Marotta clears trees, residents gather in protest

Richard Harley
Editor

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

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

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

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

The Town’s current bylaws allow for the trees to be removed.

Kelly said it appears Marotta is trying to clear-cut the properties before the newly elected council is sworn in.

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

Continued on Page 3
Queenston residents continue battle over jet boats

Penny Coles
Staff

The jet boats may be tackled away for the winter, but Queenston residents are not standing down on the battle against the operation of buses and boats on the river, hoping to find some relief by next summer.

For almost three decades, the Old Town Dock area residents have borne the brunt of the increasingly popular attraction’s impact on their neighborhood and its residents. The double-decker buses are regularly operated by one of the large tour company buses that pass by on their way to Queenston, and the Whirlpool Jet Boat Co. operates its tours from Queenston. But this past season, the jet boats rowed down the river and operation shifted the bulk of its tours to Queenston, and the town has seen complaints from the villagers who live along the river and its shores, their quality of life suffering severely, said Jim Armstrong, president of the Queenston Residents Association.

“It is impossible for some residents to even leave their houses or driveways because of the noise, dust, and the smell from the buses,” he said.

Locally known as the sand pit, the four-way stop has destroyed his lawn, and he was forced to stop or scale down the operation, he said. The result was that the jet boat day is now gone.

He said he has one boat that would take dinner cruises out on the river, with a liquor licence and a restaurant, along with a second boat now permanently moored at the dock. He uses it for special events, which usually sell out, and even has retail space for souvenirs. Armstrong said his business is still doing well and he has been looking at adding a glass-enclosed structure at the dock.

Although there have been rumours about town that Kinney wants out of his Melville Street lease to move his entire operation on this side of the river to Queenston, he said that’s not the case.

Kinney, who is past his seven years of the lease, said he is considering the possibility of moving his entire operation on this side of the river to Queenston until he no longer wants to be there. But Queenston residents would like to see other activities share the waterfront, as residents have requested over the years.

He denies the move is an issue for village residents. Rather it’s for the QRA to discuss the issue.

Town CAO Dowlow said the QRA has been working with the Whirlpool Jet Boat Co. and the Whirlpool Authority of Ontario to fulfill its mandate and control the intensification of what is going on at the docks. The QRA has met with representatives from the company, along with members of the QRA. Stecyk said the Whirlpool Jet Boat Co. has prepared a brief for the provincial agency outlining what is going on at the dock and asking them to get involved in limiting it.

There have been complaints from residents about the jet boats, and the lakeside is often very busy with people looking at or riding in the boats.

Kinney said he wouldn’t quantify the number of buses arriving each day. He said passengers are able to eat while enjoying the sunset and have a drink and a bite to eat from one of the Niagara Belle restaurants, along with a annual escalations clause based on the consumer price index.

“Without giving an exact ac-

count of the cost to Kinney, Dowlow said the term of the lease, going back to 2013, was for $140,000 a season, plus an annual escalation clause of 7 per cent on the index cost of living increase.”

She has been asked to meet with members of Smuggler’s Cove Club and on other boats, and even has retail space for souvenirs. Armstrong said there would be a glass-enclosed structure at the dock.

“This is not going to be a building, but Queenston residents would like to see other activities share the waterfront, as residents have requested over the years. Rather it’s for the QRA to discuss the issue.”

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diate mental health support should know there is help available. Distress Centre Niagara has a 24/7 crisis hotline at 1-800-563-4944. The Distress website also has many resources.

The paddle boats and kayaks operate on the lake and river, and said, and are a wel-

come addition, with no threat of danger from the jet boats.

Boats can rent for a few dollars, and opportunities for residents to access the waterfront, such as a place to put a cup of coffee or a glass of wine, which they can use to do so. “We’re not least bit threatened by those types of boats,” he said.

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

Continued from Front Page

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

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

Protestors gather outside the Randwood Estate. (Richard Harley)

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

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

Marotta said he expected people to protest the cutting.

“There’s a lot of people that have nothing to do, but rather cause problems and embarrass the town, trying to stop someone that follows the bylaws,” he said.

He said the clearing of the trees is permitted by the Town’s bylaws and the NPCA, and that he “won’t allow anyone to interfere with what needs to be done.”

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

“Of course the plan was approved by the Region, the Town and we’re just following the law.”

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

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

“We didn’t count them but whatever we feel needs to go down, we’ll take it down.”

Marotta said.

“What we do, it’s not breaking any rules or bylaws or anything like that.”

Several police officers were on scene for more than an hour, including a Niagara Regional Police sergeant who was called in to make decisions regarding the rights of the protesters. Lord Mayor-elect Betty Dero said one of her goals as leader of the new council will be to update the town’s tree bylaw, specifically to outline a procedure for developers to follow in extinguishing cases like Randwood.

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

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

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

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

He agreed, and police left the scene without incident.

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Why NOTL has a lord mayor

Betsy Masson

When I moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake five years ago, I was surprised to learn that the head of the Council was called the Lord Mayor, not simply the Mayor. I knew that the title Lord Mayor was used by the English monarch starting in medi- eval times to cities such as London, York and Edinburgh and more recently, large cities such as Birmingham and Manchester. But why was NOTL the only municipality in Canada to use that title? Publicity about the town gave the explanation that it was because it was the capital of Upper Canada for four years in the 18th century. This made sense. Why didn’t Halifaxes, Fredericton, Quebec City, and Toronto have Lord Mayors? I decided to investigate in 2012 after the incident when Councillor Martin Mazza talked repeatedly about Mr. Marotta. In the Town Hall, then later explained that the reason for this was “I have only one Lord.” I think that comment should be put on a list of famous words spoken in legislatures bodies along with Patrick Henry’s “Give me liberty or give me death,” and Winston Churchill’s “This is the finest hour” speech during World War Two. I started my research in the Jan Carnochan room of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library, a light-filled room with newspaper files, historic maps, and books dat- ing to the early 19th century, which, regrettably, no longer exists. Going through the Niagara Town Council file which began with documents going back to 1860, I noticed that official correspondence was conducted by the Lord Mayor of Niagara but about 1921 changed to the lord mayor. Town of Niagara-on-the- Lake. But there was no accompanying explanation as to how the mayor had become the lord mayor. So I turned to Joy Ormsby, the town historian, who told me the following.

