



Predators back on the ice | Page 13



NOTL fire chief Nick Ruller resigns, takes job in Brampton

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Nick Ruller announced his resignation as chief of Niagara-on-the-Lake's fire and emergency services, saying he is always looking at what comes next in life. "I'm more of a pioneer than a settler," Ruller said in an interview on Tuesday. "I am always kind of looking over the next hill, right? What opportunities exist and what challenges exist."

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Niagara Long Term Care COVID-free after outbreak

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Niagara Long Term Care is COVID-free once again. In an email Tuesday, Chris Poos, executive director of the Niagara-on-the-Lake care home, said an outbreak that started Dec. 27, 2021 has been declared over by public health. "I am thrilled to share that the outbreak at Niagara Long Term Care has been declared over," Poos said.

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Education ministry cracks down on Virgil 'learning pod'

Government says private group has to cut number of children to five from 50 or possibly face large fines

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

The Ontario Ministry of Education has ordered the owners of the Niagara Alternative Learning Alliance

to reduce their operation to only five children or face a \$250,000 fine and potential jail time, The Lake Report has learned.

The "learning pod," led by Lori Davidson and Monica McCourt, started hosting

maskless, non-physically distanced classes in early January with as many as 50 children and another 15 volunteers in space rented at a former public school building in Virgil.

After inquiries from The

Lake Report, the ministry, Region of Niagara and Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake all launched investigations into the learning group.



Continued on Page 3

Hiking series explores Black history in NOTL

Jill Troyer
The Lake Report

Black history in Niagara is complex, with deep roots that encompass slavery as well as the people and events that pushed for freedom and gave safe haven as part of the Underground Railroad.

The Niagara Bruce Trail Club will lead a series of hikes exploring that history on four consecutive Fridays, starting on Feb. 11, to mark Black History Month.

Each 90-minute hike has a theme, ranging from the days of early slavery, to the early Black community in Niagara-on-the-Lake, the role of Black soldiers in the War of 1812, to important people and dramatic events that led to limits and ultimately the abolition of slavery.

These events transpired in centuries past, but we are surrounded by the echoes of those extraordinary individuals and events here in NOTL. People who walked where we walk, lived where we live and did business where commerce still hums today.



Niagara-on-the-Lake was an important terminus on the Underground Railroad. In the mid 1800s, a Baptist church stood on this property on Mississagua Street near John Street, as well as the Negro Burial Ground. Only three gravestones remain, including that of George Wesley, who died in 1893. Wesley escaped slavery in Kentucky and raised his family in Niagara-on-the-Lake. He lived across from the burial ground, at 519 Mississagua St. DON REYNOLDS PHOTO ILLUSTRATION

In the 1800s, there was a vibrant community of about 200 Black people who lived in an area known at the time as the "Co-

loured Village," generally bounded north and south by William and Anne streets, and King to Butler Street.

The accompanying photos and captions highlight some of the many people and places the hikes will cover.

Those interested in the

hikes, can go to the hiking club's website at niagara-bruceclub.club/wp/.

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Sharpening body and mind at community centre and library

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

With the reopening of town facilities, Niagara-on-the-Lake residents are able to get back to exercising both the body and mind.

"I was sitting across the street looking over, upset that I wasn't in here," Brock

Sansom said about the lockdown as he played badminton in the community centre's gym.

"It's better than being out," Ron Planche said about being back in the centre.

When lockdowns shutter doors around town it isn't just the ability to go out for dinner and have a beer that

is lost, NOTL residents also lose access to the valuable resources provided by the public library, arenas and the community centre.

Arenas are also open again and children's hockey and figure skating programs have resumed.

Planche joked that he



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Ron Planche plays badminton at the community centre.

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'Freedom convoy' supporters gather at Husky truck stop

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

Hundreds of vehicles lined up at the Husky Travel Centre in Niagara-on-the-Lake Saturday afternoon to hit the road together in protest of ongoing COVID-19 safety mandates.

While there weren't many tractor-trailers — and it was unclear if the ones that were there were part of the group or just working — there were hundreds of cars and trucks dressed up in Canadian flags and political messages to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

The group, which did a "slow roll" drive along local Niagara roads to Grimsby, is part of a larger nationwide movement that's fed up with vaccines, masks and measures in place to protect the population from the ongoing threat of COVID-19.

Chris Smith, a Niagara-on-the-Lake resident, was there to show support, dressed in a tin hat and a homemade sandwich board sign that read: "3rd vax and not free!"

As his sign says, Smith has been fully vaccinated as well as a booster dose, but he wonders why he's still being restricted from certain activities after following all of the advice he was told to follow.



Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Chris Smith says he's been vaccinated and boosted, but he's become fed up with continued restrictions. RICHARD HARLEY

"First it was two weeks to flatten the curve. And here we are starting our third year. And it seems like everybody else in the world is reasonably back to normal but for some reason Canada, we're still lagging behind," he said.

"You know, people sit on their couch and they watch TV and see what other people are doing in the

world, you know, go to the games and they don't mention (COVID)."

He said his two daughters live in Buffalo and it's not really a conversation they have anymore. He'd like to see a similar attitude in Canada, noting that with vaccination rates high in Canada, he thinks there should be a move toward re-opening more of the country.

He said he misses the "simple things," like visiting friends and family without wearing a mask, and is wondering if there's any end in sight.

Smith said he's typically not one for protests.

"Honestly, this is the first protest I've ever been at in my whole life," he said.

"(But) who would have thought six years ago that we'd be where we are now? And like I said, like what's the future? You know?"

The Canadian and U.S. governments have put restrictions on truck drivers crossing the border to deliver goods and Smith questions those restrictions now when they were delivering during the initial waves of the pandemic.

"In the darkest days of 2020, the trucks were allowed to go back and forth to maintain the supply chain. But here we are, in the third year, 90 per cent of the people apparently are vaccinated and yet I was at Walmart two weeks in a row and you could start to see the shelves getting empty. So how come they're hitting the truckers all of a sudden, you know?"

Asked the significance of wearing a tin hat, Smith said it was in response to comments by Trudeau.

"Trudeau was on TV just last week saying that we're a fringe minority of tin hats. And actually, I had to Google what tin hat was — it's the whole conspiracy theorists thing — so I mean, what are we supposed to believe? We've taken our vaccination, right? And yet, we still can't do a lot. So what are you supposed to think? Is this a real thing going on? Or is it deeper?"

He said he isn't regretful of taking the vaccine, but hoped it would mean more freedoms opening up.

"I've taken measles, mumps, chickenpox, like everybody else. So now triple-vaxed, and they never mention herd immunity anymore."

He said he's frustrated with what he sees as moving the goalposts for vaccines.

"First, they said 80 per cent (to get to) herd immunity ... we achieve these goals of immunity, and they move the goalposts and it's always more and more."

He said he just wants things to get "back to normal."

"When was the last time you took your wife or girlfriend to a nice restaurant and didn't have to worry about wearing your mask and you didn't feel odd?"

Clarence Vanderhout, a long-haul trucker from

Smithville, was riding with the convoy.

He said he's lost his job due to the border restrictions, though his company is giving him local work.

"I'm here to protest the mandates. I have 45 years of over-the-road driving experience. JT says I'm unqualified now because of a vaccine. We need the mandates replaced or rescinded totally. We need the freedom back to Canada," he said.

He said he believes Trudeau has "divided the country so badly."

"I've never in all my life seen such fear in people," he said.

Normally, he would be trucking dry goods into the U.S. midwest. He hasn't been able to do so since Jan. 15.

Vanderhout said he and his wife are part of a like-minded religious movement called "For Such a Time as This," which is joining in the protests.

"We were actually in Ottawa last week, and we're going back next week. We're scared the way it's going. And it has to stop," he said.

"You may not see a lot of truckers here. But look, here's your fringe group right here — they're not driving any of the big rigs, but you know what, these people are all worried about their freedoms."

Council roundup: Councillors concerned about sale of Laura Secord school

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Coun. Erwin Wiens says he wants to make sure Willowbank's sale of the former Laura Secord school does not jeopardize the property, which he calls "the heart of Queenston."

"My concern is that they are going to sell that to a developer and it's going to be houses," Wiens said during a committee of the whole meeting on Monday, Feb. 7.

"Once it's sold we know what's going to happen. I can predict five years down the road or seven years or whatever, we know what is going to happen."

Wiens said the original sale of the school was

facilitated by the town to the Willowbank School of Restoration Arts to preserve the historic building.

"We should have a conversation with Willowbank to see if we can get that property back or something about the future before it gets sold," he said.

"They're the school of preservation and they gotta preserve. I'm hoping they're going to be amicable to working with us."

Wiens said the sooner the town gets involved in the sale the better.

"We're going to be in a lengthy process if we don't step in now," he said.

"It's an incredible piece of property that's so important."

Lord Mayor Betty Disero said she had spoken to offi-

cialists from the school and with director of operations Sheldon Randall about the property.

"I'm not sure if we can afford that but I think the negotiation or discussion with them will be the next best thing," Disero said.

Dock area master plan

Council has chosen to defer an update to the dock area master plan and spend the extra money on getting work done in the area.

