



NOTL celebrates Wayne Cardiff | Page 13

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## Hear the Wolves howl

Next stop, provincial championships for NOTL U13 and U15 rep teams



Kevin MacLean | The Lake Report

Goalie Tomas Nolan celebrates after the U15 NOTL Wolves beat Port Colborne to win the Niagara District championship and qualify for the provincial championships. With his team down in the series after two games and facing elimination, Nolan shut out the Sailors in the final two matches. NOTL's U13 rep team also qualified for the provincials, with a dramatic double overtime win in their finale.

DAVE VAN DE LAAR

**B**acks against the wall. Do or die. No tomorrow. For two Niagara-on-the-Lake rep hockey teams all those sports clichés rang true last week as they faced immi-

nent playoff elimination. But the U13 and U15 Wolves both prevailed, winning the Niagara District crown and earning berths in the provincial championships in Halton Hills at the end of March. The U13 team did it in

dramatic fashion. After a win and a tie put the Wolves up 3 points to 1 in the 4-point series, NOTL could win it all at home in game 3 last Wednesday night. But the U13s gave up two late third-period power-play goals to lose 3-2 to the Glan-

caster Bombers. That tied the series. With a winner-take-all finale two nights later in Ancaster, the Wolves fought back for a 3-2 victory in double overtime.

*Continued on Page 6*

## Royal George ruling **expected soon**

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

A court decision on whether Niagara-on-the-Lake's approval of the Royal George Theatre teardown will stand is now a race against time — with demolition possible next week if

judges don't rule first. A three-judge panel heard arguments Tuesday in a virtual Divisional Court hearing involving Centurion Building Corp., the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake and the Shaw Festival. The ruling will be delivered by email at a later date, though the panel did

not indicate timing despite acknowledging the urgency. The undertaking prevents Shaw from going forward with demolition until after March 26. The fate of the Royal George now hinges on whether a ruling is issued

*Continued on Page 2*



The Royal George Theatre, sans marquee.



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# Court ruling awaited as **theatre demolition** could begin next week

*Continued from Front Page*

before then.

“Theoretically,” said Centurion’s lawyer, Eric Gillespie.

“Given that the Divisional Court is very well aware of that deadline and specifically asked the Shaw Festival to extend it — it seems, realistically, that a decision may well come before that date.”

The case also carries a financial component.

Combined, the town and Shaw are seeking roughly \$70,000 if successful, while Centurion is seeking about \$24,000, plus about \$8,000 related to a motion it won on Feb. 10 to temporarily stop demolition, Gillespie said. Cost claims reflect the time each party says it spent on the case.

“What’s surprising in this case is that the town and the Shaw ended up spending about five times more time than our office spent,” Gillespie said.

“That’s one of the matters that we’ll ask the court to consider when it makes its decision on costs,” he added.

Cost submissions are still



Demolition of the Royal George Theatre could begin next week, depending on a court ruling. FILE

to come.

“We will meet the deadline, but beyond that, it’s still a work in progress,” said Gillespie.

At the centre of the hearing was whether Centurion even has the right to bring the case — a legal question known as standing — along with broader arguments about whether the town’s decision to allow demolition was reasonable.

Centurion argues that the town’s decision to approve demolition was not properly supported by evidence — particularly around costs to preserve — and that it should be set aside. The company maintains it has

the right to bring the case forward.

“Someone had to stand up,” said Nicholas Colaneri, Centurion’s president.

“Niagara-on-the-Lake has hundreds of heritage properties. Every single one of them may be affected by how this case is decided.”

Colaneri said the Ontario Heritage Act requires preservation to be taken seriously “before irreplaceable heritage buildings are demolished” and coming forward was “simply the right thing to do” as a NOTL resident and business standing up for the town and “every heritage community in Canada.”

“Once these buildings are gone, they are gone forever,” he said. “Everyone involved in shaping this community, the town, developers and institutions alike, should follow the laws that exist to protect it.”

Shaw and the town argue Centurion does not have standing and say the company is not directly affected by the project and does not meet the test for public interest standing.

Both say the case should be dismissed because the town followed the proper process in approving the demolition.

When Gillespie referenced other cases, including the Ontario Place redevelopment, judges pointed out that Centurion’s case differs from groups who represent broader matters of public interest.

“It was an organization representing quite a number of people — and yours is a single individual,” a judge told Gillespie.

Gillespie said the panel’s decision to hear full arguments could suggest standing has already been addressed, since courts usually deal with the issue

early to avoid hearing a full case.

The undertaking originally prevented Shaw from demolishing the buildings until after March 25.

Centurion pushed for more time, while Shaw said it could only offer a day or two of flexibility — referencing a federal minister visit related to funding next week.

The Shaw declined to comment and would not respond to questions about the minister’s identity, the purpose or timing of the visit, whether it is tied to funding or construction, or how it relates to the demolition timeline, citing the ongoing court case.

The town declined to comment on the case for the same reason but “remains committed to respecting and following the legal process as it proceeds,” said communications co-ordinator Marah Minor.

In court, Centurion argued demolition cannot be justified when the cost of preservation and redevelopment is unknown.

“That information was never before the heritage committee, and it was never

before the council, and it’s not before you,” said Gillespie.

“The only way they could make that determination is by knowing the number.”

Gillespie said it’s impossible to assess whether council’s decision was reasonable without clear cost figures, noting estimates could vary widely — from thousands to millions.

“How could anybody say ‘Well, that’s a reasonable conclusion,’ with absolutely no backup?”

The town and Shaw said the decision wasn’t just about cost and that the town considered several factors — heritage reports, public input and plans to preserve parts of the theatre — before approving demolition.

“On the pure dollar figure, (Gillespie) may be correct — I do not recall seeing, in any of the information, a dollar figure attributed to what it would cost to try and save the old theatre,” said Terrence Hill, counsel for the town.

“But the materials are ripe with information about why a new project needed to be undertaken.”

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## St. Patrick's Day celebrated across NOTL

Dan Smeen  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake residents and visitors packed pubs, donned green and embraced Irish traditions Tuesday as St. Patrick's Day celebrations brought music, food and festivities across town.

Across town, people dressed in green T-shirts, leprechaun hats, beads and hair accessories, while some enjoyed green drinks at local spots such as the Sandtrap Pub & Grill.

Inside, patrons listened to Irish classics like "Whisky in the Jar" performed by Barley Brae while sharing pub food and Guinness.

"I was named after an Irish boxer, and so was my son," said Tim Buttigieg. "Irish people are great people."

He was at the Sandtrap with friend Ken Sporar, who travelled from Oshawa. Sporar said they started a St. Patrick's Day tradition about 15 years ago, gathering each year to celebrate with friends.

"We're always up for a good time and you know what, this is their day so why not celebrate?" said Sporar.

The Irish Harp also hosted its annual St. Patrick's Day festivities, a tradition spanning about 20 years. The event featured a prize wheel, two dance groups, four bands and a draw for a trip to Ireland, awarded Wednesday.

While owner Jovie Joki said she wasn't a fan of the cold weather, it didn't dampen spirits.

"It's one of our busiest



Top: Friends and family celebrate St. Patrick's Day with a toast at the Sandtrap. Taking part in the festivities are (from left) Dave Morris, Mary Delvecchio, Anna Peters, Jen Green, Tracey Peters, Randy Duff and Rita Delvecchio. Bottom: Members of the band Barley Brae perform traditional Irish music for a packed house at the Sandtrap on Tuesday. Patrons decked out in green attire and hats gathered to celebrate St. Patrick's Day with live entertainment, food, and drinks. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

days," she said, noting the pub enforces a three-hour time limit for patrons on St. Patrick's Day.

Joki also reflected on the pub's Irish roots. Her former business partner, Trevor Smyth, who was Irish, died in 2013.

She said she hopes he would be proud of the celebration.

Other venues, including the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 124 and the Olde Angel Inn, also hosted gatherings.

At the Olde Angel Inn, Paul Couture and Connie Gervais struck up a conversation with visitors

from Oakville who were originally from Belfast.

At the Legion, president Al Howse said the event has been running for "five or six years" and offers a chance for familiar faces to reconnect.

"It's a good time for a party," he said.

The day also included activities for children.

The Cake Café in Virgil hosted a St. Patrick's Day-themed cake-decorating class for children five and older. Participants decorated miniature cakes with green and white icing and clover designs.

Seven children attended,

including five-year-old Zelda Ehret, who was visiting from Toronto during March Break.

"She really wanted to do it," said her grandmother, Astrid Shrubbs.

"She loves sweets, yes, very much so, but she's also very creative and she's always wanting to help in the kitchen and make things and come up with things ... she's really excited about decorating a cake."