In 1860, the mayor of Niagara-on-the-Lake went on a trip to England and came back with the idea that should be known as the lord mayor. He therefore went into Toronto, had a medal- ion made, started wearing it to meetings and signing his correspondence as lord mayor. Niagara-on-the-Lake. The mayors thereafter fol- lowed the same practice in 1861 when the Town and Township were united, it was written into the Bylaws to show that the head of government be known as lord mayor. So if you hear that Niagara-on-the-Lake is the only municipality in Canada (and, in fact, all of North and South America) to have a lord mayor because it was the capital of Upper Canada for four years, please remember it is not true. It’s because a self-aggrandizing mayor (whose name I will not reveal because Niagara history slumbers) will soon figure it out) he took to England.

A proposed change to NOTL’s coat of arms

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

I’m tempted to petition the Town to change the coat of arms to the 21st century, replacing the grassy mound, blah, blah with this image of a logging truck nestled (as they say) between the lions, thereby officially incorpo- rating stark evidence of the Town’s complicity, in the developer/owner betrayal of the community at the Rand Estate, and elsewhere in the rapid deterioration of the Town. It was curvy.

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

The removal of trees from John Dunington-Grubb’s properties required no permit and broke no laws, an extensive investigation by the Town has revealed.

Mayor-elect Betty DiSero said Monday Town staff looked at “all the options” to block further tree removal.

“We’re not leaving one door open in terms of what the property owner’s rights are and what our rights are,” she said.

But at the end of the day, they found no agency regulation, and no municipal, regional or provincial legislation that could stop the work.

Benny Marotta of Two Sisters Resort Corp. has the right to cut down trees on his four properties with the exception of elements of the historic Dunington-Grubb landscape on the three John Street lots.

“As far as we can tell, that landscape area will extend to Charlotte Street,” said Disero.

With the recent election, the Town’s bylaw enforcement terms and no meetings scheduled until December, Marotta picked the time to take down the trees when the Town was at its weakest, Disero said.

A tree bylaw against tree deforestation has been passed by the last term of council and referred to the new council to decide.

Marotta said his timing had nothing to do with losing the election to the Town at a “weak moment.” He wanted the work done in the fall as the seasons had already changed and it would have been a two-week window to do the work. It will continue until Friday, he said, when he hopes the cutting will be complete, although there may be “some minor work” to be done, and the crew could be back in the winter.

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

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

pumping department.

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

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

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

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

NPCA staff have inspected the site on several occasions, and have walked the entire One Mile Creek and the swale connecting to One Mile Creek, determining the area is not covered under the Regional tree bylaw and the tree removal that has taken place does not constitute an interference with a waterfront.

NPCA staff said they would continue to monitor the situation.

With neither a Town or Regional tree bylaw that covers the destruction of trees on private property, there is nothing to stop the activity on those four properties, the Town concluded, with the exception of the trees which are part of the Dunington-Grubb landscape, and are protected by the Town’s heritage designation application.

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

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

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

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

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

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

APPLICATIONS ACCEPTED IN THE OFFICE MONDAY TO FRIDAY 9:00 AM TO 5:00 PM OR SUBMIT VIA EMAIL TO CONSERVATION@NIAGARAPENINSULAR.COM.

The Town’s lawyers have consulted with the heritage experts to continue to monitor the situation.

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

Have an opinion you want heard?

Send a letter to the editor to editor@niagaranow.com.
Upper Canada Lodge expected to close, Pleasant Manor to expand

Upper Canada Lodge, (Penny Coles)
Penny Coles
Staff

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

It’s one of three Regional homes requiring extensive upgrades to meet Provincial standards. The Region has decided to ask the Province for $70 million to expand the other two, Gilmore Lodge in Fort Erie and Linhaven in St. Catharines, with the intention of turning them into community hubs for seniors.

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

Upper Canada Lodge. (Penny Coles)

The end result will be determined by the Province, and the board is hopeful some of the funding announced by Premier Doug Ford recently for long-term care will end up in Virgil.

The plans to create a campus-style facility with everything from rental apartments, wellness suites for those who need temporary medical attention, seniors day care, and long-term care to allow aging in place. They’re even looking at adding a child daycare centre, said Dick.

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

NOTL has the most seniors per capita in the region, and “obviously we want to care for the seniors here,” expanded Pleasant Manor will help ease the pressure on Regional long-term care homes and hospitals, he said.

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

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

Ford has also promised an end to “hallway medicine,” and that means more long-term care for seniors who are now in hospital while they wait for an available space in a nursing home, said Dick.

“We can get people out of corridors in our hospitals by providing more nursing home beds for those who don’t have anywhere else to go,” he added. “There will likely be a glut of baby boomers who will need beds. We need to build for them now.”

This story has been edited. The story originally falsely stated Pleasant Manor was recently taken over by Revera Retirement Living and Long-term Care Services. In truth, Pleasant Manor is operated by Radiant Care and has not changed hands, but was re-branded. More information about Radiant Care can be found at, https://radiantcare.on.ca/.
Region needs to update smoking bylaw to include cannabis, vaping

Peony Coles | Staff

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

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

Dr. Andrea Feller, the Region’s associate medical officer of health, said Niagara has been “leading the way” in Ontario with stronger rules to limit smoking in public places. When the Province first introduced legislation to ban smoking in some areas, the Region went further with its own bylaw, adding some public locations the Province hadn’t included, such as parks and playgrounds, bus shelters, sports fields and around Municipal and Regional buildings.

