



Dr. Mustafa Hirji. SUPPLIED

## Niagara should **stay in lockdown** a bit longer: Hirji

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

Niagara's chief medical officer of health says he isn't sure what level the region will be at when the provin-

cial lockdown is lifted and he warns that we need to be cautious about reopening too quickly.

While for now Ontario lockdowns have been extended, the province is

preparing to bring regions back into the colour-coded COVID-19 response framework.

The province hasn't said for sure when Niagara will return to the colour frame-

work, though it is expected the stay-at-home order will last until at least Feb. 16.

Regions with fewer COVID cases will open up more quickly, the province said, and when they do, the

updated framework will allow for limited in-person shopping for areas in the grey-lockdown zone.

Dr. Mustafa Hirji

*Continued on Page 2*

## Firefighters **battle blaze** into morning

Damage estimated at \$2.5 million, but millions in property saved



Through a haze of dark smoke, as the daylight began to disappear, NOTL firefighters continued to battle a vicious fire at a multi-use facility on Townline Road Tuesday and into Wednesday morning. RICHARD HARLEY

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's crew of 60 firefighters used every fire apparatus the town has but were simply "outmatched" due to a lack of available water as

they battled a massive blaze that engulfed an old chicken farm turned business facility Tuesday, fire chief Nick Ruller says.

The fire created a thick plume of dark smoke that could be seen from several kilometres away, across

most of NOTL and firefighters worked through the night to bring it under control.

The three huge, 500-foot repurposed former barns at 1238 Townline Rd. were home to several businesses, including Reclaimed by

Roots, a custom producer of live-edge wood products.

The barns housed a variety of businesses, including auto repair, storage of high-end boats and some that were "building racecars,"

*Continued on Page 3*



Crossroads students make their way into school on Tuesday morning. TIM TAYLOR

## **Return to school** brings relief for some parents, concern for others

Brittney Cutler  
Special to The Lake Report

Although the number of COVID cases continues to drop in Niagara and schools have reopened, some parents are still not comfortable with sending their children back to class.

Brooke Bowslaugh, a Niagara-on-the-Lake resident

and mother of two, said her five-year-old daughter, Olivia, has a weakened immune system and she doesn't think it's the right time to send her back just yet.

Olivia has been at home learning online at Crossroads Public School since March 2020.

*Continued on Page 6*

## Hermit living on boat taken to **hospital**

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

A man who has been living on his boat in the Niagara River for several weeks has been brought back to land again, this time by Niagara Regional Police.

The man, whom a sailing

club member identified as being named "Justin," is now in a St. Catharines hospital "getting the help he needs," said Jaime Day, newly appointed commodore of the NOTL Sailing Club. Day had been helping to monitor Justin's situation while he was living on the boat.

The man apparently has no sailing experience and had been living on the boat for weeks without an engine or heat.

Day said on Monday he called the police as the ice in the Niagara River and on Lake Ontario was getting worse and the boat had drifted out farther into the lake.

Police brought the man in at about 9 p.m. to the sailing club, where a group of members was waiting.

The members, when approached by a reporter, said the man suffers from mental health issues and that it's a "sad situation" but refused

*Continued on Page 6*



Police bring the man's sailboat in to the Niagara Sailing Club. RICHARD HARLEY



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# NOTL care homes **doing well** after receiving vaccines

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake's long-term care homes are seeing a sharp decline in new COVID-19 cases after month-long outbreaks led to 14 COVID-related deaths, the region's top doctor says.

In an interview Tuesday, Niagara's chief medical officer Dr. Mustafa Hirji said the situation at Niagara Long Term Care Residence on Wellington Street, which saw the majority of cases, is "looking a lot better than it was a few weeks ago."

The home, which has had more than 120 resident and staff cases in total, had no active resident cases and just four staff cases as of Tuesday.

"I think the vaccine, of course, has been administered to their residents, so that's certainly helping and we're just finishing off getting second doses to residents right now which will help even more," Hirji said in an interview.

Niagara Long Term Care home is following the same pattern as other care homes in the region, where the outbreaks are now



A sign at of Niagara Long Term Care thanks staff members. FILE/RICHARD HARLEY

looking a lot more controlled, he said.

While there are still a large number of outbreaks across Niagara, new cases are coming down across the region.

"We're fortunately not seeing very many people getting sick in those outbreaks any more. It's a very small number now," Hirji said.

At Radiant Care Pleasant Manor in Virgil, CEO Tim

Siemens said as of Tuesday the home had three active resident cases (five recovered) and four active staff cases (with six recovered). The home has had two deaths.