"I think we're getting masterplanned to death," Lord Mayor Betty Disero said.

She said the original dock area master plan was finished in 2015 and that spending money to update it now when there was actual work to be done in the area seemed unnecessary.

"The limited money that

we have left we should be putting into doing some of that drainage work and completing at least some of the ideas within the old master plan," she said.

Treasurer Kyle Freeborn said there has been roughly \$20,000 earmarked to update the master plan.

"I just think we need to put the shovel in the ground and stop the updating," Disero said.

The transfer of funds is focused around getting drainage work completed in the area.

Chief administrator Marnie Cluckie said the town is already pursuing grants for the drainage work and will be able to replenish the coffers if the grants come through.

"Certainly, between (the new funds) and what we

have in the project budget already, we can complete that work," Cluckie said.

A \$75,000 dock area feasibility study is nearing completion and Randall said a report will be ready soon.

"The feasibility study was to deal with the potential of ongoing high water and flooding in the dock area," Randall said.

Parliament Oak discussion

Town staff are working on a "charrette" between the town and Parliament Oak property developer Liberty Sites (3) Ltd.

A charrette is a meeting between stakeholders in a project to map out solutions and deal with issues.

Acting community services and development supervisor Rick Wilson said

the meeting is still a ways from taking place.

"There are a number of issues that need to be sorted out before we can try and schedule some sort of charrette," Wilson said.

He noted no terms had been agreed upon for what the discussions would cover and said much more work needed to be done to figure out how to bring public input into the equation and ensure that something meaningful comes out of the meeting.

"There's a lot of correspondence that we've received thus far. In trying to distill that down to what elements a design charrette can assist with I believe is sort of a joint venture with the heritage committee and the urban design committee."



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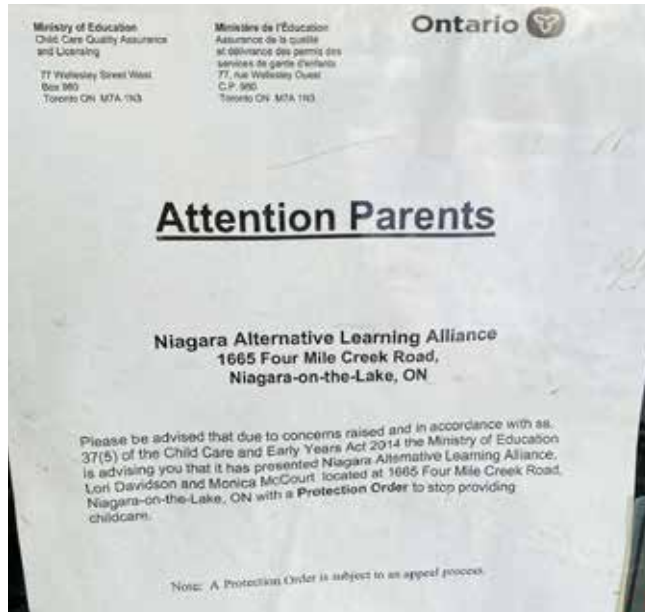
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The Niagara Alternative Learning Alliance has been told to reduce operations, or face fines or jail time. Right: A protection order posted at the old Virgil school, where NALA is operating. SUPPLIED



Pod school **must reduce operation:** Ministry

Continued from Front Page

The results of the region and town investigations are not yet known.

Ministry officials issued a protection order under the Child Care and Early Years Act on Jan. 28, one day after The Lake Report first published a series of stories about the pod.

It requires the operators to reduce the number of students to no more than five children under the age of 13, a ministry representative said in an email.

"Failure to comply with a protection order is an offence under the Child Care and Early Years Act. A person convicted of an offence under the (act) can be liable to a fine of up to \$250,000, imprisonment for a term of not more than one year, or both."

The ministry also emphasized that the learning pod has not been registered as a private school or a child care program in Ontario.

The ministry said its investigation is ongoing and that it would not comment further.

The order is subject to an appeal, according to a copy of the order posted on the building's exterior door.

On Wednesday, when a reporter phoned McCourt to ask for the school's position on the ministry's action, he was told to "get lost" and she immediately hung up.

In an attempt to find out if the pod is abiding by the order, a reporter visited the building in which it is

housed but McCourt barred the entrance and called the police, claiming she was being "harassed" and "stalked."

The reporter did not enter the building and remained professional and polite.

McCourt followed the reporter to his car, shouting out his description and licence plate while on the phone with the Niagara Regional Police Service.

While there, the reporter saw at least 20 children playing in the school yard but it is not known if any were inside the two classrooms the pod rents.

On Feb. 6, Davidson and McCourt appeared in a video on the Facebook account of Mary Ann Petry, saying they had an upcoming court date with the Ministry of Education and pleaded their case to the public.

"What we are is a community of families who have removed our children from the school system. As parents, it is our legal right to educate our children as we see fit outside of the ministry, under article 26, section three of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," McCourt says in the video.

The article in question states, "Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children."

The preceding sections note that "education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for

human rights and fundamental freedoms" and "elementary education shall be compulsory."

Among other stipulations, Ontario's Education Act states that unlicensed child-care means "the child care is provided for no more than five children at any one time."

In the video, McCourt called the case against her pod an attack on all home-schooling programs.

"We have been subject to scrutiny by the Ministry of Education. They are attacking the homeschool communities and this affects all of us," she said.

"If they shut us down, they are shutting down all learning pods and home-schooling communities," Davidson said in the video.

McCourt further said there is "no policy or precedent for how many children can participate at a community homeschool co-op," and that this case would set a national precedent for learning pods.

The Lake Report did not receive a response from the ministry relating to the video or the court case prior to deadline on Wednesday afternoon.

The story so far

In January, a reporter from The Lake Report visited a new learning pod in Virgil named the Niagara Alternative Learning Alliance operating out of the old Virgil school on Four Mile Creek Rd.

The reporter discovered the pod had more than 50 children and volun-

teers attending the pod daily. There was no masks or physical distancing, even though provincial regulations limited gatherings to no more than five people indoors due to COVID-19.

The pod's operators, Lori Davidson and Monica McCourt, said they launched the pod to give children a restriction-free alternative to traditional schools, where masking and physical distancing are the norm.

They contend they are a homeschool operation and that all participating families have registered with the province to provide home-schooling for their children.

They also said they had received support from protesting truck drivers in Ontario who would help prevent them from being shutdown.

"Nobody's going to mess with us," Davidson said.

Beyond issues surrounding COVID-19, the pair said they wanted to provide a more community- and personal-based learning alternative to traditional schools.

They have been teaching quantum physics to four-year-olds and skills-based lessons such as small engine repair and how to make your own hand sanitizer out of vinegar.

After inquiries from The Lake Report, the Region of Niagara, public health, Niagara-on-the-Lake bylaw department and the Ministry of Education all launched investigations into the pod.

Driver **faces charge** in death of Lukas Smith

Staff
 The Lake Report



Lukas Smith. SUPPLIED

Niagara police have charged a St. Catharines man in a fatal crash that killed a Niagara-on-the-Lake man last July.

Lukas Smith, 41, was out for a bike ride with his son 13-year-old Riley about 9:30 on the night of July 11.

They were stopped along Irvine Road near Scott Street, not far from their home, so Smith could fix something on his son's bike when a southbound Toyota Corolla struck Smith.

He died later in hospital. The driver remained on

the scene and Niagara Regional Police have spent the last seven months investigating the incident.

On Feb. 3 investigators announced they have charged Cody Sullivan, 28, with dangerous operation of a motor vehicle causing death.

He was released and is to appear in court on April 13.

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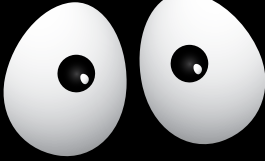
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Willowbank students hold Parliament Oak study

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

Students from the Willowbank School of Restoration Arts are hosting an online survey to gather people's opinions about the Parliament Oak school site.

The survey is part of a project for students to create a conservation management plan, something the students have to do every year as a purely educational exercise.

"A conservation management plan is simply a document that explains why a place is significant and then how the owner, whoever that is, can sustain the significance in any new use alteration or repair," said Caitlyn



The Willowbank School of Restoration Arts. FILE

Wooll, the school's director.

Wooll stressed the project is purely internal and doesn't want to get involved in the debate about development on the Parliament Oak school site.

However, she did say the school might share the

results of the survey on a purely educational level for the public to read. The students' assignment runs until April.

Parliament Oak and the survey are just one small aspect of the overall student project, which aims

to look at post-war infrastructure in NOTL, Wooll said.

She said the assignment has been interesting as post-war infrastructure is often overshadowed by the many older buildings still standing in the municipality.

The survey is important so students "glean how the public has perceived the property over time."

She encourages everyone curious to take the survey. It can be accessed from Willowbank's Facebook page. There are also flyers with the survey link posted at various locations around town, including the Queen Street Starbucks, Balzacs and the community centre.

NOTL airport reviewing RFP for new operator

Richard Harley
The Lake Report

The Niagara District Airport is getting closer to finding a private third-party operator, says executive director Dan Pilon.

While he couldn't discuss details because the request for proposals is still being reviewed, he said the request has been closed.