In 2017 the Ontario government updated its smoking bylaw to include cannabis and vaping, and added more, although not all, of those locations. Niagara and other regions in Ontario had included in their own local bylaws. In September, the new Conservative government announced Ontario residents would be able to smoke recreational cannabis wherever the smoking of tobacco is allowed, with some exceptions for vehicles and boats.

Right now, that’s the easiest way to think about it, said Feller. “That’s the way we’re suggesting people look at it, although there will be a few places where the Provincial bylaw and the Regional bylaw don’t match up.”

There are “technical and really confusing discrepancies,” she said, adding it would be “a distraction” to the intention of the bylaw to outline the differences. They do exist, though, meaning, for example, there could be some corner of a park, a distance away from a playground, where the Regional bylaw bans smoking tobacco but not yet cannabis or vaping.

The Regional public health department didn’t want to move forward with a review of its bylaw until the provincial update was completed — it turned out to be stronger than expected, with additional smoke-free locations focused on protecting children, said Feller. The Regional al review process will include public consultation and the possibility of looking at additional locations to include as smoke-free places.

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

Working closely with staff from Niagara municipalities, the public health department could be ready to present a new bylaw in the first quarter of 2023, Feller said. In the meantime, the board is suggesting people see cannabis as smoke-free places.

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Right now, that’s the easiest way to think about it, said Feller. “That’s the way we’re suggesting people look at it, although there will be a few places where the Provincial bylaw and the Regional bylaw don’t match up.”

There are “technical and really confusing discrepancies,” she said, adding it would be “a distraction” to the intention of the bylaw to outline the differences. They do exist, though, meaning, for example, there could be some corner of a park, a distance away from a playground, where the Regional bylaw bans smoking tobacco but not yet cannabis or vaping.

The Regional public health department didn’t want to move forward with a review of its bylaw until the provincial update was completed — it turned out to be stronger than expected, with additional smoke-free locations focused on protecting children, said Feller. The Regional al review process will include public consultation and the possibility of looking at additional locations to include as smoke-free places.

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

Working closely with staff from Niagara municipalities, the public health department could be ready to present a new bylaw in the first quarter of 2023, Feller said. In the meantime, the board is suggesting people see cannabis as smoke-free places.

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

Dr. Andrea Feller, the Region’s associate medical officer of health, said Niagara has been “leading the way” in Ontario with stronger rules to limit smoking in public places. When the Province first introduced legislation to ban smoking in some areas, the Region went further with its own bylaw, adding some public locations the Province hadn’t included, such as parks and playgrounds, bus shelters, sports fields and around Municipal and Regional buildings.

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Voices of Freedom Park open

Park monuments will honour history of black Canadians

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

The afternoon also saw a performance of Bob Dylan’s “The Times They Are a-Changin’” by vocalist Alana Bridgewater and pianist Robi Bo- tos, and a reading of “Remember- ing Canada’s Best Kept WW1 Secret: The No. 2 Construction Battalion,” performed by Allan Louis, a Shaw Festival actor.

The concept for VOF Park was created by Raymond Tang, the Town’s urban design specialist, and is designed to be an interac-
tive experience—both visually and physically,” according to a Town media re-
lease sent Nov. 2. The release said a web developer has been hired by the VOF committee to produce an online app that will let park-goers take part in a mobile walking tour of all black history sites within the town, beginning with the Voices of Free-
dom Park.

An educational compo-
nent dedicated to the history of black Cana-
dians is also in development for schools visiting the Niagara Historical So-
ciety Museum, planned to launch in Black History Month (Febru-
ary, 2019).

The VOF Park project received $330,000 from the federal government — through the Building Communities Through Arts and Heritage Legacy Fund, administered by the Depart-
ment of Canadian Heritage — for its role in showcasing local arts and history. “The Government of Canada has been a proud partner of Voices of Freedom from the outset,” said Rodri-
guez. “Projects like this one help foster connections across communi-
ties and encourage us to build a stronger future for everyone. Our government will continue to work hard to promote inclusion, and show how diversity is a source of strength and pride.”

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

The private donations were crucial to the completion of the park, the Town release said. Kevin Turcotte, parks and recreation manager for the Town of NOTL, said he would like to thank the hard work of everyone involved in the VOF Park Project — “town coun-
cillors, donors, the Voices of Freedom committee, Town staff and the many contrac-
tors that were involved in constructing this park. This project wouldn’t have hap-
pened without your support — a special thank you to Dawland Farms and Land-
scaping who have worked tirelessly into the night over the past few weeks to ensure the park is ready for the official opening.”

“we look forward to preserving this beautiful park for the years to come,” Turcotte said.

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

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

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

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

Betty Disero, lord mayor-
elect and co-chair of the VOF Park committee, spoke to the crowd, noting the significance Niagara-on-the-Lake had in ending slavery. She told stories of Chloe Cooley, a freed slave who was taken back to the US from the audience. She said it’s an honour to have been named honorary chair of the park committee, and spoke of a time when she once tried to advocate for the history of black Canadians, “But no one was there.”

“I don’t think anyone re-
ally understands what we’ve been through in the past 90 years. And to see this see this become a project and success — and the support from the community — that’s the won-
derful thing,” Morrison said. “It’s been an honour and a joy to be a part of it, and I thank you all so much — all of the people who contributed to building this monument … I really couldn’t ask for more.”