St. Patrick's Day, held each year on March 17, marks the death of St. Patrick, Ireland's patron saint.

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## Annual Easter egg hunt returns April 4

Dan Smeen  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Spring's beloved furry mascot will be making a stop at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre in the early hours of April's first Saturday to leave a special surprise for the children of NOTL.

Then, at 10 a.m., the race is on to scoop up as many of his offerings as possible.

The annual Bunny Trail and Kinsmen Egg Hunt is returning on April 4 at the NOTL Community Centre, where kids will take part in the mad dash to search the grounds for Easter eggs left by the Easter Bunny.

Organizers say families



The Kinsmen egg hunt begins at 10 a.m. sharp!

can also enjoy children's games, a colouring station provided by the Fine Estates Team, a bake sale, and a Touch-a-Truck event featuring Niagara-on-the-Lake Fire, Emergency Medical Services, Niagara Regional Police, tractors and Performance Mercedes-Benz.

The event will also include the Niagara Symphony Petting Zoo, a visit from Eggs the Bunny and other activities.

The yearly event is a collaboration between the Niagara Nursery School and Child Care Centre and the NOTL Kinsmen Club that has been going on since the early 1990s.

Ken Slingerland of the NOTL Kinsmen Club said the group values the long-running partnership.

"We've seen this event grow and evolve over the years," he said. "From our early days at Simcoe Park to moving the event to the new community centre, it's been a fantastic journey."

Organizers hope the

Bunny Trail fundraiser will raise \$15,000 for programs at the Niagara Nursery School and Child Care Centre.

"The Bunny Trail represents more than just a fundraiser for us; it is a chance to connect meaningfully with our community," said Maegan Price, executive director of the child care centre. "We are incredibly thankful to our donors, as their contributions help us continue improving our school for the children in our care."

Activities and the bake sale will run from 9 to 11:30 a.m. Admission is \$5 per child.

The egg hunt will begin at 10 a.m. sharp.

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# Weigh in on Mississagua St. reconstruction

Dan Smeenk  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

An important connector street in Niagara-on-the-Lake's Old Town could be reconstructed later this year, and the town is inviting residents to have their say on the matter.

The town is looking to rebuild Mississagua Street from Mary Street to Queen Street, with construction potentially starting in the summer or fall this year.

The project would include a full reconstruction of the street and several infrastructure upgrades, including improvements to the water-main, sanitary sewer and storm sewer, plus replacing the streetlights.

In the town's 2025 capital budget, \$1.32 million was slated for the rebuild of Mississagua Street. Construction was set to start last fall, but was postponed to this year.

Funding for the reconstruction will come from the town's municipal accommodation tax fund.

Mississagua Street, one of Old Town's most prominent roads, runs through the mid-



Have your say on Mississagua Street reconstruction on March 30. PAIGE SEBURN

dle of the settlement at 1.27 kilometres long and is used by visitors and regularly to get to Queen Street.

The town will hold a public meeting on Mississagua Street's reconstruction on March 30 at the NOTL Community Centre.

This public forum is "an opportunity for residents to learn more about the proposed improvements and provide feedback before construction begins," said chief administrative officer Nick Ruller in a news release.

The proposal also includes paved shoulders, bike lanes and sidewalk enhancements, burying Bell and Cogeco utilities underground, and installing "decorative post-top street lighting."

The town said preserving "existing healthy, mature, non-invasive trees wherever possible" will also be a priority.

Plans also include a "permanent bump-out feature with decorative landscaping" at the intersection of Queen and

Mississagua streets. Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa said the upgrades would improve both infrastructure and the streetscape.

"By upgrading underground services and enhancing the streetscape, we are supporting long-term reliability while also improving the experience for residents, pedestrians, and cyclists," he said in the release.

The public meeting will run from 4 to 7 p.m. at the community centre.

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# Air Canada bus links Pearson to NOTL

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake travellers will soon be able to start an Air Canada trip from their local airport — but instead of boarding a plane, the journey will begin on a bus.

Air Canada and the Landline Company announced Thursday that a luxury motorcoach service will connect Niagara District Airport to Toronto Pearson International Airport starting June 15, allowing passengers to book the bus as part of their flight itinerary — similar to a connecting flight.

The service will run six trips a day — three departures from the airport on Niagara Stone Road and three return trips from Toronto Pearson.

Buses will leave Niagara at 5:30 a.m., 11:20 a.m. and 4:05 p.m., with return trips from Toronto at 8 a.m., 1 p.m. and 7 p.m. Travel time ranges from 1 hour 10 minutes to 1 hour 25 minutes each way.

Travellers will check in at Niagara before boarding the motorcoach, receiving boarding passes and having bags tagged to their final destination. At Pearson, they proceed to bag drop, security and their departure gate.

When booked as part of an Air Canada itinerary, the motorcoach connection will not increase the cost of a flight.

The shuttle can also be booked separately through the company's website.

Travellers who book the motorcoach separately or are using a different airline, including those travelling through Air Canada Vacations packages, would pay \$49, Landline vice-president of commercial Nick Johnson said in an interview.

"If you think about a \$300 fare to Vancouver — you could potentially spend that much in parking at Pearson for, you know, two weeks or something," said Johnson.

Passengers will travel on Air Canada-branded motorcoaches offering Wi-Fi, power outlets and reclining seats. Customers can also



These Air Canada-branded motorcoaches will offer Wi-Fi, power outlets and reclining seats. Free parking will be available at the Niagara airport. PAIGE SEBURN

earn Aeroplan points. Free parking will be available at the Niagara airport.

Tom Simmonds, a NOTL resident who drove limousines between Niagara and Toronto for years, said the travel time estimate seems optimistic.

"I've been driving limos here since 2007," said Simmonds. "Even when I used the 407, it would take well over an hour and a half on a perfect day — if I averaged 120 kilometres per hour."

Simmonds, who stopped driving during the pandemic, said travel times would likely be even longer now.

Meanwhile, airport chief executive officer Dan Pilon told The Lake Report the airport is adding about 50 to 55 parking spaces, bringing total capacity to roughly 150 to accommodate additional visitors.

"In the grass in front of our parking spot, there's a whole lot of little flags — those little flags are all locates for different services that are going through those areas. So we're going to be expanding our lot outward," said Pilon. "There will be a number of things we do to change the customer experience at the airport."

The parking expansion is expected to be completed before the service launches in June and will cost about \$80,000 from the airport's capital budget.

"There's a nice laundry list of items that we're going to have to support and look at," Pilon said. "There's revenue sources to supplement that as well."

Pilon said the airport will receive passenger revenue from the service, similar to fees collected from airline passengers — and will have future office leases and likely additional advertising revenue streams.

"We might be charging for parking," he added. "We don't have that in place right now."

During a question-and-answer period after the announcement, The Lake Report asked whether the motorcoach would still be needed if commercial flights eventually operate from Niagara — something the airport's recently-released 2025–2045 master plan identifies as a long-term vision.

Pilon said the answer isn't straightforward.

"It might make this type of service redundant, but it may not."

He said service departing from Niagara "may be going to Ottawa, to Montreal, to New York, to Boston" — but nonetheless, "connectivity through Pearson may still be an integral part of what's needed."

"This may continue to be, if anything, even more important at that point," said Pilon.

Landline has already looked at that exact scenario and planned for it, said Johnson.

"If there's an air service here and more people use the YCM airport, it actually strengthens the service," he said.

"Because more people can make every single trip start and end here."

Pilon said the partnership reflects the airport's long-term vision for the facility, leveraging its proximity to Toronto Pearson while helping connect Niagara travellers to Air Canada's global network.

"Having a greater influx of individuals to your facility offers you a number of different scenarios for revenue streams," he said.

Coun. Erwin Wiens, who sits on the airport commission, said the new service is an important step in testing demand for the airport and making the facility financially sustainable.

"We're hoping to turn it from a liability to an asset — that's actually funding itself," Wiens said in an interview.

"It's a terrific first step to see if there's an appetite for it as we move forward," he added.

In his remarks, Wiens said the airport will now become "the lynchpin of how we get people here" and acknowledged several NOTL councillors in attendance, including Couns. Wendy Cheropita, Tim Balasiuk, Maria Mavridis, Adriana Vizzari and Gary Burroughs.

The director of regional airlines and markets at Air Canada, Ranbir Singh, said "beginning today, we're linking Niagara District Airport with our global hub at Pearson."

A second pickup and drop-off location will also be available at the Marriott on the Falls hotel in Niagara Falls.

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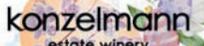
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# Wolves headed to provincials

Continued from Front Page

It had fans at the edge of their seats. After five minutes of 4-on-4 overtime, the game moved to three minutes of 3-on-3. With less than 60 seconds to go and a shootout looming, defenceman Kosta Condos was the hero.