"It's in the midst of the review and all of the items that come along with the review of the RFP. So there's really ongoing procurements from a municipal perspective," he said last week.

"The RFP was released



last year, it closed before the end of the year and from a timeline perspective, I would expect in kind of Q1, Q2 of this year for information to be coming back to the various municipal councils in some way, shape or form."

Pilon said having a third-party operator for an airport is commonplace in Canada.

"There's numerous airports throughout Ontario,

throughout Canada, that are often operated not by a municipality, but are therefore operated by private sector organizations," he said.

"From a local perspective, if you take a look at some of the closest scenarios that we have, Waterloo is operated by the regional municipality, so it's operated directly by municipal government," he said.

"You could look at

(Hamilton), which would be the next closest one, which is owned municipally but operated by a private sector entity."

Ontario has a large mix of airports and "they're all operated differently," Pilon said.

Now, the airport is operated by a board, on behalf of its three municipal partners, Niagara-on-the-Lake, St. Catharines and Niagara Falls.

The land on which the airport operates is owned by Niagara-on-the-Lake and Pilon said "the RFP in and of itself doesn't reference a scenario where that land is looking to be sold."

Niagara Long Term Care COVID-19 outbreak is over

Continued from Front Page

"We are so thankful for our hardworking dedicated staff and extremely appreciative of our families who were understanding every step of the way as we navigated this COVID-19

outbreak."

The outbreak saw 74 cases, split evenly among residents and staff. Two residents died with COVID-19 while palliative, Poos said previously.

The outbreak status had not yet been cleared on the

public health website as of Tuesday evening.

Poos said now that the outbreak is over the home will start to reopen slowly, "with the safety of our residents, their families and our staff top of mind."

He said many infection

prevention practices will remain in place, including masks, face shields and daily rapid testing for staff, on unit dining with limited capacity at tables, cohorting residents to their units and cohorting of staff to specific home areas.



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Ruller will stay on as NOTL volunteer firefighter

Continued from Front Page

Lord Mayor Betty Disero said Ruller's departure is a "great loss for the town."

"He's been a great asset to the town over the years. He's hardworking and thorough," Disero said during an interview Tuesday.

"That's a real tough one. You know, he's got to do what's good for him and his family and I get that. I wish him much success."

Ruller, 41, is leaving NOTL to become a platoon chief with the City of Brampton, a move which offers several benefits, he said.

The first is letting him focus on the operational side of firefighting rather than administration.

"My passion for fire service has really stemmed from my background in operations and it just felt like a good fit," he said.

"I'm less concerned about what the name is on my shirt and more concerned about working with a high performing team and a team that's not just going to challenge but also support."

"We've had that here in NOTL and we've built a real solid team here. However, I have the opportunity to join another high performing team and those opportunities don't come along everyday."

He said operations has always been rewarding.

"I really value relationships with individuals. The strongest relationships I've built over the years throughout my career have been through the operational side with the firefighters," he said.

"A lot of that comes from you having experienced some real tragedies, some real challenges on the day-to-day and as part of the job and, in turn, you really develop some meaningful relationships."



Outgoing fire chief Nick Ruller. FILE/EVAN SAUNDERS

The other benefit of switching jobs is in Ruller's personal life.

"You're on 24/7," Ruller said about working in NOTL.

"And that can be a little bit challenging at times. It definitely adds a level of disruption to my home life. So I'm relatively optimistic that I'll strike a bit of a better balance on that side of it."

"Beyond that, I can't say there's anything I'm running from," Ruller said with a laugh.

Ruller will be doing shift-work with Brampton.

Ruller, who was born in New Zealand but grew up in Virgil, lives in NOTL and plans on staying on as a volunteer fighter.

"My intention is to reintegrate into that role and that's kind of where I started and I really find it rewarding and fulfilling to be able to participate in the community and to give back in that manner," he said.

He first volunteered with NOTL in 1998, he said.

Ruller said NOTL's fire and emergency services are in a great position for the future.

"I'm really proud of what we've been able to achieve over the last five years. We've made huge strides in firefighter safety, everything from new self-contained breathing apparatus to decontamination and hygiene, processes and equipment that's going to help reduce the incidences of cancer in the fire service," he said.

Ruller was also proud of purchases for improved personal protective equipment and programs started for respiratory protection, health and wellness.

But he said the thing he might be most proud of is improving communication between frontline firefighters and the senior leadership.

"Really, the most important thing for us is to ensure that we are providing the frontline firefighters with what they need to be effective in their role because if we can allow them to be effective then, in turn, the public is served."

He stressed that these improvements were made possible thanks to the support of the current council.

"I really genuinely mean this, this council has been incredibly supportive. I

recognize that there is lots of competing interests in the community but that being said, they have been incredibly supportive," Ruller said.

"They have really well positioned us as we move forward and I'm incredibly grateful for that."

But Ruller didn't want all the credit.

"I don't think I'm 'leaving' the department in that position. I think it's our members, our supportive council and it's the strong leadership from (chief administrator Marnie Cluckie)," he said.

"It's really been, I think, refreshing to have the open dialogue that we've had."

Ruller said he will greatly miss his NOTL staff.

"I'm a people person. So, I'm going to miss my staff that I've had the chance to work with. I really think that's what I struggle with the most about leaving. I have such a great staff and I'm really going to miss working with them," he said.

"I'm lucky to be able to continue as a volunteer and at least maintain some of those relationships in a different way."



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

COVID Tracker

NOTL active cases: 74
Region active cases: 2,081
Region deaths: 501
Region total cases: 32,570
Region resolved cases: 29,988

**Feb. 9 data per Niagara Region Public Health. Public health warns that "Due to the surge in COVID-19 cases, limited availability of testing, and changes to case and contact management practices, case counts shown below are an underestimate of the true number of individuals in Niagara with COVID-19. Data should be interpreted with caution."*



Contributed by Patty Garriock
 "Determine to live life with flair and laughter." - Maya Angelou

HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

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Sittin' on the dock of the bay

Photographer Ron Planche captured this snowy image of the NOTL Sailing Club docks during last Thursday's snow storm.

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



Editorial

All the best to 'Rockstar' Nick Ruller

Richard Harley
 Editor-In-Chief

Niagara-on-the-Lake fire chief Nick Ruller has been a rockstar during his tenure at the top, overseeing the town's volunteer brigade. Dare we say, he's been the Neil Peart, the Wayne Gretzky, the James Bond of NOTL fire services. As a senior manager and leader who worked to improve and modernize the fire service, he has shown that he's sharp, sensible, organized, capable and does

what he thinks is best for our town. He has led NOTL through a global pandemic, improved response time to fires and kept volunteer firefighters top of mind in demanding quality fire halls and breathing apparatuses. He rarely misses a council meeting and has been known to show up even when he's on vacation. He's also always been very responsive and transparent to requests for information. Typically he has an answer back in

short order and our readers greatly benefit from that. There's a long list of areas in which the town is better off, thanks to Ruller. And despite all of his hard work and long hours, the only thing we have known him to complain about was having to go to a call involving a local person in distress — because he's grown up with the people in our community and knows many of them by name. It's sad to see him go but we wish him the best moving to his new position in

Brampton as platoon chief. Go get 'em. Looking to the future, we hope some of our own firefighters are considered for the chief's role, if they are interested. Several of them, like deputy chief Jay Plato, have learned under Ruller and have been instrumental in helping him run the service. If it's right, we'd love to see this position go to a dedicated member of the NOTL fire service. Because, really, they're all rock stars. editor@niagaranow.com



Community answered when snowed-in senior needed help

Dear editor:
 My wife and I settled here in Niagara-on-the-Lake more than 15 years ago, accepting the advice of lifelong friends who made the move a few years earlier. We "retired" from many years living and working in Asia and Hong Kong. We never regretted that decision: NOTL is one of the loveliest, most historic and dynamic, well-run communities in Canada. However, there is always a "but." Winters have exposed, at times, the "raw underbelly" of life in a Canadian municipality. I am not complain-

ing mind you — quite the reverse — I am in effect singing a song of praise to our community. The story is that after last week's major storm I was snowed in for days and — mea culpa — did not look far enough ahead to ensure I had all my prescription medications. The result was that I found myself on Friday morning taking the last of them and looking out at my driveway, under more than a foot of snow, plus blocked at the road by a snowy "berm" more than three feet high. Now I previously had exchanged a "bit of banter"

with Lord Mayor Betty Disero about the business of road snow plowing and the new legislation protecting people, especially those of an advanced age, who might come to harm in attempting to clear their driveway after it has been blocked by plowed snow. I never thought it would actually come to the "crunch." Friday morning it did. I was out of my prescription and while I did get the pharmacy to issue a refill I had no way to get out of my house to pick it up. This is where the lovely people of NOTL came to the fore: the office of the

town's office director of resident services, which I contacted, immediately offered to pick up my prescription and deliver it to my house. Another kind person, an editor with The Lake Report, offered to do the same. In the meantime I did try to "clear" my driveway entrance myself (I am of intrepid, self-help Estonian ilk), and three people came out to help me. The "berm" was cut away and now I have my prescription. Thank you, NOTL. **Kaspar Pold**
 NOTL

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Kudos to Pillar and Post for Monet garden

This letter was sent to Paul MacIntyre, vice-president of operations for Vintage Hotels. A copy was submitted to The Lake Report for publication.

