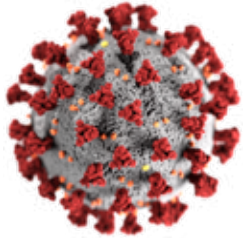




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We've entered a **new wave** of COVID-19, Hirji warns

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

One week after mask mandates were disposed of by Doug Ford's Progressive Conservative government, the province has entered a new wave of COVID-19, Niagara's acting medical officer of health says.

"We're seeing a definite resurgence and a new wave

Continued on Page 3



4,400-km trek honours **memory** of his brother Noah

Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

Kaleb Schriefer was crushed by the loss of his younger brother Noah in January 2021 and he plans to bike through the grief this June on a 4,400-kilometre Tour Divide ride in his sibling's memory.

"It's an event for me and my healing through grief and through this traumatic journey that we've been forced to go through,"

Continued on Page 16

1,400 cranes honour essential workers

Display was put together by more than 45 volunteers over three months of meticulous folding



Lord Mayor Betty Disero and Pumphouse Arts Centre chair Lise Andreana admire some of the 1,400 hand-folded origami cranes. EVAN SAUNDERS

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

More than 1,400 hand-folded origami cranes are now adorning the front windows of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre

to honour essential workers and those who helped everyone during the pandemic.

"Today marks the two-year anniversary of the closure of Ontario due to COVID," Pumphouse Arts Centre chair Lise Andreana said at the unveiling of the

display at the community centre last Thursday.

"Little did we know how our lives would unfold in these two years."

The Pumphouse organized the project.

"Throughout the pandemic essential workers

endured public exposure to ensure our community's health and safety. They put their own well-being on the line so that critical services and operations continued," Andreana said.

"This art installation, featuring colourful origami

cranes, honours these unsung heroes."

A large crowd gathered in front of Sweets & Swirls Cafe to view the art project.

The idea to use cranes was inspired by a piece of

Continued on Page 2

Former animal control officer **sues town** for severance

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Ken Reid, the former canine control officer for the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, is suing the town for severance.

"They were served with papers from my lawyers and the town has opted to fight it," Reid said in an interview at his home Tuesday.

"So, now I'm probably in the process of going to court with it."

Last fall, Reid was told his contract with the town as canine control officer would not be renewed, about three months before it expired.

The Lincoln County Humane Society has been now handling all animal-related needs in Niagara-on-the-Lake since Jan. 1.

Reid, who was on contract with the town for 22 years, said that since his contract came to an end, he has received vacation pay he was owed.

He said his lawyer told him vacation pay is not owed to contractors, only to contract employees and that contract employees are entitled to severance.

The town has taken the stance that he was simply

a contractor and not a contract employee, meaning the municipality does not owe him any severance after his 22-year tenure, Reid said.

Town spokesperson Marah Minor confirmed Reid has filed a statement of claim.

"As this is an active legal matter, the town is not

Continued on Page 4



Ken Reid is suing the Town of NOTL. EVAN SAUNDERS

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Visitors have started to return to downtown NOTL

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Downtown Niagara-on-the-Lake was starting to show signs of life again on Saturday, despite a rainy, wet morning.

At about noon, groups of visitors were walking the streets, window shopping and picking up goods from the local merchants.

And while the people seem to be starting to return, some store managers are hoping for more traffic and for an easing of restrictions for unvaccinated Americans.

Camille Epondulas, manager at Gyros on the Lake, said customers have started to return, especially over the March break. She said she's looking forward to what will hopefully be a busier season.

For now, she said the store is still relying on the support of locals — something she says has really helped.

She thinks further easing border restrictions could help bring in more people.

Kim Santos, from the Cambridge area, was enjoying some food from Gyros on the Lake with her boyfriend Joseph Bonsignore. She said the two have come to Niagara-on-the-Lake four



or five times a year for the last five years or so.

They usually go to the casinos in Niagara Falls first, but always visit NOTL.

"We always stop the next day here because we love Niagara-on-the-Lake, we love the businesses. And every time we come here we bring a lot of family members when we come down. And we'll come here to eat. We just love the food and the atmosphere and the service

here is always great," Santos said.

As a regular visitor, she's really happy to see things opening up again. For her, it's more of a reason to come down and said it makes her feel safer to be out and about.

At BeauChapeau Hat Shop, master hatter Meghan Harrison said since mask restrictions were lifted, customers are starting to come back — happier.

"More and more people

are getting excited about coming out and being able to just get out and shop now. Moods have been lifted a lot since masks haven't been mandatory. We're still seeing some people wear them. Some people aren't. But the overall mood from everyone is a lot better," she said.

At the shop, most of the staff are still wearing masks because they're working closely with people to do hat fittings.



Left: Visitors out on Queen Street on Saturday. Right: Kim Santos, from the Cambridge area, enjoys some food from Gyros on the Lake with her boyfriend Joseph Bonsignore. RICHARD HARLEY

"(It's) personal preference, really. If people don't want to wear their masks, they don't have to," Harrison said.

Most staff are donning masks "because we're in very close proximity with people, measuring heads, helping with hat styling and that kind of thing." And with some clients preferring masks, "we don't want to make them feel ill at ease."

She is predicting the spring and summer seasons will be busier than the last two years, "leaning more towards getting back to the way it was before all of this started to happen."

"Because again, people are more in the mood to get

out and about now that they don't have to wear something on their face."

The store gets a lot of visitors from the United States, she said, and is hoping for the further lifting of travel restrictions.

"It'd be nice to have them be able to come back and have it be a little bit more free and open that way. We're just looking forward to seeing people again."

She's already seeing American visitors.

"We've had people basically as soon as it was opened up for people to come," she said, noting a lot of people who weren't able to come have been placing online orders.

Origami crane display will decorate community centre until April 7

Continued from Front Page

Japanese folklore, which says folding 1,000 paper cranes will grant someone a wish from a god, or gift health and safety to the person they were made for, Andreana said.

She thanked the 45 or more volunteers who helped make all the cranes.

She recalled a heartwarming story about four grandparents who got together for their wedded children who are expecting a child. Together they folded 200 cranes for the unborn baby.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero folded many cranes herself and was on hand to provide remarks on the installation.

"There were a lot of people that were afraid (when the pandemic started). There were a lot of

unknowns and uncertainty about what they could do going forward," Disero told the crowd.

"But there was a group of people that worked and put the community ahead of themselves and those are front-line workers, our health care workers and our emergency services."

"We owe them a great deal of gratitude."

Disero reminded people the pandemic is not over and we need to put patience ahead of personal frustration.

"I want to just say to people, when you see the front-line workers — a firefighter or a doctor or a nurse or an EMS or any front-line worker, a pharmacist or a grocery store attendant — please tell them 'thank you' and please be kind to them



1,400 handmade origami cranes hang along the windows of the community centre. EVAN SAUNDERS

when you speak with them," she said.

"They really need our support and I feel that their work, at some point, as we all got frustrated and angry, maybe wasn't appreciated as much as it should be."

After the installation the cranes will be donated to essential workers. Resi-

dents who want to recommend an essential worker who inspired them during the pandemic can send suggestions to office@niagarapumphouse.ca.

Disero said there were three people who helped her manage the turbulent waters of the pandemic.

One of them is outgoing

director of operations Sheldon Randall. He is retiring on April 1 after 25 years with the town.

He was acting chief administrative officer when the pandemic started and worked closely with the mayor and other town officials.

She also thanked current chief administration officer Marnie Cluckie.

"Marnie's been really helpful. She's really taken a lot off my plate," Disero said.

She said the other important person is her husband, Dan. "He picked up the pace when I was running around doing everything else," she said.

Andreana said there was one essential worker she wanted to honour.

Her mother-in-law lives at Millennium Trail Manor in Niagara Falls and long-

term care worker Cherry Sandos has worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to take care of residents at the home.

"Cherry is so upbeat and happy and beautiful. When I talked to her at the end of February she had not had a day off since Christmas," Andreana said.

"I said to her, 'I call in the morning and you're here, Cherry. I call in the evening and you're here.'"

Andreana's mother-in-law has dementia.

"But they do her hair, they paint her nails, they make her feel whole and alive," she said.

"You can't pay people to do that stuff. So, I'm definitely taking a string (of cranes) over to her."

The cranes are on display until April 7.



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Suspended town staffers can return to work

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Three Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake workers who were suspended in December for refusing to be vaccinated or not disclosing their vaccination status will be allowed to return to work on Monday, April 4.

That's when the town will be withdrawing its

mandatory vaccination policy, in accordance with the latest provincial measures.

"Suspending the vaccination policy is in alignment with public health indicators and with provincial regulations regarding vaccination requirements," town spokesperson Marah Minor said in an email.

In December, three unidentified town staff-

ers were placed on leave over their COVID vaccination status.

Minor said the suspended employees are welcome to return and two of them have already confirmed they will be back on the job April 4. The third worker resigned earlier this year, she said.

The Lake Report did not receive a response to a question about whether

any of the returning staff have public-facing jobs.

Minor said the town's vaccination policy is determined by public health indicators and could change.

"Should the COVID-19 situation worsen, and public health recommends reinstating vaccine requirements, the town can review and reinstate the policy if necessary," she said.

Masks, vaccinations still important tools: Hirji

Continued from Front Page

of COVID-19," Dr. Mustafa Hirji said during a media briefing on Monday.

Across Niagara, most metrics for measuring the spread of COVID-19 are growing.

Outbreaks are up by 160 per cent and hospitalizations for people being primarily treated for COVID-19 are up by 182 per cent, Hirji said.

"Really large increases, especially in the hospitalizations," he said.

After several days of seeing no COVID deaths in the region, Hirji informed reporters that trend had ceased.

He warned the time to act is now in order to lessen the suffering of Niagara's residents.

"I think we need to start acting soon if we are going to prevent seeing a large number of deaths," he said.

The threat of another wave is all the more reason for people to get three COVID vaccination shots.

"We can't control what the BA.2 variant is. We are able to control vaccination status," Hirji said.

"People who are vaccinated with just two doses (are) far less likely to be hospitalized, are far less likely to be in ICU and also far less likely to pass away."

But as Canadians shift away from the safety measures they once readily accepted, Hirji said far fewer people are getting their booster shots.

"Unfortunately, we've seen a real slowdown in people getting vaccinated," he said.

While people are still getting vaccinated every day



Tom King says he thinks about his 90-year-old aunt when deciding why he should still wear a mask. He does not want to be the reason she gets COVID-19. EVAN SAUNDERS

across the region, "with the speed in which the wave is coming on, this is unfortunately not going to be high enough that we can really prevent a lot of deaths."

"We really need to hope that we can convince more people to come to be vaccinated."

The age groups with the lowest vaccination uptake tend to be between 12 and 29 years old, data presented by Hirji showed.

He said the province needs to launch a robust messaging campaign about the importance of continuing to wear a mask, getting vaccinated and maintaining other basic safety precautions against COVID-19.

"I've been disappointed we have not seen a lot of strong messaging from (the provincial government) really encouraging and trying to convince people that it's important to wear a mask," he said.

"We need to do that so we can limit the number of infections going forward."

Hirji said the province's

inability to follow up its decisions with messaging has resulted in "a lot of people mistakenly having the signal that masks are no longer important and that we don't need to worry about (them)."

"I think that's the very opposite of the case."

There also needs to be a shift in how sickness is viewed in Canada, he said.

"I think we need a culture in this country about staying home if we're sick," Hirji said, noting people should not be going out, running errands, going to school or work if they are sick.

He emphasized that one of the most important ways to promote this is for workers to have paid sick days.

Paid sick days used to be mandatory for Ontario workers. The Ford government revoked them in 2018.

Hirji also said an important tool for fighting the latest wave of COVID-19 would be making proof of vaccination certificates only eligible for those with three doses.

The province needs to start preparing to bring back the mask mandate, he said, and should be open to reinstating the proof of vaccination requirement.

Hirji cited polling by EKOS which showed 75 per cent of Ontarians support mask mandates and 67 per cent support the vaccine certificate.

The doctor stressed the pandemic continues to affect people with low income more. Taking precautions to stop the spread of the virus therefore helps low-income households the most.

"If we want to be an egalitarian society, it's important that we make sure we control COVID-19 because it's disproportionately those who are the least well-off in our society who are going to feel the impact," he said.

Hirji said this could be because low-income individuals have fewer health resources and are more likely to be working a front-line job where they are at risk of getting exposed to the virus.

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Dog catcher Ken Reid sues for severance, town will fight claim

Continued from Front Page

able to provide any further information at this time," she said.

Reid said he retained legal counsel on contingency and the firm is only be paid if it wins the case. He said his legal representatives feel they will be successful.

If the town loses the suit it could potentially be paying much more than if Reid was just paid a severance package, he said.