“He carried the puck over the offensive blue line while our other two players went for a line change,” head coach Gary Friesen said in an interview.

As his teammates skated to the bench, it looked like Condos was just going to dump the puck in and change.

“Instead he fired a slapshot that found its way into the back of the net.”

Game over, the Wolves were Niagara District champs and they had qualified for the Ontario Minor Hockey Association championships.

It was a close-fought series, Friesen said, and it could have gone either way. His team’s two goaltenders, William Ecker and Declan MacNeill, both were stellar during the playoffs, he said.

Admittedly, game 3 had been “a very discouraging loss” for the players but the coaching staff urged them to focus on positive thoughts and visualize themselves playing their best on Friday.

“It’s actually a really good life lesson for the kids: You can’t do anything about it now, so just look ahead and put your best foot forward,” Friesen said.

In the final game, Ike Good opened the scoring in the second with a snapshot from the slot. Then, after Glancaster went ahead 2-1 early in the third, Campbell Whyte answered back for NOTL 38 seconds later.

There was no further scoring until Condos’ heroics in OT. Next stop Halton Hills March 27 to 29.

Friesen’s coaching staff includes Timothy Whyte, Steve Lidstone, Craig Slack and Chris Hiebendaal.

Players are Conor Bailey, Kosta Condos, Kale Conroy, Vincenzo Coppola, Will Ecker, Evan Ferreira, Jack Friesen, Ike Good, Charlie Hiebendaal, Will Lidstone,



Top: Players and coaches of the U15 NOTL Wolves team celebrate their Niagara District championship win over Port Colborne last Wednesday night. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

Bottom: The U13 NOTL Wolves needed double overtime to oust Glancaster and earn a spot in the OMHA championship tourney. Both the U13 and U15 teams will play in the provincial championship in Halton Hills March 27-29. ELAINA WILKINSON

Declan MacNeill, Cole Milot, Brendyn Palka, Nathan Reid, Amedeo Santini, Campbell Whyte and Easton Wilkinson.

The U15 Wolves didn’t have quite as dramatic a road to the provincials as they pulled off a 3-0 win at home last Wednesday in the deciding game of a series against the Port Colborne Sailors. But the series did test their resilience.

With the first team to four points advancing to the OMHAs, the Wolves were shutout 2-0 in game 1.

Another loss meant elimination, head coach Rich Andres noted. But the Wolves stayed alive with a 1-1 tie in game 2.

NOTL goaltender Tomas Nolan didn’t allow another goal after that, posting back-to-back shutouts in games 3 and 4 as the Wolves fought back with 2-0 and 3-0 wins.

Dean Olsen had the lone

NOTL goal in game 2 while Cian Doyle and Olsen scored in game 3. Easton VanBerkel had the series winner in game 4 as Logan Stewart and Olsen also tallied.

“It has been a great season,” Andres told The Lake Report. “The team has really come together and learned to play at the rep level with body contact.”

“We continued to improve as the season went along.”

After losing in the semi-final of their home tourney in NOTL, the Wolves won the consolation championship in the Georgian Shores tournament.

That final “was a turning point for our season as we came from behind with two third-period goals to beat a very good Georgian Shores team,” Andres said.

He noted that every member of the team contributed and stepped up at different times this season. “It really

has been a complete team effort. We believe in these young men and are very proud of what they have accomplished.”

“Our goal at the OMHAs is to compete against the top teams in our division in Ontario and make NOTL minor hockey proud.”

“We are looking forward to a great experience as the coaches, boys and their families continue to build friendships and make memories they will carry with them for the rest of their lives.”

His coaching staff includes of Craig Slack, Ryan Nickel and Easton Andres. The team is comprised of Henry Buffington, Michael Collins, Landen Dick, Cian Doyle, Frank Harper, Sam Kallio, Noah Nickel, Tomas Nolan, Dean Olsen, Maxim Plomish, Easton Van Berkel, Jake Van Spronsen, Logan Stewart and Lucas Woods.

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# Wolves beat Wolves 4-2 in U13 final at March Break Classic tournament

Andrew Hawlitzky  
The Lake Report

After chasing gold all weekend, the Wolves battled their own pack and sank their teeth into a championship.

Two NOTL U13 teams entered their hometown March Break Classic tourney and, in a rare turn of events, they ended up meeting in the finale on Sunday.

A third-period surge carried NOTL #2 to a 4-2 win over NOTL #1 in the U13 championship game, closing the three-day competition that drew teams from across Ontario.

The tourney ran March 13 to 15 at Virgil's Centennial and Meridian Credit Union arenas, with U11, U13, U15 and U18 divisions competing.

Tourney organizer James Cadeau kept things running smoothly managing 27 teams from 18 associations, filling last-minute dropouts and co-ordinating with coaches to ensure a successful tournament.

"It's 16-hour days and you just do it and get it done, and then you look back and go, hopefully you did a good job," said Cadeau, who's also a coach with NOTL's U18 team.

In the U13 final, Sawyer Moes opened the scoring for Team #2 in the first.

The teams were tied 2-2 after the second thanks to tallies by Norah Palmer for Team #2 and Jordan Dulas and Maximillian Czarniak for Team #1.

However, two late third-period goals — by Caden Hielema with just over three minutes to go and Moes' second at the buzzer — secured the win.

The champs had a short bench, with only seven skaters "and they still found a way to win," said U13 coach Jeff Duc. "I think for most of them, it's their first tournament win."

For the players, the year-end tournament provides an opportunity to compete after their regular seasons have wound down.

Several local teams who entered the weekend without strong records managed



Top: Jordan Dulas scores NOTL U13 #1's first goal in the final to narrow the margin to 2-1. The NOTL #2 team, in red, added two goals in the third period to win 4-2. Middle: The NOTL #2 team: Sawyer Moes, Lucy Collins, Tucker Wiens, Harrison Pohorly, Caden Hielema, Regan Doyle, Norah Palmer and goalie Michael Duc. Bottom: Tourney runners-up, the U13 NOTL #1 team. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

to advance deep into the playoff rounds.

"We've had a tough season, so making it this far in a tournament has really boosted their spirits," said Laura Dulas, mother of U13 team #1 player Jordan Dulas.

Other Niagara-on-the-Lake teams posted mixed results in the tourney.

The U11 Wolves struggled, including a 10-0 loss to Beeton and a 6-3 loss to Woodville. The U18 team fell 6-0 to London in round-robin play, recorded a 6-3 win over Minto, and lost 3-0 to St. Marys before a 6-0 semifinal loss to London.

The U15s tied West Niagara 1-1 in pool play, then lost 6-3 to Ennismore and 2-0 to Lucan, before a 2-1 loss to Ennismore in a rematch.

Sarah Leplay, whose son Cian Doyle plays for the U15 rep Wolves, said his team qualified to play in the provincial finals March 27 to 29. Meanwhile, her daughter Regan Doyle competed in the all-NOTL U13 final Sunday.

"It's kind of special that both teams are Niagara-on-the-Lake, so it's friendly competition in the finals," said Leplay.

Cadeau said the event ran without major problems despite the number of games

and co-ordination required across two facilities.

NOTL minor hockey volunteers handled time-keeping, concessions and scheduling, while the association hosted a barbecue to support operating costs.

"As long as the kids go home happy, that's all I care about," Cadeau said. Cadeau pointed to Niagara's conveniently close hotels and attractions as a consistent draw that keeps hockey associations from across the province returning for the tournament.

"It's Niagara. It's a destination. There's lots to do and that makes it an easy sell for teams," he added.



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# Mediterranean fine dining finds a home on Mary Street

Dan Smeenk  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

From tableside crepes to Grecian lamb shank, a new restaurant in Old Town is bringing a taste of the Mediterranean to Mary Street.

Cousins John Eymann and Michael Frendo, the duo behind Virgil's Bricks and Barley sports bar, opened the doors to their new dining venture, Mdina Fine Dining, in late February, an intimate, 15-seat restaurant in the same building as Nine Vines Hotel, which opened last June.

"A lot of things happened on a fluke," said Eymann, describing how he came to own the new venture. He said Frendo wanted to open a hotel and found the property, which already had a restaurant space attached.

"My creative mind thought this was the perfect opportunity," he said. "It's the right size for fine dining ... we felt it was the



Giuseppe Piruzza cooks up a banana foster, tableside, at the Mdina fine dining restaurant on Mary Street, which opened to the public on Feb. 27. DAN SMEENK

perfect place for that kind of dining."

Eymann said one reason he wanted to open the restaurant was to connect with his heritage. He and Frendo are of Maltese origin.

The menu features Mediterranean cuisine from

across the region, including Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Greece and Malta.

