



The Lake Report

DISERO MAKES HISTORY:

A CHAT WITH NOTL'S FIRST FEMALE LORD MAYOR



Penny Coles Staff

Change was what the voters wanted in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and change was what they got — there will be a new look in the council chamber when meetings resume in December.

Betty Disero will lead seven new councillors, with only John Wiens, last term's deputy lord mayor, returning to the table — this time in fourth place.

Disero, the first female lord mayor not only for Niagara-on-the-Lake but for the country — another first for a town already steeped in historic

milestones — will be joined by Deputy Lord Mayor Clare Cameron, forming a female duo at the helm, which is also a first for NOTL.

Grape-grower and retiring police officer Erwin Wiens, Gary Burroughs who also brings experience to the table, Wendy Cheropita, Stuart McCormack, Allan Bisback and Norm Arsenault will join them on council.

After one term as councillor, Disero took 4,169 votes — slightly more than 50 per cent.

Continued on Page 2

ELECTION RESULTS ICYMI:

Disero 50.14% of votes
Darte 32.99%
Turner 16.86%

Full results on Page 3.

Disero clears smoke surrounding plans for cannabis retail

Richard Harley Editor

Newly elected Lord Mayor Betty Disero says when it comes to cannabis, Niagara-on-the-Lake isn't entirely opposed to having local dispensaries, despite a circulation of rumours that the new council plans to ban the industry entirely from town.

The reality, Disero said, is that she wants council to make sure it's not jumping into something without knowing what the effect is going to be on the town, residents and Niagara's known and established industries like wine and spirits.

"I would recommend to council that we need to figure the situation out first ... it's so new."

An information package sent to council members on October laid some basic ground rules for the privatization of cannabis retail stores — another issue that seems to be of confusion to many Ontarians.

Currently Doug Ford has approved the privatization of the cannabis industry in Ontario, meaning anyone who applies and gets a licence could open up shop — even downtown on Queen Street.

And without an updated Official Plan that includes rules surrounding marijuana stores, there "could be 10 stores that open up on the main strip," said Disero.

According to the package sent to council, privatized stores will be able to open in April of 2019.

Disero said she simply wants to make sure there are some ground rules in place and find out what kind of power municipalities will have to govern these laws.

According to the information package, municipal governments will have the ability to opt in or out of cannabis sales in their community by Jan. 22, 2019.

"If municipalities opt out at this time, they can opt in at a later date yet to be set ... If municipalities opt in, they cannot opt out at a later date," the report says.

Disero said this is really her main concern.

"If 10 people open shop, we can't close them down after that's happened."

"If we were talking about one OCS (Ontario Cannabis

Store) this wouldn't even be an issue," she said.

Disero said she is no prude, and admits she thinks most people have tried marijuana in some form in their lives.

Even Disero tried it when she was in high school, she said.

"But it's not something for me. I didn't like the feeling ... and it's not something for everyone."

Disero said some of her other concerns are whether or not the newly legal drug will have a negative effect on people, including minors, who may feel more "peer pressure" to try cannabis, now that it is legally acceptable to smoke, and even sold by the government.

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Niagara-on-the-Lake's cannabis industry uncertain.



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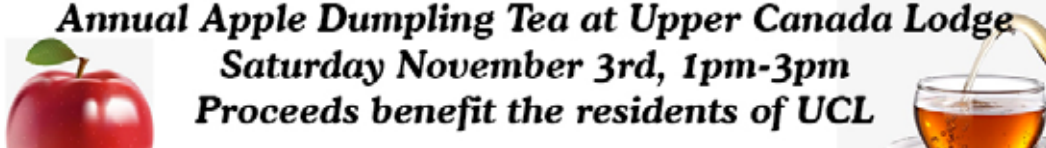
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Disero Cont'd: Lord mayor to hit ground running

Penny Coles
Staff

Continued from Front Page

Incumbent Pat Darte earned 2,743 votes, 32.99 per cent of the 8,349 ballots cast in a town of 14,213 voters. Daniel Turner finished third with 1,402 votes.

NOTL had the highest turnout of voters in the region, at almost 59 per cent, while Pelham saw the biggest change, sweeping out every incumbent, including mayor, Town and Regional councillors.

Although an election outcome is never a certainty, Disero says she was feeling pretty confident heading into the last few days of campaigning, after knocking on doors and speaking to people who were interested, engaged and often supportive. A Toronto city councillor for 18 years and a Toronto public school trustee for three years before that, she says she learned early in her career that the candidate who gets out to knock on doors early has a good chance of winning.

"People want to talk to you," Disero says.

She estimates she knocked on 300 to 400 doors every day for two months, hitting not only the villages but some of the concessions, firelanes, Lakeshore Road, Four Mile Creek Road, York Road and Queenston Road.

"That's the way I won — through hard work."

She's not lord mayor yet — the new council officially takes over Dec. 1, but a day after the election she was already being asked about the title, one that was apparently legislated for NOTL by the province, although details of the history of the appellation are a little uncertain. Historically, in the U.K., the title remains lord mayor, whether for a male or female. Lady mayor is used in the U.K. for the wife or consort of the mayor. Lord mayor will be her title, Disero says, "and I accept that."

Disero spent a good part of her first post-election day at the NOTL community centre — first at a Rotary Club meeting with discussion about one of the club's main priorities (eradicating polio) and then sitting down with The Lake Report to talk about her goals for the next term of council.

Disero believes doing her homework, researching issues, listening to residents and bringing their needs to council were what helped her earn the right to lead the town for



Betty Disero will be sworn in as lord mayor in December. (Richard Harley)

"John Wiens is knowledgeable about public works, says Disero, and Burroughs 'knows where the bodies are buried at the Region.' He'll be a real help in that department."

BETTY DISERO

the next four years, along with organizing or attending many public events and heading or sitting on committee during the past term.

But that, she says, "is who I am."

And it isn't about to change, she says — residents can expect to see the same level of energy, organizing and participating in events, committee work and gathering knowledge about issues — her workload is about to increase, and she couldn't be more thrilled.

At 61, Disero exudes energy. She got that from her mother and grandmother, she says, and believes it will come in handy as she faces the challenges ahead of her.

"This will be a tougher, bigger responsibility, with two councils involved (including a seat at the Region). I will do my best to get back to everybody who contacts me, because I know as a constituent, the worst thing is to send an email to someone and not hear back, although I might need people to give me a little nudge sometimes."

She's already champing at

the bit to begin, and keeps thinking of all the many issues she wants to get started on, "but then I have to remind myself, I can't do that yet, so I put it on my list."

In the month or so until the December council meeting, the new council members will be going through orientation sessions. Disero hopes they will get some guidance on the code of conduct, so they will know and understand it.

"I don't want them to unknowingly do something inappropriate," she says.

Then there's understanding the budget process, which will require a quick learning curve, because on the long list of things to do, it's at the top. It will be the first issue to come to the new council, and is expected to be approved by the end of December.

She's confident of the new council members, though, she says. "They're a smart and bright group of people who will catch on quickly," noting they have also already demonstrated respect for each other and even friendship during the pre-election events.

Disero's face lights up at the mention of Cameron, and her value to the new council.

"She's bright, she's confident, she does her research, and when she speaks she knows her subject. I'm thrilled to have her on council." Cameron too is anxious to get going, and the two have already scheduled a meeting for later in the week to begin discussions.

John Wiens is knowledgeable about public works,

says Disero, and Burroughs "knows where the bodies are buried at the Region. He'll be a real help in that department." She said Erwin Wiens knows growers, and he uses the irrigation system, which is a big issue in town. Wendy Cheropita is a strategic thinker, Al Bisback and Norm Arsenault are smart men and bring their own skill sets, and Stuart McCormack is already thinking way ahead.

"There is so much positive energy in this group. This council is made up of colleagues in every sense of the word. They will come together as a team that will move the agenda forward like no other council I've ever known in my career."

Each member of council will bring something different to the table, says Disero, and if there is ever outside expertise needed, "they'll know where to find it."

There are other big issues once the budget is approved, including some left over from last term, such as the updated draft Official Plan, which she expects to come to the committee-of-the-whole January meeting. She and council members will all be seeing it for the first time, and she hopes over the Christmas holiday, they will spend some time reading it, as she expects to. There will be master plans and secondary plans to be prepared, which will get the town to the vision set out in the OP, she says.

Also on her list is the community planning permit system, which alters the development process so that developers apply for zoning

amendments, provide design details and a site plan at the same time, so when councilors make a zoning decision they have all the information they need. Currently, a zoning amendment can be approved, leaving council to deal with an inappropriate design when it's well along into the process.

And then, of course, there's Randwood. Two Sisters Resort Corp. provided a revised plan in August and staff were expected to schedule an open house and public forum early in the term — the process was delayed because of the election. Disero said she believes Two Sisters jumped too early to the appeals tribunal as it was their decision to submit revised drawings. Two Sisters has also appealed the Town's notice to initiate heritage designate for four properties.

"My hope would be that the appeals tribunal (Local Planning Appeals Tribunal) sends it back to council, so we can do our job and conduct an appropriate review of the application."

She's also concerned about an onslaught of development proposals likely to start coming before council in January, she says. Developers are smart enough to avoid council during the lead-up to an election, so there are probably a few "waiting in the wings, and we need to be ready for them. It's about slowing down the rush, taking a breath until we get some plans in place. The community planning permit system is good for both sides. It allows the developer to go to the planning department with one stop, and it also gives us a level of protection. We know what we're approving."

Sure to resurface early in the term is the urban tree bylaw, which was discussed over a period of years but which council didn't approve when it was presented to them in September. Much talked about during the campaign, there was never any intention of it being applied in the rural areas, says Disero. She hopes the next draft urban tree bylaw will incorporate some of the suggestions made by Coun. Jim Collard in September, with less of an impact on residents but the ability to prevent developers from clear-cutting before they build.

The Town also needs a master transportation plan, built around the Regional system and its plans for the future; the St. Davids pool is on the list, in conjunction with discussion of what other facilities are needed in

the Lions Park, and options that could include a public meeting place, a splash pad, and even a Saturday farmers market, says Disero. "I think that would be great."

Other issues that surfaced during the campaign — a sidewalk from the Cannery Park subdivision to the Lions Park, parking in the Cannery and grinder pumps are still troubling St. Davids residents. Diesel buses drive through Queenston at the rate of one every four or five minutes some days on their way to the jet boat dock, and Bevan Heights has fence issues. Paxton Lane residents want an encroachment agreement on some Town land that is not being used, and throughout the town, there are traffic problems and heritage protection concerns. In the Old Town residents want calming measures on King and Rye Streets, while Virgil residents on Andres and Henry Streets are concerned about their neighbourhoods being used as thoroughfares, and in subdivisions some residents want sidewalks and others don't.

Disero says she can point to almost any street in each community in town where there are problems to be solved. "And we'll get through it all," she says.

While the Official Plan is the most significant issue for the town, the Region may be the biggest challenge for Disero. Along with the draft OP she'll be studying up on Regional issues, she says. The tainted hiring of the regional CAO and recent contract extension, expenses at both the Region and Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority and other issues have led to several new Regional councillors, so she will be in good company. Sitting at the table with new faces and a different type of issue will provide the learning curve for Disero, but the process is nothing new to her. Any decisions made as a result of a closed-door discussion must be voted on in public, and if a councillor is not satisfied with what has gone on in private, that's the opportunity to "set the record straight."

Depending on the subject matter, the appropriate alternative to a public discussion may be to go directly to the integrity commissioner, where it remains confidential. "It's not appropriate to disrespect a member of council in a public forum," says Disero, "but you have to have people who are not afraid to follow the appropriate process to do the right thing."



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ICYMI: Complete election results

Richard Harley
Editor

The town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has a new council. Betty Disero led the polls election night ending up with 50.14 per cent of

votes. Disero will be joined by mostly new council members Clare Cameron, Erwin Wiens, Gary Burroughs, Wendy Cheropita, John Wiens, Stuart McCormack, Allan Bisback, and Norm Arsenault.

Cameron will act as deputy lord mayor to Disero.

Complete election results are as follows, from the Town Clerk's Declaration of Election Results.

The town saw a 59.06 per cent voter turnout, one of the

highest for municipal elections in Ontario with 8,394 ballots cast; up nearly 10 per cent from 2014.

The only results not included are the French school board's, which saw acclaimed trustees take the positions.

Candidate	Number of Votes (out of 8,394)	Percentage of Votes
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For lord mayor

Betty Disero	4,169	50.14
Pat Darte	2,743	32.99
Daniel Turner	1,402	16.86

For town councillor

Clare Cameron	4,429	8.68
Erwin Wiens	4,169	8.18
Gary Burroughs	3,879	7.61
John Wiens	3,145	6.17
Wendy Cheropita	3,144	6.17
Stuart McCormack	2,915	5.72
Allan Bisback	2,631	5.16
Norm Arsenault	2,462	4.83
Sandra O'Connor	2,431	4.77
Dennis Dick	2,357	4.63
Andrew Niven	2,341	4.59
Terry Flynn	2,333	4.58
Gus Koroneos	2,270	4.46
Martin Mazza	2,031	3.99
Anne Kurtz-Just	1,946	3.82
Paolo Miele	1,690	3.32
Crispin Bottomley	1,361	2.67
Mark Brown	1,085	2.13
Katherine Reid	942	1.85
Terry Davis	771	1.51
Simon Bentall	747	1.47
Lauren Goettler	682	1.34
Jordon Williams	571	1.12
Bernhard Peters	429	0.84
Rob MacInnis	186	0.37

For regional councillor

Gary Zelepa Jr.	2,408	31.80
David Lepp	2,249	29.82
Mark Cherney	1,655	21.96
Chuck McShane	1,243	16.43

For District School Board of Niagara trustee

Lora Campbell	2,098	17.70
Jonathan Fast	1,946	16.42
Alex Bradnam	1,789	15.09
Kate Baggot	1,425	12.02
Jennifer Ajandi	1,064	8.98
David Israelson	1,008	8.50
David Waddington	775	6.54
John Netherway	598	5.04
Norman St. George	530	4.47
Sumeth Tanyaovalaksna	352	2.97
Roberto Contreras	269	2.27

For Niagara Catholic District School Board trustee

Eddie Galati	321	22.85
Dan Moody	311	22.14
Tony Caruso	297	21.14
Frank Fera	238	16.94
John Shalala	238	16.94



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The Lake Report

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 Design: Richard Harley
 Contributors: Richard Harley, Penny Coles, Lauren O'Malley,
 Rob Lamond, Denise Ascenzo, Owen Bjorgan.

