hand held or just don't be touched at all?

One question had our group responding with the same answer: How much do you want to know about your prognosis?

Some possible answers were: Give me a rosy picture, tell me nothing at all or give me all the details as straight as possible.

All four of us agreed knowledge is power —

power to fight or power to accept what is going to happen.

When discussing these questions with Bagnulo she noted that the dying very seldom ask for something for themselves. They often are concerned for children or a spouse or a pet and ask what will happen to them.

"We climb and climb and climb all our life for external stuff, but in the end, we dig and dig and dig for the internal stuff," explained Bagnulo.

She said one key factor when caring for a dying person is to ask what they want and to really listen to them. Do not think any desire is silly, just make it happen.

Did they ask for a bowl of jelly beans or for a certain flower or to visit one place in particular? Maybe they need to talk with a long ago acquaintance to clear up things long unsaid.

Bagnulo said it is very important to help the dying leave a legacy for their cherished ones. It could be a simple story, or a favourite photo with a story attached, or a favourite recipe.

Maybe it is a family secret that should have been told or a treasured item that has been passed down through the generations of the family. The dying want to be remembered, they want to leave some legacy.

Then there is the practical side of dying. These are things we all must or should do regardless of an imminent death or just because it should be done now.

We all know we should have a will, as well as power of attorney for health and finances but what about all the other details that should be looked after as well?

Passwords — for bank accounts, computer access, bills, Facebook or other chat sites should all be listed and updated regularly. No one will be able to help the family if they do not have these passwords.

Remember, this is not like any TV series where with a stroke of a few keys and bam, we have the code! This does not happen in real life.

As well directives on vehicles, boats, RVs and even pets should be written out.

Do not keep these all in a secret place but in a secure place, possibly with your will and make sure several



Bonnie Bagnulo, executive director of NOTL Palliative Care, said one key factor when caring for a dying person is to ask them what they want — and to listen. SUPPLIED

people know where that place is.

We also have to make it known what we want when we die. Do not leave these decisions to your loved ones to make in their grief. Tell them what you want.

The Death Café brought all these questions to the forefront for many of us. Fight like hell to stay alive but when the inevitable is facing you square in the face, start asking questions and talk about what you want.

Bagnulo also had representatives from Morgan Funeral Home at the Death Café to answer any questions people might have.

A few days later I spoke with Alain Gignac, managing director of Morgan Funeral Home and Anne Taylor, the financial planner of Morgan Funeral Home.

The one consistent question they deal with is: What type of funeral should we have for our loved one?

The funeral home can offer several options and it is up to the family to decide.

Besides finances, the bigger issue is what did the dying person want? If this has not been discussed, it can create a festering soup of remorse and guilt.

Did we do it right? is this what they really wanted? Did we look cheap or did we overdo the funeral?

These are all questions that the grieving loved ones will deal with many months or even years afterwards.

My grandmother, who

died at 102 years of age, told my sister and me directly what she wanted.

No funeral, no prayers, no casket — just have me cremated and put my ashes next to my husband's in the family plot.

We had no problems making those decisions because this is what Grandma had told us. As well she threatened to haunt us if we did not do as we were told.

So what options are available for us to discuss with our families?

There is the full traditional funeral — coffin, embalming, viewing, service and burial. Sounds simple enough but what about a few other things to be decided?

What will I want to be dressed in? What music to be played? What words to be spoken? Who should speak those words? Who will be pallbearers and should flowers be asked for or donations sent to your favourite charity?

A funeral is not as simple as closing the casket and dropping it into the ground.

There is the cremation option. No big fancy coffin — but you do need a coffin of some sort to contain your remains. Then do you have a full service with your ashes in a lovely urn or do you bury the ashes or do you scatter the ashes and then do a celebration of life?

One thing recommended by both Gignac and Taylor was to have some sort of closure for the family. Say-

ing just "dump my ashes anywhere" will not really help. Let the family know what you want.