Reid, who is 69 years old, is facing financial difficulties since his only source of income was lost last year.

"Without an income and with the expense of this property it's going to be a struggle," he said.

"I was a contract employee, as such the town is obligated to give me a severance package. I'm spending my savings and hoping that can get replaced with a severance."

Reid starts new animal control service

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Former Niagara-on-the-Lake canine control officer Ken Reid has started a wilderness animal service to help NOTLers deal with critters that are living a little too close for comfort.

"I have the equipment, I have the expertise and I only want to do it for people here, in (NOTL)," Reid told The Lake Report.

He said his prices are modest and meant to be more affordable for NOTLers than what bigger animal control companies may charge.

He is charging \$50 for an assessment, \$50 to set up and maintain a humane live-trap for three days and a \$100 fee for animal relocation. He cautioned his prices are likely to increase as he gets his bearings on the demands of the job.

Reid said he prides himself on helping people and doing what is best for the animal. He won't relocate animals if they are potentially nursing offspring, unless he is able to bring the offspring with them.



Ken Reid is taking animal care into his own hands, after the Town of NOTL didn't renew his longstanding contract. He's also suing for severance. EVAN SAUNDERS

"There's a lot of things to consider when you're assessing situations, especially in the spring with potential babies, making sure they're not getting orphaned and such," he said.

Reid was already required to have his own business licence for his work with the town and has opted to pivot its operations from canine services to a general wildlife operation.

He said he started a few weeks ago and it's been slow going.

"It's going to be a word-of-mouth kind of thing. With spring coming, that's when all the wildlife starts getting active," he said.

Reid said pursuing this work builds on his skill set and enables him to continue serving the community he has called home for decades.

"I just want to provide an essential service for everyone in town," he said.

"I used to do it when I was doing the canine control, at the same time. It grew so fast that I had to back out because it was taking away the time I had to provide for canine control," he said.

"That being said, I felt the potential for doing strictly wildlife control would prob-

ably be a good source of income for me."

He said similar jobs in his past and experience with NOTL have made him well-prepared for the role.

And residents can depend on Reid to respond to situations as quickly, he said, noting immediacy can often make the difference between life and death for wild animals.

He recalled an incident when a NOTLer called him after hearing the sounds of animal cries coming from a storm sewer.

Reid went over immediately, took the storm sewer grate off and investigated. He found five baby ducklings trapped in the sewer.

"I got my catch pole, which is five feet long. It was a deep, deep storm drain. I picked each one up and what they had done is walk through the culvert," he said.

Reid speculated whether such timeliness would be possible with a large humane society.

"Would they come down and do it in time? I don't know. But I had the time so I went and did it," he said.

Reid said he can be reached at 905-658-8712.

NOTL hero Maya Webster needs help in quest to cure diabetes

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Coming off a whirlwind of media and cheers for her efforts in getting many people with Type 1 diabetes covered for continuous glucose monitoring systems, Niagara-on-the-Lake's Maya Webster is setting her sights higher.

She wants a cure for diabetes.

Having met the tenacious 10-year-old on several occasions, I think diabetes is facing a tough and tenacious opponent.

"We're gonna try to raise more money and need people to sponsor us to raise awareness. We're trying to get the word out," Maya said in an interview at her Glendale home on Wednesday.

Maya is working with JDRF Canada to fundraise



Maya Webster.
EVAN SAUNDERS

for the "Let's Make History Again" program, which marks the 100th anniversary of the first insulin treatment and is seeking to raise \$15 million toward a cure for Type 1 diabetes.

"I think it's pretty special that it's the 100-year anniversary of the first diabetic getting treated with insulin," Maya said.

Insulin is a lifesaving Canadian invention for

people living with diabetes. But Maya wants everyone to understand that insulin cannot be the end of the road for diabetics.

"Insulin is a treatment, it's not a full cure. So, I think that it's really important that we keep going further and further to find a cure," she said with the gusto of a seasoned public speaking professional.

"I'm still really happy that we have this insulin, though, and that it's been 100 years."

"But, 'It is a treatment, not a cure!'" she suddenly cried out as she burst up from her chair and pumped her fist in the air as if leading a chant outside Parliament.

"We are going to keep going until we find a cure."

Maya explained some of the feats Canadians with diabetes and other demon-

strators will be taking part in to raise awareness.

From April 4 to 8, hundreds of people are going to be sleeping in tents to raise awareness and money for Type 1 diabetes research.

"I think the tent thing is a good way to celebrate and to say, 'We are going in. Progress!'" she shouted once again.

During that same week in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and Calgary, five Canadians will live for 100 hours atop 40-foot flagpoles to spread awareness.

"The reason the flagpole is actually happening is because (a principal of the Oliver and Bonacini restaurant empire) Peter Oliver, his daughter, Vanessa Oliver, she was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes in 1990," Maya said.

"Because of this he

wanted to raise more awareness. So, he went on top of a flagpole and stayed there for a few days trying to raise awareness and trying to help find a cure for everyone, not just his daughter."

Oliver chose to go on top of a flagpole to represent the isolation and danger people living with Type 1 diabetes face every day, according to JDRF Canada's website. He raised \$250,000 for diabetes research.

"I'm questioning how they're gonna get up there," Maya said.

"There will probably be a ladder," her mother Christi Webster answered.

Maya wanted to assure everyone there would be a platform at the top of the flagpoles and the demonstrators wouldn't be balancing on one foot

for 100 hours, something the energetic 10-year-old couldn't help but act out.

Maya was recently given a certificate of recognition by Lord Mayor Betty Disero for her achievements.

"That was pretty exciting," she said.

"It's good to know that's how far me and my Type 1 diabetes team have come. It felt really good to know that we got that."

Maya needs corporate and individual sponsors in order to raise money for the cure for diabetes.

Her team, March for Maya, has raised nearly \$700 so far.

To donate to Maya's team, go to jdrf.akaraisin.com/ui/LetsMakeHistoryAgain, in the top right corner click "find a fundraiser/team" and enter Maya Webster. Her team should be the only one that appears.

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Progress ramps up on QEW interchange

Steve Hardaker
Community Correspondent



A crane was used to lift steel girders onto the new bridge on Monday and Tuesday nights. RICHARD HARLEY

With winter fading into our memories and spring emerging, work on the new Glendale Avenue and QEW diverging diamond interchange is ramping up.

Overnight on Monday and Tuesday this week, contractors were busy installing precast girders for the Glendale overpass bridge decks at the new interchange.

That required lane closures on the QEW as most of the work was done throughout the night.

This latest work will start to give area residents the first real visualization of what the new interchange will look like.

Much of 2021 was devoted to site preparation work, including creating the approaches to the QEW overpass, designing the on and off ramps, and laying the roadbed for the new Glendale Avenue and Airport Road connection.

During the winter, work was completed on the overpass concrete superstructure on the QEW as well as the

Airport Road connection and loop ramp.

The \$53.8 million project will replace the current Glendale Avenue overpass over the QEW with a diverging diamond interchange. This will be the first interchange of this kind in Ontario and only the third in Canada.

An online video at youtu.be/vwvscTv4OE4 depicts how a similar interchange in Calgary works.

The project aims to reduce vehicle conflict points by allowing unrestricted turning movements.

The interchange will allow traffic to enter or exit the QEW without having

to turn through oncoming traffic lanes, lowering the number of potential vehicle conflict points thus making it safer for vehicles and occupants.

A shared four-metre-wide active transportation, pedestrian and cyclists' path will also run through the middle of the bridge structure with dedicated signal crossings at each end.

Other features of this project include a new commuter carpool lot at the northwest quadrant of the interchange that could support a future GO bus stop, a single-lane roundabout at Glendale and York roads, and a new loop road

connection from Glendale Avenue back under the new overpass to Airport Road, providing a more direct route to the historic Old Town tourist area.

The province has committed to fund 80 per cent of the cost of the project.

In an email response to a question regarding Niagara Region's share of the funding, Stephanie Huppunen, manager, capital projects transportation engineering, said, "The cost sharing of the construction of this project is approximately \$11.3 million, including the town's portion of the contribution of construction."

In an earlier email, Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake treasurer Kyle Freeborn stated, "We have \$235,000 proposed in the 2023 budget for Glendale streetscaping. Upon completion of the project, actual costs will be debentured."

The interchange is expected to be opened in late 2022 and the project will be completed by late 2023.

Steve Hardaker has lived in Glendale for 11 years and is active in many community organizations.

Hold off on donations, Farmworker Hub says

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report



The Farmworker Hub is asking people to hold off on donations while it catches up sorting. FILE PHOTO

The Farmworker Hub is having a prolific second year.

After an immense turnout of donations from Niagara-on-the-Lakers, the hub is asking people to hold off on contributions for the next two weeks, founder Julia Buxton-Cox said.

"We've been overwhelmed with the outpouring of support from residents, volunteers, community organizations like the Rotary and local farmers," she told the Lake Report on Monday.

The hub needs time to organize the donations it has received and get them out into the seasonal workers community, she said.

The Farmworker Hub was only started last year, as a reaction to the difficulties COVID-19 had imposed on seasonal workers' lives.

"We started last year due to COVID, during lockdown, when charity shops were closed," Buxton-Cox said.

After opening it, she noticed the service was essential.

"We quickly saw there was a growing need and so we decided to look for a more suitable place to welcome the community and workers."

Gary Hatton, retired naval captain with the Royal Canadian Navy and Niagara-

on-the-Lake Rotary Club member, visited the hub on Sunday with a \$6,500 cheque on behalf of the club's community service committee.

"The role of a community service committee is to help develop and implement educational, humanitarian and vocational service projects that help the local community thrive," Hatton said in an email explaining the group's goals.

"Community service defines Rotary's character,

is the basis for its appeal and visibility in the community and is the reason Rotary continues to grow," he said.

"The top community service priorities for clubs are determined by examining the assets and needs in the local community and developing a response. This ensures that Rotary will not function in isolation, but be an active part of the community with projects that are relevant and effective."

Originally, the hub was operating out of a portable at Cornerstone Community Church in Virgil. Now the hub operates directly inside the church.

Buxton-Cox said she is blown away at how much community support the project has garnered after only one year of operating.

"It's an amazing feeling to have the community embrace our mission of helping seasonal agricultural farmworkers," she said.

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Canada The Local Journalism Initiative is funded by the Government of Canada.

COVID Tracker

NOTL active cases (last 28 days): 116
Region active cases: 1,061
Region deaths: 527
Region total cases: 36,019

**March 30 data per Niagara Region Public Health. Public health warns that "Due to the surge in COVID-19 cases, limited availability of testing, and changes to case and contact management practices, case counts shown (above) are an underestimate of the true number of individuals in Niagara with COVID-19. Data should be interpreted with caution." Case data for municipalities is also now being interpreted in 28-day cycles.*



Contributed by Patty Garriock
 "Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life."
 - Melody Beattie

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Lake Report editor and publisher Richard Harley captured this photo of a robin hopping in the late March snow on Saturday.

Calling all NOTL photographers: send us some of your interesting, evocative, quirky images of life around town and we'll consider them for this space on our editorial page. Email images (1 MB or more) to editor@niagaranow.com.

Spring ... soon?



Editorial

Hopeful happy ending to learning pod saga

Richard Harley
 Editor-In-Chief

It's a nice thing when stories have happy endings.

So we were happy to learn that the Niagara Alternative Learning Alliance has taken steps to become a legal, viable school by working with the Ministry of Education, instead of against it.

As a Lake Report investigation documented in several stories over the past two months, the school was shuttered for operating outside the province's standards for educational institutions.

Now, after what appears to be a change of heart, operator Monica McCourt said she accepts that the ministry is there to protect children and isn't just slapping schools with bureaucratic

make-work regulations.

We sincerely hope the school's reopening plan, outlined in a news story last week, comes to fruition, that the quality of education will be top of mind and that pandemic safety will be respected at the school.

Arguably, this is the best outcome one could ask for. We're aware of public perception from a small but vocal group of people who didn't understand why it was important to report about the school's illegal activities.

It's simple: today's children are the next generation, the ones who will inherit the responsibility of caring for this planet and the people on it.

So anything less than the highest standard of education we can offer is a risk

to those children – and that future.

And while we were recipients of vitriol from the school's defenders (largely courtesy one of its former directors, Lori Davidson), we are happy to hear of McCourt's changed perspective.

Last week she said she understands the poor original choices by the school's operators brought on the reaction from the ministry, as well as a negative public perception.

And while our reporting certainly did open a can of worms — sparking independent investigations by three levels of government and swiftly landing the school in court — we were doing our duty to our community.

That's how genuine, enterprise journalism works. There's nothing wrong with positive community-

boosting – we happily do that regularly. But we feel it is important to bring our readers more than just fluffy feel-good stories that comfort the community.