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

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

“The Canada-US border is very real here in Niagara … but Freedom’s Land of course, is much more than a determined and enforced legal border. It’s also a metaphor for life and liberty. It’s an aspiration, a set of ethical and moral prin-
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Richard Harley
Editor

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ciples, and a daily challenge to everyone in society to break the lingering bonds of intolerance, ignorance, racial prejudice and hatred,” said Johnson.
Phragmites could end sustainability of specialty crops

Penny Coks
Staff

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

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

Dick, a farmer and operator of a small business that installs and repairs septic systems, was chair of the Town’s agricultural committee during the last term of council. He hopes to be appointed to the committee again, and control of phragmites (pronounced frag-MY-tees, which is both the singular and plural of the word, if anyone is both the singular and pronounced frag-MY-tees, which

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

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

The Town is overtaking storm water management ponds, “It’s not going to be a one-year or two-year project. It will continue to be a challenge going forward.”

Dennis Dick is hoping there will be some money put aside for eradicator to control the growth of phragmites, which is overtaking storm water management ponds, ditches and drains across the municipality.

The invasive plant grows near or in water, and has an extensive root system, as long as the plant is tall — it can grow up to 10 feet — and with the toxins it produces, it can choke out or kill native plants.

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

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

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

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

Dick hopes the Town will

Ideas? Submit them.

The Lake Report has asked local residents which issues matter most to them, and how they’d like to see them solved. We have provided a blank slate for residents to identify five specific areas of concern to them. Let us know what matters by submitting responses to editor@niagaranow.com with the subject line “My ideas for NOTL.”

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

1. Issue: _________________________________________

Fix: _________________________________________

2. Issue: _________________________________________

Fix: _________________________________________

3. Issue: _________________________________________

Fix: _________________________________________

4. Issue: _________________________________________

Fix: _________________________________________

5. Issue: _________________________________________

Fix: _________________________________________

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Call us today to book your complimentary hearing test
Queenston bake sale to offer holiday spirit

Lauren O’Malley
Staff

The Queenston Residents Association is offering a chance for folks to fill their freezers and bellies with goodies at its annual bake sale on Dec. 1 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Queenston Public Library. The library will be stocked full of baked goods such as squares, loaves and cookies, while the freezers will be stocked with the perennially popular tourtières and chicken casseroles for which the event has become known.

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

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

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

“We made 164 tourtières this year, and we’ve sold more than 90 of them already,” said Armstrong with pride.

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

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

Of the 160 casseroles, more than half have been pre-sold. The sale will feature gently used donated Christmas decorations as well, with donations being accepted until one week before the sale.

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

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

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

Tourtieres are $20 each, chicken casseroles are $25, and both can be ordered by calling Armstrong at 905-262-0268 or by sending her an email at armstrong@bellnet.ca.
Yellow Door receives $13K grant

Richard Harley
Editor

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

After taking up residence at 304 Line 2, the company is slowly transforming the former fitness studios into a versatile rehearsal, special event, and performance venue – no small task for a new charity, run on volunteer steam and grant money alone.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bridge tournament draws hundreds

Jill Troyer
Special to TLR

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

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

Organizers expected a maximum of 220 tables to be filled over the course of the weekend, but that was well exceeded for a total of 267 tables. Unit president Miriel Tremblay was delighted with the positive feedback from participants, without a single complaint as the tournament drew to a close on Sunday. Tremblay was also pleased there were players with a very broad range of experience levels participating. Roughly half of the participants were local, such as Rob Kischke.

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

He now plays two to four times per week at the community centre between tournaments. “The NOTL club is the most friendly and well-run club I’ve ever seen.”

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

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

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<tr>
<td>Public skating - 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. - Meridian Credit Union Arena</td>
<td>Little Red Tail Hawks - 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. - Niagara Regional Native Centre</td>
<td>Community Pot Luck and Drumming Night - 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. - Niagara Regional Native Centre</td>
<td>CARP meeting - 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. - Royal Niagara Golf Club</td>
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<td>An Afternoon of Music - 2 p.m. - St. Saviour’s Anglican Church, Queenston</td>
<td>Rotary Club of NOTL - 12 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</td>
<td>Council Orientation - 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. - Council Chambers</td>
<td>The Makeshift - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</td>
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<td>NOTL Ukesters Sunday Ukelele Workshop - 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</td>
<td>NOTL Golden Age Club - 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</td>
<td>Beer &amp; Books: The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald - 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. - The Old Winery</td>
<td>Make Some Noise - 4 p.m. to 4:45 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</td>
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<td>Frank Deresti &amp; The Lake Effect - 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. - Silversmith Brewing Co</td>
<td>Drums Night - 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. - Meridian Credit Union Arena</td>
<td>Council Chambers</td>
<td>NOTL Newcomers Club - 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</td>
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| | | NOTL Community Centre | Public Talk: The High
duman Hall and Its By Darren Schmahl - Willowbank School of Arts |
<p>| | | | Fall Trivia League - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - The Exchange Brewery |
| | | | Simply STEAM Story Time - 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. - Niagara College |
| | | | Open house for Queenston Rd. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library |
| | | | 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. - NOTL Public Library |
| | | | Fall Trivia League - 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. - NOTL Public Library |
| | | | 2018 Christmas Luncheon - 10:45 a.m. to 12 p.m. - NOTL Public Library |
| | | | Royal Oak Community School Open house - 3:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. - 176 Wellington St. |
| | | | Table tennis - 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. - NOTL Public Library |
| | | | 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 |
| | | | The Makeshift - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library |
| | | | Urban Design Committee - 5 p.m. - Council Chambers |
| | | | Baha’i Community of NOTL - 7:30 p.m. - Mori Room NOTL Community Centre |</p>
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<td>Painting without brushes - 8:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. - St. Michael Catholic Elementary School 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 Akwe:go Afterschool Program - 4:40 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. - Niagara Regional Native Centre Committee of Adjustment Hearing - 7 p.m. - Council Chambers</td>
<td>Drop-in bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre Montana Club - 1:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Public Library 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 Akwe:go Afterschool Program - 4:40 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. - Niagara Regional Native Centre</td>
<td>P.A. day (no school) - 8:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. - Royal Oak Community School Drop-in bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</td>
<td>Raising Healthy Teens - Rules - 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. - NOTL Public Library Healthy Kids Community Challenge: Power Off &amp; Play - 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. - NOTL Public Library NOTL Duplicate Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre An Afternoon at the Movies - A Wrinkle in Time - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library Knit-a-Bit - 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Public Library</td>
<td>Raising Healthy Teens - Common Psychological Concerns - 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - NOTL Public Library Queenston Bake and Christmas Sale - 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. - Queenston Library Christmas Craft Show - 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. - Royal Canadian Legion Branch 124 Rotary Holiday House Tour - 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Healthy Kids Community Challenge: Power Off &amp; Play - 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. - NOTL Public Library NOTL Duplicate Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre</td>
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</tbody>
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Kim McQuhae shows off two of her award-winning preserves, a sangria jelly and her first-place award-winning golden plum lychee jam. Behind her is a wall of awards she’s won at various Royal Canadian Winter Fairs, including 17 first-place awards for canning and numerous awards for showing her Highland cattle. (Richard Harley)