"Is it worth celebrating a life lived? Yes. Loss is like defeat. Through an organized gathering of family and friends during times of loss, you gain moments of joy and sense of accomplishment, evading defeat," said Gignac.

I saw an obituary of one man, who requested that upon his death, that he be cremated and a celebration of life was to be held, with beer being poured and everyone wearing blue jeans. Even his grandmother came in jeans. The family got relief and closure because they knew what he wanted.

The scattering of ashes does come with a few rules. No, you cannot be scattered on the 18th hole, and you cannot scatter ashes on private lands, so rule out your back garden. Only crown lands and waterways can be used.

If doing water scattering, you must spread the ashes out from the plastic bag. The urn or cardboard container and the plastic bag are considered hazardous waste and you could be charged for littering. Now that is not a great legacy.

Another option to be considered is a green burial. Gignac advised that Fairview Cemetery in Niagara Falls has a dedicated section for green burials.

The body cannot be embalmed, the coffin cannot have any metals and the person cannot have any jewellery or belt buckles or metal implants. The burial must be within 24 to 48 hours of death. Finally, no marker will be placed on the grave site. Fairview Cemetery also permits the planting of a native trees with your ashes poured into the hole before the tree is planted. This is what I want — a good Canadian sugar maple tree and me.

On a side note, should you want the ashes of a loved pet put with you, make your wishes known and most times this can be accommodated.

There is another option, alkaline hydrolysis (also known as aquamation). After some research I found it difficult to explain the process. Look it up on the Smithsonian Magazine web-site for a good explanation of this procedure.

A question asked at the Death Café — and one I

brought up with Ann Taylor later — was "What is the difference between pre-planning and pre-paying for a funeral?"

"You have a financial plan, a will and powers of attorney, why would you not also plan your funeral arrangements?" Taylor asked.

Taylor explained that pre-planning opens a file at a funeral home and lets you decide what you want when you pass away. Every detail can be recorded so that your loved ones do not have to make these decisions when they are grieving. No financial arrangements are made.

She went on to explain that pre-paying is not much different. The person will make all the arrangements that they want, just like pre-planning, and then pay the full amount of the funeral.

Taylor said the money for a pre-paid funeral is put into a registered trust fund and cannot be touched until the person dies. Interest accrued will hopefully cover inflation costs.

Should you make arrangements in Markham, Ontario but have since moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake, this is not a problem. On your demise, the NOTL funeral home will contact the Markham funeral home and the registered trust fund agreement is transferred to the funeral here in NOTL.

One thing Taylor did suggest is the pre-paid funeral contract be kept with your will. Do not keep it a secret. She said she has seen families torn apart because no one was advised of a will or the pre-arrangements made.

We had a rather fun question asked at the Death Café. If someone with hips or knee replacements or metal rods in their back are cremated, what happens to all the metal?

It was explained that Evergreen Crematorium, owned by thirty funeral homes in the Niagara Region, recycles all metals with the proceeds from the sales going to local charities in the region. As the Evergreen Crematorium website states, "Since 2017, donations to local charities have exceeded \$100,000."

I found the Death Café a very relaxed and informative way to talk about our inevitable demise.

Bagnulo plans on running the Death Café quarterly so look for the notices of the next one, hopefully in June, then make a list of questions and come for a discussion.

Remember death should not be shrouded in mystery, only the body.

Explore the world of **magnolias**



GROWING TOGETHER 

Joanne Young
Columnist

What would spring be without seeing the first of the magnolias bursting forth into bloom?

The magnolia tree has captivated imaginations across time and cultures with its beautiful, large waxy leaves and plush white to pink flowers. Some of the blooms also have a wonderful perfume to them that fills the air in the early spring.

And this year, after our mild winter, they are opening even earlier than normal.