Editorial: Clearing the air



Richard Harley
 Editor

It has come to the attention of the paper's editorial staff that some residents have been spreading rumours that the paper is funded by Benny Marotta, the owner of Solmar Development Corp. This is defamatory and untrue. The paper is solely independently owned by myself, Richard Harley a.k.a. Harley Davidson and has not received financing from the Marotta family.

While I can understand the leap people might make

to that hypothesis, given that Marotta was apparently involved in the opening and closing of a small paper in Caledon, I can assure all readers there are currently no additional investors or shareholders in The Lake Report or Niagara Now.

Presently the paper finances itself by selling advertisements, both in print and online, as well as offering sponsored story content.

All sponsored stories are labelled as such.

The paper also receives some donations from local readers and residents who support independent, hyper-localized journalism.

To this date, our largest donation has been \$500.

As the sole owner of The Lake Report and Niagara Now, it is my hope the paper will outlast any particular ongoing development issue.

The Lake Report should

thrive in our unique and historical town for centuries, outliving many of its editors.

For those who weren't at our launch event in September, a common theme throughout the night's speeches was the impact this area has had on journalism across Canada. The Upper Canada Gazette was Ontario's first newspaper — the fourth in Canada — and was printed here for a short period before production was moved across Lake Ontario to York (now Toronto). The Mackenzie Printery Museum in Queenston is a landmark of the first editorialized paper in our country, run by William Lyon Mackenzie.

Our town has typically had a strong tradition in print newspapers with strong readerships behind them.

We still have that.

And then there's another uniqueness of our town, in

that so many retired professionals from Toronto (and the world) come to live here.

Many of these people have spent their lives reading, keeping up with current events and staying politically active in the places they've lived.

In short, when you combine all of that, it's no surprise the town has helped make a success of this paper. It is my intent to keep The Lake Report alive for those residents, and preserve a large part of the history of our town — a part that's often overshadowed and overlooked.

Anyone who wants to talk further about the paper is welcome to stop in the office or get in touch with me to ask questions. I believe it is important for newspaper editors to be easy to contact and open to having conversations with residents, and intend to keep communications open.

Instead of believing rumours, give us a call and find out for yourself.

editor@niagaranow.com

Message to candidates

Thank you to everybody who participated in our recent municipal elections: the new candidates, the incumbents who put their names forward to run again, and those who by choice or otherwise are not returning after years of service to their community.

Those of you who attended the candidates meetings, met with them and asked questions of them, will know that not only were there a large number of candidates from whom to choose, but an extremely high caliber of candidates to make that choice difficult.

It's now time for all of us to move forward and for those who will represent us to collaborate for the sake of this great municipality, so it can continue to prosper as the best place to live, work and visit in this country of ours.

This very special town attracts millions of visitors each year, thanks to the dedication, skills and passion of the many who sought and accepted the responsibility of participating in municipal government in years past. Those who have agreed to bring their talents to this term of council will continue to shape the town into the future.

As your community newspaper, we at The Lake Report felt privileged to be a part of the election process. The decisions which will be made by our new municipal and regional government directly impact the quality of our lives, and we look forward to reporting on the stories of local significance in the future.

The Lake Report

Niagara Parks Commission chair must be chosen with care

Penny Coles
 OPINION

With an election behind us, we know our municipal leaders for the next four years, but who will be the next chair of the Niagara Parks Commission?

We don't get to vote for that very important position — it's a provincial appointment, and one that has been in extremely competent, trustworthy and principled hands since 2011.

Janice Thomson, also doing an exemplary job as president of our Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce, became chair of the NPC following almost two decades of troubling reports on its governance. There had been allegations of financial improprieties, commissioners were removed and audits of board expenses and procurement and contracting processes undertaken, under NDP, Conservative and Liberal provincial governments going back to the late 1990s.

Problems at the NPC became front and centre when a decision was made to renew, untendered, a 25-year lease to the Maid of the Mist tour-boat operation.

As reported in the Globe and Mail in 2009, auditing firm KPMG conducted a governance review and found several ethical breaches that had led to a drop in trust in the agency. One recommendation to get it back on track was that commissioners should be appointed based on competency, not on the 'old boys' club' method used too often for political appointments.

One change in recent years, for the better, is that the NPC chair position is a limited term, and must be advertised to attract the best candidates — as long as the selection is based on getting the best person for the job.

However, it's still the Province that appoints the chair, based on advice from Ministry of Tourism staff, and that doesn't eliminate the possibility of cronyism, especially following so closely on the heels of a provincial election that prompted wide-spread political change.

The mandate of the NPC is to preserve land and enhance the natural beauty of Niagara Falls and almost 60 kilometres of the Niagara River corridor from Niagara-on-the-Lake to Fort Erie, including greenspace and access to the river, all of which is of great significance to the cultural landscape of Niagara and the successful tourism industry that has grown up around it.

Included in the huge responsibility the NPC has to the province are the many attractions, restaurants, retail outlets and natural trails that have been established since its inception in 1885. It is also tasked with generating sufficient revenue to continue funding the many ongoing projects required to maintain and upgrade its properties and environmental initiatives, and the 1,700 employees who contribute to the stewardship of NPC assets, all at no cost to the taxpayer.

Under the category of innovation, the NPC should be rewarded for finding a positive

side to the ash borer disease, using 6,000 trees on parks property felled due to the disease, along with recycled Christmas trees, to create wetlands for marine habitat along the river's edge. And under the category of fiscal responsibility to the province and for all of us who live in the area and enjoy NPC properties and attractions, the agency generated a surplus of \$17 million last year and is on track to exceed that this year.

Even the Niagara Parks police, who provide services to a portion of NOTL and along the length of the parkway, do so at no cost to taxpayers.

While continuing to carry out the mandate of the NPC, the commission, under the leadership of Thomson, has emerged from the cloud that enveloped the agency when she took over.

During her tenure, the commission has adopted rules for conflict of interest and conduct that exceed legislated requirements, and have been approved by the Province. The commission also continues to be compliant with regard to expenses incurred by commissioners and staff.

But now, after seven years of stellar leadership, Thomson's term is up, and the position, if not posted by press time, will likely be shortly. She is free to apply, but if she has decided whether or not she's going to, she's not saying publicly — the decision in this political climate could be about more than the fact that she loves her job and does it brilliantly. There may be — are certainly rumoured to

be — people interested in the high-profile job.

Politicians who have been chairs or members of other Niagara governing bodies through their past elected positions, which they have lost in the recent municipal election, and also may be part of that old boys' club KPMG recommended be avoided.

Thomson is known to play by the rules and not bow to political pressure. It's deeply unsettling that a premier who thought even for a moment that it would be a good idea to allow developers to pave over Greenbelt lands might also think it's okay to allow, even encourage, development along the parkway, and who might find a candidate less interested in conservation and the environment than in selling out to developers and kow-towing to the upper echelons of government.

Thomson has successfully sought to restore public trust in the NPC and maintain something irreplaceable, and of great value to Niagara and all of Ontario.

Hopefully Thomson wants another term at the helm and her value to the NPC will be recognized and rewarded — but whoever is appointed to the position should be chosen with great care, by someone who thoroughly understands and accepts the importance of the NPC mandate and all it represents, and the level of leadership required.



Letters to the editor:

I think this is the first time I've ever written to a newspaper, however your interview with Benny Marotta inspired and motivated me. While the story is well written, one does readily draw the conclusion that Benny feels he's somewhat of a savior for the town and is displeased that the residents don't hold the same opinion to the extent he's feeling somewhat victimized.

- Glenn Ashenhurst

In response to "A Q&A with Benny Marotta"

Mr. Marotta is entirely correct when he states that NOTL "is losing the charm it's been known for" and "that there's a big change in the community."

Perhaps that can be attributed directly to the factory-line production process and cookie-cutter style development of Solmar Development Corp., which designs subdivisions with bland homes that don't fit the area.

It doesn't seem to matter where Mr. Marotta builds, the developments all look the same — generic houses with no character, zero curb appeal, and every single street has that same boring feel to it where no one looks at them with interest as they pass by. Cannery Park subdivision is a perfect example of a huge lack of innovative designs where the all architecture and streetscape is uniform. Affordable housing should not equate with ugly housing. Accommodating population growth is badly needed but we don't need these types of uninspiring and tasteless development to balloon across NOTL.

- Helen Arsenault

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Cont'd: Disero clears smoke surrounding local cannabis dispensaries

Richard Harley
Editor

Continued from Front Page

With regards to marijuana being a gateway drug, Disero said she "doesn't know" if that's true or if there is also now a potential for people to think other drugs are fine.

"It's a legal business now," Disero said.

Some residents have expressed concerns that the Town, if it was to not allow cannabis retail within the municipal boundary, would be — to its detriment — ignoring a proven revenue stream that could positively affect the economy of NOTL.

"Not only would it be irresponsible to ignore the potential income from the product, there are budding partnerships between Canopy Growth [which operates Tweed in NOTL] and Niagara College, which opened the country's first cannabis production program," said a local smoker.

Disero said she believes the partnership between Canopy Growth and Niagara College



is a positive for the area in that it's another reason for our young professionals to stay in the area.

"We're an exporter of intelligence," Disero said.

"We need to keep some of that around."

The cannabis industry just may peak that interest.

For residents who might be disappointed, Disero notes

it's still easy to get online, and for medical patients not much is going to change at all — "and they can each grow four plants," Disero adds.

The federal law surrounding cannabis allows up to four plants per household, and citizens can grow both indoors and outdoors.

All in all, if council motions not to allow cannabis

retail, it's really about making sure the Town doesn't walk itself into a situation it can't undo, Disero said.

She said it's important to make sure the cannabis industry doesn't have a negative effect on tourism and our established wine industry.

Legion calls bells to action Nov. 11



Al Howse, legion president talks in front of the cenotaph on Remembrance Day 2017. (Richard Harley)

Richard Harley
Editor

On Nov. 11, 1918 — one hundred years ago — church bells erupted across England in celebration of the end of four years of war.

One hundred years later, the Royal Canadian Legion is calling to action bells across the country to ring in solidarity and commemoration of the war and those who fought for our freedom.

"[The legion] is looking to recognize the Centenary of the Armistice ending World War I on November 11 2018, by having communities

across the country ring bells at sunset on that day," said local legion (Branch 124) president Al Howse.

"To this end, we are asking each church in and around the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake to ring their church bells at 5 p.m. on Nov. 11 as many as 100 times."

Howse, who served in the Canadian army during the Second World War, hopes bells will be heard across town.

"It is important as Canadians for us to remember this date for the contribution that our ancestors made during the 1914-1918 conflict. Of the 424,000 that went overseas,

66,000 were killed and 172,000 were wounded. Our population at the time was only eight million people," said Howse.

The legion will hold its Remembrance Day services at 10:45 a.m. and 12:45 p.m. on Nov. 11, gathering first at the Old Town cenotaph, and then at the base of the staircase at Queenston Heights near Brock's Monument.

The bell event will only happen this year, notes Howse, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the armistice that ended the war.

"We hope as many as possible can participate, if only



to stop at the sound of the bells and reflect on the 100 years that have past, and how it affected your family."

"We also encourage people throughout the day to go into the local cemeteries and seek out the graves of those who served in the First World War."

The graves of those who served will be marked with small Canadian flags.

"At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we will remember them," said Howse, quoting the poem *For the Fallen* by Laurence Binyon.

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The Lake Report would also like to acknowledge and thank those who have made financial contributions to the paper, whether through our donate button online or by mailing us a cheque.

The paper encourages all residents to support the paper through a "voluntary subscription" annually.

For those interested in supporting us, we suggest \$1 per issue, per household, at 52 issues per year, which we strive to get to. That's only \$52 — less than most people spend on pizza and wings — and will help us grow to a weekly edition and ensure all households receive a copy.

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Rotary rocks at Queen's Royal Park

Penny Coles
Staff

On a sunny autumn Tuesday morning, with one of the most beautiful views in the country as a backdrop, the Rotary Club of Niagara-on-the-Lake celebrated its 25th anniversary gift to the town — a limestone seating area on the beach at Queen's Royal Park.

Rotary community service chair Paul Lalonde came up with the vision to recognize the club's milestone, and members jumped in to back the project, helping to raise the funds to cover the \$21,500 cost.

"I had the idea July 3, and we're standing here at the end of October and it's happened," said Lalonde.

It's a busy park, used by locals and visitors from all over the world, he said. The stone seating is a focal point that will give people a place to rest, enjoy the view or a beautiful sunset, "feel at peace and relax in tranquility."