Diners can start with escargot, order a Grecian lamb shank for dinner and finish with sauteed crepes for dessert. The menu also includes soups and pastas

ranging from gnocchi to pasta pillows.

"We wanted to bring some of our heritage here," he said.

Eymann said the restaurant's name refers to Mdina, a city in Malta known as "the silent city." It was the

country's first capital and a filming location during the first season of "Game of Thrones."

The head chef at Mdina is Giuseppe Piruzza, a Windsor native with a nearly 24-year career who has worked in nine countries.

Eymann described Piruzza as "one of the best chefs in Niagara-on-the-Lake" and said the partnership was a good fit.

"We had probably a two-hour conversation on the phone the first time," said Eymann. "He fell in love with my concept, my idea of Mediterranean. Not like strictly Italian, Mediterranean."

Piruzza said he serves traditional Mediterranean dishes with a modern twist. Some meals are prepared tableside, using a burner and frying pan on a rolling cart brought to guests.

Food is cooked and served directly from the pan, a style of service that was once more common, he said.

Property manager Inna Mantegna said the hotel has been busy so far.

"The summer has been pretty busy," she said, adding that even in winter the hotel generally sees guests on weekends.

Mantegna said the hotel offers rooms with king-, queen- and twin-sized beds. Breakfast and parking are included with a stay.

Eymann said the owners plan to add a 10th room this summer, a two-bedroom, two-bathroom executive suite.

Eymann grew up in Niagara-on-the-Lake and said the town was the natural place to open the business.

"I would never look anywhere else," he said. "I love NOTL. I love every aspect of it."

Mdina Fine Dining, located at 390 Mary St., is open Wednesday to Sunday from 4:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Eymann said the restaurant will extend its hours in the summer.

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

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# A pony meet-and-greet? Horse rescue fundraiser brings **therapy trio** to town



Meet 2%, one of the friendly stars of the show — therapy ponies will be on site to greet visitors at the fundraiser supporting Last Chance Horse and Pony Rescue and Sanctuary. SUPPLIED

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Chewy, 2% and Houston may be small, but they'll be making a big impression when the trio of therapy ponies trot into a Niagara-on-the-Lake fundraiser later this month in support of a local horse rescue.

The Community Initiative for Animal Rescue is hosting its annual spring floral and bake sale fundraiser on March 28 and 29 at 456 Line 2 Rd., behind Crossroads Public School, which will feature guest appearances from three therapy ponies.

Proceeds will support Last Chance Horse and Pony Rescue and Sanctuary.

Founder Tanya Rice said the fundraising group supports animal rescue groups across Niagara and chose Last Chance this year in recognition of the Year of the Horse.

The event will run from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. both days and will feature spring-inspired floral arrangements, baked goods, jams, handmade chocolate and pickles for sale.

Visitors will be able to meet the registered therapy ponies from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. each day.

"As with any event, we're grateful for the sponsors and community support," Rice said.

Bracelets created by Coconut Quartz will also be sold for \$24 each during the fundraiser, with 50 per cent of those proceeds going to Last Chance.

"Two very special designs by Coconut Quartz," Rice said.

Rice said the horse rescue has had an expensive winter, citing the cost of feed and straw for bedding and frozen pipes in the barn.

"They're very grateful for our support," she said.

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



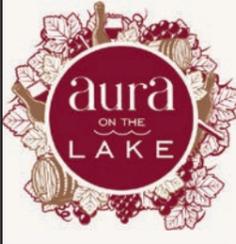
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**Canada** The Local Journalism Initiative is funded by the Government of Canada.



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**Contributed by Patty Garriock**

“Happiness is not a possession to be prized, it is a quality of thought, a state of mind.”

- Daphne du Maurier

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## Hopping into spring

Festive woven rabbits and shamrock accents decorate the entryway of 308 King St., marking the transition into the spring holiday season. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

## Opinion

# Barbarians at the gate, NOTL style



**THE TURNER REPORT**  
 Garth Turner  
 Columnist



Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa enters the community centre with a grin after winning the 2022 municipal election. FILE

When it comes to electing people, this place rocks.

Four years ago, 27 per cent of Niagara Falls citizens and 26 per cent of those in St. Catharines bothered to vote. Pathetic. But better than Mississauga (21 per cent).

The turnout in NOTL was overwhelming in comparison, at 47 per cent. And of those ballots the current lord mayor collected 49 per cent. So, Gary Zalepa came to power with just less than half of the votes cast by less than half the people.

But still, he romped to a 15-point win over his closest opponent and has more political legitimacy than, say, the mayors of Hamilton or even Toronto.

But that was then. This is now. And things have gone south.

In St. Davids, people worry about overdevelopment, floods and that damn roundabout. In Glendale, folks are steamed over the White Oaks towers and the Mississaugaification of the community. In Virgil, locals are hot over the pickleball courts going dark, too much development and how politicians allowed the slaughter

of hundreds of trees for yet another subdivision.

In the Old Town, oy, animal spirits have been unleashed as the elected gang approved a mother of a hotel in the middle of a residential hood, then the Shaw rebuild, which will tear up the iconic main strip, along with a municipal media gag order to stifle debate.

The response? Well, we now have a popular resistance front and nascent insurgency known as NOTLRA — the NOTL Residents’ Association.

Born just months ago, but already with 800 members. Four management groups. An executive. A constitution. A group website. An election site set to launch. They’ve got everything but F-35s and attack beavers.

“We elected these people, but they don’t seem to listen,” Ron Simkus says. “We’re going to stress that if you want to be a councillor, the residents are asking you to listen to them.”

Simkus is a director and founding member of the rebel group, which was spearheaded by former council member and retired

lawyer Stuart MacCormack.

The group stands for better governance, citizen involvement, protection of the natural environment and built heritage, financial sanity, sane development and prosperity without being overrun by tourists.

Now, the rebs have two problems. Both need to get fixed well before the next time citizens go to the polls — Oct. 26 — likely in large numbers.

First, not only is the town stifling free debate with chief administrator Nick Ruller’s gag order on officials talking to the local media (me, in particular), but it’s also nuking your ability to see, hear and judge candidates.

Besides helping recruit contenders, the association wants you to hear them, see them debate and make their case. That requires a hall holding hundreds of people. And the only one in all of NOTL is the community centre, which the town (with no legal basis) is putting off limits.

In fact, The Elected passed a bylaw preventing its assets being used for a

public debate — a law due to be extended at a meeting on March 24.

“While I understand your intent is not to promote or endorse any particular candidate(s), we are aiming to bring forward an updated policy [that] will continue to prohibit municipal properties from use in candidate debates, election open houses and such,” town clerk Grant Bivol told the group.

The rebels objected. They responded that the Municipal Elections Act calls for no such ban, and the group should be able to rent the hall on the same basis as any other.

Is this bureaucratic overreach? Abject stupidity? Or a clumsy attempt to tamp down the grassroots rebellion? Let’s see where that vote lands.

And the other problem? The insurgency will not be backing a team of candidates. Nor will it endorse even a fighter committed to group goals.

“We don’t want to be in a position where we’re telling residents who to vote for,” Simkus says. “Instead, we’ll say here are your choices. Here’s the information you need to make that choice, You do it.”

Very NOTL. And probably wrong.

The cure for bad decisions is a motivated voter and a transparent choice. Give us a slate.

Garth Turner is a NOTL resident, journalist, author, wealth manager and former federal MP and minister.

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## Bob Gale's record, **not his books**, are why it's good he's no longer Niagara's leader



David Israelson  
Special to The Lake Report

Is Bob Gale a Nazi? Absolutely not, I'd say.

But in the digital, social media age, that's the kind of unfair judgment people tend to make when they glance at a screen and see that some public figure did something dumb or out of bounds.

Certainly I don't like that Gale, who resigned as Niagara's regional chair on March 12, included in his "broad collection of historical art and artifacts" a copy of Adolf Hitler's "Mein Kampf," signed by the evil führer himself.

It's creepy. And it's understandable why many people find it offensive for a public figure to collect what many would consider to be history porn.

But it's also a distraction. As long as they're not breaking the law, people are entitled to be as weird as they want in their private lives. This is so as long as their private weirdness does not seep into their public decision-making.

The irony is that Gale's resignation leaves Niagara Region better off, but not

for the reasons he resigned. These reasons relate to his job, not his peccadillos. That's what people should focus on.

In the Insta-era, our attention is being hijacked by emotional reactions, or triggered by gotcha moments or driven by algorithms. We get outraged by ridiculous or awful things that people in the public eye often do.

There are enough stupid things available to offend us 24 hours a day. But we should pay more attention to the bad decisions people make in their jobs that actually can make our daily lives worse.