Dear Mr. MacIntyre:

The purpose of this letter is to thank you, your staff, and contractors for the excellent work you have done to revitalize and repurpose the land across the street from the Pillar and Post Hotel.

You have created a beautiful, almost magical park – Monet’s Giverny Gardens reimagined!

The land, of course, is the old C&C Yachts property, which was contaminated with asbestos and other nasty chemicals.

We like that we live beside land that has been cleaned up and now offers an abundance of flowers and trees. So much healthier.

Thank you also for generously sharing the park with the NOTL community. My mother and I walk there often. I skate on the ice rink.

And, in an aging community, it’s nice to see so many kids enjoying themselves. We’ve noticed many folks from the NOTL community sitting by the little fire pits, drinking hot chocolate as they admire the beautiful Christmas tree – all toasty and warm even in the middle of winter.



The Monet garden on John Street West. EVAN SAUNDERS

This is so important in the midst of the global COVID pandemic. It’s our opportunity to meet up – outdoors – with friends and family instead of being locked down and isolated in our homes.

We are fully cognizant of the fact the land could have been developed into a multi-storey apartment building. Instead, we have a park full of ponds, flowers and trees.

In the summertime, we hope to enjoy the sights

and sounds of many happy young people getting married, dancing and celebrating. We’ll enjoy the music right along with them.

On a practical note, your organization has increased all of our property values. We are not moving anywhere – but we don’t mind an increase in real estate value, thank you very much

Lastly, we do realize that this abundance of beauty is not free. We realize Vintage Hotels needs to pay for the park and has obligations to

employees, shareholders and guests.

We know you need to pay your taxes. We do understand that the more weddings, and noise, and guests – “outsiders” – that Vintage Hotels hosts, the more sustainable your business will be.

Your sustainability is in our best interest. You will find that our household will be very tolerant.

Wallace Wiens
Klara Wiens Knelsen
NOTL

Nothing wrong with existing town gateway

The following letter was sent to members of town council:

It is my understanding that the existing well-designed Queen and Mississauga street entrance was created so the floral display could be changed annually to commemorate an event or individual such as the War of

1812 display.

Is it broken or falling apart?

Can any of you explain to me or the taxpayers of this town why it needs to be replaced? I have read nothing in the papers that justifies replacing it.

How much time (and money) has staff and council

spent on something that does not need replacing?

I read that the town will apply for some government grants to help cover some of the town’s costs. But federal or provincial government grants are still taxpayers’ dollars. What a waste of \$250,000.

Redirecting these dollars

to some project in the town that actually needs work or upgrades would make a lot more sense. For example: the museum, Queenston Community Centre, Centennial Arena, Queenston and St. Davids fire halls, and the St. Davids swimming pool.

Kip Voegel
NOTL

Roundabout is not needed, despite experts’ opinions

Dear editor:

Thank you for the article, “Roundabout is safest alternative for St. Davids, region’s expert says.”

It clearly demonstrates to me what I have feared all along: So-called experts have been found/used to try to sell an idea that most

people who live in the area do not want.

I do not care if Phil Weber, the region’s expert, has been involved in the design of 200 roundabouts or 2,000. The intersection in St. Davids is not the place for a roundabout.

Maged Elmadhoon,

transportation manager for the Region of Niagara, is quoted as pushing back against calls for routing traffic off York and Four Mile Creek roads.

He says, “There isn’t any study that says we need to move traffic away.” Well, there should be.

Also, thank you for your editorial, “Coun. Zalepa and the St. Davids roundabout.”

It is always good to remind constituents of the positions taken by their elected representatives.

Dave Alles
St. Davids

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The numbers show vaccination works

Dear editor:
 Ontario is opening up a bit and this may give people a false sense of security, feeling that they are relatively safe, particularly if they are fully vaccinated.

I checked recent Ontario COVID data and found the following:

* In numbers, about two-thirds of the cases are with the fully vaccinated (two shots or more). But because they represent 83.5 per cent of the population, their rate of infection is significantly less than that for the unvaccinated. The unvaccinated are 2.35 times as likely to be infected.

The real telling statistics, though, are in hospital occupancy and ICU occupancy:

* The unvaccinated are almost six times as likely to be hospitalized, and almost 12 times as likely to be admitted to the ICU.

So, the messages are, if you have yet to be fully vaccinated do it now as exposure is likely to be higher given that there will be more contact with people.

The risks of being hospitalized and admitted to the ICU are significantly higher than if you are vaccinated. And even if you are vac-

inated, there is still a risk of being infected.

There is also a belief that if we do a rapid test before meeting inside with a group, all are safe. Not necessarily so.

We know of at least two cases recently where dinners were held, none had symptoms, all were fully vaccinated, all tested negative – and five of the seven people ended up with COVID. Because they were fully vaccinated, all the cases were “mild.”

Data from one study shows that without symptoms, only about 60 per cent are correctly tested positive. With symptoms, the number is 72 per cent.

Other studies show that a rapid test rarely gives a false positive and the advice from public health is that if you test positive, assume you have COVID.

As some public health people are saying, this will eventually turn into an endemic and perhaps we all have a risk of infection. But in the meantime, we need to stay safe and be aware of what the statistics are telling us.

Bill Garriock
 NOTL

Charities need support more than ever

Dear editor:
 While Canadians are generous to charities, especially during times of crisis, it is difficult to keep that going for two years during a once-in-a-generation pandemic.

There was a groundswell of support for charities in the early months of the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, but understandably that support is difficult to maintain as community

members try to move past the crisis mode.

However, at the same time, the demand for charitable services has not decreased. Instead charities have seen a significant increase in demands for services.

The result is that many charities can no longer meet the demand, as they are stretched and challenged both financially and with staffing to the point where

some may not survive.

Research from Imagine Canada estimated that as many as one in four charities may not be able to continue to operate. We cannot ignore the crisis facing the charities Canadians and residents of Niagara depend on.

Now is not the time to give in to “pandemic fatigue.”

I urge you all to reflect on what you have to be grateful

for and what you are able to offer others, even at this difficult time.

Please consider supporting the NOTL Community Fund through the Niagara Community Foundation, to help the charities that do so much to support our community.

We are in this together.
 Mike Berlis
 Chair
 Niagara-on-the-Lake
 Community Fund

Government must cap real estate commissions

Dear editor:
 A Vancouver think tank recently recommended that all homes over \$1 million should have a new tax levied on their sale in order to tackle the housing crisis.

Tackling our growing public debt and the devastation to our economy and our country’s people as a result of COVID-19, is an even greater crisis.

The time has come to provide for the proper regulatory control of a

monopolistic real estate industry that has provided many real estate agents with annual income increases that are so out of whack with the rest of the population as to be disgraceful.

It is surely time to hold the Canadian Real Estate Association and its members accountable for a flawed and multi-level remuneration system, whereby property price increases in recent years have resulted in single home pur-

chases and sales commissions to individuals often being greater than most of us earn in an entire year.

I would suggest that one way of dealing with this “elephant in the room” would be to cap real estate commissions at three per cent (in Europe they are typically no greater than two per cent, but often only 1.5 per cent), with an additional one per cent payable as a tax to tackle our oncoming public financial crisis – and to help

those most in need. No doubt the CREA and its members will not see it this way.

But for those less fortunate who have clearly struggled and suffered over the past few years, we should view such changes as an improvement in the way we work for each other, for the betterment of society as a whole, and a move toward a much fairer world.

Philip Hoard
 St. Davids

NOTLers shouldn’t pay for rainbow crosswalk

Dear editor:
 I am very disappointed that the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake seems hell-bent on pushing through a rainbow crosswalk and

five rainbow benches, thus singling out a specific group for special treatment, which in my opinion is discriminatory toward other special interest

groups that would be just as deserving.

I feel it is totally unnecessary, as the majority of people living here are already welcoming to the

LGBTQ+ community. And the cost, if the town is going to proceed with this, should not be funded by taxpayers.

Earle Vance
 NOTL

Rainbow crosswalk may happen but residents deserve input on location

Dear editor:
 I note that \$15,000 has been set aside in the town’s capital budget to fund the installation of a rainbow crosswalk.

There has been an unofficial survey by The Lake Report asking for input on this issue. The response from the miniscule number of 403 respondents, 43 of

whom were not even residents of NOTL, resulted in a very slim margin in favour of the crosswalk.

The town also conducted an only survey, which attracted even fewer responses. NOTL residents have never officially been surveyed by the town. How has the town’s unelected inclusivity committee

managed to commandeer taxpayers’ funds to further their own objectives from such an inadequate survey?

Before we proceed with this preferential treatment of the LGBTQ community, we should recognize that it is a slippery slope, wherein every faction of society could consider themselves wanting in some degree or

other. Therefore, it could be anticipated that other segments will expect similar treatment, should they wish to satisfy their feelings of perceived shortcomings.

Has the inclusivity committee set a series of objectives that will require further funding that NOTL residents are yet to be advised of? Initially, the LGBTQ wanted

a crosswalk. Now we learn of the plan to install painted benches in NOTL’s five villages as well.