On the face of the Rotary stone, a centrepiece of the seating area, said Lalonde, will be engraved the words "Have you made some-



Members of the Rotary Club of NOTL gathered at Queen's Royal Park Tuesday to celebrate the opening of the updated beach area, a project the club undertook to celebrate its 25th anniversary. (Penny Coles)

body's life BETTER today?" "It's a simple question that we hope will lead to reflection and promote goodwill that we hope will multiply within the community and the world."

That's the goal of the Rotary club, he said — to make people's lives better every

day, and the seating area of the park will help to do that. The stone with the plaque will even have a little ridge at the top, and it's placed in the perfect position to rest a phone on top, to allow people to take selfies while enjoying the seating area, with the gazebo as a backdrop.

Rotary members not only raised the money for the project but gathered at the beach to do what work they could, including raking sand, aided by Roxburgh Landscaping to move the stones.

J.B. Hopkins of the Town's parks department called Lalonde's vision "an

excellent idea effectively executed," and said it was a pleasure working with Rotary members on the park enhancement.

The celebration was also an opportunity to announce the name of the area — it was an idea of Lord Mayor-elect Betty Disero, who came up

with Rotary Rocks — fitting, since Rotary donated the rocks, and because Rotary does rock, said Lalonde.

Whether that becomes an official name or one that is used by locals, Lalonde said he can imagine a time when residents say "let's meet at the rocks."

Photos: Kidsport Halloween event a local hit



Kidsport Niagara held a Halloween bash in the old Willowbank mansion last weekend. The event raised funds for children to play sports within the Niagara region. (Facebook)



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Zalepa hopes to see trust, faith restored in Regional government

Penny Coles
Staff

Having a “strong voice” is an essential quality for an effective politician, but given the state of Regional government and the many issues that Niagara-on-the-Lake needs addressed, Gary Zalepa knows one voice will not be enough.

Elected to represent Niagara-on-the-Lake at the Regional council table, Zalepa spoke often during the election campaign of the need to work with the mayor and Town council as a unified voice. It’s too important a time for the Region and the Town to do otherwise, he said.

Niagara-on-the-Lake might be a small municipality, but it pays a large chunk of revenue to the Region and also provides a huge benefit as a successful tourism destination, said Zalepa. Yet it hasn’t been receiving the infrastructure investment it needs to sustain it.

“This is why I wanted to run for Regional council, to help NOTL get what it needs from the Region. It’s an opportunity to bring my experience and the way I work to change things.”

He’s excited by the reaction he received from residents when he was out knocking on doors, he said. “There is so much more energy than when I was out there campaigning in 2006. People wanted to talk, they’d want to go to get a clipboard so they could ask me questions. I’ve never seen anything like that before. People are so much more engaged, and that’s encouraging.”

It also indicates residents are concerned, and they wanted to hear answers on which to base their votes, he said. They asked about many issues, but in general, they asked him what he could do to make a difference that hasn’t been tried in the past.

Post-election, the big change around the Regional council table should provide the opportunity for change, he said, with many new people who also want to work collaboratively to improve the public’s perception of the Region, to “act in a manner that is much more transparent.”

Zalepa said if a council meeting goes behind closed doors, he will ensure there is a valid reason under the municipal act, which has “fairly strict guidelines,” and that any decisions are made



Gary Zalepa, elected NOTL’s Regional councillor, is looking forward to tackling issues that are sure to surface early in the new term of Regional council. (Penny Coles)

in public. “That will be my gauge, to ensure decisions are made in public in a fair and transparent manner,” he said.

“It’s so important to restore trust and faith in Regional government, for a variety of reasons.”

It’s no secret the province is “keeping an eye” on regional governments and that there could be change coming, said Zalepa, and it’s important for the Region to demonstrate it’s doing a good job “so we make that change, and not have it dictated to us.”

Electing a chair will be one of the first items on the Regional agenda, said Zalepa, and with so many newly-elected councillors, there hasn’t been the early chatter that might be expected. No one has reached out to him to lobby for that position, but he said he expects lobbying to start soon.

The outcome of the controversy surrounding the hiring of CAO Carmen D’Angelo and the extension to his contract was an issue that came up often when he was campaigning, said Zalepa. “Definitely it will come up early on the agenda, but I don’t have any first-hand

information. I only know what the public knows,” he said, and he will be in good company with new colleagues who will all need to be brought up-to-date on options before making any decisions.

Another question residents asked was about long-term care, said Zalepa, and he will be investigating the Regional plan. Whether it’s Upper Canada Lodge or another facility, NOTL residents need to know there will be options for them to “age in place. That resonated during the campaign. We need a solution for NOTL.”

As for traffic infrastructure, his strategy, with the backing of the lord mayor and Town council, will be to talk about having funding for improvements moved up in the budget.

“We have to push for that. The part we play in the Region might be a small part, but we’re a significant contributor to the Region, and to the success of the Region through our own tourism success. And having the mayor and I on the same page will be the key to that.”

Having two strong voices at the Region, two votes in the same direction, working

together in a constructive dialogue toward the same goal “is our strategy, and I think it will make a difference.”

Whatever the traffic solutions are, they will have to be part of a long-term multi-faceted approach that could include a third lane on Niagara Stone Road, a roundabout in St. Davids and the opening of Mewburn Road bridge with upgrades to Concession 6, “but we’ll let the engineers work on that. I would rather push for when it’s going to happen and having the funding advanced so it can happen.”

The town’s traffic problems are interconnected, he said, and “it’s so important to have a master plan instead of a one-off solution that can cause more problems.”

Another question he was often asked was regarding GO Transit, and how it would fit into the Town and Regional transportation system. Residents “have a desire to see transit integration, with a transit hub that allows them to access Regional transit and GO Transit.”

GO Transit is not a done deal, he said — the Region needs to work on a system, including the location of stations, that will show the Province and MetroLinks it can provide the ridership through integrated transit. “That’s a key part of the puzzle. The Region needs to be committed.”

There will be an open house for the Region to show the public some preliminary plans regarding stations and hubs, he said, at the Casablanca Winery in Grimsby Nov. 8 at 5:30 p.m.

Also high on Zalepa’s agenda is making the Region competitive with other regions in attracting successful investment and economic development, which requires an effective transit system to draw key employers to invest in the region.

“If we can bring people from the GTA, it would be a big game-changer for Niagara. Other regions have been doing the same. It’s time for the Niagara Region to get there too. I think we’re really close.”

Zalepa says his hope is that four years from now, with improved transportation and day care bringing good jobs to the Region, “we’ll be able to say we can live and work here, and age in place. That will be success for the Region.”

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Darte's community involvement to continue

Penny Coles
Staff

Outgoing Lord Mayor Pat Darte began his career in the family funeral home, where his job entailed helping people in their grief, sometimes sharing what would be the worst time in their lives while they coped with tragedies most of us can only imagine.

It taught him the difference between what is trivial and what is important. He learned not to take each new day with loved ones for granted — a cliché, maybe, but not when you face daily those who have had that opportunity ripped out from under them — and to focus on the positive.

So losing an election is not going to knock him back.

Over the course of four years Darte became accustomed to being a politician and leading a municipality, although there were some of the more negative aspects of the political game he had no interest in mastering, and it will take him “about four days” to adjust to no longer being the lord mayor of Niagara-on-the-Lake, he says.

Darte is first and foremost a businessman, a go-getter who is used to making decisions and getting things done. He learned quickly in his role as lord mayor that it's an entirely different ball game to head a municipality, where process, process, process is always the key, where legislation dictates decisions, and the downside to process is it does not move quickly.

The day after the election he was back in his world,



Lord Mayor Pat Darte serves up some slices of giant cake on Canada Day. (Richard Harley)

already juggling new ideas and projects in his head while taking a transmission apart on his garden tractor at the farm so he can get the lawn mowed.

When asked about his plans to fill the gap left by the time-consuming job of being lord mayor, spending time with his kids, grandchildren and girlfriend are at the forefront. Working on the family horse farm is also on his list, catching up on the jobs that have fallen by the wayside and getting the farm ready for winter.

He has another business he hopes to expand, a hockey tournament that brings visitors to NOTL each winter, and some ideas for a couple

of new businesses that are still in his head.

He has some fundraising duties coming up for the Niagara-on-the-Lake Fund, one the Niagara Community Foundation's municipal funds.

Darte has also begun working on Growing Mental Wellness, a new initiative with Steffanie Bjorgan of Red Roof Retreat, focusing on young people. It's early days yet, he says, but they want to get moving quickly and plan to offer support and counselling for youth suffering from mental health problems. Suicide prevention will be one of the elements. The Lord Mayor's Youth Advisory Council is also involved, but the well-

ness program is not a Town initiative, Darte says.

The services will be arranged by Red Roof and offered at its Concession 2 facility. The serious lack of such support services for youth in the Niagara area is a growing problem, says Darte, “and this is something that can't wait. These kids need help now.”

He will continue to be interested in education, and he hopes to see more high school specialty courses such as the one on aviation he helped facilitate with the Catholic school board that will begin offering courses at the Niagara District Airport in January. He still sees that as a way to further offer edu-

cational opportunities locally, despite not having a local high school.

Reflecting on the last four years, Darte says of course he wishes it had ended differently. He gets that people saw what didn't get done, rather than the many accomplishments, but blames some of that on “misunderstandings,” including the Randwood Estate issue. Council has to work within legislation, and the zoning amendment required for the John Street hotel proposal was only about a small difference in height — all the other details were ones that had already been approved. Yet councillors were blamed for not supporting heritage and for

not stopping the development, although there was no way they could.

Another issue he says people misunderstood was the salary of the CAO, who was mentioned in attack ads during the campaign. Council voted unanimously to give her the position, so while they were still paying the previous CAO, Holly Dowd agreed to take on the challenge but did two jobs for the price of one. It didn't cost the Town more, it likely saved money, he says, and although she was new to that job, she had 37 years experience working for the Town, and has done what she was asked to do. Darte says staff morale was low. “Her first task was to get the place back on its feet, and she did that.” One of his regrets, he says, is that the CAO and Town staff have been the victims of some of the nastiness that had no place in the election campaign.

Perhaps the best part of his four-year experience was that although he already knew NOTL was a great community, he got to see it first hand over and over. He saw families who needed help many times, most recently with the Virgil fire that took the home of a local family, and each time, the community jumped in to help. “It wasn't a surprise, I always knew that was the kind of community we live in, but it really touches you when you see it happening.”

Which is why Darte plans to continue his involvement in the community, the part of the job he says he loved — without the politics.

Future looking bright for Dan Turner



Daniel Turner. (Richard Harley)

Penny Coles
Staff

Once you've campaigned to be lord mayor of Niagara-on-the-Lake at the age of 23, what comes next?

Dan Turner hasn't quite made up his mind, but not surprisingly, the confident and articulate young man has lots of options.

Although the conclusion of his election run was not what he was hoping for, he was satisfied with the campaign he ran, he says. He knocked on a lot of doors, met a lot of people with whom he was able to share his ideas, and was able to garner the support of more than 1,400 voters.

NOTL has been his home

most of his life, and he had some positive ideas about change to present to voters, including how to fund a world-class aquatic centre in town.

“I'm feeling optimistic about the future,” he said. “There is definitely more to come.”

The experience has made him want to become more involved in the community, he said, but other than that, “I need time to do some more reflecting. I need to think about what comes next.”

Going to grad school is an option, as is looking for other career opportunities — he currently holds an honours economics degree from Brock University — but

whatever he chooses to do, he has learned some valuable skills while campaigning that will help in the future, including time management.

He learned something important about himself as well. While he has always considered himself a quiet person and an introvert, “I've discovered I'm more of a people person, more of an extrovert than I thought I was.”

The kind remarks and compliments he was given on the campaign trail were great to hear, he adds.

“A lot of people commented that I was well-spoken, and wise beyond my years. That is good to know.”

He also learned something about the community — it's

more diverse than he thought it was.

“I met a lot of people from many places in the world. The town has become more multi-cultured.”

He even met people who suggested they might have a job opportunity for him if the election didn't work out, or who asked him to join their groups or service clubs.

“It's definitely been a very interesting experience,” says Turner.

“I have absolutely no regrets. I'm glad I put my name forward — I got to connect with so many new people in my own home town.”



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Ford protesters gather outside White Oaks



Protesters gathered peacefully outside White Oaks in Niagara-on-the-Lake on Oct. 26 to voice frustration with Ontario Premier Doug Ford's decision to repeal Bill 148, which would have increased the minimum wage to \$15 in the province. Ford had spoken at a NOTL Chamber of Commerce meeting about new road signs to be installed near the border. The signs read: "Welcome to Ontario, Open for Business." Protesters carried signs advocating people to "fight for \$15 and fairness." Among the demonstrators was Kyle Hoskin, unit vice-president for Emterra Environmental with CUPE 1287 and Niagara Falls MPP Wayne Gates. (Alex Lupul/Special to TLR)

Ideas? Submit them.

In the wake of the recent municipal election, which saw a near clean sweep of the incumbent members of town council, the Lake Report would like to know what local issues matter most to residents, and how they'd like to see them solved. We have provided a blank slate for residents to identify five specific areas of concern to them. Let us know what matters to you by either filling these questions out and mailing them to PO Box 724, L0S 1J0 (NOTL post office) or by emailing your answers to editor@niagaranow.com with the subject line "My ideas for NOTL."