The saga of the former "learning pod" should be a lesson to all who feel they can skirt the rules and flout the law, no matter how well-meaning their cause is.

We trust that McCourt's change of heart is sincere and encourage our community to give the school the chance to prove it can be a valuable addition to Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Everyone makes mistakes. Owning up to them and learning from them is a good first step.

It would bring us nothing but joy to see these children flourish and grow in our town — the right way.

editor@niagaranow.com



We need to do more to stop Russia

Dear editor:

A Toronto Star editorial on March 25 argues that the west must do more than just provide humanitarian aid to Ukraine, an argument I support.

If the west prefers not to act beyond this support, it must at least provide Ukraine with military weapons to stop the destruction and murder or injury of defenseless children and innocent women.

As well, millions of people are being forced to flee their country without knowing where they will go.

Economic sanctions can

work in the long term, but not in the short term. The crisis is now. Concrete action beyond rhetoric must happen today. Tomorrow will be too late.

I can understand why the west, especially the reluctant western Europe, does not want a war in its backyard.

The west's response is shameful in that it was responsible for pushing NATO eastward, moving closer to the Russian border to better protect itself. It seems ready to sacrifice Ukraine for this purpose.

Given its obvious difficulties in Ukraine, it is becoming

increasingly clear that Russia would lose a conventional war against NATO.

It is possible that Vladimir Putin would resort to nuclear missiles, which would initially target Poland and Germany, two countries that do not possess nuclear weapons.

Western Europe must therefore accept the fact it must get rid of Russian oil and gas, which supports a militaristic state. The consequences would be difficult but not as deadly as those suffered by Ukrainians.

The Russian war machine

and its financing must be strangled. Once Berlin has been immolated by a nuclear bomb, the door will no longer close.

The fate of the planet is in Russia's clutches. It is time for China and North Korea and the other "allies" to realize these facts.

The world must realize that Russia is ruled by an egomaniac who borders on psychopathy and who had the constitution amended to occupy the presidency of Russia for life.

Gilbert Comeault
 NOTL

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Longing for good old days **won't solve** housing problem

Dear editor:

John Foreman, president of NOTL B&B Association is correct when he points out that there are many seasonal homes in NOTL especially in the Old Town, ("Rental tax needs strong oversight, B&B president says," The Lake Report, March 17).



Many people have a second home or a future retirement home here and many choose to reduce their costs with short-term rentals. This is a practice that has been the norm for as long as I can remember here and anywhere you could call cottage country or ski country, which could be anywhere outside a major North American city.

The ability to have a second home is actually considered part of the North American dream. I am not aware of any municipality where that right has been removed.

One of the characteristics of a second home is that it tends to sit empty out of

season. There are people/companies (including a lot of locals) that have bought multiple lowrise properties for investment.

In the U.S., and even in Toronto, companies are commodifying housing stock and driving up prices. And now because of platforms like Airbnb, they are able to rent them short-term at higher profit margins. Naturally, they will choose whatever generates more income and short-term rentals tend to generate a better return than long-term rentals when the demand is there.

This community caters to tourism. People's jobs depend on tourism. Tourism draws people to short-term rentals.

If too many vacation rentals have negative con-

sequences on a community, does the community have the "right" to limit the number?

If so, to be fair, it makes sense to start with the businesses that own multiple properties, the businesses that are driving the prices up and compounding the rental availability problem.

If any business negatively impacts a community, that municipality has the right to pass laws to prohibit it.

But how do you prove that a home is a third or fourth etc. property? Alternatively, banning all vacation rentals just because you can is regressive and unfair.

NOTL thrives on tourism. Since the opening of the Shaw Festival, the town's amusing nickname has been Niagara-on-the-Take. Now, with all the wineries, the tourist draw, especially from a large city like Toronto, is significant. Naturally that's going to transform a community.

The new opportunity to work from home for most

of the week will encourage families to move out of major centres and into places like NOTL. Nothing is stopping NOTL from going the way of Oakville and becoming an affluent satellite community to Toronto.

There is another way to look at the problem. We live in a capitalist country. We allow people to get rich and people to get poor even though we may not like it.

We have affluent enclaves and areas where rent is much more reasonable. This is not just a NOTL problem. It's a systemic problem.

People everywhere find a way to get by living in a nearby community that is less expensive than the one they'd prefer.

Investors build affordable housing when the need is there and where the bylaws allow. It's solvable. But longing for the good old days is not going to solve it. The world is always changing.

Jackie Bonic
NOTL

Just enforce existing laws against **noisy motorcycles**

Dear editor:

I am writing in response to the letter from Paulette Kennedy regarding noise from "open pipe" motorcycles, (The Lake Report, March 24).

Her solution to the problem with her neighbourhood being a chosen route of the noise makers, is to petition for a law to move them to a "concession road."

I moved here several years before Paulette did and although I love Old Town, I chose not to live there because I prefer the peace of the countryside, even though it meant I would have to drive to the amenities, shops and restaurants of Old Town.

I also love the Niagara Parkway, with the magical views of the historic and world-celebrated Niagara River.

But I passed living on the wonderful views and trails because I love the quiet of the undeveloped rural areas.

I chose to have to get in the car and drive to the parkway for our daily dog walks, although it would

have been nice to just walk out the door to Old Town sidewalks, or the paved parkway trails.

It is not safe or relaxing to walk on our concession road with the lack of sidewalks and with 70 to 80 km/h speeds.

Many Old Town residents enjoy these higher-speed concession roads to quickly get to their destinations. On our concession road we do not have town water, sewage, street lighting or, of course, sidewalks.

There is nothing to view here and no shops for tourists, including motorcyclists, to seek out. We are alone with no attractions and because there is almost no one to disturb, the motorcyclists ignore us for the most part.

FYI, where I moved from before arriving on this beautiful and warm peninsula of fruit and tourism, I lived for 40 years on my former region's equivalent of the parkway, north of the GTA.

My very lovely winding country road was and still is the main destination for

all "open pipe" motorcyclists in southern Ontario. Instead of just having to stop talking when the motorcyclists came through, we just didn't even talk outside on afternoons in spring, summer or fall.

I have sympathy for the plight of the people who are on the motorcyclists' chosen routes. Where I used to live the weekend motorcycle count was in the thousands, so weekends were out of the question for having visitors to enjoy our rural home and gardens.

We did get some relief from motorcyclists' noise on cold rainy days, for what that's worth.

I know Paulette is speaking out of desperation because excessively noisy non-muffled motorcycles are stealing her right to quiet enjoyment of her home.

I also know that the solution is not to in turn steal those same rights of quiet enjoyment from people who live on concession roads. After 40 years of noise I chose my new location in

NOTL very consciously.

These noise-enhanced motorcycles are not legal to drive on highways in Ontario and it is a great mystery to me why there is no effective enforcement anywhere.

The existing Highway Traffic Act provisions provide this comfort to residents faced with unreasonable noise. Rather than spending money passing and enforcing laws to redirect noise lawbreakers to someone else's neighbourhood, I hope we might agree to just enforce the laws on hand.

Municipalities may also pass noise bylaws to curb motorcycle noise.

If you pass a bylaw and post signs to prohibit noisy motorcycles in Old Town, it still is of no effect unless it is enforced by police.

So just enforce the laws already on the books. By the way, municipalities get a share of Provincial Offences Act fines to offset trial and enforcement costs.

Keith McNenly
NOTL

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Future Vision: Part 6

A retirement village on old hospital site

We asked readers for their suggestions regarding what should happen to the old Niagara-on-the-Lake hospital site. With its prime location and history in town, the municipality is considering formal proposals for its possible redevelopment. Here is another idea from a reader.

Marlene Sibbald
Special to The Lake Report

I have been reading with great interest the articles regarding the proposed use of the old Niagara-on-the-Lake Hospital land.

In my opinion the answer to what would best benefit the community is staring us in the face: a new Niagara-on-the-Lake urgent care facility.

With the demographics of Niagara-on-the-Lake being primarily an aging population, we need a modern 24/7 urgent care facility to address the needs of the community, especially the emergency needs.

This is essential, rather than having to go to St. Catharines or Niagara Falls emergency rooms where it is not unusual to wait for seven-plus hours to be seen by a health care professional.

I am speaking from personal, frustrating experiences and I'm also aware of terrible experiences of many others I know.

When a person has a medical issue severe enough to have to go to the emergency department their problem is only compounded by having to wait for hours just to be seen, let alone treated.

An urgent care facility isn't meant to be a full-scale hospital, rather an interim well-staffed, well-equipped facility to give Niagara-on-the-Lake residents the assistance they need when they urgently need help.

People would be assessed and, if deemed appropriate, could either be admitted there or transferred to a full-scale hospital for surgeries or other treatment.

Taking this idea one step further, perhaps a long-term care wing could be integrated into this facility.



The former NOTL hospital could be a retirement village, one writer says. FILE PHOTO

Also a lab, diagnostic facility, wellness centre – just to mention a few services that would be beneficial to NOTL residents.

I read with great interest the article that said in the 1950s the community rallied to build the hospital that opened in 1954. I believe the residents raised \$196,000 to help build this hospital.

I'm sure that if today's residents were given the opportunity to donate to such a worthy cause that they, too, would rally to donate.

Fundraisers could also be held, which I'm sure could generate millions of dollars.

There are also many people who would be more than interested in spear-heading fundraising projects to contribute to a cause that would benefit all residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Who knows, perhaps developers that have been in the news on several occasions lately would like to contribute a sizeable financial donation.

Granted they might not receive the profits that they would with some of the commercial projects that have been proposed but they might welcome their legacy realized with a ward, wing etc. in their name.

Doctors, nurses and other health care professionals, I'm sure would like to work in a smaller, prestigious urgent care facility. Also there are many retired

health care professionals in our community who could be interested in giving of their time on a part-time

volunteer basis.

There has been a lot of media coverage recently about maintaining the historic nature of the existing hospital building. A new, small urgent care facility could be designed to mimic the design of the existing hospital to fit into the integral part of Old Town.

Structures built in the 1950s in my opinion contain many health risks such as mould and other health-related issues. A new urgent care designed after the 1950s structure would maintain the integrity of the downtown location.

I am not an architect but I imagine many such professionals would relish the opportunity to design a beautiful structure similar to the existing building.

I think government intervention to assist in such a project would be a wonderful political platform, especially in these times of stress and uncertainty primarily caused by the pandemic.

It's bad enough having to think about what happens if you contract COVID let alone any other emergencies that could occur.

I know for a fact the little town of Huntsville with a population of about 15,000 has a wonderful little hospital with amazing staff. There is a very active guild that supports/recruits volunteers at the hospital as well as running fundraisers.

The hospital is an integral part of the community and supported by all. Why then couldn't Niagara-on-the-Lake have such a facility?

I understand that building costs, equipment costs, staffing costs and so on are certainly much more expensive than in the 1950s but everything is relative. I think the residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake should be given the opportunity of voicing their opinion/support for such an urgent care facility in this wonderful, prestigious town.

The idea of using this prime piece of real estate for a multi-storey parking lot is, in my opinion, a travesty.

Perhaps the Parliament Oak school property would be a much more viable location for such a parking structure. I'm sure that there are many other pieces of property in town that could be used for a needed parking project.

One article mentions that the existing hospital's finances were solid in 1997 and that there was a surplus of \$600,000.

A few years ago, the town negotiated a deal with Niagara Health to purchase the land and the old hospital. Since the town now owns the land why on earth wouldn't council build an urgent care facility that would benefit all our residents?

The bottom line is anything less than using this beautiful piece of land for a new, well-equipped urgent care facility to serve the residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake is unacceptable. I hope that many other people agree with me and somehow approval could be received for this important project.



Kit Andres at a march for migrant workers' rights. FILE

Join migrant workers' push for equal rights for all

Dear editor:

The current and former migrant farmworkers who led Niagara's first Unite Against Racism march to demand full and permanent immigration status for all, would like to thank the community for participating in last week's event in Virgil, ("Advocates march against racism, urge citizenship for migrant workers," The Lake Report, March 24).

It was a great success

and encouraged them to continue speaking up for their rights.

Migrants urge you, as their neighbour, to join them in the call for equal rights for all migrants, refugees and undocumented people by signing and sharing the petition at statusforall.ca.

United we are stronger.

Kit Andres
Migrant Workers Alliance for Change

\$250,000 is a lot to spend for a few seconds' exposure

Dear editor:

So, here we go not with common sense but rather preferred sense.

I am writing regarding the ongoing kerfuffle about the town garden and new gateway project as one drives into Niagara-on-the-Lake at Queen and Mississagua streets.

I made a trip down to the intersection and did a time study.