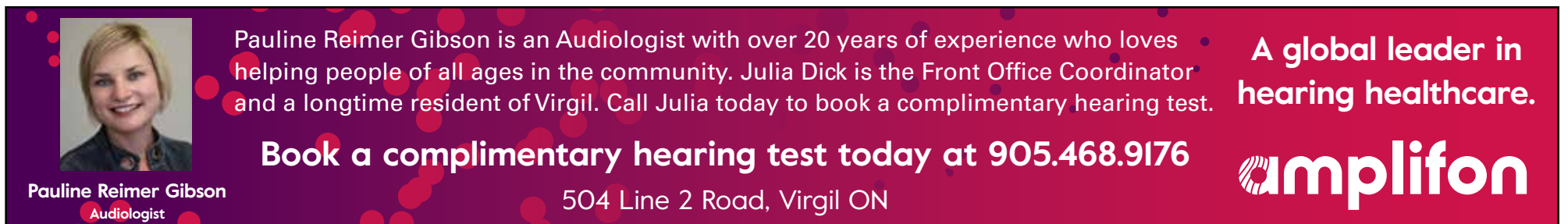
What is next? Will NOTL residents be asked for their opinion before some other suggestion is rubber-stamped and funded with taxpayers’ money?

I have no doubt that the crosswalk will go ahead, but

at the very least, residents need to have input into where this Brighton-style eyesore will eventually be located.

This has been an underhanded and unwarranted imposition under the guise of representing a so-called persecuted group of people.

Jean O’Malley
 NOTL

Rotary preps for ‘Gigantic Garage Sale’ fundraiser

Staff
The Lake Report

COVID and cold weather isn't stopping the Niagara-on-the-Lake Rotary Club from fundraising for local and international charities.

The club is gearing up for its Gigantic Garage Sale on May 14 and 15, and is collecting donations for the event.

In 2020 the first-ever estate sale, or the “fancy name we used for our garage sale” generated \$14,000 that supported local charities like Niagara Nutrition Partners, Food-4Kids Niagara and Education Foundation of Ni-



Volunteer Jeannie Manning at the 2020 estate sale. FILE

agara, said NOTL Rotary's fundraising chair Jolanta Janny Kudlats.

“We had lots of leftover goods that we donated to the RAFT and the Habitat for Humanity and migrant workers as well. All thanks

to the generous support of our community.”

The first event was so successful the club wants to make it an annual fundraiser, and Janny Kudlats is hoping for community support again this year.

The club needs the following items: Home furniture and décor, artwork, china, area carpets, dishes, kitchen utensils, household appliances and electronics in working order, sporting equipment, linens, kids accessories and toys, and outdoor furniture.

Collection of donations will take place at Cornerstone Community Church in Virgil (1570 Niagara Stone Rd.).

Dates for donations are 9 a.m. to noon on Feb. 12, Feb. 26, March 12, March 26, and every Saturday in April.

More information, visit niagaraonthelakerotary.ca.

Town launches ‘ShopNOTL’ to promote local business

Evan Saunders
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has launched its ShopNOTL program to encourage support of the local business community.

“The ultimate goal is to help re-stimulate the local economy post COVID-19 by

supporting and promoting all things local, ultimately driving sales,” town spokesperson Marah Minor said in an email.

The program's website, ShopNOTL.ca, provides “a comprehensive online business directory and acts as a one-stop-shop for residents and visitors to shop local.”

Businesses that want to be

included on the website can access a form posted on shopnotl.ca. Business owners can email directly to the program at shopnotl@notl.com.

More than 150 businesses have already signed up for the program, chief administrator Marnie Cluckie said during a committee meeting on Monday.

“This shop local initia-

tive includes promotion through social media, radio, newsprint, digital, and some marketing collateral such as banners, door stickers and tote bags,” Minor said.

The idea was first conceived in early 2021 as the town saw a need to provide support to the business community during the pandemic, she said.



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The “REAL” Report

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On the left is a map of the area known as the "Coloured Village" in the 1800s, where most of the estimated 200 Black residents lived. On the right, is an artistic interpretation of this map as featured on the communal circle wall at Voices of Freedom Park, on Regent Street at Johnson.



This is the William Stewart Homestead at 507 Butler St. William and Susannah Stewart escaped to freedom from Kentucky and bought the property for £25 when they arrived in Upper Canada in 1834. The house was probably built around 1835. It was typical of homes built by Black residents in Niagara at the time, comprising a one-and-a-half storey saltbox with rear lean-to. The Stewarts left Niagara for Galt (now Cambridge) in 1847.



This is the location where Black residents operated his barbershop on Court Street. A fire in 1886 destroyed his barbershop. Note his building was insured by the court. He moved his barbershop to King after the fire.

Walk through NOTL explores Black history

STORY AND CAPTIONS BY JILL TROYER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DON REYNOLDS
HISTORICAL IMAGES COURTESY NOTL MUSEUM

Continued from Front Page

Go to the hike calendar to find the hike and contact the hike leader to register in advance. The hikes are likely to fill up and so the club may repeat the series in the fall.

The club also leads hikes through NOTL every Friday morning with different historical themes. Non-members are welcome to try a couple of hikes before deciding whether to join the club, which is run entirely by volunteers.

Further information on Black history in NOTL is also available through the Voices of Freedom Park website at vofpark.org.



This house at 243 Gate St. appears in town records as "The Slave Cottage," even though the owner had never been a slave. Daniel Waters was born in Niagara in 1813 and he bought the house in 1872. He owned and operated a large livery stable on Regent Street, one of only two stables in town. Waters was one of the most prominent local businessmen of his time.



This monument on the ground honours Harriet Tubman's escape from the American south. The slaves came through NOTL Artpark, in Lewiston, N.Y., in the monument was moved to Park Street location where the Act to Limit


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Black businessman Louis/Lewis Ross lived and worked out of a hair cutting and shampooing business on Queen Street, as advertised at the time. A hair cutting and shampooing business, but records from then and now indicate he was able to save most of his household goods and move his hair cutting and shampooing business to a location on Queen Street closer to the Court House.



This is a sketch of the log house built by William Riley, at the northwest corner of Mary and Victoria Streets. Riley was an escaped slave from Virginia and when he bought the lot for £50 in 1819, he became only the third Black man to own property in the village. He got married and built the house in the same year, and eventually eight family members lived there. The house was torn down in the 1880s.

RIDDLE ME THIS

I'm a word that when spelled right, is spelled wrong.
What am I?

Last issue: You can find me at the end of the rainbow. What am I?

Answer: "W"

Also accepted: "Bow"

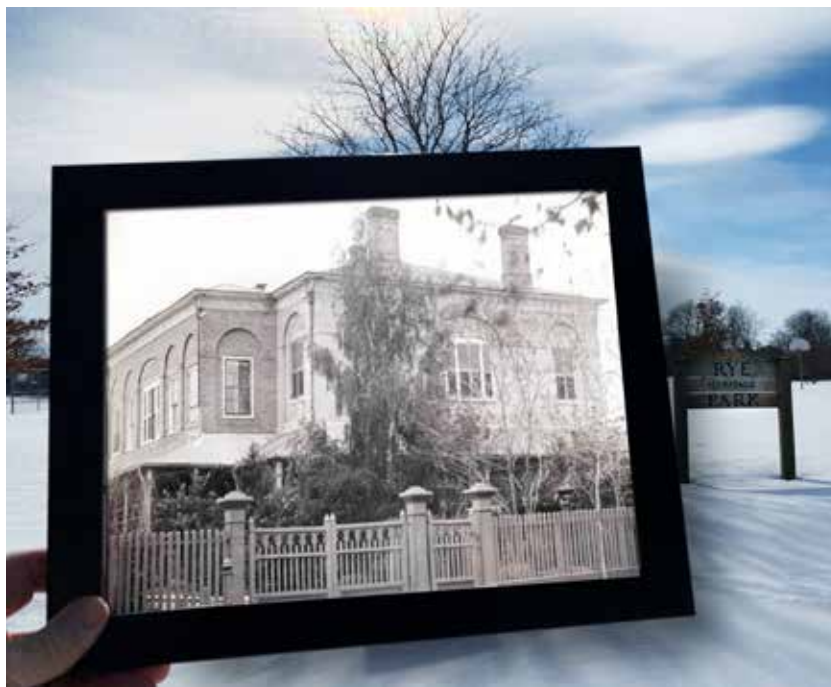
Answered first by: Betty Knight

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Mary Drost, Sylvia Wiens, Pam Dowling, Margie Enns, Howard Jones, Rob Hutchison, Sheila Meloche, Ron Cane

Email answers, with your name, to editor@niagaranow.com for a chance to win a prize. (Subject line: Riddle me this)



Remains of the former Parliament Oak school on King Street, which was the historic site where the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was signed in 1783. The monument was originally displayed at the Parliament Oak school, which was the historic site where the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was signed in 1783.