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

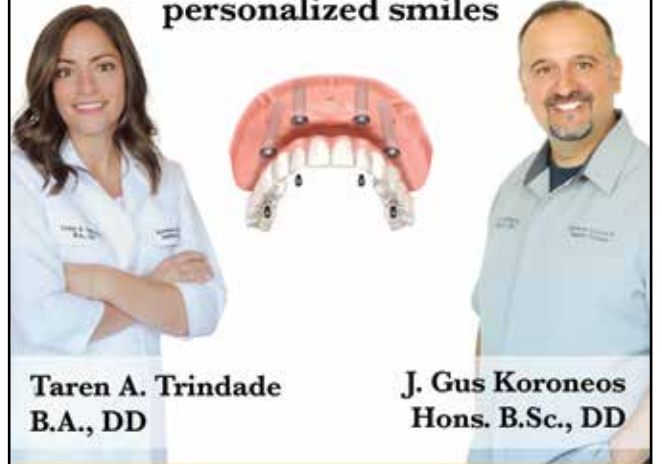
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LOCAL SPOTLIGHT: Ralph Mellanby

Executive producer of Hockey Night in Canada (1967-87)



Richard Harley
Editor

Across the globe, it's safe to say the way people view sports has come leaps and bounds since 1960.

Slow-motion replays, steady aerial shots and speed-measuring devices are just a few of the innovative breakthroughs we now take for granted when we watch our favourite players skate down the ice or hit a ball across a field.

A large part of the credit for these innovations goes to Ralph Mellanby – a local man who has five Emmys under his belt, is in eight halls of fame, was involved in producing the broadcasts for 15 Olympic games, and was the executive director of Hockey Night in Canada for 20 years – with another five years as director.

We have Mellanby to thank for

being able to hear players skates and sticks on the ice, and for commissioning the staple theme song that Hockey Night used for so many years (you know the one) and for a number of other innovations to how Canadians watch our national sport.

We also have him to thank (or blame) for Don Cherry – who Mellanby hired when they both still had colour in their hair.

Mellanby, now 84, could entertain you with hundreds of stories, laced with the names of other iconic visionaries like Rune Arledge of American Broadcasting Company. A particular favourite story is the time he met John Denver – or rather *how* he met John Denver.

It was the Olympics in Yugoslavia, and Mellanby – who had just arrived from the airport to direct the hockey for the games – heard music coming from the room beside him while he was trying to sleep – which he

wasn't too happy about. So, in a hot-headed moment, he threw one of his bags against the wall to let his neighbour know.

Not long after, Mellanby heard a knock on his door.

A man was standing there, and said he was sorry for the bother, but that he really needed his music.

"I said, 'I'm producing hockey here ... no music before 10 a.m. or after 10 at night,'" Mellanby recalls, noting he wasn't very friendly about it.

When the stranger replied he was also there to work on the Olympics show, Mellanby said, "I'm Ralph Mellanby," to which the man replied, "I'm John Denver."

"[Denver] said, 'how would you like a nice beer?' Well this was like manna from heaven to me. 'Cause we weren't allowed to drink on the plane or anything ... so he gave me a Tuborg ale. I never forgot it ... I think I

even had more than one."

There is no shortage of these stories, Mellanby said, and he seems to remember almost all of the people he's met or worked with over the years, largely crediting his tremendous achievements to the people on his team.

Like anything, it's not a one man show, Mellanby says.

Now Mellanby lives a quiet retired life in Queenston with his wife Gillian. His son Scott was a professional NHL hockey player and now continues the family legacy as an executive with the Montreal Canadiens.

Though retired from his 55-year career in television, he still enjoys coordinating a sports tournament or two, as well as speaking at universities.

His friend Ross Robinson said he calls Mellanby "the Commissioner," because he gets involved in so many things.

Without him, we may not

even be able to hear hockey being played. Who knows – when Mellanby talks of how hard he worked to brand Hockey Night as Canada's one true place for hockey, one can't help wonder if Mellanby was the one that *made* hockey into Canada's national sport.

Who's to say?

To finish off the John Denver story, Mellanby hasn't seen him since, but some years later a few of his producer colleagues ran into Denver in Colorado and introduced themselves as such.

After being welcomed in, they asked Denver if he would be interested in filming something for the Canadian airing of the show.

"[Denver] said, 'it'll cost ya.' And they were all listening.

"What' they said."

"One Tuborg ale."

Niagara-on-the-Lake isn't just home to world-class wineries. Some of its residents have also left distinguished marks on the globe in astounding ways. We're fortunate to live in a place that's so beautiful it attracts unique individuals from all walks of life. Local Spotlight will be a regular feature about some of our impressive locals, their careers, family lives and the paths that led them to one of the most beautiful places to live in the world.

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NOTL foundation leaves legacy

Lauren O'Malley
Staff

Barbara Waller, a member of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Healthcare Foundation Board of Directors, holds up a poster marking the opening of the Cottage Hospital in 1950.

"This is an elegy for the hospital which served us well for over 60 years," she says.

"It's sad to see the hospital go, but it was time, and we feel comfortable that the money will go to the better health of the community. Goodbye old hospital."

The NOTL Healthcare (formerly Hospital) Foundation had a surplus of \$920,000 raised in support of patient care at the former NOTL Hospital. Being a community-focused foundation, the decision was made to use the funds for legacy projects with other Niagara-based and -focused foundations.

The money has been divided into two grants of \$460,000 each. One will go to the Niagara Health Foundation, the other to the Niagara Community Foundation.

"These three groups are working together for one great cause — the better health of all Niagara residents," NHF President



Members of the Niagara Community Foundation and the Niagara Health Foundation. (Lauren O'Malley)

and CEO Roger Ali says. "This is a great demonstration that a collaboration of like-minded organizations can work together for the greater good."

The money going to the Niagara Health Foundation will go toward the foundation's Gifts of Extraordinary Care Fund — the goal of which is to purchase a third MRI machine for the Niagara

region. "With these new funds, the legacy of the NOTL Healthcare Foundation will live on well into the future," says NCF Executive Director Bryan Rose.

The gift to the Niagara Community Foundation will go toward an endowment fund and annual disbursements for health-focused charities serving Niagara-

on-the-Lake, as well as an endowment fund to benefit the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Palliative Care Service.

"As we close our doors, we're confident these significant gifts will continue to fulfill the wishes of our donors and continue supporting healthcare needs, including palliative care, in our community," said Waller.

Newark neighbours drive a success

Lauren O'Malley
Staff

Newark Neighbours reaches into our community in a number of ways. Recently they decided to do so physically, with 15 volunteers from Rotary clubs around Ontario and New York State driving to over 50 houses in town to collect gently used goods for the charity.

This first annual "drive" was so successful Newark had to rent a classroom at the old Virgil Public School to store and stage everything the volunteers brought back. "Some houses had as many as 25 boxes loaded up for us to collect," said Cindy Grant, a volunteer at the local organization.

"That classroom is full." Volunteers collected clothing, toys, non-perishable food, and cash donations.

"Speaking of food," said Grant, "we distributed 28 Thanksgiving baskets to local families in need, and are now starting to collect for Christmas."

Grant expects to have around 30 families registered for Christmas baskets, which generally include a turkey and the rest of the fixings for a fine feast, as well as new toys and gifts for kids.

"Families with children give us a wish list and we try to accommodate that," said Grant. "We collect things from donations here and there throughout the year to add to the baskets too."

If you're not able to support a family by donating goods towards a basket, there are other ways to help the charity support local people in need.

"Shop," said Grant. "We have the best deals on clothing in town, and all the proceeds go to our food bank." She indicates her stylish white cotton sweater and dark slacks and said, "I bought all of these here" All of the gently used clothing is donated by members of the community.

Newark Neighbours is located at 310 John St. E., and is open from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday to Friday.

Christmas sale aims to raise funds for African school children

Lauren O'Malley
Staff

Shopping for artisanal Christmas gifts in Niagara-on-the-Lake could help to provide solar-powered lights for children in Burundi, Africa.

The Christmas With Heart fundraising artisan sale takes place on Saturday, Nov. 10 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Cornerstone Community Church's new location in the former Orchard Park church.

Virgil resident Chris Gillespie is partnering with her adult daughters Paige Ruthertford and Jess Gillespie-Bridel to create a meaningful and helpful resource for our own community, as well as for the students of Karubai Harvest School in Africa. Ronald McDonald House will also benefit, with proceeds from the event going to both charities.

The family chose the second charity as a recipient due to a family scare, which landed Gillespie's young

grandson in an extended hospital stay, while his parents found some solace in the nearby Ronald McDonald House. The Karubai school is a current focus of Cornerstone church.

Thirty vendors are committed to the event, and church folk will be cooking up goodies for a bake table as well. A well-stocked raffle table includes donations from each vendor as well as several local businesses.

There is no admission fee, and the building — located at 434 Hunter Rd. — is fully accessible.

There will also be ample parking, free of charge.

The event is family-friendly, to include face painting and photo opportunities with "Princess Elsa" from the animated film Frozen.


A detailed list of vendors can be found on the sale's Facebook event page, www.facebook.com/events/274988663282706/.

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Public skating - 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. - Meridian Credit Union Arena NOTL Ukesters Sunday Ukelele Workshop - 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre Sunday Songs at the Church - 3 p.m. - Silversmith Brewing Co	Council Workshop - 3:30 p.m. - Council Chambers	Table tennis - 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre Rotary Club of NOTL - 12 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre NOTL Golden Age Club - 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre NOTL Duplicate Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre The Makeshift - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library	Tentative Sign Comm Meeting - 9 a.m. - Council Chambers Outdoor obstacle course - 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. - St. Michael's Catholic Elementary Drop-in painting - 3 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre Fall Trivia League - 7 p.m. - The Exchange Public Talk: Residential Architectural Styles - 7 p.m. - Willowbank Restoration Arts
11	12	13	14
Public skating - 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. - Meridian Credit Union Arena NOTL Ukesters Sunday Ukelele Workshop - 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre	Painting without brushes - 8:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. - St. Michael Catholic Elementary School NOTL Social Club MOVE TO 15th!!! - 10 a.m. - Sweets & Swirls Café Little Red Tail Hawks - 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. - Niagara Regional Native Centre Community Pot Luck and Drumming Night - 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. - Niagara Regional Native Centre	Table tennis - 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre Rotary Club of NOTL - 12 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre NOTL Golden Age Club - 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre NOTL Duplicate Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre The Makeshift - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library	NOTL Newcomers Committee meeting - 1:30 p.m. - Greenhouses Irrigation Committee Operations Board Meeting - 7 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre Drop-in painting - 3 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre Public Talk: The History of Letters of the 19th Century by Prof. Cecilia Morley - 7 p.m. - Willowbank Restoration Arts



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Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 Babies and Books - 11 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Public Library Drop-in bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre Practical Genealogy - 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. - NOTL Public Library Minecraft Club - 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Public Library	2 P.A. Day - - Healthy Kids Community Challenge: Power Off & Play - 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. - NOTL Public Library NOTL Duplicate Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre Drop-in Mah Jong - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre Wayne Gates Office - 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library Knit-a-Bit - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library	3 Public skating - 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. - Meridian Credit Union Arena Niagara Rhythm Section with Dylan Wickens - 9 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. - The Old Winery
7 Committee Council Course - 8:30 a.m. - St. Michael Catholic School 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. - Community Centre 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. - The Brewery ential s of Niagara nk School of	8 Babies and Books - 11 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Public Library Drop-in bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre Minecraft Club - 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Public Library Building with Brandon - 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. - NOTL Public Library	9 Healthy Kids Community Challenge: Power Off & Play - 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. - NOTL Public Library NOTL Duplicate Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre Drop-in Mah Jong - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre Wayne Gates Office - 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library Knit-a-Bit - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library	10 Public skating - 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. - Meridian Credit Union Arena NOTL Ukesters Sunday Ukelele Workshop - 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre
14 Club monthly - Virgil ee - 2 p.m. - room 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. - Community Centre milton entury, rgan - 7 School of	15 Painting without brushes - 8:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. - St. Michael Catholic Elementary School Babies and Books - 11 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Public Library Drop-in bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre Minecraft Club - 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Public Library Building with Brandon - 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. - NOTL Public Library	16 Painting without brushes - 8:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. - St. Michael Catholic Elementary School Healthy Kids Community Challenge: Power Off & Play - 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. - NOTL Public Library NOTL Duplicate Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre Wayne Gates Office - 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library	17 Public skating - 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. - Meridian Credit Union Arena Niagara Rhythm Section with Dylan Wickens - 9 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. - The Old Winery Vinyl Flux - 9:30 p.m. to 12:30 p.m. - The Olde Angel Inn

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Helping Niagara's heart beat

Niagara Rhythm Section celebrates 15 years of Saturday nights

Lauren O'Malley
Staff

In a town as historic as ours, 15 years may not sound like a long time — but for working musicians, playing a gig in your own town every Saturday night for a decade and a half is legendary.

On Nov. 17, the Niagara Rhythm Section is celebrating 15 years of weekly house gigs at local haunts the Anchorage, Corks and The Old Winery.

Steve Goldberger, bandleader, bass player and singer, says it's "amazing to play so close to home. One night I broke a string, and it was faster to go home and get a different bass than to replace the string."

The nucleus of the band — Goldberger along with Penner MacKay (drum kit and percussion) and Dave Norris (drums) — played regularly at the Olde Angel Inn.

Their keyboard player at the time was Herb Nelson. One day Nelson announced he'd scored them a musical holy grail: a weekly gig at the Anchorage Motel. They were slated to play every Saturday night for six months.

The only thing that could end their stage there was the imminent destruction of the buildings.