Vehicles came to a stop facing the existing garden that backs on to the golf course, and rested there about anywhere from three seconds to seven seconds. And then they made their respective turn.

When one thinks about it with clarity, a driver comes to a stop, looks to the left

and then the right, and perhaps views the garden for a couple of seconds, with hopefully the same brain being able to focus on driving and not sightseeing.

Then the case might be put forward that the present garden is adequate, and therefore the \$250,000 donated expenditure – kind, thoughtful and generous, too – could be put to better use within the town.

How about in the dock area or any one of numerous other entities around NOTL.

I was about to type "this is my two cents' worth" but they no longer exist, so this is my five bucks worth, what with inflation and such.

Keith Bullen
NOTL

We welcome your letters

The Lake Report welcomes your letters to the editor. Please, write early and often. Letters ideally should be under 400 words long. Occasionally, longer letters may be published. All letters may be edited for conciseness, accuracy, libel and defamation. Please include your full name, street address and a daytime telephone number so that authorship can be authenticated. Only names and general addresses (eg. Virgil, St. Davids, NOTL) will be published. Send your letters to editor@niagaranow.com or drop them by our office at 496 Mississagua St., NOTL.

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NOTL ambassadors turn loving 'their' town into an art form

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

The Niagara-on-the-Lake ambassador program has turned loving this town into an art and is looking for more self-proclaimed NOTL know-it-alls to join the ranks.

The ambassador program was launched in 2020 by the Shaw Guild and the town as a way to inform people about pandemic restrictions.

It has morphed into a way for people enthusiastic about NOTL to tell visitors about the town and how to get the most out of their time here.

"It's fun. It really is fun," Vlad Haltigin said at an ambassador information session last week.

Volunteers work two-hour shifts on weekends and holidays, walking up and down Queen Street to chat with anyone who is looking for some advice.

This year, the program is also launching an ambassador kiosk that will operate outside the courthouse.

Haltigin said one of the best aspects of the job is meeting different visitors from all over the world.



Lynne Hanna, Vlad Haltigin, Lord Mayor Betty Disero, Laurie Harley, Margaret Walker and Carrol Morris show off the new NOTL ambassadors outfits. EVAN SAUNDERS

But he said one of the main attractions of the program for him is spreading and gaining knowledge about the town.

"I love sharing stories about the things that interest me. This is a fabulous town," he said.

"I've been here for two-and-a-half years but there's still so much about this town I simply do not know. Learning things is great. That's what motivates me," he said.

"And, every moment, I'm discovering new things and meeting new people. That's

a personal motivator. And this is a stunning, stunning town. It's one of the top three places to visit in Canada."

Haltigin moved to Canada from Europe. As a European, he said there were two things he associated with Canada before moving.

"First of all, a Mountie on a horse in the Rockies," he said.

"Secondly, Niagara Falls. We are so close to Niagara Falls. It's a gem, and NOTL adds to Niagara Falls."

He said the response from visitors has been good but

the positive reaction from NOTL residents has been a welcome surprise.

"On several occasions we were approached by residents who said, 'Wow, this is great,' " he said.

"That's because we allow people to learn about more things that are in Niagara-on-the-Lake — in Queenston, in St. Davids, in Glendale, in Virgil and on Lakeshore Road."

"It's encompassing Niagara-on-the-Lake. They can discover this place and all we are doing is facilitating that."

While explaining historical details of fascination to visitors can be a perk of the job, past Shaw Guild president and ambassador leader Laurie Harley said the main questions visitors ask are fairly consistent.

"Where are the wash-rooms? Where can I park? Where can I park my bicycle?" she said, eliciting laughs from the enthusiastic attendees.

Among the upstart ambassadors at the information session was none other than Lord Mayor Betty Disero herself.

"I am going to become an ambassador. I feel like I already am an ambassador for the town, in some ways," she said.

Noting she generally has a fairly busy schedule, Disero affirmed she was "going to make the time" for the mandatory six-shift commitment all ambassadors are asked to make.

The mayor said she also saw it as an opportunity to get closer to the town's residents and visitors.

"It gives me an opportunity to meet people and talk with them and find out, you know, what they're think-

ing about Niagara-on-the-Lake."

Returning ambassador Michael Berlis said he's "very proud of this community. I've been involved in the community in many ways and I just love to show it off."

As a lover of NOTL, Berlis said he already does what the ambassadors are asking him to do on a daily basis.

"When I'm walking into town and I see people that are looking around for places or restaurants, I usually stop and ask them how they're doing," he said.

"So, it kind of feels like the right thing to do."

The ambassadors will be more important than ever as the world fights its way out of the pandemic, said Berlis, who is also chair of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Fund.

The ambassador program, which kicks off on the May long weekend, is looking for more volunteers, with Harley saying she hopes for 50.

The group is holding another information session on April 6 and anyone interested in attending can email info@notl-ambassadors.ca.



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Alitura open house offers a taste of **what's to come**

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Despite the rain Saturday morning, crowds of curious and hungry people headed to an open house for the new Alitura bakery.

It was one of the first outdoor events in Niagara-on-the-Lake this spring and owner Fabian Reis was outside helping to run the stone oven.

He was a bit worried about the rain, but by the afternoon things had cleared up and people were outside enjoying themselves, eating sliders and roasting homemade marshmallows.

Some earlybirds arrived at about 11 a.m., having a glass of wine with some freshly baked flammkuchen (a German-style pizza) with bacon, onions and sour cream.

It tasted sort of like an open-faced perogy.

"This is tremendous. I mean, Fabian, I met him back in the summer and I had no idea that he envisioned such an amazing kind of marriage of food and wine," said Jonathan Halliwell of St. Catharines.

"He's taken things to the next level, so we're just happy to be here and check it out. And the wine the food is wunderbar."

He said it was too bad about the weather, but "we're Canadians. It's spring. What can you do? All the more reason to come and drink wine at 10:30 in the morning."

Ray Syegco, a partner with Alitura and chef at



Top left: Holly Neuhof decorates a cookie with Ukrainian colours during the Alitura open house. Bottom left: Michelle Tran, Jonathan Halliwell, Tessa Oort and Ryan McAdams enjoy some flammkuchen. Right: Chef Ray Syegco cooks up porchetta and pastrami brisket. RICHARD HARLEY

Incoho restaurant in St. Catharines, was busy preparing sliders for lunch — a pastrami brisket and porchetta.

He said the goal is to "showcase what the future is going to be" as Alitura — formerly Harvest Barn — prepares to open its stone oven outside for the summer.

Inside the shop, kids were busy decorating cookies, many of them using the blue and yellow colours of the Ukrainian flag.

NOTL mother Andrea Poapst was with the first

kids to be decorating cookies.

Stephanie Reis, co-owner with her husband Fabian, was inside helping people get coffee and cinnamon buns and tickets.

She said the store had been busy since before 9 a.m., with people coming in to check out the bakery's offerings and warm up with a hot drink. Items like sourdough bread were "flying off the shelves," she said.

Ted Stones, general manager of Alitura, echoed her thoughts.

"It's going really well. Lots of people coming through the store, which is nice. We want to create a little bit of a buzz with Alitura, and kind of get the name out there and reintroduce and get people excited again," he said.

All of the sales from the outdoor portion of the event went to the YWCA Niagara, to help young women and children suffering from abuse and addiction, while 10 per cent of the store's sales and 100 per cent of Ukraine cookie sales went to the Red

Cross's Ukrainian Relief Fund.

Franziska Emslie, manager of donor stewardship for YWCA, was there with her husband and two kids, roasting marshmallows by the fire.

She said Incoho owners Syegco and Selah Schmallert have been big supporters of the YWCA through their restaurant and that the organization is grateful for the support.

"We are very excited for them and for this new partnership, for this new

store and for all the exciting things they're doing here. For us at the YWCA it's always so important to have the support of the local business community, because it takes all of us to help the folks that we serve," she said.

The money helps the YWCA help women in need, she said.

"We serve homeless women and kids and families. So, for us that helps us to keep the doors open and to shelter people who are struggling here in our community."

Garrison House to host Top Chef Canada winner for **special dinner**



"Top Chefs" Erica and Josh Karbelnick. SUPPLIED

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's Garrison House restaurant is gearing up to host two Top Chef Canada chefs for a night of local spring food.

Winner Erica Karbelnick and her husband Josh (a finalist) will join chef David Watt for a night that will see local ingredients cooked up by the award-winning chefs, both who are Niagara College culinary graduates.

Watt, owner and chef at the Garrison House, said the May 15 evening is meant to showcase the talent of the Karbelnicks and the culinary forces that come out of Niagara, including the local ingredients.

It's also an homage to the success of his friends — Josh worked for Watt years ago at his restaurant Zest.

The plan is to source as many spring ingredients as possible locally, Watt said.

"We're going to go to

Thwaites to get the asparagus. Andrew Ball and Levi (Brant) are going to forage, hopefully, more mushrooms, but a mushroom of some sort," he said.

"Whatever we can get — rhubarb, St. Davids peppers, stuff like that. So we're trying to get as much local product but you know, it's spring right? There's not much coming out of the ground."

The restaurant is also joining forces with five

local partners, Niagara College, which will host the reception, Ravine Vineyard Estate Winery, Big Head Wines, winemaker Thomas Bachelder and Arterra Wines Canada (which operates Jackson-Triggs and other wineries).

The dinner will take place Sunday, May 15, at 5 p.m. at Garrison House. Tickets are still available and anyone interested can reserve a spot by emailing leigh@thegarrisonhouse.ca.

Part-time Bartender Wanted

Local RCL, Branch 124 is accepting applications for part-time bartender for our Clubroom. We are looking for the following attributes:

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NOTL Realty's owners Thomas Elltoft and Christopher Bowron both have very fond memories of this program when they were growing up in town. They still use the lessons learned in this program today, and encourage all local families to take advantage of this fantastic experience.

**Niagara
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1994 Limited Real Estate Brokerage

NOTL 'spring' in pictures

By Richard Harley



Above: Len Bates walks through a snowy, windy Commons with his dogs Poppy and Butch on Saturday, after a late March snow and high winds blasted the town. Below: A Canadian goose has a snack on some seed left out at Navy Hall. A plump American robin sits in a branch of a tree at the Commons after searching the path for worms. RICHARD HARLEY


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Shelves are bare at Newark Neighbours food bank

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Easter is coming and the shelves at Newark Neighbours are almost bare, so the charity is calling on Niagara-on-the-Lake residents to demonstrate their generous spirit for families in need.

“We received a literal mountain of food at Christmas, so much so we had to rent a pod to store it all. It’s gone. It’s all gone,” Newark’s chair Cindy Grant said in an interview.

With Easter approaching, Grant said she noticed they did not have enough



Stuffing is one of the items being requested. SUPPLIED

supplies to create holiday hampers for all the families who rely on Newark.

Several weeks ago the food bank started calling out for more donations.

That worked — to an extent.

“Bags and boxes and cartons are coming in every day. But — and I don’t mean to sound ungrateful, because I’m not ungrateful — but we need a lot more,” Grant said.

It’s not entirely unusual for the shelves to start getting thin, but the last year has been particularly good for the charity, she said.

What has hit Newark Neighbours hard in the last few months is a sharp rise in the number of families who need their help.

Where Newark normally helps provide for about 35 families, now about 70 need the help of the food bank — and the people of NOTL.

Grant said the rising cost of living has exacerbated problems for many families.

Her message is simple: “If you can help, please, please do so.”

Monetary donations are welcome, as Newark will go out and purchase items it needs. The agency plans to buy a ham or turkey for every family come Easter.

Among the desired donations are canned green beans, peas, pineapple and gravy, stuffing mix, snack crackers, cookies and cranberry sauce.

A specific list of needed food supplies can be found on its website, newarkneighbours.ca.

Spooky! Fort George ghost tours return Sunday

Staff
The Lake Report

Besides being one of the prettiest towns in Canada, Niagara-on-the-Lake is often referred to as the most haunted.

The most prevalent tales of paranormal activity surround the Fort George national historic site.

There have been hundreds of reports of sightings at the fort, ranging from the benevolent spirit of a little girl named Sarahann to a more ominous presence simply known as “The Watcher.”

For the 29th year, visitors can enjoy a candlelit tour of the most haunted site in the most haunted

town in Canada, starting this Sunday, April 3, when the Fort George Ghost Tours resume.

Tours will run every Sunday in April, May and June, and each Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday throughout July and August. All tours are at 8:30 p.m. but in September they will be on

Sundays at 7:30 p.m.

Tickets are \$20 per adult and available now at the fort’s online gift shop a friendsoffortgeorge.square.site/halloween-ghost-tour-tickets

Proceeds from the tours help to support student summer employment at Fort George and Brock’s Monument.