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

For more than a decade, Kim McQuhae has been taking home first-place awards from the Royal Canadian Winter Fair. This year was no different: the local farmer earned herself two firsts this year in the fair’s jam, jelly and pickle competition — one for her golden plum lychee jam and one for her maple, pear and pecan jam, made with Forty Creek whiskey.

For McQuhae, the craft of canning has become an art, one she treats like a science, having by now created a large binder of “mad recipes,” including recipes she’s literally dreamt up, like a water chestnut marinated pickle competition — one for her golden plum lychee jam and one for her maple, pear and pecan jam, made with Forty Creek whiskey.

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McQuhae has passed the blind test every year since 2007, having 17 first-place ribbons, and taking home the title of premiere exhibitor in 2017. It’s reached the point where she’s stopped really counting anything besides a championship win, though she’s won a plethora of other awards too. This year she took home another 10 awards in a variety of categories she enters in, it can be tough, and change is inevitable, and growing vegetables in the summer.

For McQuhae, the craft of canning has become an art, one she treats like a science, having by now created a large binder of “mad recipes,” including recipes she’s literally dreamt up, like a water chestnut marinated pickle.

McQuhae’s preserves speak for themselves, with the awards to prove their tastiness.

You can get in touch with McQuhae at the local farmers’ market in the summer or by giving her a call at Gryphon Ridge at, 905-488-5603.

Golden Plum Lychee - 1st place
Maple Pear Pecan - 2nd place
Vanilla strawberry mint jam - 3rd place
Sangria jelly - 3rd place
Blackcurrant raspberry jam - 4th place
Blueberry lychee jam - 4th place
Jalapeño blueberry jelly - 4th place
Blueberry lemon jam - 5th place
Vanilla pink grapefruit marmalade - 5th place
Strawberries and cream jam (made Godiva white chocolate liquor) - 6th place
Peach Bellini jelly (peaches and champagne) - 6th place
Balsamic, caramelized onion and roasted garlic jelly - 12th place
NOTL Rotary Club launches 20th anniversary holiday house tour

Lauren O’Malley

The annual Christmas parade in Niagara-on-the-Lake will be on Saturday, December 3, and the NOTL Rotary Club is celebrating 20 years of it this year. This year’s property selection has been working on this committee for several years, a task that requires dedication and passion. All committees are working on it for several years, a task that requires dedication and passion. All committees are working on it for several years, a task that requires dedication and passion.

Lauren O’Malley Staff

Hold on tight to your Santa hats — it’s Christmas in town. The Rotary Club of Niagara-on-the-Lake has been hard at work planning for this year’s Christmas Parade on Saturday, December 3. The parade will begin at 10 a.m. and will travel along Main Street, ending at the Cenotaph.

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

Some of the houses decorated specially for the parade this year will be on display. These houses include the home of Barb Petrierson, which will be a block party, with music and hot cocoa available. Other houses, including the Gardener’s House, will also be decorated specifically for the parade.

Quality and detail are key to the success of the parade. “We want to make sure that every house is special and unique,” says Barb Petrierson, who has been involved in the parade for several years.

The parade is a fundraiser for the Rotary Club, with proceeds going to various local charities. This year, the Rotary Club is working with the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre to offer a special Christmas package.

For more information on the Christmas Parade or to purchase tickets, visit notl.org or call 905-688-0717.
On Nov. 11 we remember

Jill Troyer
Special to TLR

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

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

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

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

She said the Sparks, some as young as five years old, were “totally engaged in writing post cards to veterans for their service; Thank you for your service...”

“...can’t help but touch their hearts,” said Moulson. “How I wish my Dad were alive to receive one.”

The Sparks then asked questions of local resident Blanche Quin, a 95-year-old Second World War veteran who served in Canada working in an office.

“Your messages touched the hearts of all who saw them,” Moulson said. “The meeting ended with the singing of O’Canada. The Girl Guides laid a wreath at the base of the Cenotaph in Old Town.”

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

Sparks give something special to veterans for Remembrance Day

Richard Harley
Editor

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

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Fighter pilot reminisces about Second World War

Penny Cokes
Staff

At 98, Second World War veteran Norm Howe has attended his share of Remembrance Day ceremonies. When paid his respects and gratitude to Howe and others who served and sacrificed for our country, he was remembering the men in his life who became his temporary family. As a young man, he was based in the U.K. where he flew 81 dangerous solo bombing missions to preserve democracy for its allies.