Nelson and Goldberger had struck upon the idea to have a core group — the Niagara Rhythm Section — and invite a rotation of different local musical guests to join them. "Our original guest roster included Joe Ingrao, Mark Lalama, Bruce Jones, James Brown, and even Tim Hicks when he was nobody," says Goldberger. (James Brown was a NOTL singer — not the King of Soul — and Tim Hicks is now a country music mega-star.)

Says John White, the band's nominated number one fan, "The first time I saw the NRS was with (then local musician) Bruce Jones — a Brazilian artist. There were eight or nine people on stage, including several drum kits. I spoke with Bruce and asked him about the gig, and he said, 'Oh, I'm just the guest. Next week it will be a completely different show.' And it was: Johnny Maxx, a pop singer. I thought, 'Alright, I'm on to something here.'"

What he likes about the weekly shows is the diversity: "Variety with a certain element of familiarity. There



Dave Norris and Steve Goldberger, members of Niagara Rhythm Section. (Lauren O'Malley)

are common elements, but it's never the same show twice."

White has missed few of the band's weekly shows in the last decade plus, and has even taken on the role of lighting technician. Other die-hard fans include Wayne and Lorna Short, who come from Oakville every Saturday night — often bearing gifts of baked goods and lovingly made crafts that celebrate the band. Wayne has become the de facto emcee of the shows at the Old Winery. "We like to put our fans to work," jokes Norris.

Goldberger and Norris remember the years at the Anchorage fondly. Norris recalls the spaciousness of the stage: "We could each individually swing a cat," he says. They also recall the NRS line-up changes that occurred through those years. "After about six months, Herb left, and Joe Ingrao joined us on keys," recalls Goldberger.

"I met Joe when he called me up and invited me on a gig," says Goldberger. Imitating Ingrao's trademark gravel-pocked voice and dramatic inflections, he says Ingrao called him and said, "Steve. I hear you're pretty good. Come play with me at

Casa Mia." Goldberger asked, "What are you playing?" Ingrao answered, "Whatever you want, just come."

Ingrao, a legend in the Niagara music scene, played with the NRS for several years — until, tragically, he died suddenly of a heart attack in 2005.

Rodger Niznik — "a monster on keys" according to Norris — joined the band for a couple of years after that, often bringing his B3 organ and Leslie speaker cabinet to gigs.

Guitarist Steve Grisbrook also joined the band in the Anchorage years. "He came as a guest one night, and then kept suggesting other guests to us, saying, 'Get this guy, and I'll come with him,'" says Goldberger. Eventually Grisbrook just became a permanent fixture, and, through his extensive connections in the blues music scene across Ontario, boosted the band's guest roster significantly.

Grisbrook is evidence of the fact that these guys are musicians' musicians. "The overwhelming rule is that guests always want to come back, which is so flattering," says Goldberger.

Jane Cripps, then manager at the Anchorage, remembers the band fondly. "They were just the greatest. Just the greatest," she repeats. Of her memories of those years, she says, "Probably the most significant one for me was when they played for our closing. That was a really emotional night for all of us. That night was really sad."

But the boys in the NRS weren't going to let a demolition get in the way of their Saturday night winning streak. "When the Anchorage looked like it was going to close, Bob Mavridis (owner of Corks Wine Bar & Eatery) came to us and said, 'The moment you're done there, come and play at Corks,'" says Goldberger.

"We were Bob's guinea pigs for live music at Corks," said Norris. After almost a year of trying, the unanimous conclusion was that the NRS plus guests were just too large a band for the configuration of the bar and restaurant.

Once again, there was a suitor waiting in the wings. "Rob Glatt (co-owner of The Old Winery Restaurant) said, 'If this thing at Corks ever goes south, we want you in our wine bar,'" remembers

Norris.

"And again we didn't miss a Saturday night — we just had to let our scheduled guests know to go the Old Winery instead of Corks," says Goldberger.

The core members are proud of their unbroken record of service. "I think in 15 years Dave has missed two gigs — and I've only missed one or two, for my heart surgery," says Goldberger, who — as a member of the "zipper club" — has had a valve in his heart replaced twice.

They're also proud of another rather significant thing. "Rehearsals are not allowed," says Norris. The only thing the band gets together for is espresso in Goldberger's studio before the gigs. "On stage, the guest artist gives us a five-second synopsis of the song, and off we go. Not one rehearsal in 15 years — and only a few minor musical train wrecks. That's what live music is all about," says Norris.

Local musician and former winemaker Sandra Marynissen is one of a few honorary members of the Niagara Rhythm Section. "Sandra is a percussion student, a protege of Penner's who found her

way on stage." Marynissen nestles in between MacKay and Norris on stage at The Old Winery and adds djembe and tambourine to the on-the-fly arrangements.

"We're so grateful to Rob Glatt for this gig," says Goldberger. "We have a wonderful relationship with him. He told us we're there as long as he is. Not long ago he told us, 'I have bad news for you guys: I just signed a lease for another ten years.'"

Goldberger jokes, "I might be coming in on my walker," — he mimes staggering in to the club. "Alright everybody, let's walk — I mean rock!"

"We aren't taking it for granted, that's for sure. We get to play whatever we want, have good people around us, friends nearby, and we're so close to home," continues the bandleader. The only drawback? "We're getting paid the same as we did 15 years ago," he says. "We're getting paid the same as we did in the 70's," Norris chimes in, laughing.

Raoul Bhaneja — actor, former Shaw company member, and blues singer — is the NRS's guest on Nov. 17 at the wine bar in The Old Winery restaurant.

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Local acts win at Niagara Music Awards

Danny Lamb and Laurel Minnes take home first prizes for NOTL

Photos by Lauren O'Malley.

Lauren O'Malley
Staff

Niagara-on-the-Lake can boast about so much — and now there are two more reasons to be proud. Our own Danny Lamb and Laurel Minnes have both won Niagara Music Awards.

"It's nice to get the public recognition for my work," says 29-year-old Minnes, who in her youth thought the summit of her success would be being a back-up singer in a Motown band, sporting a big beehive hairdo.

Minnes' musical family groomed her voice starting from a young age. "My mom — a trained singer — made my sister and I sing harmonies along with the radio. If we didn't, she'd turn the music off."

The diminutive and powerful multi-instrumentalist and singer-songwriter was nominated for Female Vocalist and Best Original Song, and won the Songwriter of the Year award for her new project, Minuscule. This is a unique group made up of Minnes as the lead singer, with a back-up band of keyboard, drums and choir. "I have all these melodies in my head and not enough instruments — so I used voices."

Minuscule started a year ago, when Minnes applied to perform at In the Soil — a grassroots arts festival in St. Catharines. "I was approved, and then thought, 'Okay, now I have to pull together a choir really quickly.'" She recruited friends and family, and prepared each of their parts by first recording 13 versions of her own voice singing the songs. Then she transcribed them and sent the appropriate part to each singer. She continues to use this method. "It's time-consuming with all 14 parts plus keys and drums. But I love it," she says.

Minnes, who also fronts rock band Majora, says, "The idea of Minuscule was that I wanted to feel control over the content and issues. I want my message to be meaningful. In a band I always have to compromise my message — you can't have a group of guys playing songs about feminism," she says.

The choir now consists of about 14 women — family, friends, and friends of friends. "I choose to write and sing about things that are really uniquely female, so I keep it just women," she says. Minnes makes exceptions for her partner Taylor Hulley on



Top: Danny Lamb.

Bottom: Laurel Minnes.



drums, and her father, Blair Minnes, on the keyboard. Membership in the choir ebbs and flows. "It needs to be fun, empowering, not stressful at all," she says.

The women practise every Tuesday at Minnes' home. "It's community — ladies' bonding time, which is another aspect of the project. We drink wine and eat cheese and sing and talk." In fact the band gets paid for

gigs, but all the money goes back into wine and cheese, as well as gas and drinks at shows. It's a non-profit endeavour. "I never want to think of this project in terms of money — which is kind of freeing in a way. It's literally a passion project," she says.

The name comes from a play on her own name — Minnes-cule — and is humorous because of the sheer size of the group. "It

also refers to the fact that women have been meant to feel small for so long," says the ever-courageous and plain-speaking Minnes.

The future holds many new highs. Minuscule will be performing a house concert at Applewood Hollow in NOTL on Nov. 17. Minnes plans to record a full album of her original songs with the band and choir. And she has a concept album in the works.

"The focus of whole album is consent. I want people to listen and say, 'Oh my god that's exactly what I wanted to say and how I would have liked to have said it,'" she says.

According to Minnes, she has already found the pinnacle, though. "I love it. It's the ultimate expression of who I am as a musician. I have come to the peak of my mountain. Everything I have done before has brought me to this point."

Minnes and Lamb have a similar ethos. "Conversations that we need to have can be started through art. It's my responsibility to share that. What is the point in learning if you don't share it," says Minnes.

Lamb echoes the insight. "I use music to create a space for unheard stories and bigger conversations than I know what to do with. The microphone is a pretty great superpower to have," he says.

His anthemic song Champion won the award for original song at the NMAs. "The song was rooted at a conference around access and inclusiveness in sport. I started to form a concept of what defines a champion and what that looks like," says Lamb.

The NOTL native is an ardent activist on a number of levels. He is the Young Ambassador of the Spina Bifida/Hydrocephalus Association of Ontario, and spent two years travelling the world as a speaker and facilitator for ME to WE — a social enterprise based on empowering youth and creating social change on a global scale — with which he remains on contract.

Lamb also teaches ESL online to children all over China, and teaches music, singing and performing, and songwriting in person and online. "I figured I was getting students in Niagara just based on name recognition, but when someone in San Francisco found me and then asked to set up a series of lessons after our first one, I thought, 'Hey, maybe I am pretty good at this,'" he says, laughing. The 30-year-old singer-songwriter now has students all over the world.

Champion is an exciting departure for Lamb, in that it marks a new path with new partnerships. He has been collaborating with established producer and songwriter Andre Kaden Black (Fefe Dobson, Alecia Keys, One Republic) after meeting him

through local drummer Andy MacKay. He has also started working with engineer Tal Vaisman (The Next Step). "I brought a song to them and they said, 'This is your song. What do you want it to be? What role do you want to have in this,'" he says. "They also reminded me that it's about the song so it can be heard and the story can be told. They said, 'Let's create a great song,'" he remembers.

When it came to making Champion a "great song," Lamb knew he needed to hand over part of it to powerful spoken-word artists Chris Tse, based in B.C. "He's an exceptional human being full of integrity and spirit. A mentor, says Lamb. "I learned so much about the privilege I live in from him. I see him as a champion."

"We secured a date in a studio after wrangling calendars and he came in and spit these words out and I think I cried a little about it," Lamb says. "It wasn't about him or about me, it was about any kid in the world who is trying to be heard. This is so much bigger than us."

Having the song win at the NMAs touches Lamb. "I've achieved a personal goal through the challenge of honing my craft. Being recognized locally is meaningful," he says sincerely.

Champion is attributed to Danny Lamb and the Association. "It's called the Association because it's fluid, like Broken Social Scene. People come and go," he says. Members include writers, producers, and musicians such as Matt Anthony, Chris Borboros, Kayd, Jason Golden, Nick Cooper, Matt Taylor and Ferguson Lundy. "I mostly just jump around on the stage and get them amped up," says Lamb.

His latest project is acting as a manager for a young singer-songwriter named Em Jordan. "We connected through the SBHAO — she has spina bifida and other physical challenges," Lamb explains. "We started with her just singing, then moved into songwriting. We recorded a song with Andre and Tal, and made a lyric video, which has over a thousand views on YouTube."

Now Lamb is looking for the big vision: "How does it all connect? How does it best move forward," he wonders.

Perhaps we'll find out how it moves forward for both of these local talents at next year's Niagara Music Awards.



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High school students offered boarding pass to aviation education

Penny Coles
Staff

Niagara-on-the-Lake may not have a public high school, but secondary school students are being offered a boarding pass to an education in aviation at the local airport.

The Niagara District Catholic School Board, prompted by outgoing Lord Mayor Pat Darté and in partnership with the Niagara District Airport, is offering Grade 11 and 12 students an Aviation and Aeronautics program.

Beginning in February, it will be the newest of the high skills major programs, which give students a chance to learn subjects of interest through co-operative education and placements in the community.

At the airport students can learn about careers in aviation, from the engineers who design planes, the mechanics who service them and the pilots who fly them — all that is neces-

sary to get the airplane off the ground, said school board director of education John Crocco, who was at the airport recently to sign a memorandum of understanding that will allow the program to move forward.

Thinking about the thousands of airplanes flying around the world daily, he said, makes it clear how many opportunities there are for students in the field of aviation and aeronautics.

The program was approved by the Ministry of Education in June, Crocco said.

Students will graduate with a high school certificate that includes a red seal, indicating a high skills major in aviation and aeronautics, he said, showing employers they have received a certain level of knowledge in that field and allowing them to move forward.

Students can begin taking courses as early as Grade 9 or 10, but by Grade 11 and 12 students can begin apprenticeships, which will present “realistic and

authentic pathways” for students interested in careers in aviation.

With students from several Catholic high schools and St. Michael Catholic Elementary School in attendance at the airport announcement, Crocco said some of the those sitting in the room that day will one day be the pilots, the people who look after airplane passengers or any of the many people who are responsible for getting the aircraft off the ground and from point A to point B.

“There may be a student in this room who will be the next astronaut, or who will work on the next Canadarm or the space station,” he said.

Darté said he began working with Crocco years ago, hoping to bring a Catholic high school to NOTL, but eventually Crocco “planted the seed” for the aviation course. The local squadron of Royal Canadian Air Cadets have also come on board — they fly their glider out of the airport, and have

many members interested in careers in aviation — as are FlyGTA, with a regular service to Toronto, Brock University and Niagara College. Having the program at the airport, he said, was another way of offering education to the community.