This building once stood on what is now Rye Park. It was the courthouse and jail for NOTL in the 1800s and the scene of the so-called Moseby riot. Solomon Moseby escaped slavery in Kentucky in 1837, travelling north on his owners' horse. His former owner followed him to Niagara and demanded his extradition. Moseby was arrested and jailed. Both Black and white residents petitioned the lieutenant-governor to refuse the extradition, but the order was signed. Two hundred or more Black people, many of them women, gathered to protest peacefully at the jail. But when a carriage carrying Moseby appeared, two protesters tried to stop it, and shots were fired by order of the sheriff. Moseby escaped in the chaos. The two men who intervened died and two others were severely injured.

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Accommodations



Attractions

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Jr. A Predators finally **back on the ice** after COVID cancellations

Kevan Dowd
Special to The Lake Report



The Predators lost to Durham at home but beat Windsor on the road. RICHARD HARLEY

The Niagara Jr. A Predators returned to the ice last weekend for the first time in nearly 50 days, skating away with a win and a narrow loss to the top team in their division.

Niagara's 2022 debut came last Friday night at the Meridian Credit Union Arena in Virgil where they were dealt a 5-4 loss by the Durham Roadrunners who sit in first place in the Greater Metro Hockey League's southern division.

"Yeah, Friday night was a tough one just with it being their first game in over a month, the boys are still getting back into skating together," said assistant coach Connor Shipton.

A combination of Christmas break and the most recent COVID-19 lockdown had kept the Predators off the ice since their last game of 2021 – on Dec. 19.

Durham proved tough competition, sitting three spots above them with 23 wins to Niagara's 20. It was also the first time the two teams had played each other.

"We got off to a really slow start and weren't playing very well," said Shipton. "It was just really unfortunate timing with that being the only team we haven't played before and we were short some guys, too. But we were able to battle back towards the end but they just got us with a late goal."

Although Niagara beat Durham onto the scoreboard with a goal two minutes in from Noah Caperchione, the Roadrunners netted two of their own by the end of the first period. Durham capitalized on a Predators penalty with a power play goal at the

eight-minute mark of the second to bring their total to three.

A second goal for Niagara came courtesy Dante Massi to tighten the gap but a fourth goal for Durham meant the Predators would enter the final 20 minutes trailing by two.

Things started going Niagara's way in the final frame with a tally from Predators' new recruit Alexander Andrews and a power play goal from Brendan Morin making for a 4-4 tie with seven minutes to go.

But with less than two minutes to go, Kyle Smith sealed the victory for Durham.

The Predators fared better Sunday afternoon in Windsor with a 7-5 win over the Aces.

"Once again we had a slow start in the first half but about halfway through we started to pick up our game," said Shipton.

"We started playing with a high guy in the offensive zone for both defence and offence and the guys came back with five quick goals. So it was a very strong ending to the game and we're feeling good about that."

Caperchione opened the scoring once again but it was all Windsor for the rest of the first period who were up two goals after 20 min-

utes. Things balanced out in the second period with goals for Niagara's Gino Carter Squire, new-hire Alexander Page, and Pontus Madsen. Windsor responded with a single tally.

Finally having gained their footing, the Predators dominated the third period with Reese Bisci netting his team's fifth goal two-and-a-half minutes in and despite an equalizer from Windsor's Brock Grandbois, Niagara secured the win with markers from Alexander Insulander and Jason Humphries in the final two minutes for a 7-5 win.

"That game went a lot better and we're looking at working off that and continuing from there," said Shipton.

"We're just looking to build off of the last half of the Windsor game and play like we can. We just need to continue to get back into the swing of things and strengthen our game."

Absent for both games were top-scorers Emil Eriksson – who is still stuck in his native Sweden – and Jesper Eriksson, who is in tryouts for a European professional league.

"Jesper may or may not be back. We don't know yet," said Shipton. "It's definitely unfortunate to lose him but this is what we're here for, to give these guys a chance to move on to the higher-level leagues."

Team captain Mario Zitella also geared up Friday night for the first time in months, having been unable to play under league regulations due to being unvaccinated against COVID-19. Unfortunately, he suffered an injury and was a scratch on Sunday night.

The team had just 14 skaters in Windsor but among them were two players Niagara picked up just before the trade deadline: former Tottenham Thunder captain Alex Andrews, 21-year-old defenceman Alexander Page of Niagara Falls and 6-foot-7 netminder Morgan Penwell.

Niagara will spend the upcoming weekend on the road, facing the Streetsville Flyers in Mississauga on Friday night and the Plattsville Lakers Sunday afternoon. They return to Niagara on Friday, Feb. 18, against the North York Renegades at 7:30 p.m.



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Shaw's 'This Is How We Got Here' explores universal emotions

Jill Troyer
The Lake Report

The first play onstage this season at the Shaw Festival marks a number of milestones for Keith Barker, the artistic director of Native Earth Performing Arts, the playwright and director of "This Is How We Got Here."

This is the first time the Shaw Festival has partnered with another theatre company to present its work. It's also the first time the play has been produced since it won the Dora Mavor Moore Award for Outstanding New Play in 2020, just as the pandemic began.

And, it's Barker's last production with Native Earth before he moves to a new role with the Stratford Festival, taking on new play development. Barker says this transition is "bittersweet."

"I'm excited to celebrate Native Earth in this space, and introduce new audiences to our work," he said.

While this is the first time Native Earth has staged a play at the Shaw Festival, Barker is no stranger to Niagara-on-the-Lake. He



Left: Keith Barker, artistic director of Native Earth Performing Arts. Right: Jenn Forgie, who plays Liset in "This Is How We Got Here." The show is on now at the Jackie Maxwell Studio Theatre. SUPPLIED

and his wife Catherine met online, and had their first date here in NOTL in 2013, and they were later married at Grace United Church.

"This Is How We Got Here," which is onstage now to Feb. 19, is about a family grappling with grief following the death by suicide of their son and nephew.

"It's a universal story and people see themselves in it. When we lose someone

our lives shatter. How do we support people and have conversations about the most difficult thing? It's a vital conversation lots of people avoid because it's so complicated and difficult," Barker explained.

"I hear aunties and uncles in Northern Ontario families, echoes of people I have known," in the play, said Barker, who is Metis and from northwestern Ontario.

He watched his own



aunt and uncle go through it, and when he wrote the play much later, he gave it to them.

"I said, 'It's not your story, but it has elements of your experience, and I want to honour that and have your approval.'"

They approved the play and so have audiences.

According to Barker, "people say they enjoy the show, even though the subject matter is challenging.

It's an emotional ride, but there's lots of humour too. Sometimes it's found just in the absurdity of life."

Actor Jenn Forgie, who is of Metis, French and Scottish descent, said the play is "so relatable. It's a story of grief, a story of love and a story of finding our way."

Forgie plays Liset, struggling with the death of her nephew. Her path to this role may have been destined.

"I loved the play when I saw it at its debut in 2016. I turned to my friend and said, 'I'm going to be in that play some day,' and so here I am! I like to believe that dreams can come true."

Forgie thinks of her character Liset as "a combination of my own relatives in Northern Ontario."

Liset deals with her grief by keeping busy. "She is just trying to survive, and for her to acknowledge her grief outright is not a possibility. She literally has to come undone to give her grief an honest expression."

Forgie noted, "Liset is a hard woman, but I bring a softness to her. She really loves her people, in the ways of a small town, tough love, hard love."

While Barker is the artistic director, playwright and director, for him it's all about storytelling.

"We're storytellers and we want the audience to become engaged. Stories engage us in a different way and challenge us in powerful ways."

"This Is How We Got Here" is on now at the Jackie Maxwell Studio Theatre.

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Juno Showering Gifts

At left, Paolo Veronese, "Juno Showering Gifts on Venice," c.1554-56, oil on canvas, Sala delle Udienze, Doge's Palace, Venice, Italy. SUPPLIED

Penny-Lynn Cookson
Special to The Lake Report

In February 2020, at the Louvre, the major Leonardo da Vinci exhibition was in its final days.

The Mona Lisa remained separate, at the far end of her usual permanent gallery, behind a protective shield and distanced from the crowd pressing forward to take photos.

The onlookers had their backs to one of the most superb paintings at the Louvre, "The Wedding Feast at Cana" by Veronese, considered with Titian and Tintoretto, to be an outstanding artist of Venice's Golden Age.

This enormous 32-foot work is a prime example of Veronese's skill at weaving together pageantry, spectacle, religion,

history, architecture, music, costume, figure studies, composition and colour. He was a bravura artist painting big, bold and decorative.

Venice was at its 16th-century height as a mercantile empire, the third-largest state in Europe and the richest. Commercial self-interest was a foundation of its national ideology. But so was myth in a society needing origin stories for its self-identity and reassurance as a "chosen people."

It was a city built on water, 1,000 years old, believed to be founded by miracle, governed by providence and inviolable. Its collective survival depended on efficient authoritarian government, conformity, pageantry and ritual for continuity and harmony.

Many of its greatest paintings equate Venice with the Olympian gods of classical Greek and Roman mythology. In Veronese's "Juno Showering Gifts on Venice," the gifts are gold.

Juno (Greek Hera), wife

of Jupiter (Zeus), rewards Venice (Venus) with gold coins, bejewelled gold crowns, the corno ducale (doge's horn-like bonnet) and a laurel wreath, symbolizing power and peace. Gold represents dignity as well as moral power.