The problem is that it's harder and harder to distinguish actual harm from gratuitous insult. Cynical politicians have figured out how to whip up instant outrage to take our eyes off what's really going wrong.

We need only look south of the border to see this. One outrage leads to more outrage, until all of us are always angry about some perceived slight. Often, we can't tell the difference between what really ought to make us angry and what we should ignore.

In this context, we can recognize that it's easy to disapprove of Bob Gale's book acquisition — Hitler was the worst, and Gale didn't really explain adequately why he apparently paid thousands of dollars for a signed copy.



Bob Gale resigned from his appointed regional chair position late last Wednesday after it was revealed he paid thousands of dollars for a signed copy of Hitler's "Mein Kampf."

But what happens in more ambiguous situations, for example, when people are doing research and have nasty materials on their desks or in their hard drives? Are we ready to rifle through every public figure's files to make sure they don't have something we disapprove of?

Public figures should recognize that they will be under scrutiny. But the public should also recognize that public service requires hard work, dedication and that even public figures we don't support deserve respect for boundaries.

Otherwise, we become beholden to special interest groups with their own

agendas, who bring people down or cancel them simply by disapproving what they read, watch or do on their own time.

What really merits our disapproval more than his history collection is Gale's performance as regional chair, a position he was plopped into by Premier Doug Ford.

Thanks to Gale, in Niagara, we're now facing a sudden push to amalgamate local governments — something we did not ask for and do not seem to want.

It's an idea that may or may not be worth considering. But Gale's unwanted, pushy approach has left Niagara-on-the-Lake and other municipalities scrambling to figure out a rational way to look at the pros and cons.

It's unclear what, or who, motivated him to undertake his letter-writing campaign aiming to foist amalgamation on us. But the unwanted campaign is what's really out of bounds.

His apparently unsolicited attempt to do away with our town (and other communities in Niagara) raises the real question: did this person belong in his job?

I think we got our answer without having to go through Bob Gale's bookshelves.

*David Israelson is a writer and non-practising lawyer who lives in Niagara-on-the-Lake.*

## Expect cost of everything **to rise** with Iran war

Dear editor:

The legitimacy of the current military conflict in the middle east, according to Garth Turner, is above his pay grade ("The Turner Report: Mr. Trump's war comes to NOTL," March 12, The Lake Report).

While it is also above my pay grade, there are some issues that are generally held to be indisputable fact and require little in the way of analysis or thought.

For example: over many years, there has been the neverending call for the

destruction of the U.S. and Israel. "Death to America" and "From the river to the sea."

While tiresome and disturbing to many, both have been allowed without serious challenge by international authorities, and in the latter case (surrounded by hostile neighbours), no concern for its very existence.

These same authorities are quick to point out, however, the lack of legal justification or United Nations endorsement of the present combatants, which seems to some not to matter

anyway when it comes to armed conflict, as history can easily and frequently testify to.

Iran, as part of its own nuclear research program, has verbally committed to civilian use only. However, this is not very convincing to many when military purposes are obviously seen and the contradiction noted.

This is unacceptable to many of those who see a nuclear armed Iran and its proxies as a dangerous threat to the Middle East. Although there are those

who will undoubtedly disagree, the U.S. has taken upon itself the position, rightly or wrongly, that it will not allow a military nuclear Iran and has given many serious warnings to this effect.

We are now witnessing a military conflict whose length and final outcome cannot be determined at the present time. However, we all know that in the meantime oil prices will increase and with them, inflation on just about everything.

*Derek Collins  
NOTL*



This week's riddle is "Jeopardy!" style  
Category: MOVIES BY DECADE

### "Good Will Hunting"

Last issue category: EAT LIKE A BRIT

Clue: It's the super awesome name for sausages, especially when they're paired with mash.

Answer: What are bangers?

Answered first by: Hugh Lundy

Also answered correctly (in order) by:  
Bob Wheatley, Bill Hamilton, Tuija Johansson, Susan Hamilton, Bob Stevens, Gary Davis, Claudia Grimwood, Jane Andersen, Rob Hutchison, Becky Creager, Emma Balsas, Alison Parson, Tony Clarke, Lynda Collet, Gary Davis, Esther VanGorder, Jim Dandy, Howard Jones, Michael Creager, Susan Dewar, Katie Reimer, Nancy Rocca, Catherine Clarke, Sue Rautenberg, Mike Gander, Donna Pearce, Jeff Lake, Wade Durling, KC King, Blake White, Marla Percy, Elizabeth Oliver-Malone, Gail Benjafield, Sylvia Wiens, Sheila Meloche, Margie Enns, Margaret Garaughty

Email answers to [editor@niagaranow.com](mailto:editor@niagaranow.com), with your name, for a chance to win a \$25 Irish Harp Pub gift card every week. (Subject line: Riddle me this)

\*REMEMBER TO PUT "WHAT IS" FOR JEOPARDY QUESTIONS!

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# Navigating the new heritage conservation district plan, pt. 2



Brian Marshall  
Columnist

We're continuing on from last week's column ("Arch-i-text: Navigating the new heritage conservation district plan, pt. 1") wherein, amongst other things, we considered how to determine whether a property located within the new heritage district boundaries is considered "contributing" or "non-contributing" and the general rationale for controls on the latter, as contained in section 7, "Policies and Guidelines for Non-contributing Properties," of the plan.

Before shifting our attention to the "contributing" classification, it may be useful for "non-contributing" property owners to understand that, section 9.2 of the plan specifies only "generally major alterations to the size, shape, density, height of existing structures, such as additions, new

builds, rehabilitations and demolitions" will require a heritage permit, and this section goes on to define the classes of work that fall under exemptions (don't require a heritage permit).

In general, if you have a project in mind that does not significantly alter the existent building(s) within the streetscape context, nor have an adverse impact on adjacent "contributing" property(s), it will likely fall within the "exempt" parameters.

However, I reiterate that you should reach out to the town's heritage planners and discuss your proposed work to ensure it falls within (or outside of) the allowable interventions to the property that can be performed without a heritage permit.

As for the policies and guidelines for "contributing" properties (section 6 in the plan), let's begin with a few definitions of terms used in the plan.

When the term "cultural heritage value" is used, it refers to a historical place that may variously be a single property, a street, a neighbourhood or a series of conjoined neighbourhoods which embody heritage attributes — materials, forms, location, spatial configurations that illustrate the evolution of the town over time



The goal of the plan's policies and guidelines is to preserve the heritage attributes of each contributing property, with the understanding that, over time, minor — and sometimes major — alterations must happen. FILE

and may have historical association with the social, cultural and/or economic milieus within the town's past.

"Spatial organization" is a fundamental component in defining the character of a place as established by the arrangement and relationships of both natural and built features within a given area.

A row of trees (natural feature) planted equidistantly along a boulevard may be considered to contribute to a consideration of spatial organization; as does the orientation and positioning (setbacks from lot lines, etc.) of built features — including the spaces between them — along a street.

An "alteration" (or "to alter") refers to an action which results in a change to a property — and, that includes restoration, renovation, repairs or disturbance

of the currently existing conditions on said property.

"Heritage attributes" refers to the elements of a property which includes, but is not limited to, the buildings, structures, materials, spatial organization, features and spaces that underwrite its cultural heritage value and/or heritage interest.

Intrinsic to the plan's policies and guidelines is the understanding that a property that contributes to the overall integrity of the cultural heritage value of the conservation district through its architectural, historical and contextual attributes is an irreplaceable asset in that tapestry.

And, the loss or diminishment of such contributing properties can materially damage the district.

The intent of the plan's policies and guidelines are directed toward preserving

the heritage attributes of each contributing property and the existing spatial organization of district streetscapes while enfoldng the understanding that, over time, minor — and sometimes major — alterations must happen.

Therefore, the authors of the heritage conservation plan have addressed this at multiple levels in section 6.

Setting aside heritage specialist guided "restoration" projects the plan identifies "rule-of-thumb" alteration criteria in 6.7 as: "compatible, subordinate, and visually distinguishable to conserve the cultural heritage value and heritage attributes of the contributing property and of the heritage conservation district."

Under the new heritage conservation district plan, if you are a "contributing" property owner, this is what can be done without a heritage permit.

You can conduct, according to section 9.1, the following: repair of windows, doors, shutters, siding, entryways, roof systems, trim and associated architectural details, foundations, fences etcetera without any oversight.

However, should you wish to paint your front door purple or replace the original single pane windows

with modern vinyl framed units, be prepared for a fight because these types of interventions are not in-kind and will detract from the cultural heritage values of the district.

The plan does not dismiss new additions to a contributing property but states that such a construct must be "compatible, subordinate, and visually distinguishable to conserve the cultural heritage value and heritage attributes of the contributing property and of the heritage conservation district."