“It was a long time coming,” Darté said.

Terry Flynn, chair of the airport commission, spoke about the facility as a “major economic driver” for the region, and the advancements that have occurred over the years, including a regular airline service.

The new program, combined with others such as the air cadets and flying club, “can combine to be great for youth,” he said, adding it’s also positive for the growth of the airport, and may help it to receive grants for future expansion.

“We want to make sure everybody is a safe as they can be, and we can all come together to make sure youth are part of that.”



Students from several Niagara Catholic high schools and from St. Michael Catholic Elementary School gathered at the Niagara District Airport to learn about a high school aviation course. (Penny Coles)

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SORE acknowledges and thanks all of those who ran for NOTL council and applauds their public service in the case of our departing councillors and Lord Mayor.

SORE also congratulates the winning candidates and acknowledges the unprecedented contributions of many groups and individuals to inform the electorate.

The clear message of this election was that the residents of NOTL seek direction and leadership on the future of our Town. We look forward to working with the new council in this regard and on responsible development of the Randwood Estate.

For the positions of our new council on the seven questions put to all candidates by SORE, please visit <https://SORENOTL.ca>



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Cycling map leads to frustration

Lauren O'Malley
Staff

It would seem the road to cycling safety is paved with good intentions. And a few misunderstandings.

Late last summer, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Safety Committee launched their Cycling and Pedestrian Route Map with pride and fanfare. A joint partnership with the Town, the Ministry of Transportation Ontario (MTO) and Vino Velo Bicycle Tours, the map was a project undertaken by the committee, at the request of the Town, following many complaints by residents about safety issues they've witnessed, mostly on rural roads. The goal was to offer safety tips for cyclists and pedestrians, as well as provide a clearly legible, accurate map of Niagara-on-the-Lake and its cycling and pedestrian routes.

As the saying goes, no good deed goes unpunished — or so some members of the committee are feeling these days.

Steve Irwin, the outspoken co-owner of Vino Velo, has raised many issues regarding the map. For one, he feels his contributions of time and money weren't acknowledged by the committee and in the media when the map was announced and celebrated.

Irwin also has many questions about the purpose, functionality, and goals of the map, and about the committee's focus regarding cycling in NOTL. "It's a bigger issue than just the map — this could go so much further," he says.

Irwin sees this off-season time as a perfect opportunity for all interested parties to begin a conversation about what cycling safety looks like in town.

Rebecca deBoer, co-owner of Zoom Leisure (another bicycle rental business in town) agrees. "This town has the opportunity to be the gold standard for cycling — if we want it to be," she says. "We need signage, and we need digital maps."

There also need to be more conversation and consultation, she says. "We were never given the opportunity to consult on this — we weren't even given the opportunity to donate, which we would have loved to have done."

Rich Mellis, co-owner of Grape Escape Wine Tours, also feels out of the loop. "We would have liked to have been consulted at the beginning," he says. "We found out about the map by reading about it in the paper when it was already finished."



Steve Irwin, co-owner of Vino Velo. (Lauren O'Malley)

Catharine Wickabrod and Ken Gansel of the NOTL Safety Committee explain their process. "The Town was getting complaints from residents about unsafe cyclists, so we decided to address the issue," says Wickabrod.

Gansel, an avid cyclist himself, reached out to his various contacts at the NRPS and MTO to research and develop what he hoped would be the most thorough series of safety instructions available for the flipside of a to-scale map of the area. For the map itself he dealt directly with the Town. "The Town supplied a GIS — geographic information system — map. This is absolutely accurate and to scale, unlike the B&B maps we see most cyclists using around here," says Gansel with pride.

The committee decided to include cycling routes, wineries, and historic landmarks on the map.

"We had someone come in who was very irate that the main points of attraction on the bicycling safety maps were wineries," says deBoer. Irwin and Ian Mellis (Rich's father, also co-owner of Grape Escape) also point this out, comparing the 37 wineries listed to the only six historical landmarks. "It's good to show the bike routes but it needs a companion map to show people what else is going on too — more historical sites, tourist attractions, other points of interest," says Ian.

Even the actual printed map is a potential point of discussion. While Gansel adheres to its relevance, Irwin does a little performance. "I'm a happy millennial going on a bike tour," he says. "Do I want this," — he flaps his left hand above his head, imitating a paper map fluttering in the wind — "or this," — he looks down peacefully at an imaginary smart phone in his right hand.

Gaz Wright, office manager at Grape Escape, concurs.

"We send out maps with every rider, and they all come back still in their plastic pouch, untouched," deBoer thirds the sentiment: "We've actually abandoned using maps because no one refers to them — all of our clients use Google Maps (a smartphone app)." She continues to say that she would like very much to be involved in a group safety effort going forward, including some kind of map, but "it has to be digital — that would be a caveat for my involvement."

There is a nascent digital component to the map. Gansel and the Safety Committee have launched a website — cyclenotl.ca — which is "a work in progress," says Gansel. He foresees working on the site over the winter, adding a component which might allow people to purchase the printed map and have it mailed to them for a fee. He also plans to create PDFs of parts of the map and safety tips and offer them as downloadable files.

"Ken has poured his heart and soul into this," says Wickabrod. The entire committee is staffed by earnest and busy volunteers, most with full-time jobs and a long list of commitments.

While Wickabrod and Gansel point to the bicycle rental businesses as lagging in safety features, each of the three owners interviewed is proud of their safety standards, and points to issues with signage and motorists. All three include a safety orientation before renters are allowed out on their bikes. All three offer the option of helmets (which are not required by law for adults). All remind clients they are not to drink too much, and should their customers become inebriated all three offer pick-up in a van. All three also promote their own pick-up

services, so clients "don't feel the pressure to guzzle wine at each location," says Irwin, and can purchase bottles at the winery for their provider to collect. And all bicycle rental companies remind their clients they must ride single file along the roads.

This last might be the most contentious issue, and the most difficult to enforce. It comes up often in discussions with the committee and residents. The bicycle businesses are well aware of this issue too, and feel there are many potential solutions. Offers Wright, "We could do with signs that indicate the bike paths. We need set bike routes, say Line 1 Rd and Concession 1 Rd, for example." deBoer echoes this: "The Rail Trail on Concession 1 Rd could be paved and would make for a perfect bike trail. I'd also like to see a safer bike path on East & West Line, separate from traffic."

She also mentions another path. "The Active Transportation Committee said there would be a bike path along Four Mile Creek Rd from St Davids to Hwy 55, but I haven't heard anything about that in a long time."

Irwin sums it up this way, "How easy can we make it to ride a bike in Niagara?" He goes on, somewhat defensively, "There is not one initiative to protect the safety of cyclists — cyclists are attacked: don't ride here, don't do this..." He would like to see a comprehensive and collaborative strategy that includes everyone: his fellow bike rental businesses, residents, Town, tourists — everyone. He says "Yeah, I'm a bike guy and I'm stirring up trouble. This is my home town and I want to make it socially important to do this."

Irwin imagines bylaws that would increase signage and trails, and minimize bike tour group sizes. "I come from a scuba background, where you have to keep groups small for safety purposes." He sees cycling as equally perilous. "Groups should have a 10-person maximum by law. In the U.K. a parade license is required for groups larger than 10 people," he points out.

The safety committee plans to make a presentation to the new council in the coming months to discuss the map and its successes and drawbacks. Irwin, Mellis and deBoer would like to participate in the presentation, or at least consult with the committee prior.

"Obviously the best way to solve everything is communication," says Wright.

JOHN Wiens
COUNCILLOR

johnwiens.notl@gmail.com • 905.468.3424

Dear Friends and Family,

I am absolutely thrilled to have your support and humbled for placing your trust in me for a second term on council.

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Your support is greatly appreciated!

Warm Regards,
John

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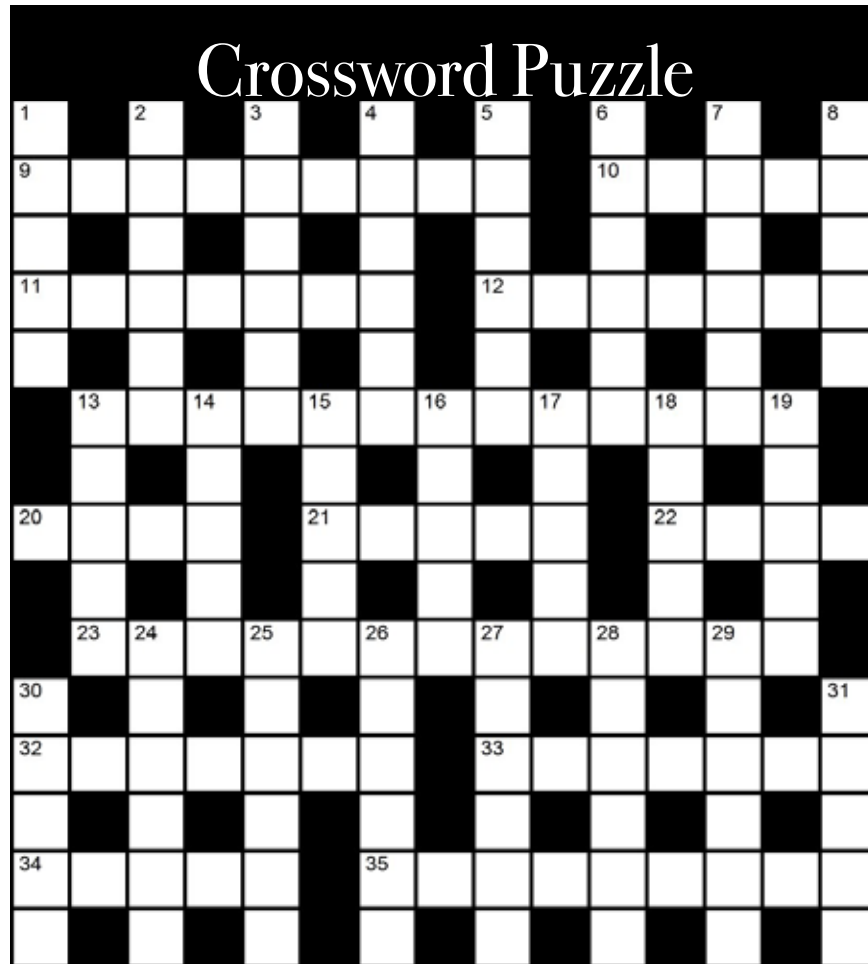
GAMES



Have some fun

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

- Across**
- 9. Wiggler (9)
 - 10. Eight singers (5)
 - 11. Curtain calls (7)
 - 12. Trap (7)
 - 13. Debatable (13)
 - 20. Equipment for the reproduction of very good sound (2-2)
 - 21. Set apart (5)
 - 22. Irish county (4)
 - 23. Unpredictable (13)
 - 32. Tolerate (7)
 - 33. Sustain (7)
 - 34. Awaken (5)
 - 35. Appraising (9)
- Down**
- 1. Gem (5)
 - 2. Dealer in foodstuffs (6)
 - 3. Winged child (6)
 - 4. Sweet dessert (6)
 - 5. Simple life form (6)
 - 6. Dwarfed tree (6)
 - 7. Capital of Canada (6)
 - 8. Speak (5)
 - 13. Publish (5)
 - 14. Intense hatred (5)
 - 15. Hire (5)
 - 16. Island awarded the George Cross (5)
 - 17. A tenth part (5)
 - 18. Celestial body (5)
 - 19. Faithful (5)
 - 24. General escape (6)
 - 25. Maxed (6)
 - 26. Make over (6)
 - 27. Wretchedness (6)
 - 28. Son of one's brother or sister (6)
 - 29. Very handsome young man (6)
 - 30. E.g. the Romanovs (5)
 - 31. Male deer (5)



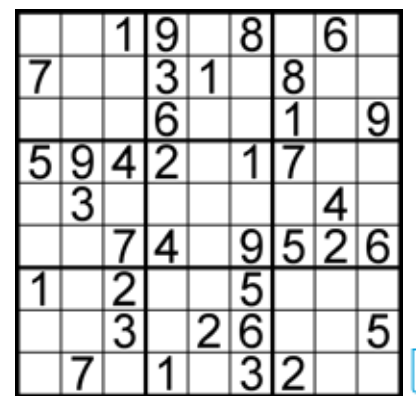
Want the answers early? Scan the puzzles using HP Reveal. (Must be following Niagara Now's channel.)



Last issue's answers



Sudoku





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<p>14757 Niagara River Parkway, NOTL \$3,795,000</p>  <p>MLS# 30678390 James O'Connor* & Margie van Gelder*</p>	<p>285 Wellington Street, NOTL \$1,425,000</p>  <p>MLS# 30685854 James O'Connor* & Margie van Gelder*</p>	<p>2 Samuel Street, NOTL \$1,395,000</p>  <p>MLS# 30691472 James O'Connor* & Margie van Gelder*</p>	<p>92 Loretta Drive #9, NOTL \$525,000</p>  <p>MLS# 30692300 Jo-Ann Cudmore*</p>
<p>94 Garrison Village Drive, NOTL \$669,000</p> <p style="background-color: red; color: white; padding: 2px;">OPEN HOUSE SUN 2-4 PM</p>  <p>MLS# 30689697 Doreen Ibba*</p>	<p>19 Ridgeview Drive, St. Davids \$658,000</p> <p style="background-color: red; color: white; padding: 2px;">OPEN HOUSE SAT & SUN 2-4 PM</p>  <p>MLS# 30666782 Dan Stefels*** & Katie Redekopp***</p>	<p>9 Autumn Place, NOTL \$699,000</p>  <p>MLS# 30692612 Dan Stefels*** & Katie Redekopp***</p>	<p>2 Stoneridge Crescent, St. Davids \$1,125,000</p>  <p>MLS# 30692486 Dan Stefels*** & Katie Redekopp***</p>



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FEATURES

Nature's Lens: What my nature tours have taught me about Niagara



Owen Bjorgan
Biophilic World
Featured



An excellent view at sunset hour can be found up along the Niagara Escarpment's Bruce Trail, from Queenston to St. Davids. (Owen Bjorgan)

Unknown to both locals and travellers alike, the Niagara region's natural features extend far beyond the almighty Niagara Falls.