The doge wore robes made from gold thread. Artists worked with gold dust and flakes of gold. There was gold in Venetian glass. The façade of the Ca d'Oro was gilded with gold leaf fixed on its surface. Of the Venetian obsession with gold, Petrarch wrote "... behold what men will do for the thirst of gold."

In Veronese's painting, Juno leans over to watch Venice as she drops her gifts. A receptive Venice acknowledges the gifts, the sceptre of governance in her hand and the head of the lion, attribute of St. Mark, under her raised knee and hand.

There is circular volume, heft, yet refinement, in the large scale of the seductive bodies and fashionable satin garments.

Veronese's renown as a brilliant colourist is apparent in his delicate handling of blue, yellow, orange, pink and silvery white. The image speaks to luxury, to material value, to an ideal of

tradition and most importantly, to wise rule sanctified by divine authority.

Penny-Lynn Cookson is an art historian and former lecturer at the University of Toronto. See her upcoming series on "La Serenissima - Venice in Art and History," Thursdays, 11 a.m. Feb. 17 to March 24, on Zoom from the RiverBrink Art Museum in Queenston.

Correction: In "Eye for Art" on Feb. 3, the headline about the painting by Pietro Longhi should have said "Il Ridotto" not "The Magpie."



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Crossword Puzzle

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Last issue's answers

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Very busy day launched a career that changed the world

Dr. William Brown
Special to The Lake Report



Sir Winston Churchill.

Sometimes we are so busy we barely have time to think.

Here's what one very busy day looked like – then guess who and when: Breakfast at 5 a.m. with fried eggs and bacon, followed by a 6 a.m. meeting with the ministers of war, a 7 a.m. meeting with the military co-ordination committee, an 8 a.m. meeting of the war cabinet with the prime minister followed by sundry meetings with ministers and others between 9 a.m. and 11:30 a.m., a second meeting with the cabinet and PM at 11:30 a.m., followed by a non-stop series of meetings with various ministers and advisers, a third war cabinet meeting at 4:30 p.m., an early evening meeting with the King and thereafter a series of consultations with members of the cabinet and the opposition Labour party to form a unity war cabinet before finally going to bed at 3 a.m.

Many of you might guess from the urgency and frequency of the meetings that there was a crisis brewing which threatened the country

and you would be right. The central figure was, of course, Winston Churchill, who at the start of the day, was first lord of the admiralty and by early evening had become PM with the grudging support of many in his own Conservative party.

The King preferred Lord Halifax but with Halifax's reluctance to take on the job, it fell to Churchill.

It was May 10, 1940. Germany was busy bombing

France and Belgium, and had just invaded Belgium and northern France. The "phony war" was over, the blitzkrieg of western Europe had begun. In a few weeks it led to the collapse and surrender of France, Belgium, Holland and Denmark and, along the way, the rescue of a few hundred thousand British and French troops at Dunkirk. Those were dark days.

There were many who thought the situation was hopeless and Britain should negotiate for peace with Germany, something Hitler favoured, according to the records at the time, given that his primary target was the East and Russia.

The pace of that May 10 day was frantic – we can only imagine what ministers said to one another in private. Certainly Churchill wasn't their first choice and many who assented to Churchill as PM thought and hoped he would be a temporary fill-in until someone sounder could be found.

Churchill was 65 then, an age when many these days retire, and 70 when Germany and Japan surrendered

unconditionally in 1945. In 1940, many considered Churchill a risky, even dangerous choice as PM and well past his time, especially by his Conservative party who saw him as a turncoat from the days when he crossed the floor to become a Liberal, a grandstander and a trouble-maker throughout much of the 1930s.

In the air, the Battle of Britain was about to begin, the war in the Atlantic would run on for three years before the horrendous losses in material and men began to slacken, and the next two years was a litany of defeats in western Europe, Greece, Crete, North Africa and Southeast Asia.

Despite his age, in those early years of the war, Churchill was day in and day out, more than up to the job. He was a demanding, sometimes exasperating, and heartless taskmaster. And he made some big mistakes, but never on the big-ticket items, like the Atlantic alliance, which he got right and invested with all the time, energy and schmoozing of Roosevelt he could muster.

But by late 1943, Churchill

was visibly tiring and beginning to lose his emotional and cognitive grip. That was certainly the case if you pay attention to his generals, especially Field Marshal Alan Brooke, with whom Churchill had many battles.

During the war, Churchill probably suffered from several heart attacks and possibly at least one small ischemic stroke, which these days might have been dealt with effectively, although getting Churchill to take medical advice was never easy.

As American influence grew, his influence over the course of world events waned. Even so, Churchill managed with the help of many others to write a highly personal, readable six-volume history of the war (especially his part in it), as well as a masterful history of the British people.

For those writings and his wartime speeches, he won the 1953 Nobel Prize in literature, cited for "his mastery of historical and biographical description, as well as his brilliant oratory in defending exalted human values."

By the time he returned as PM in 1951 at the age of 76 and for the next four years, it was obvious that he was very much a caretaker PM. Finally, he stepped down, persuaded by Anthony Eden and other colleagues, and especially his wife Clementine, probably the only person he really listened to.

It was a life well-lived, even though he made some big mistakes including the management of India during the war. He was a creature of his time and culture and reluctant to see the empire go.

But then, many of us are trapped by our past and because of that probably shouldn't take on jobs that will shape the future long after we are past. Whatever his faults and mistakes, he was the right man, in the right place and time when his country most needed him.

Not a bad first day, which launched a tumultuous prime ministership at 65.

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

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The Spalding Trophy

Are you ready for some football? Well, the Buffalo Bills aren't playing in the Super Bowl this weekend, so no. However, if you're referring to what we like to call soccer and the Canadian men's soccer team's highest-ever ranking for FIFA, then yes! In honour of the team's success, we present the "Spalding Cup," which was awarded to D company of the 35th Battalion at Niagara Camp for winning the soccer tournament held on the Commons in 1915. Although you recognize the word football on the trophy it is referring to soccer in this instance. The YMCA organized several extracurricular activities for the soldiers during their leisure time. Soccer (football), tug of war, cricket, baseball and boxing were a great way to pass the time when the men weren't in training. The soccer pitch was located just in front of the museum building (on Castlereagh Street) where the veteran's housing is today.



ARCHITEXT

Our government and affordable housing

Brian Marshall
Columnist

In January this column published a three-part series focused on affordable housing.

Drawing on historical precedent and a current example of how to approach constructing dwellings for those whose household incomes are insufficient to meet the financial thresholds in our wildly inflated housing market, it was a bit of out-of-the-box thinking that has been demonstrated to work.

Interestingly, in late 2021 our provincial government commissioned the Housing Affordability Task Force to examine this same ques-

tion. Unsurprisingly, there was no innovative or creative thinking displayed in the draft report circulated in mid-January.

I don't suppose this should come as any great revelation from a government task force, particularly when five of the nine members appointed represent the real estate development market and the chair is from the banking industry, a bastion of conservative thought.

Still, to be fair, let's take a look at a few of the draft recommendations.

On density, they recommended that any municipality (and it is unclear whether a "municipality" might not be defined as a region) with over 100,000 people would be required to allow four dwelling units and four storeys on any single residential lot, setting aside any existing local zoning or height limitations.

On minor variances (where the definition of "minor" is not provided nor who would have the authority to determine what it constitutes) sought by developers of housing projects, the municipalities should no longer be required to seek

public consultation nor, in fact, would the elected municipal representatives have any decision-making authority associated with it.

All applications would be made to an independent (not responsible to elected officials) appointed committee of adjustment vested with unilateral and final power to grant or deny same.

On heritage protection, preservation and designation, which (I assume from the way it is written) could encompass built heritage, cultural landscapes, archeological, etc., the province should drastically reduce municipal heritage powers while passing legislation that would require a municipal government to compensate property owners for any loss of development or sales income from their land associated with existing heritage limitations.

On local municipal zoning, the recommendation was that minimized province-wide standards should be set that would prevent local governments from using everything from lot size to shade and wind tunnel impacts to limit the scope and/or size and/or

"you-name-it" of a development.

In other words, set aside all local zoning and associated bylaws and allow the real estate development industry to be free to do nearly anything to maximize profits through densification.

Does no one in our provincial government remember the history of the 19th century when robber barons proliferated and the economy was boom and bust?

Even I, as an unapologetic capitalist, embrace the fact that capitalism without independent oversight and controls is a social disaster.

Further, I ask, how would any of these recommendations lead to affordable housing?

I guess an argument could be made that eventually, if enough housing units are constructed, the insane price escalation of the past few years might be capped. And even, in the sweet by-and-by, supply may substantially exceed demand which could, possibly, lead to lower housing prices.

I also believe in Santa Claus and the tooth fairy. Just sayin'.

Looking to the Stars



Week has a stressful start but a passionate finish

This coming week we have Valentine's Day on Monday and a sexy Venus and Mars conjunction two days later.

Thursday, Feb. 10: Stress, stress and more stress is asking us to make use of the flexible moon in Gemini to change something about how we relate to others. Getting it right means getting more good things for everyone – especially you. It was Feb. 10, 1942, that the first gold record was awarded to the Glenn Miller Orchestra for "The Chattanooga Choo Choo."