Bluntly, if the original clapboard siding on your house needs to be repaired or replaced, you can use modern stock configured to the original exposure at no additional cost.

And, should your original single pane windows require full replacement, this can be done with historical accuracy and, with the addition of interior storms, achieve an R-value roughly equivalent to the vinyl window inserts.

And, so many more no or low-cost options are available to preserve and maintain the invaluable heritage character of Old Town.

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

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# Hundreds fill community centre to celebrate **Wayne Cardiff**

Kevin MacLean  
The Lake Report

Hundreds of friends, neighbours and colleagues filled the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre Saturday afternoon to honour and say farewell to Wayne Cardiff, a much-loved and admired man about NOTL.

The main auditorium overflowed and a line stretched through the lobby and outside into the parking lot as well over 1,000 people paused to remember the 81-year-old.

Cardiff died on March 5 after a short, private battle with prostate cancer. He was diagnosed in October but opted only to share the news of his illness with his immediately family.

"Shocked" was a common refrain among visitors and those who posted condolences after his death.

His widow Judy Cardiff steadfastly stood and greeted all those who came in person to pay their respects. The couple's children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren also were among those on hand to bid farewell.

Judy and her husband have been fixtures in town,



Wayne and Judy Cardiff were married for 58 years. He died of prostate cancer on March 5. SUPPLIED

married for 58 years, living in the same house on Mary Street for decades. They could often be seen out walking together or enjoying a round of golf.

The two met on Victoria Day weekend in 1967 at the old Anchorage bar on NOTL's waterfront. Judy was 24, a widow from Niagara Falls with two young children.

After losing her husband, her family encouraged her to get out and enjoy life. That's when she met Wayne.

A few years younger, he was smitten and within

three months they were married. In smalltown NOTL in the 1960s, "it was a scandal," joked Judy.

An accomplished golfer, Wayne was the pro at the NOTL Golf Club from 1965-68. In fact, his family noted, he became the youngest club pro in North America when he was hired at the age of 19.

He grew up in town, attending Parliament Oak and Niagara District Secondary School and while he didn't quite finish high school before embarking on his golf career, it didn't deter him from becoming a successful

entrepreneur.

When he left the golf club, he sold cars at what was then Garden City Rambler in St. Catharines and within a few years he owned the dealership.

In his 25 years running Garden City Jeep, it was a family operation as everyone, including their children Mark, Kym and Kari, worked there.

Cardiff was proud of NOTL and "always bought locally," including furniture and appliances, keen to support local entrepreneurs, Judy said.

"Everybody loved him and liked him and knew him," she said, which was reflected in the huge turnout to celebrate his life.

"Wayne passed away at noon on Thursday, and at the (Legion) fish fry at 5 o'clock, the town already knew," she said. "Word travelled fast."

The Dietsch brothers, Matt and Paul, opened the Sandtrap pub in 2014 and credit the Cardiffs for helping instil the confidence to go out on their own.

"Wayne's business sense was a calming voice that made our decision to open a town watering hole where locals could gather a good

one," Matt said.

"I will miss hearing him say on the really busy nights, 'Hey Matt, good place to open a bar, eh?'"

Back in Wayne's day as the pro, the NOTL club had a booming junior program. Among the many kids he taught was young Mark Derbyshire, who would go on to be the men's club champion for 30 straight years, among numerous other golfing honours.

"The only golf lessons I ever had were from Wayne," Derbyshire told The Lake Report. "He taught me all the fundamentals and got me on my way."

And when Derbyshire's aging parents Vera and Al were in hospital or in care, the Cardiffs both visited regularly.

Wayne also mentored his wife on the links and she became a strong competitor in her own right.

While he eagled every hole on the NOTL course except #9, a long par 3, he only notched a single hole-in-one, on #4.

His protégé Judy outdid him — she's had four aces.

He didn't imbibe much, but loved to raise a glass with friends and neighbours — and after the Sandtrap

opened, the Cardiffs arrived one day just before Christmas to find two stools at the bar festooned with giant bows and plaques celebrating them.

"We knew from day one that Wayne and Judy would be great regulars at the pub and with our family ties we wanted to make sure that they always had a place to sit," Matt Dietsch said.

"So, we permanently reserved the two seats closest to our service bar where they could say hi to all the patrons picking up takeout as well as the guests who were dining in."

The Cardiffs' daughter Kym McNeil remembers her dad as "extremely accomplished but at the end of the day, the most humble man in the world."

"Family and community and friends and socializing" were the essence of the man, she said.

Perhaps his family summed up Wayne's life best in his obituary: "He leaves behind not only a family who loved him deeply, but countless friends, stories and memories, the kind created through laughter, good conversation and the simple joy of being together."

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# Organist and retired pilot **Michael Bloss** joins Edison Singers

Tim Taylor  
The Lake Report

Most of us have enough challenges with a single career. Michael Bloss has navigated two challenging and very different jobs. At the same time.

An affable, easygoing sort, Bloss, 65, is currently the music director at St. Mark's Church in Old Town. And, up until this past October, a full-time pilot for Canada's leading air service company, Cargojet, taking time-sensitive cargos to every nook and cranny of Canada.

Both careers have been personal passions since about the age of 10.

"My father used to take me to the old Malton airport (Toronto Pearson International) to watch the planes flying in and out," says Bloss. "Then, for a few summers, he took the family home to southern Germany, where a great uncle took me on 'organ crawls': a walkabout to hear organs in

magnificent venues throughout Europe."

"I was hooked, both on flying and the glorious music of the organ — the way it filled the wonderful acoustics in those big places in Europe."

Bloss spent his early years in Toronto, a child of parents who had emigrated to Canada in 1958. Today he and his wife Mona Bailey live in Grimsby, just about smackdab in the middle of his two careers. He earned his undergraduate and graduate degrees in organ performance at Western and Toronto.

He has been a professional pilot for 25 years. After training at the old Buttonville airport, he flew with Air Georgian, Air Canada Express and Rouge, before COVID almost closed the passenger airlines. He moved to Cargojet who "couldn't find enough pilots."

In October, after turning 65, he retired from active flying, although there is a



Michael Bloss, professional organist, St. Mark's Anglican church music director and, until recently, a full-time airplane pilot, will perform in concert with the Edison Singers at St. Mark's, Sunday, March 29. TIM TAYLOR

retirement career in flight training, if he wants it.

All the while, for more than 40 years, he has been pleasing audiences, both churchly and not, on the organ and, if he's pressed,

the piano. Thankfully, St. Mark's Anglican Church has three organs and a grand piano.

So, for 15 days a month, he flew — considered full-time — and the rest

he managed the St. Mark's music program, plays on Sundays with a small choir and performs, as often as he's asked, with professional choirs, mostly under the direction of Noel Edison, founder and music director of the Edison Singers.

Bloss also records for the Naxos record label. Usually with one of Edison's various choral organizations. In October, he recorded his first solo album of symphonic works for the organ composed by Cesar Franck.

"It's exciting. I've always wanted to record these pieces. I just needed to find the combination of the right organ and the right acoustics."

Bloss is quick to mention his next gig, performing with the Edison Singers on Palm Sunday, March 29, a choral concert featuring major works of two composers, Faure and Duruflé.

"It will be a very eclectic program," says Bloss. "Two requiems that have

become the signposts of two very important composers, highlighting their unique musical expressions and historical contexts."

Bloss emphasizes the concert's significance in showcasing how different composers interpret the same text.

He is still considering his post-retirement options. But he is certain of one thing: he will continue to work with the Edison Singers.

"Noel and I have worked together for over 40 years, for so long that we know what each other wants and how everything goes together musically. He hardly has to say anything about what he wants. It's all clear."

In May, the Edison Singers will again be recording these requiems for Naxos with distribution internationally late this year or early 2027.

Tickets and information for the Sunday, March 29 concert can be found at [edisonsingers.com](http://edisonsingers.com) or by calling 226-384-9300.



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**Public Information Centre  
Mississagua Street Construction**

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake invites residents to attend a Public Information Centre regarding the proposed reconstruction of Mississagua Street between Queen Street and Mary Street.

**Date:** Monday, March 30, 2026  
**Time:** 4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.  
**Location:** Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre, Simpson Room, 14 Anderson Lane

The project includes roadway reconstruction, watermain, sanitary and storm sewer upgrades, active transportation improvements, and the conversion of overhead utilities to underground infrastructure.

Residents will have the opportunity to review the proposed design, ask questions to Town Staff and consulting engineers, R.V. Anderson Associated Ltd., and provide feedback prior to construction, anticipated in summer/fall 2026.

# Shaw Shivarree celebrates its **30th anniversary** April 11

SPONSORED  
The Lake Report

Weston Miller, a lifelong resident of Niagara-on-the-Lake, is leading one of Niagara's most beloved social events into a milestone year.

Celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2026, the Shaw Shivarree has long been regarded as "the most fabulous fundraiser of the year." Theatre aficionados, community leaders and friends of The Shaw gather for an evening of delectable dining, masterful live music and spirited bidding on must-have treasures, all in support of world-class artistry presented on the various Shaw stages.

While the Shivarree comes around every spring like clockwork, the April 11 festivities promise to surprise and captivate long-time devotees and newcomers alike.

"We wanted this anniversary year to feel elevated," says Weston Miller, 2026 committee chair.

"The event has always



Mel and Weston Miller are helping to organize the 30th anniversary Shaw Shivarree fundraiser on April 11.

had a wonderful sense of occasion, but we've made some changes we think will 'wow' returning guests and be a draw for newcomers."

According to Miller, the theme for the evening is "a feast for the eyes".

"We've redesigned the space to evoke the old-time glamour and atmosphere of a supper club. So, it's only fitting, then, that we feature the Toronto All-Star Big Band to create a celebratory energy in the room.

Additionally, the much-anticipated silent auction will offer many firsts — including experiences generously donated by individuals and businesses," he adds.

Among the "money can't buy" items up for bids are exclusive hotel stays, Royal George Theatre memorabilia, private parties hosted at some of Niagara-on-the-Lake's most beautiful properties, a table at Polo Niagara and a walk-on part in a (hint!) BIG upcoming musical.

"This defining date on the local social calendar is a rite of spring and the kick-off to The Shaw's theatre season — a night where there's an unmistakable sense of community," says Miller.

"Our motto has always been 'eat, drink and bid merry,' and that spirit continues to define the 2026 Shivarree."

The festivities will showcase the best of Niagara's food and drink scene, featuring renowned restaurants Fat Rabbit, Les Incompétents, The Garrison House, Wellington Court, Treadwell Cuisine and Il Gelato Di Carlotta — alongside wines from Peller Estates and craft beer from The Exchange Brewery.

Originally held at the Niagara-on-the-Lake's historic Court House, the Shivarree will now be held at the Jackie Maxwell Studio Theatre, 10 Queen's Parade. As a nod to its roots, the invitation design is a throwback to the Shivarrees of the 1990s, when it all began.

"It's a tremendous honour to chair the Shivarree in its 30th year," says Miller.

"For decades, this event has been organized by passionate volunteers who care deeply about the Shaw—and this town. I'm joining the ranks of so many dedicated locals who led this important fundraiser before me, including Gary Burroughs and Debi Pratt — the very first chairs."

Behind the scenes, Miller credits much of the creative vision for the "new look" to his wife, Mel Miller.

"I'm incredibly fortunate to have Mel involved," he says.

"As a former producer of Toronto Fashion Week for nearly a decade, she brings tremendous experience executing visually memorable events. Her creativity and attention to detail have been invaluable in making the upcoming Shivarree a don't-miss experience. We are so grateful to also have an incredibly hardworking team of volunteers working with us, Arlyn Levy,

Chris Semple and Andrew Colwell."

Ultimately, Miller says this annual fundraiser continues to thrive because of the generosity of those who have supported the festival for generations.

"The Shaw is such an important part of the cultural fabric of Niagara-on-the-Lake. The Shivarree is that moment where the community comes together to celebrate and support their connection to Niagara's largest cultural charity."

The 2026 Shaw Shivarree takes place at the Jackie Maxwell Studio Theatre on Saturday, April 11, from 7 to 11 p.m. It is sponsored by Genesis Niagara, Niagara-on-the-Lake Realty, The Irish Harp Pub, Tree Amigos Landscaping, Kraun Electric, Niagara Trailers, The Exchange Brewery, Booth Empire and Gatta Homes.

Tickets are available by calling the Shaw Festival Box Office at 905-468-2172 or online at shawfest.com.

## The Lake Report

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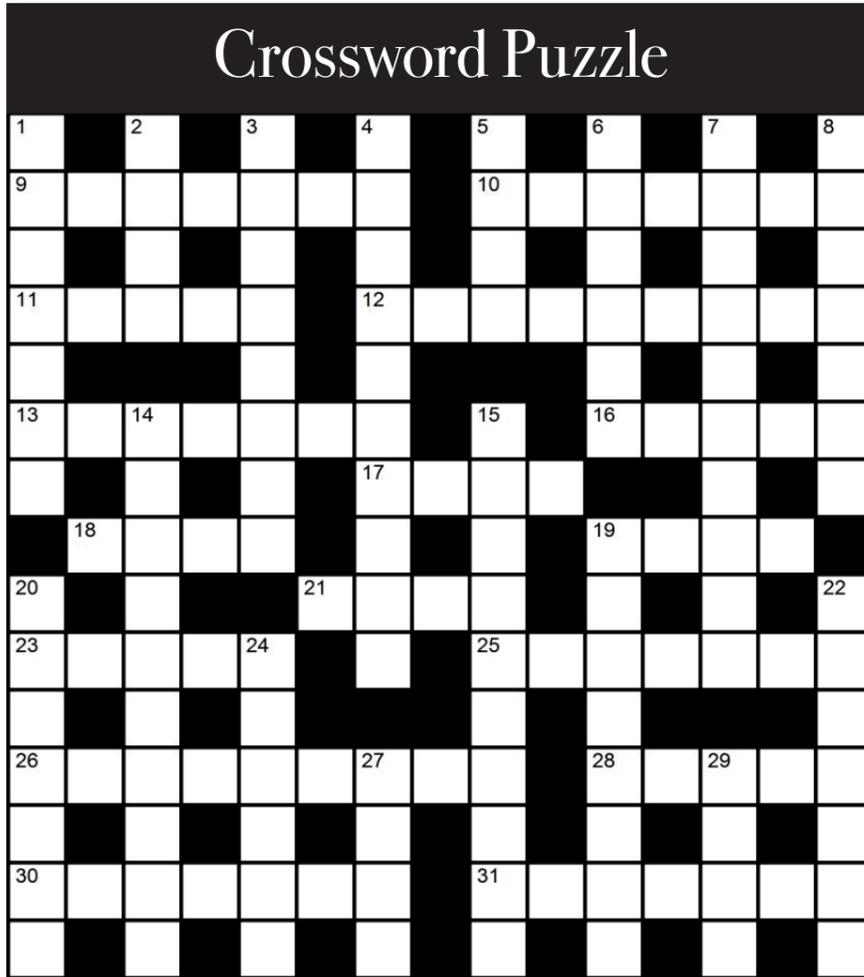


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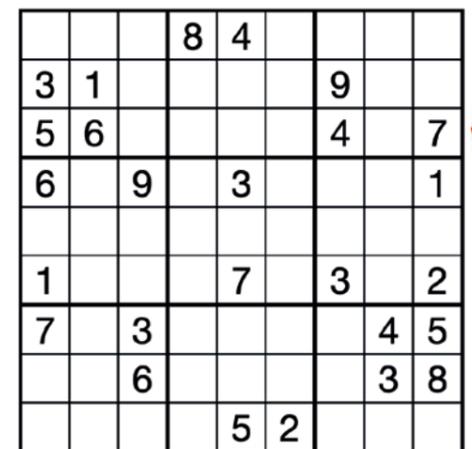
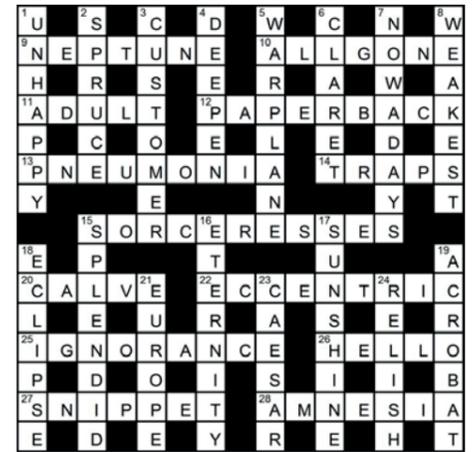
- 9. Highland (7)
- 10. Burst violently (7)
- 11. Tennis tie (5)
- 12. Clogged (9)
- 13. Keeps (7)
- 16. Welsh castle, fortress and stately home (5)
- 17. Butt (4)
- 18. City in NW France (4)
- 19. Fortune (4)
- 21. Purchases (4)
- 23. Follows orders (5)
- 25. Republic containing the northernmost point in Africa (7)
- 26. Discouragement (9)
- 28. Intended (5)
- 30. Cap attachment (7)
- 31. Thrash (7)

**Down**

- 1. Long and thin (7)
- 2. Hawaiian island (4)
- 3. Excision (8)
- 4. Prosperous (10)
- 5. Skinny (4)
- 6. Maintenance (6)
- 7. Short nap (5,5)
- 8. Rosy (7)
- 14. Path of a projectile (10)
- 15. Replace (10)
- 19. Monasticism (8)
- 20. Pongo (7)
- 22. Tack maker (7)
- 24. Move up or down through computer text (6)
- 27. Spot (4)
- 29. Flat-bottomed river boat (4)



**Last issue's answers**



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**EXPLORING HISTORY**  
WITH NOTL MUSEUM



## The Upper Larkin Farm

This photograph shows the Larkin farm that was located on the escarpment above Queenston. John Larkin, with his brother-in-law, founded the Larkin Company in Buffalo. Around 1900, Larkin began purchasing land in Niagara and eventually acquired several properties in Niagara-on-the-Lake, including Glencairn. He also developed three large farms totalling 1,900 acres. This farm was known as the “Upper” or “Mountain Farm” and mainly grew apples, along with a few labrusca grapes. It included 12 cement worker cottages and a large house built by James Calvert. The farm was later flooded when the hydro dam was constructed for the Adam Beck II generating station.