I was always intrigued by how so many people could visit our beautiful town, sometimes on repeat over the course of their lives, and never truly understand the value of Niagara's ecosystems.

That's understandable, as not too many brochures or advertisements talk about salamanders or rare tree species. But mine do.

This is one of the many reasons I decided to start a hiking tour company, and here's the feedback I'm getting from my clients who hike or stay in NOTL.

Consistent themes seem to be shock, surprise, and disbelief (in the positive sense) from hikers when they write a review or discuss how they feel after the hike.

Torontonians who frequent NOTL can't believe that some of the areas I take them to have been within a 1.5 hour drive of home their whole lives.

I have toured folks from the Canary Islands, Brazil,

France, and Costa Rica, and the reaction is similar. Many feel like they were swept away to British Columbia for a few hours, and some people have told me that the unique forests here remind them of the tropics.

We must consider that Niagara's forest and wetland coverage is around 10 per cent of what it originally was (the statistic is similar for NOTL). Because of the scarcity of these remnants, locals may become accustomed to their daily commutes and lifestyles which don't encourage us to discover the remaining relics.

As mentioned in my previous article, such "relics" include places like the Niagara Escarpment between Queenston and St. Davids, the Lakeshore Road old-growth forest, and Virgil Conservation Area.

When I hike with people in these places, suddenly it doesn't matter where they are from — they are excited

by what they are seeing, and they walk away with a different perspective of NOTL and region as a whole.

In a pleasant addition to our economy, these newfound perspectives may keep people coming back to our town time and time again.

If you're a local, there are plenty of areas within the municipality of NOTL that are accessible and offer the same experience people get out of my tours.

As my season comes to an end and I comb through the paperwork and hike evaluations, I find an interesting theme from the hikers.

When prompted to discuss or mention their favourite part of the hike, the answers come back on a beautifully fundamental level — people seem to like aspects such as fresh air, time with family, breaking free from routine, or exercising with their significant other.

This speaks volumes to the biophilic connection that hu-

mans innately have with the natural world. It is good for us, and Niagara can provide the goods.

Unless the weather is horrendous or the bugs clobber you, nobody seems to leave the forest in a lesser condition than when they entered it. People get back to the trail head with big smiles on their faces, feeling physically — and perhaps spiritually — refreshed after exposure to the elements and surprising scenery.

This is why I do my job.

As for now, my job is about to continue in the furthest quadrant away from where you are reading this paper.

I will be filming a nature documentary in tropical Australia, in a series titled "Hidden Corners," on which I have been working for three years. I will continue to submit to the Lake Report from the land Down Under.

Perhaps my work with conservation and environmental awareness in the world's oldest rainforest will conjure up discussion on what we can do in NOTL to protect our natural heritage too.

It doesn't matter where you are in the world — it is one big ecosystem, and we are merely just a cog in the wheel.

I am about to become one of those cogs in Australia, while my heart and work remains in NOTL.

bjorgan.owen@gmail.com

Public Talks 2018

TALK: Residential Architectural Styles of Niagara by Brian Marshall
WHEN: Nov 7th, 7pm
WHERE: Bright Parlour
*Kindly sponsored by Heelis, Little & Almas LLP

TALK: The Hamilton Letters of the 19th Century by Prof. Cecilia Morgan
WHEN: Nov 14th, 7pm
WHERE: Bright Parlour
*Kindly sponsored by Elizabeth Oliver-Malone

TALK: The History of Rodman Hall and its Gardens by Darren Schmahl
WHEN: Nov 21st, 4:30pm
WHERE: Bright Parlour
*Kindly sponsored by Heelis, Little & Almas LLP

TALK: Conservation at Ill Forno by Al Kovach and Theresa Felicetti
WHEN: Dec 5th, 4:30pm
WHERE: Bright Parlour



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ARCH I TEXT: with Brian Marshall Greek Revival - Willowbank



Portland brick damage. (Supplied photo)

Our town is a treasure-trove of residential architecture. Diligent searching will reveal examples of most architectural styles and occasionally that rare gem which still remains true to the original. Falling into this category are two marvelous monumental form Greek Revival homes attributed to the architect John Latshaw: Glencairn & Willowbank. While Glencairn has been and remains a private residence, Willowbank has become the home of the only credible school of restoration arts in Canada.

So, at the turn of the 19th Century, English polite society developed a fascination with all things Classical, and architects responded with designs based on Roman elements (Neo-Classical). But, as archeologists delved deeper into history, Greek forms were deemed to be "purer" than those of the 'Johnny-come-lately' Romans and the Greek Revival style was born. Whether in the smaller, spartanly elegant Temple form or the large, fully expressed Monument form, a Greek Revival home recalled classic Greek proportions and elements (which we'll explore in future columns) set into a contemporaneous building design. Looking at Willowbank, we can see the base Regency building form but our lasting impression is of classical Greek expression.

Speaking of Willowbank, I will be giving a talk on Niagara's residential architectural heritage there on Nov. 7 at 7 p.m. Come on out to discover the richness of our town's shared history. You can find more at: <http://willowbank.ca/wpdir/public-talks-autumn-2018>.

Brian Marshall

PHOTO: Halloween fun



Children and teachers at the Niagara Nursery School and Child Care Centre celebrate Halloween, with crafts and treats to celebrate and a walk through the community centre to show off their costumes. (Penny Coles)



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Voices of Freedom park to open Friday



Construction of the Voices of Freedom park has been going on since April. The park is set to open Friday, Nov. 2. (Penny Coles)



Penny Coles
Staff

During many debates about the future of the former lawn bowling greenspace on Regent Street, one concept was repeatedly mentioned — that it should honour and celebrate the town's black history.

On Friday, the Voices of Freedom Park will officially open to recognize Niagara-on-the-Lake's early black settlers and their contribution to the history of the community and the country.

It's been a long time coming, with an expected opening in early September, but will now coincide with a Voices of Freedom concert Saturday night.

The design encompasses the entire park, with a path at its entrance bordered by benches and winding its way through to a communal circle. Along the way a downloaded app will tell the stories of four black people who helped shape the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The park was designed by Raymond Tung, the urban design specialist working for

the Town planning department. The installation that provides the experience, called the Rite of Passage, which helps tell the story, is by Toronto artist Tom Ridout.

The property has been in public hands since 1803, when it was acquired by the government of Upper Canada, and was the site where General Sir Isaac Brock and Colonel John MacDonnell lay in state after being killed in the War of 1812.

It has been the property of the Town since the 1850s, and was rezoned by a previous council for residential development after the site was no longer required by the town's lawn bowling club. During the last term, council stepped in to retain it for public use, and from there, the concept of the Voices of Freedom Park was developed.

The federal government contributed \$388,000 of the \$700,000 cost, the remainder raised by the community. The land remains a Town park and maintenance will be the responsibility of the parks and recreation department.

Black historian Wilma Morrison, a committee mem-

ber and honorary chair, will be at the opening Friday.

The park, and the committee that has been working on it, came about as a legacy project of the Communities in Bloom committee, chaired by Betty Disero.

The opening of the park is Friday, Nov. 2 at 2 p.m. It also celebrates the 225th anniversary of the passage of the act to limit slavery in Upper Canada.

In addition to remarks by Morrison, Oscar Peterson's Hymn to Freedom will be performed by vocalist Alana Bridgewater and pianist Robi Boto. An excerpt of Shaw Festival's Oh! What a Lovely War will be performed by Allan Louis.

Bravo Niagara's Voices of Freedom Concert Saturday, Nov. 3 at 7:30 p.m. at the Partridge Hall, FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre, hosted by Céline Peterson, will feature Molly Johnson, Jackie Richardson, Larnell Lewis, Mike Downes, Robi Botos, Joseph Callender, and the Laura Secord Secondary School Concert Choir.

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Niagara's History Unveiled

FORT NIAGARA



Denise Ascenzo
Featured

We have two forts in our town, Fort George and Fort Mississauga, but truth be told, there is a third fort that has been as much a part of Niagara-on-the-Lake's history as the other two — Fort Niagara.

The fort, which sits on the east side of the Niagara River, was the third fort built by the French when the Great Lakes Region was known as New France (1534-1763).

The first, Fort Conti, (named after Louis Armand de Bourbon, Prince of Conti) was a simple wooden building, erected in 1679. It was built during a peaceful period with the Five Nations of the Iroquois in upper New York State. The Iroquois consisted of five distinct nations with the western most nation being the Seneca.

The Seneca were very suspicious of these foreigners coming into their territory and consequently hostilities became a common occurrence. The construction of the small fort was tolerated but the relationship between the French and the Seneca was tenuous at best.

During the summer of 1679 the fort building caught fire and was burned to the ground. The area was abandoned by the French until 1687, when the governor of New France, Jacques-Rene de Brisay, Marquis de Denonville, made the decision that a new fort must be established once again at the mouth of the Niagara River.

In the summer of 1687 France waged war against the Five Nations, in particular the Seneca nation. In the Rochester and Genesee Valley area, Seneca villages were burned and crops were destroyed — though it turned out to be a futile campaign as few native warriors were captured or killed.

Thinking to pacify the Iroquois nation after this war, Denonville moved his army away from the Seneca area to the mouth of the Niagara River, where Fort Denonville was established.

This fort was bigger than the first, with a palisade enclosing eight wooden buildings. With a company of one hundred men left behind for the winter, Governor Denonville returned to Montreal.



An October view of Fort Niagara from Queen's Royal Park. (Richard Harley)

However, with the relations between the French and Seneca being hostile, no hunting was possible and no wood was available for fires. As such, the garrison men sickened and died. By April of 1688, on the return of the French relief forces, only twelve soldiers remained alive in Fort Denenville.

The French soon came to the conclusion that this fort was too far from Montreal to be properly supplied or defended. The palisade was pulled down and the troops were sailed back to Montreal, leaving the remaining buildings to the elements.

In the years that followed, England and France were continually circling each other with words of war being thrown about. France realized that protecting their trade routes through the Great Lakes was imperative and thus decided a new fort at the mouth of the Niagara River and Lake Ontario must be established.

Louis-Thomas Chabert de Joncaire moved forward with plans to build a very substantial fort on the Niagara River. Through negotiations with the Iroquois Nation he convinced the Chiefs that a trading post built on the Niagara River was needed. He called it the House of Peace — a place where the Iroquois could come to meet with representatives of the King of France as well to barter their furs.

The Iroquois Nation, much to the consternation of the local Seneca, gave permission for such a structure to be built.

In the spring of 1726, French engineer, Gasard-Joseph Chausegrose de Lery made the decision that the best location for such a building was right at the point of

the Niagara River and Lake Ontario, the same location as the previous forts.

The idea was to build a structure that could withstand the elements and any possible attack from the Seneca, but, as it was a trading post it could not look like a fort.

Thus the House of Peace came into being. It is the oldest of all the buildings in Fort Niagara that can be seen today.

With the House of Peace completed in 1726, the French effectively controlled the Great Lakes trade routes, stopping the English from westward expansion.

The Seven Year War (1756-1763) was already being fought in Europe but now it was about to spill into North America between France and England. American historians call this the French and Indian War.

In 1756, Captain Pouchot was assigned the command of Fort Niagara and his first act was to reinforce the entire area. All wooden structures were torn down and the House of Peace was the only building left standing.

New earthwork defences were dug into place, new barracks, storehouses, powder magazine and even a church were built within the new area of the fort. Most were made of stone.

Hostilities were ever increasing between Britain and France in North America. By April of 1759, Pouchot was ordered to hold his post for as long as possible against a British attack. It was known that Brigadier General John Prideaux (British Army) was on the move from Albany, New York, to take Fort Niagara, and on July 6, 1759 the British were within four miles of the fort.

For more than two weeks,

the British forces dug trenches towards the fort. They constructed batteries for their heavy guns to fire from and pounded Fort Niagara mercilessly.

Pouchot held onto the fort with the hope that his messages sent to French posts in Detroit and Ohio Valley would bring the reinforcements he so desperately needed. They were coming, however the British knew this and set up a block in the road, systematically gunning down the French ranks.

Within twenty minutes the battle was over, the French reinforcements had either run away or surrendered. Upon hearing this, Pouchot surrendered the fort.

Fort Niagara officially hoisted the British flag on July 25, 1759. The British held the fort from July of 1759 to August of 1796.

During this time (1775 to 1783) the American Revolution occurred, ending with official borders being drawn between the United States and Canada.

A question one might ask is why the British held the fort until 1796.

The new United States could not economically afford another battle with England so they left the fort alone for the British to use. The fort subsequently became a place that United Empire Loyalists (American settlers not happy with being part of a new republic) travelled to, while for others it was a place to register for an opportunity for a new life. All one had to do was swear allegiance to the King and Crown, and their families were given grants to occupy surveyed plots of land in the new English territory on the western side of the Niagara River — Upper Canada.