Friday, Feb. 11: Today, Mercury is conjunct Pluto.

The energy of this transit has been building up for more than two weeks since Mercury turned direct. This final Mercury-Pluto conjunction will come with a much-needed resolution and clarity. The conjunction can be experienced either as an empowering revelation, or as a requirement to surrender to a higher truth that we've turned a blind eye to. The "Genius of Menlo Park," Thomas Edison, was born on Feb. 11, 1847. The phonograph record and the incandescent light bulb were two of his over 1,000 inventions. He was ousted from his own company after losing the battle for market share to Nikola Tesla and Westinghouse.

Saturday, Feb. 12: A sensitive moon in Cancer is in perfect opposition to a hard-nosed Mars in Capricorn, making for stubborn energy where "no" is the word of the day. It was Feb. 12, 2000, that Charles Schultz, cartoonist who created "Peanuts," died.

Sunday, Feb. 13: It's a day for reaching into the past and forgiving in order to heal. Whether easy or problematic, conditions are excellent to make best use of who you are today to let go of pain from an

earlier day. "Cabaret," the film starring Liza Minnelli, opened on Feb. 13, 1972.

Monday, Feb. 14: Happy Valentine's Day! It's also the day when Mercury re-enters Aquarius. If you experienced some delays or setbacks in the second part of January (from Jan. 14 to 27) you may now find the much-awaited resolution. Waiting can feel frustrating at first, but in retrospect, there's always a reason we had to put in a bit of extra effort, or wait a bit longer. Good things come to those who wait. It's not very romantic, but Texas Instruments patented the micro-chip on Feb. 14, 1978.

Tuesday, Feb. 15: A passionate moon in Leo is in opposition to Saturn in Aquarius making for the opposite of Valentine's Day. Be proud but be prepared to change. Happy birthday to the father of modern astronomy and physics, Galileo, born Feb. 15, 1564, in Pisa, Italy.

Wednesday, Feb. 16: It's like Valentine's Day, two days late, with a full moon in Leo to make it even more passionate. It's the day we see Venus conjunct Mars. This is the peak in the heavenly journey Venus and Mars have undertaken. This is not the end of the story – Venus and Mars will continue to hold hands for a few more weeks. It was 99 years ago today, on Feb. 16, 1923, that Howard Carter discovered the tomb of the boy king, King Tutankhamun and the wonderful objects inside.

Next week we see the change from Aquarius to Pisces and a powerful stellium of planets including Venus, Mars, the moon and Pluto.

Check out Bill Auchterlonie's weekly podcast at Looking up to the Stars at www.lutts.ca.

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Creating that ‘sense of flow’



GROWING TOGETHER 

Joanne Young
Garden Columnist

The last of the Five Senses of Garden Design is the sense of flow.

This is where all the things that we have been talking about, so far, start to come together for you.

Many of our gardens lack a sense of flow. You can put in all your favourite plants or that long-awaited water feature, but still be disappointed with the results.

If you do not consider how all the different elements in your front yard or backyard are flowing together, you will not be satisfied with the results. One of the most common problems I see is the lack of connection from one element of the garden to another.

Does this sound familiar? Your vegetable garden is a rectangular patch over in one corner. In the opposite corner you have created a triangle shaped bed. Around the maple tree in the middle of the yard you have added a circular bed. You have a shed that sits out on its own. Your patio is not connected with any of the gardens.

Our front yards are no different. We can have one idea when we put in the front walkway and seem to

have a different look when it comes to adding the gardens. Quite often, we break down the landscaping tasks into individual projects without considering the whole picture at once.

Everything comes across as being an after-thought. This is what I refer to as “Plunkitis.” You just start plunking things in here and there without any thought as to how the big picture goes together.

It doesn’t matter what size your garden area is or what style you have chosen. If you are not connecting things together, you will never have the garden of your dreams.

Creating a sense of flow in a garden refers to the way that people move through the space physically, but it also refers to how it visually leads the eye continuously around the garden.

To create flow and unity in your landscape, you need to learn how to guide a person’s eye from one garden area to another. Remember, wherever a line stops, or your eye stops as it goes around the garden, so does the sense of flow.

Before you begin to make any decisions about how you are going to create that sense of flow, there are a couple things to think about.

One of the big decisions that you need to make is whether to have beds and other elements in the garden (decks, patios etc.) with curved lines or to go with more straight, geometric lines. There is no right or wrong answer to that question, but there are some considerations to look at.

The first is the garden style you have chosen. This will help dictate what types

of lines you should go with.

Curved lines are better suited for more informal and natural type gardens. So, if your style is cottage, woodland, natural and traditional then curved lines will help to convey that style better. Beds with curved lines follow the natural terrain as nothing in nature happens in straight lines.

Straight lines create more of a formal look. And formal gardens rely greatly on symmetry. The geometric shape selected may be copied from an architectural feature found on your home.

The second consideration is the feeling you want to convey. The human eye follows curves easier than straight lines. Curved bed shapes allow the eye to follow the outline slowly, taking in more of the garden. A garden with curved lines is more relaxing.

Gardens with strong geometric lines have a much sharper, more precise look to them. Your eye quickly follows the lines to the end points.

They can still create a sense of flow. This style appeals to those people who like a clean, tidy, crisp look. It conveys more of an orderly and uncluttered look.

If you have a smaller space, especially a long, but narrow one, going to geometric lines will help to make your space feel larger. Using a similar look with curved lines will take up more space, both physically and visually.

Next, I will be writing about the practical ways you can implement the sense of flow into your garden.

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

NOTLers return to activities

Continued from Front Page

coped with the closure of the community centre by “drinking ice wine.”

He also thanked the large snowstorms from the past few weeks for creating another way to exercise while the centre was closed.

Brock and Planche are part of a group that gets together at the community centre twice a week to play badminton.

Supervisor of recreation Dan Maksenuk said the town is happy to see residents once again taking care of themselves.

“It’s so good to see people back in utilizing the building, keeping fit, staying active in their wellness,” Maksenuk said in an interview.

“It’s been a long haul the last two years. I want to say we’ve closed down and reopened at least four times. Every time it’s been a bit modified.”

Maksenuk said he hopes the community centre will stay open for good this time.

All the facilities are open at the centre as are individual room rentals. Maksenuk said the only real restrictions come in the form of a 300-person max capacity for the entire community



Longtime resident Kit Howe, 94, started visiting Niagara-on-the-Lake in the 1940s. EVAN SAUNDERS

residents are able to peruse the shelves once again and find the perfect book to sharpen their minds.

And that’s exactly what 94-year-old resident Kit Howe has been doing for the past 34 years.

“I think it’s wonderful. I don’t know what I would have done (if the library stayed closed). I practically live here,” Howe said while checking out some books.

Howe moved to NOTL in 1988 and said she began donating to the library immediately when it was still in the Court House on Queen Street.

“I love books. I couldn’t imagine life without the library,” she said.

“I love this library. For a small town it is a tremendous library,” she said.

Despite being an avid reader since she was a child, Howe doesn’t have a large collection of books at home.

She said library closures over the last two years have been difficult.

“I suffered, I truly suffered,” she said.

But she said the NOTL library has ensured residents could still get books while the front doors were closed.

“I don’t know what we would do without our library,” she said.

centre. Any further restrictions on room rentals will be determined on an individual basis, he said.

The Sweets & Swirls Cafe is also open in the centre, with a maximum capacity of 84 persons.

Maksenuk said the community centre occupies an important space as one of the few public recreational facilities in town, he noted.

“It’s crucial to the community, just having this building reopened. It’s a central hub for so many people to come,” he said.

“In terms of Old Town, we’re probably one of the only public facilities saying, ‘Come on down and take part in activities.’ ”

Next door at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library,

Obituary

Marion Homer



HOMER, Marion –

Passed away peacefully in her sleep after a brief illness, on Wednesday, Feb. 2, 2022, a day after her 99th birthday. Beloved wife of the late Bob Homer. Cherished mother of Lynda Mikkor (Rein), Jack Homer (Linda), Glenda Morris (Jamie) and Brenda Homer McMillan (Tom). Proud grandmother of Colleen Bogucki (Richard), Christine Masterson (Stephen), Alison Mikkor-Kedhar (Sanjay), Abby Wadley (Kurtis), Rob Altoft (Jennie) and Colin Morris (James). Great grandmother of Liam, Taylor, Morgan, Owen, Annika, Inaya, Max, Ada, Kate, Ben and Ellie. A heartfelt thanks to Margaret and Korny Penner for years of friendship and support. For the care provided by Dr. Jayawardene “Dr. J” and the staff at the Royal Henley.

Private family arrangements in care of Morgan Funeral

Home, 415 Regent St., Niagara-on-the-Lake.

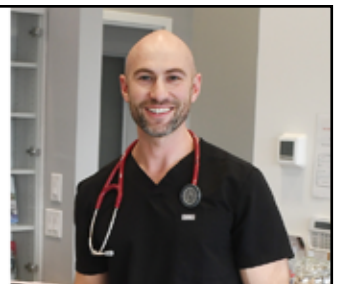
Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com



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