This year, he attended a solemn Remembrance Day in the warmth of Tabor Manor, surrounded by his family, in the chapel of the long-term care residence he now calls home. Howe is one of the few Second World War veterans still living and able to share his memories. Although he had no family members during those years most of us can’t imagine, and the armistice that marked the end of it. At the age of 19, Howe left his parents and Margherita, his high school sweetheart, in Toronto, to join the Royal Canadian Air Force. Most of his family stayed in Toronto, joined the Canadian Women’s Army Corps, where she became an expert in night vision, and trained young soldiers while she waited for her future husband to come home. About six months of his initial training took place in Quebec, before he was shipped overseas to Britain, where he received further instruction in preparation for flying fighter planes with a Royal Air Force squadron. Howe couldn’t have been more different, and he didn’t imagine, and the armistice that marked the end of it.

He attended his share of Remembrance Day ceremonies. When paid his respects and gratitude to Howe and others who served and sacrificed for our country, he was remembering the men in his life who became his temporary family. As a young man, he was based in the U.K. where he flew 81 dangerous solo bombing missions to preserve democracy for its allies.

After a time flying the Hurricane, Howe recalls rescuing an American bomber which was out over the North Sea and had been disabled. It was in the air, badly shot up, and not far from land, but it couldn’t find its way back to base. Howe found it in the air, flew around it, and wiggled his wings to indicate a friendly aircraft. There was a crew of seven, and he could see a lot of blood through a window. The pilot to follow him, and the plane limped slowly behind him as he guided it back to the base in England. The plane landed safely, but he never found out how many of the crew survived.

He found himself in danger in the sky a couple of times, once shot at by enemy guns, and once by friendly fire. Howe said there was always a sense of satisfaction after a successful mission, which most of them were. “We were doing something useful. The squadron was a family. We lost members, but we didn’t dwell on that.” He said he had the reputation of losing its tail a couple of times he was able to land safely, he said. Howe got an egg that evening. “That was the end of it. Howe returned home in November 15, 2018

When the armistice was declared, Howe decided to join the Royal Canadian Air Force, flying the 1940s version of a flight simulator. Because of the bad weather, only six days of flying were days flying, he said.

After a time flying the Hurricane, Howe recalls rescuing an American bomber which was out over the North Sea and had been disabled. It was in the air, badly shot up, and not far from land, but it couldn’t find its way back to base. Howe found it in the air, flew around it, and wiggled his wings to indicate a friendly aircraft. There was a crew of seven, and he could see a lot of blood through a window. The pilot to follow him, and the plane limped slowly behind him as he guided it back to the base in England. The plane landed safely, but he never found out how many of the crew survived.

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

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Would he have liked to stay in the air force in B.C., but he never looked back — it was the right choice. But to this day, when he thinks of the squadron and the missions he flew, he feels privileged to have flown such a sophisticated aircraft.

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

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

Want the answers early? Scan the puzzles using HP Reveal. (Must be following Niagara Now’s channel.)
NOTL Nationals to host kids night

Penny Coles
Staff

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Paddling five Great Lakes in one day

Austria Broad
Special to TLR

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

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

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

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

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

“All of it was simply about getting out there and doing something that we knew would be an amazing experience,” Dakin said.

“We’re fortunate to work with fantastic brands who support paddlers and are as adventurous as we are,” Taber said he would recommend a trip like this to all paddlers.

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

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

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

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

As Dakin tells it, it’s like the start of a bad joke.

“A firefighter, a professor and a writer walk into the Gunslinger Saloon,” he jests, in a written story of his own about the trek.

As far as the group’s research could find, standup paddleboarding all five lakes in one calendar day hadn’t previously been done, Dakin said.

“But that’s not why we did it, and if someone else has done it before us, we would love to hear their story,” Dakin said.

“Dakin said. “For us, this was simply about getting out there and doing something that we knew would be an amazing experience.”

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

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

The trio was supported by a number of organizations.

“Without their support this trip may not have been a possibility,” Dakin said.

Arch-text column we’ll follow the ‘Glass Revolution’. (Supplied photo)

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

For a buyer in one of the ‘colonies’, the high cost of artisan made glass was compounded by shipping and brokerage factors, rendering even small window panes a luxury item.

Both market demand and the 19th century industrialization ethos insisted on change and in the next ...
As far as traditions go in Niagara-on-the-Lake, the Candlelight Stroll may be the equivalent of the star on top of the Christmas tree. According to the NOTL Chamber of Commerce — the event’s organizer — this hallmark event brings 10,000 locals and tourists together to enjoy the seasonal cheer of music and community. And the warmth of charity.

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

The chamber’s decision is to install a Buddy Bench at each of the participating NOTL elementary schools. The concept of these colourful seats is to allow school kids to signal their need for support — inclusion, a friend, a kind listener — by sitting on the bench. Their peers are encouraged to then offer their empathy to the person in need. Thomson says, “We hope that the raising of awareness of the importance of both asking for a friend talk to, and of being a friend to others who reach out, will be beneficial to the young people in our town.”

The Buddy Bench concept began in Europe, and has been gaining popularity over the last five years or so in North America. Recipients of the donations from the Candlelight Stroll are introduced at the opening ceremonies, and then lead the promenade around downtown. Thomson hopes to have groups of students represent each participating school.

Last year the event raised about $12,000, according to chamber event co-ordinator Nicole Cripps. The amount was particularly high: “We were very fortunate to have an anonymous donor match our funds,” says Cripps.