Though magnolia flowers are gorgeous and fragrant, they last about two weeks before they fall off. I think that's why we wait with anticipation for the flowers to open every spring. They are not a long-lasting flower, but they do make you stop in your steps to enjoy its beauty.

The magnolia flowers can symbolize different qualities according to their colour. White magnolia flowers can stand for purity, luck and stability. Pink magnolias stand for joy, youth and innocence. Purple flowers mean well wishes for health and good luck.

If you are looking for a magnolia tree to plant into your garden, it's good to know that there are several species of magnolias available in our climate. Here are some of the more popular species and cultivars commonly found in local garden centres.

On home and native land

Did you know that there is a magnolia that is native to this area and Carolinian forest? It's called the cucumber magnolia (*magnolia acuminata*). It's getting harder to find it growing naturally as urban sprawl



Leonard Messel is the most common cultivar of magnolia. It prefers a well-drained soil in a full-sun to part-sun location. JOANNE YOUNG

continues but can still be found especially along the northern shore of Lake Erie.

In its youth, it is a distinctly pyramidal form, but rounds out with age — like most of us.

The cucumber magnolia can reach heights of 50 to 80 feet and slightly less in width. Its smaller two-and-a-half to three-inch flowers borne in late May to early June are yellow green in colour are sometimes difficult spotting in bloom as the flowers are born high in the canopy.

In the fall, the leaves turn an attractive ashy brown in colour. The tree is known for its seed pod, shaped like a cucumber, that will turn into a pinkish red fruit in October.

Simply Elizabeth

A better-known cultivar, which is a cross between *magnolia acuminata* and *magnolia heptapeta*, is "Elizabeth." Its habit is a symmetrical pyramidal shape. Its finely tapering buds open to a paler primrose-yellow colour. It blooms from late April to mid-May.

Loebner magnolia

Another species of magnolia is *loebner magnolia* (*magnolia x loebneri*) which is a cross between *magnolia kobus* and *magnolia stellata*. This species is medium-to-large, reach-

ing 25 feet high and 28 feet wide. The flowers typically have 12 petals similar to the star magnolia. They are fragrant and open sometime in mid-to late-April — one of the earlier blooming varieties.

Leonard Messel

The most common cultivar is one called "Leonard Messel." Its petals are flushed with a purple-pink line along the center of the petal. Like all magnolias, they prefer a well-drained soil in a full-sun to part-sun location.

Saucer magnolia

Saucer magnolia is probably the most common of the magnolias in this area. Its large flower buds start to open as a medium pink and fade out to light pink/white when fully opened. The flowers typically have nine petals and open up to about ten-inch flowers late April to early May. The saucer magnolia can grow up to be 20 to 30 feet high and wide.

A helpful tip for all magnolias is that you should never prune more than a third of its branches off at one time.

Shining stars

Star magnolia (*magnolia stella*) is a deciduous small tree or large shrub that produces star-shaped white flowers in later winter or early spring, before any other flowering tree — and before

even most spring bulbs.

When possible, plant it in a sheltered location to help it flower in the spring, since the buds are easily damaged by frost — which could be the reason why the magnolia buds won't open, if you're having that issue.

The white and pink flowering types are star magnolias such as royal star (white) and pink star (pink). The star magnolias are some of the smaller growing types but can still reach 15 to 20 feet in height and 12 to 15 feet in width.

The other guys

Some other varieties of magnolias that are suitable for our climate, but not as commonly found are: *Magnolia grandiflora* (evergreen magnolia), *magnolia macrophylla* (bigleaf magnolia), *magnolia quinquepeta* (lily magnolia), *magnolia sieboldii* (summer blooming), and *magnolia virginiana* (sweetbay magnolia).

As you can see, there are many species and cultivars available to choose from when choosing your tree. Now is the best time to go to the garden centres to see them in bloom and choose the best one.

Happy shopping!

Joanne Young is a *Niagara-on-the-Lake* garden expert and coach. See her website at joanneyoung.ca.



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