New lifelong learning sessions focus on bereavement

Cindy Grant
Special to The Lake Report

As many of you know, I am part of a small group that is offering a series of “Life Long Learning” programs here in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

We’ve named our program “Learn and Live” and it is a series of three successful lectures presented last fall titled “Coming

of Age: The Wellness of Learning.”

We have now scheduled two more series for this spring.

The first will be held on two consecutive Mondays — April 4 and 11 at 6 p.m. at the NOTL Public Library.

The topic is “Partnering with Losses” presented by Sandra Hardy and Bonnie Bagnulo.

This session will not be

just about grief and bereavement as they will be discussing any type of loss. As you know, we all have many types of losses in our lives, particularly in the post-COVID era.

The second series will be held on April 25, May 4 and 11 — again all Mondays — and also at the library.

That topic is “Creativity and Applied Imagination” presented by Barb Babij.

There are only 20 spaces available for the April 4 and 11 sessions and they are filling up.

So if you are interested, please register as soon as possible. Here is a link to the library’s website and event calendar: notlpubliclibrary.libnet.info/event/6324614.

Cindy Grant is chair of NOTL’s community wellness committee.



What kind of coat is best put on wet?

Last issue: You can find me in the middle of Toronto. What am I?

Answer: The letter “o”

Answered first by: Margie Enns

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Sonja Schindeler, Mary Drost, Terry Nord, Becky Creager, Bob Campbell, Wade Durling, Pam Dowling, Rob Hutchison, Sylvia Wiens, Bob Stevens, Dennis Blake, Wesley Turner, Doug Bruce, Sheila Meloche, Garry Lemon, Howard Jones, KC King

Email answers to editor@niagaranow.com, with your name, for a chance to win a \$20 Irish Harp Pub gift card every week. (Subject line: Riddle me this)

Love games? Join us for music trivia “Name That Tune with Lee” every Tuesday at 8 p.m. at the Irish Harp Pub. Details at www.theirishharppub.com

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At the theatre: 'Cyrano' is a mix of **humour and heartache**

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

The Shaw Festival opened for the season with the official premiere of "Cyrano de Bergerac" on Saturday, one of the first full-house performances since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the lights turned down and artistic director Tim Carroll gave a short introduction, there was a feel in the air that everyone — the audience, the actors, Carroll and even the ushers — was excited to see real people again.

A newbie to theatre reviews and to "Cyrano," but not new entirely to the theatre, I felt a bit like Christian (Jeff Irving). In the story, Christian doesn't know the right words to capture the feelings he has toward his love Roxane (Deborah Hay).

In a way, I'm an imposter like him, coasting on what was given to me by "Cyrano" on a moonlit night.

So this isn't a comparison to other performances of "Cyrano," but a honest review of the Shaw's

depiction after seeing it for the first time.

The play begins with a display of Cyrano's (Tom Rooney) confidence as he starts a sword fight with a performer and goes to the defence of a singer to fight 100 men. A poet and fierce fighter, Cyrano is famed for his way with words and isn't humble about his talents.

Rooney, who really steals the show, exudes the confidence of the bitter poet brilliantly, while at the same time portraying his insecurities about the one thing his character obsesses over — he hates his large, protruding nose.

It is his big nose that sets the scene of the whole play. Cyrano, tormented by his looks but a master of words, embraces his nose and becomes the butt of nearly endless self-deprecating puns throughout the nearly three-hour performance.

With such a big nose, Cyrano is certain he will never attract the attention he seeks from his beloved cousin Roxane.

With a slapstick charm, the actors take this sad love story and bring to it a



Tom Rooney as Cyrano and Jeff Irving as Christian in "Cyrano de Bergerac." The show is on until May 8 at the Royal George Theatre. DAVID COOPER PHOTO

humour that cuts through the sombre, making for a digestible performance — one that's sure to have you chuckling at the right moments and stir up emotions in others.

As the story goes, Cyrano's heartthrob Roxane is in love with another man, Christian. But when she asks Cyrano, unbeknown of his love for her, if he will help protect Christian, a smitten but tormented Cyrano agrees.

Christian is handsome but dimwitted and

far less of a wordsmith, so Cyrano begins writing Roxane flowery letters in his name — which are passioned from his true love for her.

It's a complex situation, ripe for humour and heartache, as Roxane begins to fall in love with Christian's words, not knowing she's actually falling for Cyrano.

Act one sets the scene, as Comte de Guiche (Patrick Galligan), another man who is in love with the beautiful Roxane, sends Christian off to war out of vengeance

for him marrying Roxane. Cyrano follows Christian to battle, having promised on his behalf that he would write to her often.

In act two, the love story unfolds as Christian is tragically killed on the field of battle and Cyrano decides to keep his secret from Roxane, who confesses she would love Christian "even if he was ugly."

From there, the tragedy stews, as we meet Cyrano and Roxane 20 years later, as the two share a weekly meeting in a church to pay

respects to the fallen Christian, all that time later.

When Cyrano is struck by a falling log and doomed to die, it's only then, as he spirals into poetic professions, that Roxane recognizes his words — the voice she'd heard coming from the yard on those moonlit nights.

She then professes her love for Cyrano as he dies and the curtain falls.

Throughout the performance, the Shaw's set designs flow seamlessly, like a magic show, where actors direct your eyes to one side of the stage and by the time you turn back, the sets have changed — all centred around one wooden pillar. It's pretty incredible to see.

And that feeling in the air returned once again, as the crowd gave the opening night performance a standing ovation. More than any other play I've seen, the smiles in the faces of the cast were beaming — almost tearful — to see a theatre full of real people applauding.

All around, this show, on until May 8 at the Royal George Theatre, is not one to miss.

Yellow Door Theatre Project film 'Red Letter Day' premieres Monday

Maddy Gordon
Special to The Lake Report

NOTL performing arts group Yellow Door Theatre Project is set to release a film production of "Red Letter Day," a musical inspired by Oscar-winner "La La Land."

The short-feature production, premiering on Monday, April 4, was filmed in various locations across Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Falls and St. Catharines over the course of two weeks.

"Red Letter Day" is premiering at the Film House at the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre in St. Catharines, and will only be available at live screenings. All tickets cost \$17.

The highly anticipated project features a cast of 14 teens, all of whom were auditioned, interviewed and specially chosen for their roles. Several Yellow Door alum are among the stars of the show.



Filming "Red Letter Day." SUPPLIED

About 25 candidates sent in audition tapes and had virtual interviews with the directors, Lezlie Wade and Scott Christian.

The status of Wade and Christian in the performing arts world helped attract youth participants, said Andorlie Hillstrom, producer of "Red Letter Day" and the founder of Yellow Door.

"There was a significant amount of interest in this project. Teen performers were looking for something

that was performance-oriented," she said.

"None of the high school students were attending school at that time. That need for contact and for something that approached normality was very keen," she said.

The story is centered around a group of girls and their high school graduation, an experience that many teens lost due to the pandemic, including a number of performers featured in the film.

The project allowed for those who missed out on that time to reflect and relive that experience in a unique, collaborative way, Hillstrom said.

"We were actively seeking a project that would bring them back, inspire them, get them involved again, in an immersed theatre type of experience," she said.

"They came together very quickly as a group, just by the nature of being able to actually share something they all loved again and doing it together."

Throughout the pandemic, many teens struggled with a lack of motivation to be involved in any sort of activities, which made it difficult for groups like Yellow Door Theatre Project to regain their sense of community, Hillstrom said.

"Red Letter Day" was the perfect chance to bring back those who had lost interest in those opportunities, she said.

Hillstrom noted that as an organization, promoting inclusivity and self-empowerment is important to Yellow Door, which focuses on acknowledging the positive ways the performing arts affect youth and development, and building a sense of community and belonging. "It's all about telling stories. Young people who are involved with this have a way to express things that they have been dealing with in a safe environment," she said.

Overall, she said, youth who are involved in the arts are more intuitive, are better listeners, and are able to develop strong communication skills that they otherwise would not have gained.

Those are just a few of the many reasons why she feels the performing arts are beneficial and important to preserve for younger generations.

"When you're working in

an environment with other human beings in a live setting, all the better layers fall into place, and I see what it does to the young people that I work with," said Hillstrom.

"This should not be something that is viewed as being extraneous. This is something that is absolutely critical to any child's education."

Providing a sense of community as well as an outlet for youth who may be struggling is one of the most special parts of the arts, she said, which is why Yellow Door continued its online and in-person activities, classes and performances during the pandemic.

Hillstrom credited contributions from the Lauren and Vaughn Goettler Foundation, as production sponsors, for helping to make "Red Letter Day" a reality.

Tickets are available on the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre's website.

**Please remember to support the businesses in our paper.
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Notice of Open House and Public Meeting

PROPOSED NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN

Niagara Region has prepared a new proposed Niagara Official Plan, and will hold an open house and public meeting, pursuant to subsection 17.5 and 17.6 of the Planning Act R.S.O. 1990, as amended.

OPEN HOUSE

Thursday, April 7, 2022 at 5:30 p.m.

It will be held virtually. The purpose of the open house is to present the new proposed Niagara Official Plan and give an opportunity to ask questions.

PUBLIC MEETING

Thursday, April 28, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.

It will be held virtually as part of a Special Regional Council Meeting. The purpose of the public meeting is to present the new proposed Niagara Official Plan and give an opportunity for the public to provide input.

PURPOSE OF THE NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN

The proposed Niagara Official Plan will shape the physical, economic and social development of the region over the next 30 years. It sets out objectives and policies that will, among other matters:

- Identify how and where growth will happen
- Help protect Niagara's natural environment and address our changing climate
- Ensure Niagara has an adequate and diverse supply of housing
- Plan for our future infrastructure needs and ensure they're properly funded
- Create the right conditions to attract and retain jobs in Niagara

As the proposed Niagara Official Plan will apply to the entire Niagara Region planning area, a location map has not been provided. Consultation has taken place on background work and draft policy. A final proposed Niagara Official Plan will be available for review and comment at niagararegion.ca/official-plan from the date of this notice.

HOW TO REGISTER TO ATTEND AND PROVIDE INPUT

Register to attend the April 7 open house at niagararegion.ca/official-plan.

To provide input orally at the April 28 public meeting, please pre-register with the Regional Clerk at clerk@niagararegion.ca before 9 a.m. on Friday, April 22, 2022. For more information, visit niagararegion.ca/government/council/speakingatcouncil.

Due to efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19 and protect all individuals, Council Chamber at Regional Headquarters will not be open to the public to attend meetings until further notice. To view a live-stream meeting proceeding, without the ability to provide oral submissions, please visit niagararegion.ca/government/council.

To provide written input, please either mail your comments to the Office of the Regional Clerk, Niagara Region, 1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way, Ontario, L2V 4T7 or email clerk@niagararegion.ca by 9 a.m. on Friday April 22, 2022.

If you are not able to attend, or would like more information, including information on appeal rights, you can provide input or ask questions by emailing makingourmark@niagararegion.ca. If you wish to be notified of the decision of the Council of the Regional Municipality of Niagara on the proposed official plan, you must make a written request to the Clerk c/o Regional Clerk, Niagara Region, 1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way, P.O. Box 1042, Thorold, Ontario, L2V 4T7, or email clerk@niagararegion.ca. Such requests must include the name and address to which such notice should be sent.

If you require any accommodations for a disability in order to participate in meetings or events, please let us know in advance so that arrangements can be made in a timely manner. Special accessibility accommodations and materials in alternate formats can be arranged by contacting Niagara Region's **Accessibility Advisory Coordinator** at 905-685-4225 ext. 3252 or accessibility@niagararegion.ca.

Any personal information is collected under the authority of the Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. P. 13 and may be used in an appendix of a staff report, published in the meeting agenda, delegation list and/or the minutes of the public meeting and made part of the public record. Niagara Region collects this information for the purposes of making informed decisions on the relevant issues and to notify interested parties of Council's decisions. It may also be used to serve notice of an Ontario Land Tribunal hearing. Information collected, used and disclosed is in accordance the **Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)**. Questions about this collection and disclosure should be directed to the Access & Privacy Office at 905-980-6000 ext 3779 or FOI@niagararegion.ca.

Notice first issued in the newspaper on March 31, 2022

One man's push brings community garden to Newark Park

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report



Julian Trachsel at Newark Park on Niven Road. The park will soon be home to NOTL's newest community garden after Trachsel pushed to make it happen. EVAN SAUNDERS

Have you ever wanted to grow your own sweet peppers but just don't have the space?

Your frustrations will soon be over as a community garden is planned for Newark Park on Niven Road, if you are one of the lucky ones who already reserved one of the 32 spots.

If not, the community garden hopes to expand eventually.

"I'm feeling very good and I couldn't be happier," Julian Trachsel, the driving force behind the project, said in an interview Tuesday.