This year the Candlelight Stroll takes place on Friday, Nov. 30. Carols and speeches begin in front of the Court House at 6:30 p.m. The schoolchildren will start the walk that circulates through 16 choirs at 7 p.m. Students from Vineridge Academy are staffing collection points for donations to Newark Neighbours. Strollers are encouraged to bring non-perishable foods, new toys (not gift-wrapped) and toiletries for the local charity.

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Chatting life, death and music with Jesse Lamothe

On their return from London two years later, Lamothe went beyond holding himself accountable for his teenage attitude — he also decided to face his fears head on. Having played some guitar and bass in his teens, he consciously pushed himself further in that direction. He started jamming with old NOTL friends like Jared Goetz and Taylor Hulley. He put together an alt-rock band called the Admiral Hardys: Lamothe plays guitar and sings lead. Performing in an easygoing cover band helped assuage his anxiety, and he became comfortable on stage with his bandmates at places such as the Mansion House and the Red Hot Chili Pepper in St. Catharines. But Lamothe’s professional life remained a bit aimless.

“Sarah convinced me to get some kind of career training, so I decided to go to Niagara College,” he says. “I chose therapeutic recreation because it was just vague enough. I just wanted to get out of my shell.” With his diploma in hand he went job hunting, and was quickly hired at a long-term care residence. His job is to interact with residents, mainly seniors, and keep them busy and entertained.

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

That “schooling” took him to the next level. Through word of mouth, in 2016 Lamothe heard about a comedic rock theatre show that was casting, and he asked to audition. “I felt like I avoided too much because I was afraid. So I tried out, and got the part,” he says, of the role of Stacee Jaxx — an 80s rock star past his prime — in Something’s production of the Broadway show Rock of Ages. “I realized I had never done anything like this. It was ridiculous, it was crazy,” he says of launching a theatre career in his early thirties. But Rob Burke, Something’s co-founder, says, “It was quite a challenge for Jesse, having no history of theatre work, but he did an awesome job.”

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

Burke had dreams of another theatrical musical production: Club 27 would be about four famous musicians who all died at the age of 27: Lamothe, looking for another challenge, approached Burke about being part of the cast. “Jesse said, ‘If you do Club 27, I’d like to try out for the Kurt Cobain role,’” says Burke. “I believed in him, and he nailed it.”

Like Rock of Ages, Club 27 had a limited and very successful run at Corks Playhouse Theatre, ending with a special encore presentation this summer. Burke has plans to expand the show and take it elsewhere, and Lamothe intends to keep falling to his knees and spitting on the audience as he channels Cobain.

On the flip side he’s singing Neil Diamond and BB King songs on the retirement home circuit. And now he’s facing his biggest fear of all: being himself. Lamothe started writing and performing his own songs this year. “I thought, ‘What is the scariest thing I could do now?’” He booked himself a spot on stage at a singer-songwriter showcase in St. Catharines. The judges included established Canadian musicians Jacob Moon, Melissa-Marie Shrimn and Ron Whitman, along with the event’s organizer, Ryan Lunn. “I thought I was going to pass out on stage,” says Lamothe. “But Rob Burke, Something’s co-founder, says, ‘I thought, ‘What is the scariest thing I could do now?’” He booked himself a spot on stage at a singer-songwriter showcase in St. Catharines. Burke had dreams of another theatrical musical production: Club 27 would be about four famous musicians who all died at the age of 27: Lamothe, looking for another challenge, approached Burke about being part of the cast. “Jesse said, ‘If you do Club 27, I’d like to try out for the Kurt Cobain role,’” says Burke. “I believed in him, and he nailed it.”

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First Presbyterian Church in St. Davids

Denise Ascenzo

It was 1776 when some of the first United Empire Loyalists settled in the area of two cross roads, a north-south road connecting Lakes Ontario and Erie and an east-west trail that followed the outline below the Niagara Escarpment. The area was known as community of St. Davids. The first church that was established in the hamlet of St. Davids was the Methodist Church founded in 1789. David Secord donated land for the church, a school and a graveyard which can be seen today on York Road beside St. Davids United Church.

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

By 1884, the Methodist church was struggling trying to unite four different sects. The First Presbyterian Church of Canada. However many families in St. Davids didn’t agree with this “new” Church, its new modern ways and decided to part company. The First Presbyterian church in St. Davids came into being on May 23, 1887. In June of 1888 12 people held the first worship service in a stone schoolhouse. These were the early settlers of St. Davids with familiar names — Woodruff, Cryder, Secord, Black, Lawson and Watson.

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

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

The very first minister was Rev. E. B. Chestnut, who led the church from 1889 to 1893. Behind the church is a small graveyard. There is but one stone visible, that of Colonel Joseph Clement (fought with the Lincoln Militia during the War of 1812) who died in 1867 at the age of 76 and his wife Ann (nee Caughell) who died in 1880.

Several people I spoke with remember seeing other grave markers, but alas they do not know for certain if they were markers nor who might have been buried in the church graveyard. In 1887; the congregation was made up of 52 families. Not large enough to support their own minister, they shared a minister and expenses with one or two other Presbyterian congregations from surrounding communities such as Merriton, Stamford or St. Catharines.

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

By the turn of the 20th century, the families in the church community increased greatly, which in turn helped to bolster the finances of the church. In 1903, on donated lands from Mr. H.C. Woodruff, the first manse (home owned by the church) was built. Now with a strong congregation, First Presbyterian Church, St. Davids could attract a permanent minister offering a manse, a small income and even transportation allowances. It was decided, almost 50 years later that the first manse was not habitable. In 1957 a new manse was built right beside the church, next to the Lions Club Park. The house is still there today.

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

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

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

The church and the congregation forged on, working to increase the number of families on their roles which in turn helped to stabilize the church’s finances. Then 1929; the Great Depression swept through Canada and the First Presbyterian Church, St. Davids was hit extremely hard.