## Our early ancestors were **more clever** than you may think



**DR. BROWN**

Dr. William Brown  
Columnist

For almost a century following the discovery of neanderthals, controversy surrounded them. Were they related to us? How clever were they?

Because of their heavy-boned features, most anthropologists of the day and the public concluded they were dimwitted brutes, distantly related, if at all, to humans.

In recent decades, several discoveries combined to debunk those belittling conclusions, such as the discovery of flutes and cave art created by neanderthals long before modern humans in Western Europe.

These and other related findings, and evidence that genetically speaking, neanderthals and their cousin species the denisovans, were both closely related to modern humans, strongly suggest that the cognitive powers of our cousin species were probably similar to modern humans.

And if that is true, how far back does evidence of human-like cognition go?

Apparently, a long way.

For example, there is solid evidence that 400,000 years ago in east England, neanderthals or a predecessor species, were fully capable of creating and controlling fire with all

the warmth, social and nutritive benefits that would have accrued to those groups.

Going further, it's not hard to imagine that some form of symbolic language and story-telling might have been fostered by those fires.

There's also evidence that humans mortised wood in Africa — perhaps to create shelters, 500,000 years ago — long before neanderthals.

Sophisticated tools created from stone, ivory, bone and wood have all been identified going back at least 500,000 years. That's a long time ago but as one anthropologist put it, “The oldest record for any development is often temporary,” suggesting that any precisely dated artifact is just that — it doesn't exclude earlier dates.

One example of which was the discovery of a human hand print 67,000 years old on a cave wall in Indonesia all but hidden by artwork created 20,000 years earlier, a study of which was published in Nature in January.

Which suggests that well-developed social cognition, imagination, creativity, symbolic oral language, a sense for the spirit world, forward planning, reasoning might have preceded the advent of modern humans and perhaps, even our cousin species.

Colonizing Europeans often encountered what they considered primitive peoples in Africa, the Americas, southeast Asia and Australia. One obvious example of which were the discoveries by Europeans of many previously undiscovered tribes in the interior of Papua New Guinea living



Human sophistication began as early as 500,000 years ago, writes Dr. William Brown. SOURCED

what their discovers considered stone-age existences.

Yet, within a few generations, those so-called “primitives” mastered European languages, cultures and technologies — proving their brains were every bit as capable of as those who discovered them.

The same mistake was made over and over again when and wherever Europeans encountered native in new worlds for the Europeans.

That's the dilemma, isn't it; how can the cognitive powers of ancient peoples be assessed when there's little go-on in the form of artifacts such as tools or art that, by our standards, would suggest cognitive powers matching or close to our own?

It's all too easy to forget that almost everything we wear, and use is created by other humans — not us.

The technological revolution closely paralleled the exponential increase in the world's human population beginning roughly 10,000 years ago, which allowed humans to specialize while outsourcing other tasks to others.

That was certainly the

case with science writ broadly, in which discoveries and inventions has dramatically increased in the last 200 years, and especially last 100 years.

Most advances were collective achievements of humans who diversified their interests and skills while depending on others to meet other needs.

For most of human history, the population of modern humans, or for that matter pre-humans, was tiny — tops one million and only began to climb steeply approximately 10,000 years ago.

This means that for 95 per cent of the history of modern humans, they were widely scattered and lived in small overnight groups with few tools and weapons to call on and when small advances in the fabrication of shelters, materials, tools and weapons were made, they probably weren't widely shared, if only because there weren't many neighbors.

Advances in technology of major importance, would require settling down, and specializing.

My guess is that like the tribes in New Guinea I alluded to above, many of those early human and pre-human species were far more clever than many of the artifacts they left behind might suggest and applied much of their cleverness to surviving sometimes harsh environments.

What technological advances took place such as building shelters and fashioning tools were purpose-built for survival.

Looking at the fossil record and artifacts they left behind,

they probably possessed brains as capable as ours or nearly so, perhaps as early as half a million years ago.

Imagine how we might manage if a major disaster struck which separated us from all that we depend on day-to-day to survive.

We might manage a few weeks, perhaps a few months with stores at hand,

but probably not much longer because unlike our ancient ancestors, we have none of the daily survival skills they possessed to survive in their time.

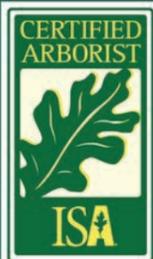
*Dr. William Brown is a professor of neurology at McMaster University and co-founder of the InfoHealth series at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library.*



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## Obituaries

### Ian Gardner



Gardner, Ian Campbell — Unexpectedly, on Jan. 31, 2026. Beloved husband of Marion for 29 years. Cherished stepfather to the late Sterling Robb (2017).

Predeceased by his parents, Campbell and Eva Gardner (1996) and birth mother, Gwen Thompson (2025). Dear brother of Leigh Ferguson (David), Paul Thompson (Sarah) and David Thompson (Jane). Proud uncle of Erin, Jordan, Dylan, Charles, Ethan, Elizabeth and Rachel. Survived by his father-in-law Donald Brown (Sheila), brother-in-law, Stephen Brown and sister-in-law, Aileen Brown (late David).

Ian was a film and television editor, a graduate of Humber College and alumnus of the Canadian Film Centre. He was an ardent birder, a warrior for social justice and a War of 1812 aficionado.

Cremation has taken place. A funeral service for Ian will be held on Saturday, March 28, 2026, at 1 p.m. at Morgan Funeral Home, 415 Regent St., Niagara-on-the-Lake. Reception offsite to follow at 2 p.m. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Niagara Historical Society, Newark Neighbours, or your local food bank. Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at [www.morganfuneral.com](http://www.morganfuneral.com).



### Calvin 'Cal' Kane



KANE, Calvin (Cal) — We are heartbroken to acknowledge the passing of Cal on March 10, 2026, at St. Joseph Health Hamilton at the age of 82, after a three-year journey with Esophageal cancer. We were hoping for more days.

Love of Julia's life for 47 years. Devoted father of Chris (Annie), Matthew (Taryn), and Paul Kane (d. 2024). Beloved stepfather of Aaron Miller (Wanda), Jovian Miller (Laura) and Ethan Miller (2014). Adored grandfather of Brandon, Jasmyn

(James Fletcher), Taylor (Mike Burton) Riley and Charlotte Kane

Cherished (Step) Grandpa of Jenna (Alex), Rachel, Grace, James, Rosie and Annabelle Miller. GGP of Max and Eleanor Burton and Portia and Scarlett Fletcher. Dear brother of Avalon Luby, (Larry) (Spokane, Washington).

Fondly remembered by nieces, nephews, cousins and many friends.

Cal was born in Calgary, raised in Vancouver and moved to Toronto for College. He was very well respected in the Cardiac Device Industry and was a leader in shaping the pacing and defibrillator medical community through educational symposiums. He loved to travel, ski, scuba, snorkel and was an avid videographer. Cal turned his energy to golf in Florida, Thornhill and St. Davids and any opportunity around the world. Cal loved his gardens, ponds, birds, Bella and Bear, and always Julia. He led by example all his life and his goodness is his legacy.

"Every day is a Gift"

In keeping with Cal's wishes, cremation has taken place. A funeral mass will be held at St. Vincent De Paul Church, 73 Picton St., Niagara-on-the-Lake on Friday March 20, 2026, at 11 a.m. Internment in the church columbarium to follow.

A reception will be held at The Church Parish Hall, across the street, at 22 Davy Street from 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. As an expression of sympathy, those who wish may make a memorial donation to the CAMH or The Juravinski Cancer Centre Hamilton. Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at [www.morganfuneral.com](http://www.morganfuneral.com).



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