Niagara-on-the-Lake town council approved the installation of the garden during a council meeting on March 28.

Trachsel initially approached council with the idea for a community garden last summer, saying it would be a boon to Niagara-on-the-Lake's who do not have space to garden on their properties.

He said he has spent many hours ironing out the details and working with town staff to get the project rolling.

"It's been solely me but I've certainly had help from the folks at the town. (Parks manager) J.B. Hopkins especially has been very helpful and (chief administrator) Marnie Cluckie has been very supportive," Trachsel said.

The garden will initially have 32 plots, each 10-by-10 feet, for individuals to use. Trachsel says every single plot has already been spoken for.

He said eight of the plots are being dedicated to Newark Neighbours families as a free source of freshly grown produce.

The costs for those families will be covered by the community garden group.

That group, however, consists solely of Trachsel.

Two of the remaining plots are dedicated to growing sunflowers for Ukraine and two more will be raised plots dedicated to people with accessibility concerns. All of these plots are being donated by Trachsel.

A former board member of Newark Neighbours, he said he was happy to cover the costs and noted Newark Neighbours already donated to the project to get it under way.

Trachsel was able to raise \$20,200 for the garden. Newark Neighbours, NOTL Realty and the NOTL Horticultural Society donated, with Trachsel raising the rest

through word of mouth and social media posts.

"It's important to note that a lot of those pledges came from people who don't actually want to even garden there but they feel really strongly that this was something that the town should have," Trachsel told town council on March 28.

Administration of the garden is going to fall squarely on Trachsel's shoulders. The town will be helping extensively with start-up work, but initially the town had not offered any financial support.

Trachsel told councillors he was bearing 100 per cent of the costs associated with the project and asked the town to offer to cover a certain per cent of those costs.

This prompted Coun. Norm Arseneault to present a motion for the town to pay \$5,500 of the start-up costs out of the capital reserve.

The motion was unanimously approved. The money will go directly toward setting up a water line and faucet in the park, much to Trachsel's surprise.

"I think council kicking in that money was spectacular. It was totally unexpected — I didn't know it was coming,"

he said.

"That leaves me in a position with either more money for next year or I'll be able to get a storage shed for this year, which I had not planned."

Plots will cost \$60 per growing season to use, Trachsel said, although prices could change as he works out more details.

The town is aiming for the gardens to be installed by June 1 in order to align with the growing season.

Parks and recreation manager Kevin Turcotte warned councillors that a potential rainy spring could delay the completion date, as muddy conditions in the park would prevent some work getting accomplished.

The park is being used as a nursery for young trees right now. The town will be moving some to other areas of town in order to accommodate the gardens.

Trachsel has created a robust list of rules, regulations and definitions in order to help administer the park.

One of the concerns Trachsel has is wildlife. Since Newark Park is right next to a heavily forested part of town, deer are a concern, he said.

But the cost of a metal fence to keep deer out was too steep for what Trachsel raised. He said it will be reconsidered if it proves to be needed, noting "there are no other community gardens in the Niagara region that have a problem with deer."

Originally, Trachsel was working toward installing 70 plots in the park. He said the town convinced him to start smaller, something he has come to see as a better approach.

"In hindsight, it's probably good to start off smaller and get the routines together, get the processes together," he told The Lake Report.

Part of that, he said, is finding people willing to volunteer their time to maintain the garden.

"Keep the garden tidy, keep the garbage away — things like that. I don't want this to just be me," he said.

Anyone interested in assisting Trachsel with this community endeavour can contact him through newarkparkcommunitygarden@gmail.com. As the plots are already accounted for, interested individuals can email Trachsel to get on a waiting list.

Biking 4,400-km 'Tour Divide' in memory of his brother Noah

Continued from Front Page

Schriefer says.

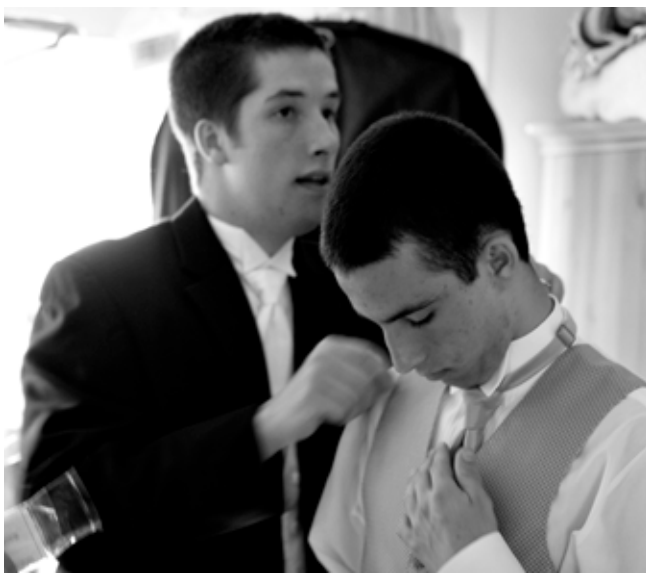
"We were thick as thieves growing up ... We grew up here in Virgil and we spent all our time running through Four Mile Creek. He was well-known in the community. This was a big shock."

Noah "Bubba" Schriefer, who would have been 30 this April 5, died of an accidental overdose. He was the youngest of five kids in the Schriefer family, who own the Pie Plate in Virgil.

Kaleb Schriefer, 36, says Noah struggled with addiction for many years.

"He was so much more than that. That's not who he was," Schriefer says although there had been relapses, Noah was getting better.

He was known for his adventurous spirit and Schriefer says he was motivated to traverse the world's longest single-track mountain bike



Kaleb Schriefer with his brother Noah. SUPPLIED

route in his memory.

The Tour Divide is an annual mountain biking trek spanning the length of the Rocky Mountains, from Canada to the Mexican border. The Grand Depart kicks off on June 10 in Banff, Alta.

"He was the adventurer. I consider myself adventur-

ous for sure. But this is huge and epic and he was about the huge epic journeys. He was out snowboarding in B.C., surfing Costa Rica and Australia," he says.

"He was home in the mountains. He really kind of came to his own out in B.C."

He will leave his brother's ashes at the top of the

mountains during the ride, where he says he will feel Noah's presence the most.

As for the ride itself, Schriefer says he stumbled on the route after watching a documentary.

The idea of completing the route "some day" was a perfect bucket-list addition. It wasn't until after he lost his brother that he resolved to make it happen.

"When he passed it was just like, 'OK, this is what you're going to do.' This is what I have to do for him and for me," he says.

He will be "bikepacking" the route, which means carrying everything he needs for the estimated five-week trip with him on his bike. There are small towns along the way to top up his supplies but he will have all his clothes, sleeping gear and cooking supplies with him for the entire route. He is also doing the trip alone.

"I'm going solo. The only one coming with me is Noah."

"(The ride) is about breaking yourself down and you go into these really dark places as a person and then you come out the other side, better and more aware of yourself," he says.

With loss, he says an overwhelming theme resurfaces: "You cannot avoid grief."

"You can try and avoid it but eventually it catches up to you. If you continue to avoid it, it just destroys you. So, it's something that you have to go through. You have to feel all the feelings," he says. And this ride is his way through it.

Schriefer has a support system at home, including his wife and three kids, who are hoping to travel from St. Catharines to meet him at the finish line.

A GoFundMe is set up to help with the expense of Schriefer's odyssey. All net funds raised above expenses

will go to the Chill Foundation, an organization that empowers youth through board sports.

"They take at-risk or endangered youth and support them through life," Schriefer says.

He will also be doing a fundraiser on Tuesday, April 5, at the Fit Collective gym in St. Catharines. He's calling it the "Tour de Burpees."

He says the plan is to raise \$1 per burpee and the event will be livestreamed.

"They do this thing called birthday burpees, where you do the number of burpees as you are years young."

He says he decided to turn that idea into a fundraiser for the ride on Noah's birthday, April 5.

Donations for his ride can be made to his GoFundMe page at <https://gofund.me/7cf76890> or by searching for "Bubba's Memorial Ride on the Divide."



WE NEED GARDENS!

The NOTL Horticultural Society is still looking for gardens for our popular OPEN GARDEN TOUR on July 9. If you have a "gardener's garden" of any size or description, from vegetable gardens to a bright display of annuals and anything in between, please consider submitting your garden for inclusion in the tour. Visit our website www.notlhortsociety.com for more details and to complete your submission. We're looking forward to hearing from you!

Timberrrr: If a tree falls on the golf course ...

Kevin MacLean
The Lake Report

One of the most demanding holes at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club just got a lot less demanding.

The sixth hole is guarded by a series of bunkers and until Tuesday a huge 80-year-old elm tree also stood sentry over the sloping, slippery green.

A single, mammoth branch reached out some 50 feet from the main trunk, dangling over the otherwise straightaway approach to the hole.

Like a giant arm with multiple fingers stretching skyward, that lone branch was renowned for reaching out and grabbing errant shots, or knocking down balls that seemed destined for glory on the green.

No longer.

Old age, whipped by Lake Ontario's winds and decades of dedicated destruction by carpenter ants made the elm a danger to anyone on the ground.



One of the smaller branches of the elm falls to the ground, severed by Dustin Jenckes' chainsaw. **See a photo gallery and videos at niagaranow.com.** KEVIN MACLEAN

It was clear last fall that it would have to come down.

Assessing it Tuesday morning, Regional Tree Service co-owner Dustin Jenckes mused that "It's a wonder it's still standing" given it was hollowed out by ants and that wicked winds off the lake a few metres away have battered it all winter.

"It's really dangerous," said golf course superintendent Mike Magwood. "When it gets this bad, unfortunately, it just has to be taken down."

The task of artfully removing the limbs, one

at a time, fell to Jenckes, who scaled the decaying deciduous, looped a safety line over one of the main central branches and secured himself to the trunk.

With a chainsaw hanging from another line, he assessed which branches could safely come down first.

After removing a couple on the lakeward side he turned his attention to the massive guardian of the green.

Deftly slicing through the decaying timber, he and his crew watched as the giant dried-out arm gave out a mighty snap, as it cracked

and fell to the turf with a thunderous, dull thud.

And with that slice of the chainsaw, decades of golfers' frustrations quietly came to an end.

The crew's work continued throughout the afternoon as they carefully removed the remaining branches and trunk.

By day's end all that remained was a three-foot-high stump, a large pile of tree trunks and limbs neatly piled awaiting removal and memories of the tall tales of the magnificent gatekeeper that once stood there.

Golf course proprietor John Wiens said he hopes to plant two new trees near that spot on the right side of the fairway after consulting the land's owner, Parks Canada. But it likely will be a few years or more before they could hope to loom as large as the lost elm.

If a tree falls on a golf course and no golfer is there to hear it, does it make a sound?

It most certainly does.



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Stephen Leacock's Mariposa could be NOTL, with a **side of Jos Louis**



Ross's Ramblings

Ross Robinson
Columnist
The Lake Report

Try to follow my Ramblings this week as I do my best to combine two subjects that contribute to what makes Canada my unique home and native land. Please be a bit patient.

After not thinking about Stephen Leacock for a very long time, I decided to have another read of this world-famous humourist's signature novel. No pressure, and I so enjoyed his 1932 classic "Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town" again, after about 55 years.

I needed a mental escape from our mixed up and complex world. No television, no hand-held device. Just a short novel, not quite 200 pages. No

profanity, lots of metaphors and similes.

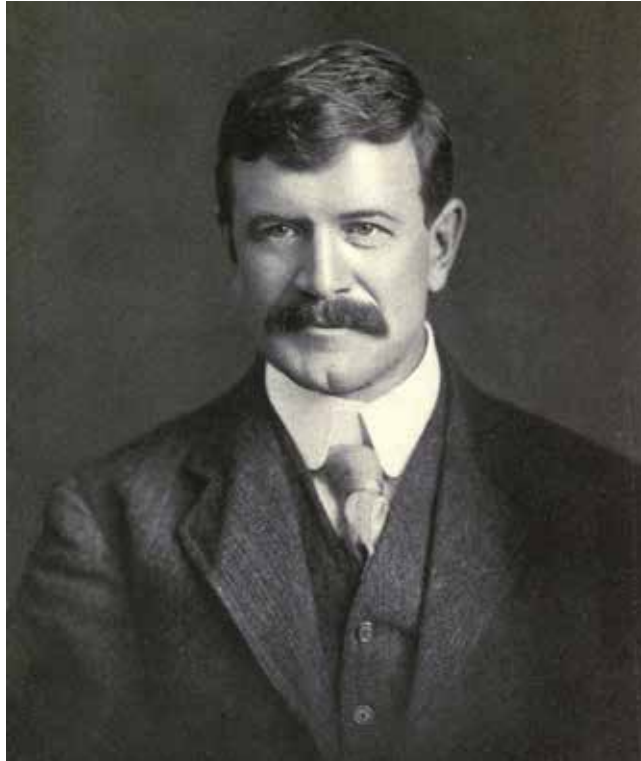
Word pictures. And such Canadian vignettes.