Many members of the congregation left, moving to larger cities in search of work, and those that remained behind had little to offer the church. Young ministers who were desperate to find work preached at three or four churches just to make a living. At this time, Rev. Dr. R. J. Johnston, a minister in St. Catharines took on the duties of three other churches besides his own. He tended to Merriton Presbyterian, Fort Robinson Presbyterian and First Presbyterian St. Davids congregations.

The struggles of this small church and congregation continued but was met with strength and fortitude. The simple fun of church picnics, the fellowship of the congregation and their support of the community was astounding, according to longtime locals who know the history. There were many families who spanned several generations within the church.

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

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

Within the church community there were many social groups. One of the first groups, started in 1890, was the Home Mission Society which later came to be known as the Women’s Missionary Society (WMS). The WMS raised money for mission work in the “Ori- ent,” now China, or for poor children in Africa.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Questions about these two services can be directed to Catherine Julie at katemac19@gmail.com.

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

To learn more about the topic of this story you can visit the Niagara Historical Society & Museum website at, www.niagarahistoricalsociety.org, or visit the museum for yourself. The Niagara Historical Museum is located at 43 Catherough St. in Old Town, in Memorial Hall, Vista, or give them a call at 905-465-5912. Ascenzo is a regular Niagara Now contributor. Her full profile can be found at niagararoun.com.
St. Davids vet to host afternoon of holiday pet photos

Every year the St. Davids Veterinary Clinic holds an open house event where community members and their pets can participate in some holiday festivities. Residents can bring in their pets and have their picture taken with Santa Claus. It is a great way to come out for some fun and to get involved in the community. Donations are welcome, and all of the funds go to the lioness of St. Davids to help with their guide dog programs. There are refreshments, entertainment and a fun raffle draw on top of the other festivities.

A Christmas Carol returns for a short time

As Niagara-on-the-Lake’s Shaw Festival is also warming into the Christmas season by running a series of performances of artistic director Tim Carroll’s version of A Christmas Carol.

The adaptation of the classic Dickens tale hits the stage from Nov. 14 to Dec. 23 at the Royal George Theatre. This year, the show is directed by Molly Atkinson, taking over for Carroll, and features Michael Therriault as Ebenzer Scrooge, together with Kyla Cook, Patty Jamieson, Andrew Lawrie, Marla McLean, Sarena Parmir, PJ Prudat, Graeme Somerville, Sanjay Talwar and Jonathan Tan.

After the show, following a “rousing chorus of Christmas carols,” audience members can capture the memory by taking a photo on stage with members of the cast, said Shaw in a news release. This show is recommended for kids ages six and up. Tickets for the show are currently on sale to Friends of The Shaw and will be available to the public Dec. 8.

RIDDLE ME THIS:

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

Last Week’s answer: Water, answered first by Holly Anderson.

Email answers to editor@niagaranow.com for a chance to win a prize.
Lauren O’Malley

“Life is all chance,” says Holmes Hook. And when you take a good look at him, you know he’s had more than a few chances, and has plenty of stories to tell about them. The Irish accent comes from his first 21 years in County Armagh, Northern Ireland. The rich baritone comes right from his chest, and is warm enough to entice one to draw near and listen longer. There is much to hear.

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

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

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

Here’s where the story swerves, and the magic steps in. Chance. When he was in his early forties, Hook and a few friends decided to put together a travelling band on a lark for St. Patrick’s Day party. “I converted Don Mills rockers to Celtic music,” he says. “It was that time in the 80s when Irish music was everywhere, and we were very successful.” He recalls the “absolute joy” of making music, of sharing four-part harmony. The brief glimpse of local fame.

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

“Every time I sit down to write I never know what will happen. I’m a tymer, or a poet or a writer,” he says. “I embrace the adventure.”

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

Anybody who was at any one of many more of these moments, these sparks of magic, in Hook’s life will attest.

While travelling as a spoken-word artist, he was given emcee jobs. This led him into and around folk festivals. And, as chance would have it, into rather important jobs in the folk music world.

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

From this point, two careers were set on fire. Even-ignited by newfound, Hooke visited Carson at the new space. “He said, ‘Hey would you like to be the host here? I said, ‘What, it going to be?’ He said, ‘This is it.’” Hook says, “I felt as if all my life, the years at Hugh’s Room, things I’ve done were leading up to this.”

“Odetta Sings the Blues.” The result is the Niagara-On-The-Lake Festival, and the Vital Spark heritage, and Communities in Bloom.

“Richie said he was ready for the next band. She and Hooke had their second child, and I was determined to book someone nearby doing some- thing impressive,” he says.

Hook has had a lifelong passion that can’t seem to be exhausted: trees. He looks at them as friends, and at their loss as the death of a relationship. Which explains his most recent endeavour. Hooks and his neighbour Leslie Frankmount mounted a massive project over the diminishing tree canopy in their neighbour- hood, and decided to make a presentation to Council and do what they could to remedy the situation.

The result is the Niagara-On-The-Lake Tree Fund, which has seen dozens of trees planted in Chautauqua, with more on the way. And now, Niagara College is involved, helping to nurture more than 70 saplings Hooke raised from acorns collected from healthy local trees. Frankmount and Hooke were recognized with awards from the Town, and Communities in Bloom. Their certificates are proudly displayed, not kept in a closet.

“I realized early on that I was in the music business, I added. And I felt he was with me every step of the way.”

There are two perspectives on how I live my life. Either I’m not that focused, or I’m always looking for the next thing,” he says. “You can’t survive without some real passion, and sometimes you exhaust a passion and have to move on.”

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

Holmes Hook. (Lauren O’Malley)