By 1796 the British had vacated the fort and in August of 1796 Fort Niagara saw another nation hoist its flag over the grounds; the flag of the new United States of America.

This was a period of peace, a time for recovery, a moment in history when people were rebuilding their lives, their country. For a few years, the Niagara River was used as a conveyance of families, friends and goods back and forth between two countries.

Then, once again, the rumblings of war emerged. France and England were at war (the Napoleonic War) and simultaneously England was taking part in the War of 1812.

The United States was not part of the war in Europe, but to recover economically from the revolution, they formed a partnership with France, which had been an ally during the revolution, buying American goods such as cotton and wood.

England did not particularly like this alliance and commenced to stop all American vessels from reaching France. As well, England was thwarting the western expansion of the United States.

On June 18, 1812, President Madison of the United States and his government declared war on England and struck at the closest British colony — Canada.

Fort Niagara was again an instrument of war. From the fort, regiments of soldiers crossed the river and attack at Queenston Heights. Later it was from the fort that cannon balls were shot across the river destroying Fort George and the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Upon the retreat of the occupying Americans forces from NOTL in December of 1813, the British regiments returned to find the town totally razed to the ground. The swift action of the British was to cross the river and take Fort Niagara.

For a short period of time, the British flag flew over the fort. However the fort was returned to the United States after the Treaty of Ghent was signed on Dec. 24, 1814.

On May 22, 1815, American soldiers peacefully marched back into Fort Niagara raised the flag of the United States. Fort Niagara never saw battle again.

During the American Civil War, Union soldiers not quite capable of fighting, or who had been paroled from prisoner of war camps, were quartered in many of the border forts such as Fort Niagara.

Later during the Fenian Raids (1866) Fort Niagara saw an increase in soldiers to help keep the border calm between

Canada and the United States.

The fort was abandoned after this time and not used again until the "Modern Wars" erupted. Fort Niagara became a military training camp.

The Spanish-American War of 1898 saw the regular garrison of the fort called into service and sent to Cuba.

The Philippine Islands, a new territory for the United States, saw volunteers trained at Fort Niagara and deployed to the Philippines from 1899 to 1901.

By 1917, the United States finally declared war on Germany and Fort Niagara was used as another training facility during the First World War.

After the war, Fort Niagara was once again in desperate need of upgrades and repairs.

In 1927, the Old Fort Niagara Association was formed with the primary goal to restore the fort and develop it into a museum.

By 1934 the fort opened up to the public and existed for many years as a place for people to gather for picnics, concerts in the park, dances and to learn about the history of the old fort.

Alas this peaceful period was ended with the Second World War. In 1940, the fort was again pressed into service as a military training ground. By 1944 it also housed, in a fenced-off section of the grounds, a German prisoner of war camp with the majority of the German prisoners coming from the North African campaign under Rommel's famous Afrika Korps.

It was hoped that with the end of the Second World War, Fort Niagara would close its doors to active military service, but this was not to be. The fort was used one last time for military training for the Korean War (1950-1953).

In 1963 the United States Army ceded the land and Fort Niagara to New York State.

From the French, to the British to the American forces, a long tradition of military history had come to an end.

The House of Peace is truly at peace now.

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

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

Denise is a regular Niagara Now contributor. Her full profile can be found at niagaranow.com.

Niagara Historical
SOCIETY MUSEUM



43 Castlereagh St.
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COMMUNITY

All NOTL residents are welcome to submit photos and stories for consideration in this section. Send to editor@niagaranow.com



It was a graveyard smash.

Sandtrap Open raises \$9,150 for two charities

Richard Harley
Editor

The 7th annual Sandtrap Open raised a whopping \$9,150 for the Ronald McDonald House and the Niagara Children Centre School in September.

Last week Sandtrap Pub and Grill owner Matt Dietsch, along with his wife Kristin and son Dylan, dropped off two cheques to the organizations, each receiving half the funds raised for a total of \$4,575.

Dietsch said this year's tournament was the biggest yet, with a sold out field of 76 players.

"It feels great to have so many people donate their time and money to make the tournament a success year after year," said Dietsch.

"Even before the tournament started this year we had \$750 in donations from people stopping by because one or the other charities has helped their family over the years."

Dietsch, whose son Dylan was born with cerebral palsy,



The Dietsch family presents a cheque to the Ronald McDonald House in October. (Supplied photo)

said he chooses to donate to the two charities year after year because of the help they have given his family.

"My son was born with cerebral palsy and we had to spend some time at RMH. It is truly amazing what a feel-

ing it is to have a home away from home after long days at the hospital, even if it's only to have a hot shower and a home cooked meal. We have since then had to stay there for some surgery Dylan had, and once again it was a big

relief to have somewhere to escape the institutional walls of the hospital. They also have a satellite room within the hospital where you can go and have a cup of coffee and any of the donated food items within."



The Dietsch family presents a cheque to the Niagara Children's Centre School in October. (Supplied photo)

The Niagara Children Centre School is where Dylan now goes to school.

"It has helped him become the shining star he is," said Dietsch.

"Their motto is 'to weave therapy and education for student success.' They have physio, occupational and speech therapists on staff to help with the different needs of each student. They also have a therapy pool."

Anyone interested in making their own contribution to

the Ronald McDonald House or Niagara Children Centre School can do so at www.rmhcsc.ca/ways-to-help/make-a-donation (RMH) and niagarachildrencentre.com (Niagara Children's Centre).

Donations to NCC can be made in honour of the Dietsch family and support individualized education and therapeutic programming in small group settings to children and youth with multi-learning and physical exceptions.

SCENE OF THE WEEK



A row of maple trees turns out a striking mix of fall colours at Chautauqua Park in Old Town. (Richard Harley)



If you have ever wanted to improve your speaking skills, become a better communicator and develop your leadership skills, this is the place and time for you! Toastmasters are happy to announce we are starting a New Club in NOTL. Come to our casual and fun open house for the Wine & Dine Toastmasters Club, Wednesday, Nov. 14 from 6:45 p.m. to 9:15 p.m. at Niagara College (NOTL Campus) Room W112.

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Betty & Jane: Plunger Patrol
Inspecting NOTL's bathrooms:
Backhouse

In a small strip-mall in uptown Niagara-on-the-Lake is one of Canada's leading restaurants. At Backhouse, the aroma of peach wood burning in the brick oven lets guests know they're not out just for dinner, but are embarking on a culinary journey. The art on the restroom ceiling was striking. All three rooms had fresh flowers and were consistently well appointed. Backhouse offers a continuously evolving menu. Your gold Plunger Bathroom experience will also be as hospitable. Backhouse earns 4.5/5 plungers.

4.5/5 Gold Plungers

RIDDLE ME THIS:

I'm often running yet I have no legs. You need me but I don't need you. What am I?

Last Week's answer: An anchor. Email answers to editor@niagaranow.com for a chance to win a prize.



The View is Absolutely Breathtaking

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Working with metal: Steele and Boaks profiles

Photos by Lauren O'Malley.



Richard Steele, local metal sculptor, at his Niagara Stone Road residence and studio.



Ronald Boaks, multi-media artist outside his studio.

Lauren O'Malley
Staff

Even in a town with an abundance of art and culture, it's surprising to find two metal sculptors less than five kilometres apart. Both Ron Boaks and Richard Steele display their works in their front yards — but the similarities might end there.

There are visual icons in Niagara-on-the-Lake, ones known to everyone in town.

The cenotaph, the white statue of a rearing horse on Four Mile Creek Road, the metal sculptures on Niagara Stone Road near Gales in Virgil, and the metal sculptures in the garden next to McDonald's, also on Niagara Stone Road.

Outside McDonald's is the work of local artist Ron Boaks. They're called Sentinels I, II and III, and the glossy black and red welded pieces stand guard outside Boaks' eponymous gallery, which contains works selected from a more-than-40-year body of work.

"I think most people are surprised when they come in," says the humble yet confident artist of his works which take form in different media.

The walls of his studio are decorated with paintings large and small, drawings, mono prints, large-scale photographic prints, and collages.

"Part of what surprises them is that all of this is the work of one artist," he says.

There are raised stages feature sculptures made largely from found and scavenged pieces, as well as ceramics thrown into the mix.

"My sculptures are informed cultures. They're collages in their own way,"

says Boaks.

"These ceramic things are from the knob and tube wiring in my old house in Toronto. The block of wood marked "ordnance" was used to teach soldiers how to pack their kit — it belonged to my grandfather," he says, pointing at pieces jutting from the blocky base of one piece.

Boaks' sculptures have a common theme — they all have three legs, "which is the minimum number you can have for stability," he says.

"In my work that triad represents mind, body and spirit."

A piece might include a piece of aluminum, a piece of water buffalo horn, a gnarled chunk from a mulberry tree, or the branch of a tree from his old home.

The Toronto native's creativity was nurtured at a young age.

"When I was in Grade 4 I had a deal with my teacher that when I finished my work I could go to the back of the class and make art," he says.

"This taught me to clear my work out of my mind first, and then create," a method which has resulted in an organized lifestyle and a prolific body of work.

The 66-year-old studied art at Sheridan College in Toronto, and had his first exhibit at Montreal Forum '76, an exhibition at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

"I've been showing on a regular basis since then," he says.

Boaks and his wife Lenore Richards bought a house in the Niagara region in 1998.

"Lenore and I went to a really fantastic picnic on a perfect summer day, sitting at a long wooden table in a vineyard with 40 other people," he says.

"The guests included restaurateurs and sommeliers. We said, 'You know what? We could live here.'"

The couple enjoyed their home on Cave Spring Road in Vineland for about 15 years, and then heard from friends about the Nothing New Antiques property on Niagara Stone Road.

"I've been working for three-and-a-half years to get this property back in shape," says Boaks, pointing out the new floors, walls, windows and even wiring. There are four buildings on the property, all now in use by Boaks as studios and gallery, as well as the late gothic Ontario farmhouse built in the 1870s the couple calls home. The work has been extensive, and Boaks has done most of it himself.

"You could see daylight through the corners of the stone walls in one of the studios," he says.

He's been paring the walls inside and out, equating the work with painting.

"I don't use traditional tools in my art for the most part — I don't use brushes very often," he says. "I use my hands, cookie lifters, scrapers, spreaders ..."

When it comes to inspiration, Boaks says there's "usually a trigger."

"Sometimes two," he says. "Flowers, lily pads, the sky. One of the things I love about living here is the sky. Every morning I just look at the sky and feel inspired."

Up the street near Four Mile Creek Rd., another local artist named Richard Steele is finding inspiration from quite different sources.

At his Raven Studios — the one near Gales — the welding artist says, "When



I stand here and look at this 'mess,' I'm looking at parts. I start moving them over, then I'll start putting them in a pile. My son Dylan says, 'What are you doing?' I tell him I'm making a sculpture," he says. "It's in there — I'll bring it out."

Steele's influences are literary and artistic. He has 10-foot sculptures of the faces of Walt Whitman and Edgar Allan Poe, and he says he's also sparked by the work of Jackson Pollack.

"I love his stuff," says Steele. "I think it's fantastic. He doesn't throw that paint, he moves his hands and uses them like fans — like a ballet dancer, like he's dancing."

The life-long NOTL resident has been welding sculptures for some 40 years.

He began creating during his spare time while working for Shepherd Boats, Genaire and at the airport doing ray-dome repair.

Now, in his retirement, he can work on his art full-time.

"Even if I didn't sell anything I'd be out here welding," he says.

Steele on the other hand is self-taught, though art runs in his blood.

"My dad never welded or anything, but he was always drawing — usually horses. I've always wanted to make a horse," he says.

Steele's father owned the barbershop where the



Stagecoach Family Restaurant is today.

The slightly-ironically-named Steele gets most of his material from a scrap yard.

"But it's getting expensive. They used to give us the metal, but now we have to pay for it," he says.

He's been selling to the public from his home studio for decades, and has many tales to tell, including the time former prime minister Stephen Harper stopped by for a visit.

"I was sitting with my wife in the back yard when a man walks up in a suit and says, 'someone wants to meet you,'" he recounts.

"I see a man standing against the fence like this, with his hands folded in front of him. There are four of them like this, lined up along the driveway. The man I'm supposed to meet is looking at a sculpture. We talk. 'You're very good,' he said. I said 'Thank you very much.'"

It took me a while to realize this was the prime minister of Canada, he says, with a look of wonder.

Steele couldn't recall which prime minister it was, though his sister Debra confirmed it.

"After he left I thought, 'Why didn't you just give him the sculpture he was looking at?'"

Another story: "A car pulls into the driveway. A lady gets out, says, 'I want this one,

and this one here,' pointing, talking to her husband who is still in the car," Steele says.

"The man gets out and says, 'give her anything she wants.' Never seen anybody like that — 'give her anything she wants.' She picked out the most expensive one I had at the time, \$3,000," he says. He shipped those sculptures to Florida.

Steele's work has been bought largely from his property by passers-by, and is currently on display in homes and gardens and galleries all over North America.

"I figure I've sold about 20 pieces this year, and maybe about 2,000 in total," he says.

For an art show in NOTL, Steele had a sculpture made of many faces.

"A woman came up and had a good look at the piece. She asked me what it was about," he says.

"I told her that's my father's cousin John, he has schizophrenia. She started crying — her son also had schizophrenia, and was also named John. She bought the sculpture."

He pauses and says, "I think sometimes why didn't I just give it to her?"

This gruff 71-year-old man's eyes tear up with the memory. "It's really something to have somebody break down and cry over your work."

News that

Hits home

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