Mariposa is understood to be Orillia, on Lake Couchiching, but as Leacock writes in the book's second paragraph, "I don't know whether you know Mariposa. If not, it is of little consequence, for if you know Canada at all, you are probably well acquainted with a dozen towns just like it."

As I turned the last page, I truly felt I could have been in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Yes, our own little Mariposa, right here on the shores of a lake. Leacock had limned some of the characters of our town, at a slow and sorta lazy time of the year for me, as the fearful and ongoing deadly global pandemic stumbles on.

Just a thought, but if Leacock were to be named the winner of a major literary prize, but not until after he had died, would the award be presented posthumously?

Characters in Niagara-on-the-Lake? Spend some time at the Stage Coach, at the arenas, at Penners.



Stephen Leacock. WIKIPEDIA

The ValuMarts (oops, the Independent Grocers.) The Avondales. Try to follow our local political scene, when really important items get talked about. And then re-talked about, by the local experts who haven't yet run for a seat on council.

And then written about in our three weekly newspapers. Enough!

Rambling now to pran-

dial pleasures, I ate more than one or two or three Jos Louis cakes last weekend. Those round and chocolatey pieces of heaven have always been baked at the Vachon bakery in Ste.-Marie-de-Beauce just south of Quebec City. Madame Vachon baked her first Jos Louis in 1932.

Not to confuse anyone, but Joe Louis was the

heavyweight boxing champion of the world around that time. The Brown Bomber had been in same segregated army regiment as baseball colour barrier breaker Jackie Robinson. Who knew? And not that long ago, eh?

Back to Jos Louis: I ate my first one in 1958, at a lunch counter in Winnipeg, after finishing my paper route at 7:30 a.m. Washed down with a bottle of fizzy NuGrape pop, in the unique figure eight bottle. Life was so good, for this tired Winnipeg Free Press paper boy.

Then and now, Jos Louis had a light cream filling and a milk chocolate shell, in a puffy plastic bag. Bigger than a snack, less than a cake. Indeed, a round slice of heaven.

Last year, Canadians ate some 41,320,896 of these indescribably consistent and wonderful cakes. Each one fresher and better than the last one. Mouth-watering memories. The Jos Louis logo may have changed a bit over the past 90 years, but the deliciousness hasn't waned.

Over 41 million, that's a whole lot of pleasure and

bits of chocolate shell to pick off the car seat or the couch.

(Merci pour l'information, Sylvia Sicuso at Vachon Bakery.)

I'm sure that Ste.-Anne-de-Beauce could be another Mariposa, with the unique Quebecois accent spoken up and down Rue Notre Dame Nord. And similar unique characters, like so many other towns in Canada. Vas-y, nos glorieux. Je me souviens, Rocket et Boom Boom.

Many of our NOTL Mariposa hockey fans cheer for the dream breaking Maple Leafs, while tous les Ste.-Anne-de-Beauce fans believe Les Canadiens will win Le Stanley Cup. again this year.

Deftly back now to NOTL ... Most of us think we are lucky to live in a small town. Especially this small town. But it has never stayed the same. The "character" of our town, and the characters of our town, are ever evolving.

The status quo is comfy, but change has always been the only constant.

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Early spring is the best time to prune your roses. **Here's how**



GROWING TOGETHER 

Joanne Young
Garden Columnist



Joanne Young says the proper way to prune roses is to cut above the outward facing buds. JOANNE YOUNG

Pruning roses seems to be one of those many mysteries of gardening.

If you have roses, you probably know they require some pruning to keep them healthy, but what does that actually look like?

As with anything, there are always differing opinions on this subject, but here is what makes the most sense to me.

Best time to prune?

Many people always prune their roses down in the fall but there are several reasons why I do not recommend that practice.

Roses have trouble going

dormant in the late fall and winter, which is why you will quite often see them still blooming into December with the leaves still green.

Therefore, you should always let the last flowers of the fall remain on the plant because this signals the rose bush that it is time for them to go to sleep for the winter.

Pruning in the fall will stimulate them to keep growing into the winter and will result in more dieback on the canes.

The best time to prune

your roses is late dormant period-early spring just as the leaf buds are starting to swell. A good indicator of the proper pruning time is when the forsythia plants come into bloom.

How to prune roses

Regardless of the type of rose you have, the first thing to do is to cut off any dead (discoloured), diseased or damaged canes. The next step is to remove any weak canes or stems that cross through the centre of the plant or are rubbing against another cane.

Roses have alternate bud arrangement, as opposed to opposite bud arrangement where two buds are located across the stem from each other.

As I wrote about a couple weeks ago in my column on "The Science of Pruning," all the power or energy of a plant is in the tips of each branch.

So, when you prune a branch shorter, the next bud down (the one that is now at the top) takes on the power and it will develop into a new branch. By pruning to an outward-facing bud, it controls the direction of growth to go out from the plant, instead of it growing back through the centre of it.

This helps improve air circulation, which cuts down on diseases. Make sure that you cut the stem on a 45-degree angle with the higher edge being on the side of the bud. It is important to always prune on an angle about one-quarter inch above an outward-facing bud.

The angled cut allows drops of water to roll off the top of the cane and

away from the bud. Now that you have done the initial pruning of removing dead, diseased, damaged, weak and crossing canes, you now need to consider what type of rose it is.

Hybrid teas, floribundas, grandifloras, miniature and carpet roses

Once you have completed the first pruning steps noted above, you can start to prune back the remaining canes. The number of canes you will have left depends on the age and overall health of the plant.

Usually, you will have anywhere from three to eight canes and as long as those canes are healthy and the plant still has an open, symmetrical form, work with what you have.

Cut off about one-third of the original length of each cane. Hybrid tea and carpet roses can be cut back a bit further, but make sure you are leaving at least three to five buds up from the base of the plant.

Climbing roses

The term "climbing rose" is a bit misleading as they do not climb of their own accord. The canes will not

twine themselves onto a trellis and do not cling to the wall or fence.

When training a climbing rose there is one important fact to keep in mind. The vertical canes will only produce flowers at the tip of those canes. So, to get that picture-perfect image of a climbing rose that is loaded with flowers, you can carefully bend the canes and tie them to a support so that the main canes are now growing horizontally.

Instead of there being flowers just at the tip of the cane, now every bud along the horizontal cane thinks that they are at the tip and each bud will produce flowers. Once the main canes have been fanned out, prune each lateral branch (branches off the main cane) back to two or three buds.

Now your roses are trimmed up and ready for another growing season. Oh, did I mention that you may want to put on a thick pair of gloves before you begin?

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

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Have some fun



- Across**
- 9. Radical (9)
 - 10. Accommodate (5)
 - 11. Find the answer (5)
 - 12. Holy Land (9)
 - 13. Increase in speed (10)
 - 14. Finishes (4)
 - 16. "The great grey-green, greasy --- River" (Kipling) (7)
 - 19. Scholar (7)
 - 21. Possesses (4)
 - 22. Quantifiable (10)
 - 26. Heaven or hell, maybe (9)
 - 27. Sort of line dance (5)
 - 28. Marijuana (5)
 - 29. Dear (9)
- Down**
- 1. Army dining room (4,4)
 - 2. Leaning letter (6)
 - 3. Armed resistance (9)
 - 4. Smoked herring (6)
 - 5. Sporting competitors (8)
 - 6. Silence! (5)
 - 7. Group of spectators (8)
 - 8. Makes over (6)
 - 15. Grease (9)
 - 17. Lack of variety (8)
 - 18. Unequal (3-5)
 - 20. Adolescent (8)
 - 21. E.g. Seville (6)
 - 23. Drowsy (6)
 - 24. Outlaw (6)
 - 25. Experiment (5)

Crossword Puzzle

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9						10	
11				12			
13						14	
15							
16	17			18	19		20
21				22		23	24
25							
26						27	
28				29			

Last issue's answers

S	C	H	N	A	P	P	S	R	P	H	
U	O	I	O	V	E	R	L	O	A	D	
A	R	R	O	G	A	N	T	C	A	S	
A	N	N	S	U	I	T	C	A	S	E	
A	B	S	T	A	I	N	T	I	O		
L	I	S	L	I	A	R	D	I	C	E	
V	E	N	D	E	T	T	A	L		K	
E				M				C			
B	R	P	E	R	F	O	R	M	S		
H	A	I	R	L	E	S	S	O	N	A	
H	A	D		S	O	R	C	E	R	Y	
V	A	R	M	O	U	T	H	F	R	T	
M	M	C	O	L	I	V	E	O	I	L	
F	A	R	E	W	E	L	L	N	T	N	
S	D	D		M	A	G	N	E	T	I	C

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





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Climate, migration and the orbit of the Earth around the sun



DR. BROWN

Dr. William Brown
Special to The Lake Report

Our sun was born in this region of the Milky Way, the third star in the neighbourhood.

The first two long ago completed their cycles from birth to burning brightly before finally collapsing into a dense lifeless remnant, or perhaps exploding in a supernova event, scattering their remains of heavier elements throughout their neighbourhood to possibly be incorporated in nascent stars.

The sun is fated to follow a similar demise in four billion years after expanding into a giant red ball, engulfing Earth and extinguishing all life, before finally collapsing or exploding about the time Andromeda, our closest neighbouring galaxy,

is due to merge with the Milky Way.

At least, that's what astronomers suggest might happen far in the future, well beyond our existence as a species, based on their observations of similar cycles on the grand scale of the universe.

There are, of course, many other cycles of birth, life, death and rebirth. They include thousands of origins stories recounted by Aboriginal peoples and most major religions, and in more modern times by science.

This includes our own origins as a species within Africa at least six million years ago to the emergence of homo species with increasingly larger and capable brains, to the emergence of anatomically and behaviourally modern humans roughly 200,000 years ago.

So far, there's no evidence that homo's immediate predecessors, the many versions of the bipedal australopiths with brains the size of modern-day chimpanzees, ever left Africa. But there's plenty of evidence that homo species' beginning with homo erectus



Earth has had several "green" periods.

and later larger-brained and increasingly talented variants, left Africa and dispersed throughout much of Eurasia and beyond.

But there was a weather barrier to overcome. For example, the climate in northeast Africa and northwest Arabia along potential dispersal routes from Africa to Eurasia varied widely from arid periods to lush green periods. The latter occurred roughly every 100,000 years when water was abundant in the form of rainfall, rivers and lakes, and a wide variety of animals and plants existed – just what was needed to sustain journeys by small

migrant groups of archaic humans such as neanderthals and modern humans.

A 2021 study in "Nature" revealed that those green periods occurred 400,000, 300,000, 200,000, 100,000 and 30,000 to 75,000 years ago and most recently, 55,000 years ago. These periods match archeological records for the presence of dated ancient lakes and rivers, plants, animals and stone tools of increasing sophistication over the last 400,000 years.

Compelling for me was a set of footprints belonging to a modern human who was walking along the shore of an ancient lakebed. The footprints were confidently dated to 110,000 years ago. Amazing, and similar to the footprints of a group of neanderthals walking along a stretch of the south coast of Spain in the same period.

This cyclic period is the series of glacial (think ice age) and interglacial (think global warming) periods which powerfully shape the climate of the Earth. They are related to cyclic changes in the yearly orbital path of the Earth about the sun, which range

from a nearly circular path to a more eccentric path with a cycle period of between the two of roughly 100,000 years.

At the peak of the last major glacial period 22,000 years ago, ice covered almost all of Canada, northern U.S. and northern Europe before receding 10,000 years ago to a landscape much like we have now.

The change in the orbit of the Earth is in turn, related to changes in the gravitational effects of other planets in the solar system on our planet, whose orbital paths also change.

Earth's climate is also related to changes in the tilt of its orbital axis, which follows a 41,000-year cycle, and a phenomenon called precession, which is akin to the wobble of a spinning top. It also affects Earth's climate, over a cycle period varying from 19,000 to 24,000 years.

As confusing as these influences may seem, their net effect has been to exert a powerful influence on climate change and, of course, the consequences of that in short-term weather changes.

Despite major shifts in

global climate most species survive and adapt. What is clear that climate change by creating land-bridges in some areas such as Alaska or favourable dispersal routes in northeast Africa and Saudi Arabia, changed when and how humans and our more ancient ancestral species spread over the planet. For the most part, they thrived, even in tough circumstances.

Astronomy, geology and biology are examples of "deep" history, far deeper than the history I was taught in school or the reach of many sacred texts. I hope that's changed because perspective comes with long time or "deep time," as some modern historians put it.

In this essay, the clock began a million years following the Big Bang with the creation of the first stars and galaxies and kept ticking until the present. As such, deep time provides a much different perspective on future time.

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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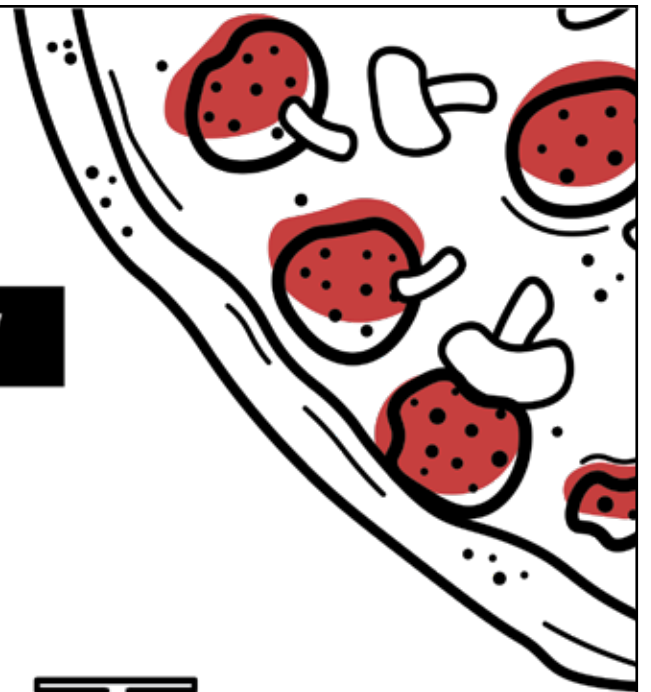
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The Bicycle Gymkhana

As spring is slowly making its way here there are more and more cyclists on the roads. Today we feature the prize winners, c.1900, of Niagara-on-the-Lake's own Bicycle Gymkhana. Cyclists from all parts of America came to Niagara to compete in this event. The first day usually featured a grand parade at the Queen's Royal Hotel with decorated bicycles, followed by boys and girls racing. On the second day the real competitions began. There were many interesting races during the tournament. The Maiden's Scurry was for girls under age 16 who needed to start, turn, go over an obstacle 18 inches high – over which the wheel had to be lifted – and finish. To win the Obstacle Race, one was required to start, ride 10 yards, dismount, lift the wheel over an obstacle, ride 30 yards, pick up a handkerchief without dismounting, ride 20 yards, go over a hurdle and finish. There was also the Tortoise Race where the winner was the last person to cover the 50-yard course without falling off his or her bicycle.



ARCHITEXT

Things that make me wonder

Brian Marshall
Columnist

From time to time I come across information about Niagara-on-the-Lake that makes me sit back, scratch my head and wonder. Take, for example, William Street. Other than the fact this street dead-ends at Regent near the Wilderness, it appears to be typical of its ilk. Curiously though, where the vast majority of streets in town have a 60-foot road allowance, for some reason William's road allowance is 90 feet. For those who are unsure what a road allowance is, it refers to the land on either side of the centre line of the street owned by the town (or region/province).

On most of our town roads, if one were to measure 30 feet from the centre of the street to either side the lines of demarcation between public and private property would typically be found.

But on William that measurement would be 45 feet. It may come as a surprise to some of the folks who live on William that their property isn't quite as big as they thought it was.

The question of why this should be the case is somewhat unclear. In one case it has been suggested that William was originally proposed as a main delivery thoroughfare to the military lands (barracks) on the south side of King Street, given the wide allowance accordingly, but when that function never materialized, the wider allowance simply remained.

Be that as it may, I wonder why this has not been corrected in the past or is not under current consideration to be addressed by town council.

As it stands, the town owns a surplus 15-foot strip of land on either side of the normal 60-foot road allowance, which is of no practical benefit, is technically the town's responsibility



to maintain and simply complicates the lives of William Street residents who may be considering a renovation or addition to an existing building.

Why not take a page out of the province's playbook (commonly done in cottage country) and offer to sell the 15-foot adjoining each lot to the property owners for a reasonable sum? Between Mississauga and Regent, even at \$5,000 each, that would put approximately \$200,000 into town coffers while reducing the associated administrative complications and get several grandfathered private buildings off town property.

Then there is the case of what can only be called a "tower" being constructed on Firelane 11. This building is a full three storeys tall sitting sandwiched between a one-storey cottage and a two-storey home.

Is it the tallest building on the road? Well, there are a couple of others on the street whose roof ridge may come close, but I'd have to say it tops them. However, this is not roof we're talking about but rather a full third storey.

Here, again, is an example of architecture grossly incongruous with the streetscape and an affront to the privacy/lines-of-sight of the neighbours.

Oddly, the original building permit for this site is to "construct a new single-family dwelling on an existing foundation 1,374 square feet."

There is no question this "tower" is larger than that, so it makes me wonder why, if amendments were applied for and made to the original permit, no one from the town would raise a red flag regarding what it was going to do to the streetscape.

I know Niagara-on-the-Lake lacks articulated design guidelines, but surely such amendments are granted at the discretion and deliberate consideration of planning and building staff ... No?

Just a couple of the things that make me wonder.

Looking to the Stars



Expect some clever pranks as April Fool's arrives

This week: April Fool's and a new moon in Aries on the same day. Mars and Saturn together and Venus moves into Pisces.

Thursday, March 31: Any time the moon and Saturn make a connection, things take a turn for the stubborn. With the moon in Aries that spells stubborn with a side of snarly. A person born with a moon/Saturn connection has trouble with parents, authority figures and self-confidence. Forgiveness works best. Mr. Hockey, Gordie Howe, was born March 31, 1928, in Floral, Sask. Gordie is the only player to have competed in the NHL in five different decades.

Friday, April 1: This promises to be one of the most prankish April Fool's Days in memory courtesy of a new moon in Aries at 2:24 a.m. And with Mercury also in Aries, the cleverness and originality of the pranks will rival the best of all time. On this day in 1972, NHL players began the first strike in the league's 75-year history. The 10-day action earned them a large playoff bonus increase and more.

Saturday, April 2: With the sun, Mercury and Chiron together at the same spot in the sky in Aries today, look to bold ideas that are original and powerful. Happy birthday #87 to the woman who played Della Street on the 1973-74 TV show "The New Perry Mason." Actor Sharon Acker was born April 2, 1935, in Toronto.

Sunday, April 3: The moon in Taurus meets Uranus in Taurus, triggering a moment where anything is possible and a cherished dream pops into reality. It was April 3, 1957, that Norwich city council unveiled a computer. It weighed hundreds of pounds and was

delivered on a flatbed truck from London. It saved the city 20 jobs.

Monday, April 4: One of the busiest days, astrologically speaking, is today. The biggest of the many events is Mars connecting with Saturn. This gives the drive to build stronger security, whether in a job or career sense, or with your life in general. Happy birthday #47 to Microsoft Corp. On April 4, 1975, Bill Gates and Paul Allen recognized that their contract to supply personal computers to IBM could prove to be very fruitful. Gates's mother set up the basis for the contract at lunch at the family's golf and country club.

Tuesday, April 5: Today, Venus moves from futuristic Aquarius into sensitive Pisces where she remains until early May. While Venus is naturally ruler of both Taurus and Libra, she is very happy to spend the next few weeks making everything Piscean more beautiful and harmonious. It was April 5, 1984, that Kareem Abdul Jabbar overcame Wilt Chamberlain's long-standing NBA career points record of 31,419. Jabbar still holds the record but LeBron James is closing in fast on his final total of 38,387.

Wednesday, April 6: It's another busy and positive day as the moon in Gemini connects in many ways, most significantly Mars making for lots of love and generosity for everybody. The great painter, Raphael, was born April 6, 1483. He died April 6, 1520. Although he lived only 37 years, he is regarded with the same esteem as Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci.

Bill Auchterlonie's podcast, Looking up to the Stars, is available at www.lutts.ca.

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Obituary

David Hepburn



HEPBURN David Ellis- Senior Life Member IEEE, Fellow and Life Member IEE (U.K.)-

David Ellis Hepburn passed away on March 25, 2022 from natural causes at his home in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

David was born on December 14, 1930 in Cardiff, Wales and spent his formative years at the side of his grandfather and pal, Arthur Ellis, learning what was to become his lifelong career, the field of electrical engineering. David graduated from the University of Stafford in 1952 and was completing an internship with English Electric in Stafford, England when he met his partner in life, Diana Wendy MacKay. David and Diana were married in January 1957 and shortly thereafter they set sail for their new life in Canada. They eventually settled in Montreal where David worked for Hydro Quebec as a systems design engineer. In 1965, David joined the H.G. Acres Consulting firm office in Montreal and was part of the design and construction team for the Churchill Falls Hydro Plant in Labrador. In 1969, David was introduced to the world of international assignments and the Hepburn clan, which now included two daughters (Alison and Suzanne), packed up their household and moved to what was then East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) for a two-year assignment building the East-West Interconnector transmission lines. From that point forward David spent the remainder of his career with Acres travelling the globe on a wide variety of projects. Some assignments were several months in duration and others were multi-year affairs, including a year on the Tarbela Dam project in northern Pakistan; three years spent in Lahore, Pakistan; one year in Kathmandu, Nepal; and other far-flung corners

of the world such as Sudan, Laos, Indonesia, and Lucknow, India. Diana accompanied David on all the longer duration projects and over the years they became very adept at setting up a new household and making endless friends among the expatriate communities. David "retired" in 1994 from Acres but, as any of you who knew David can well imagine, full retirement was not in the cards for many years to come. For the following ten years David provided his invaluable consulting services to various agencies such as the World Bank and the Canadian International Development Agency and his travels continued. For several years David volunteered with the Canadian Executive Services Organization and worked on small hydro projects in Honduras and Guatemala. David's collection of expired passports tells the story of a life full of adventure and good works. He touched and enriched many lives around the globe.

David's ever inquisitive mind and desire to help shape the next generation of engineers and explorers led him to his final role as a mentor for teachers and their students. He spent ten years volunteering with the Institute for Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), judging science fairs in the Niagara region, staffing an information booth at the annual teacher's convention in Toronto, and writing lesson plans for educators to use as classroom teaching aids. He was always impressed with the creativity of the students he met. On any given day, David was to be found at his computer researching and typing up ideas to keep the grey matter active and hopefully share his keen interest in the world around him.

David and Diana just celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary and were a true left hand-right hand pair for each other. They were always up for the next travel assignment and their shared interests in other cultures and lands made their partnership a true success. Throughout their married life they hosted many a memorable Christmas and February Blahs party where old and new friends could gather and catch up on each other's busy lives. Many of these friendships endure to this day and happy memories will be cherished.

Despite his active career, David always found time for his daughters and grandchildren and many a happy day was spent sailing in small crafts built by David on family trips to Prince Edward Island and then, later, on larger sail boats on Lake Ontario. His lovingly restored 1928 Chevy, nicknamed Betsy, also provided enormous joy to the kids, tootling around the vineyards of Niagara. David never tired of sharing his zest for life with his family. Holidays to Disney Land, Barbados, Montana, and the West Coast of Canada were always full of activity, exploration, and high fives. David took great pride in the accomplishments of his grandchildren and followed their academic and life pursuits with much pleasure, always there with encouragement and support.

David is survived by his wife Diana of 65 years; his daughters Alison Hepburn of Niagara-on the Lake and Suzanne Hepburn (Don Booth) of Bozeman Montana; grandchildren Megan Zetlian (Tro Zetlian) of Stouffville, Ontario; David Seymour of Guelph, Ontario; Samantha Booth (Mike Veselik) of Bozeman, Montana; and Karen Booth (Tevin Dial) of Seattle, Washington; and great-grandchildren Jonathan and Penelope Zetlian.

David was preceded in death by his son-in-law, Alison's husband, Dave Galloway.

We were lucky to know David as a friend, husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather but most importantly as a role model for all of us on how to approach life with open eyes, mind and heart, to live life to the fullest and always take on new challenges, never to be defeated or settle for status quo. You are already greatly missed.

A Celebration of Life will be held later this year. In lieu of flowers, donations are welcome in David's memory to the fund of your choice at the University of Waterloo's Department of Engineering. Funeral Arrangements have been entrusted to the Morgan Funeral Home, 415 Regent St., Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON, 905-468-3255. Memories, photos, and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com



In Memoriam

Denise Lundy



A loving Wife, Mother and Grandmother.

Born January 16, 1961

Passed away April 01, 2019.

*Your life was a
blessing, your memory
a treasure, you are
loved beyond words
and missed beyond
measure.*

Always loved, forever missed.

Tony, James, Michael, Jen and Granddaughter Rose.



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Jack William Shrubb

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