Pleasant Manor's housing facility has no active cases, he said.

Siemens said long-term care residents would be receiving their second dose of vaccine on Wednesday.

Upper Canada Lodge, a

region-run facility in Old Town, has reported no COVID cases to date.

Hirji said the region is seeing the benefit of having started vaccinating people in early January.

"The residents aren't getting sick as much, which means it's not spreading among staff, and those outbreaks are a lot better controlled as a result."

His hope is that with long-term care residents

and staff vaccinated, outbreaks will no longer be deadly.

"That'll mean that outbreaks if they do occur are very small and don't really spread to many people and we don't see people dying any more from outbreaks."

Niagara Long Term Care executive director Chris Poos said he's "very pleased" there are no more active resident cases in the home.

"I would like to share our sincere appreciation to our families, the community and our health system partners for the tremendous support as we have navigated this COVID-19 outbreak," he said.

Some residents received their second dose of the Moderna vaccine last Saturday and staff members with active cases "are all doing well and self-isolating at home," he said.

## 'Risky' time to open with new COVID variant looming: Hirji

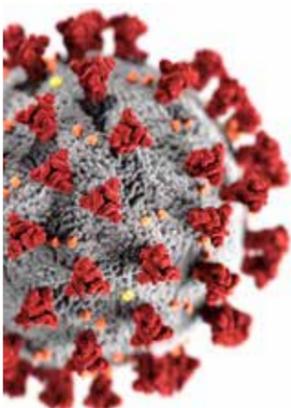
Continued from Front Page

said, "We don't know what colour we're going into yet. I understand an announcement might be end of the week on that front. And I think without knowing that we don't have a complete picture of what the reopening means," he told The Lake Report in an interview Tuesday.

If Niagara goes into the red-restrict zone, restaurants will be able to reopen in a limited capacity.

But Hirji said it's a "relatively risky time" to be opening up. Even though new cases of COVID-19 have come down "quite substantially," the daily case count is still relatively high "in an absolute sense" and we could end up in another lockdown.

Niagara is still averaging



Dr. Mustafa Hirji. SUPPLIED

more cases per day than it was at the peak of the first wave, he said.

"I would hope that whatever happens is a pretty cautious move."

He said there are still more than 40 outbreaks in Niagara at various facilities and people continue to die from the virus.

"So, I think we do need

more time to make sure we are completely out of this wave," he said.

He said the other thing he's worried about is the new, more contagious variant of COVID-19 already seen in the GTA. Opening up for travel between regions could potentially lead to those variants spreading.

"It's a particular concern for us in Niagara because those variants are in Toronto, Peel, York Region, Durham Region. Those are the places that will likely travel to Niagara if Niagara opens up before those regions do," he said.

"And unfortunately we saw in the past that they have brought infection here and now they could potentially be bringing variants here, so I think there's a lot of reasons to be potentially concerned about what this

reopening will look like."

He said he hopes the province is cautious about reopening, so "we're able to mitigate those risks."

"What happens in one part of Ontario will eventually impact us in Niagara, so what happens elsewhere really does matter."

His recommendation for Niagara would be to stay in lockdown for a bit longer, until cases fall further.

"There's no margin for error. If there's any kind of rise in cases, we're once again in a point where we aren't able to manage the rising cases, we're not going to be able to follow up with all the cases. The hospitals will be overwhelmed."

Another important factor, he said, is that when vaccines arrive for the public, the health system can't be

overwhelmed, or vaccinations will be delayed.

"If our hospitals are busy taking care of people with COVID-19 and we in public health are busy following up on outbreaks and following up with lots of cases, that means there's not going to be the health care providers to be vaccinating and our vaccine rollout is going to be slower," he said.

As a result, staying locked down a little longer will "really pay dividends, enough to vaccinate more quickly, very soon. And hopefully make sure that we never actually get a third lockdown or a third wave."

Niagara-on-the-Lake Lord Mayor Betty Disero has been encouraging residents to continue to be vigilant in preventing potential spread of the virus.

"Despite the recent decrease in COVID-19 cases through the Niagara region and province, we remain in a public health emergency," she said in a town news release.

"While the province cautiously considers the gradual reopening of the economy and loosening of the stay-at-home order, it also stressed that we must remain vigilant," she said.

"We cannot let our guard down now. We must remain aware and cautious due to the looming variants of COVID-19. Please, stay home, follow all regulations and precautions issued by the Province and Public Health and help to save lives," Disero said.

As of Wednesday, NOTL had 16 active cases of COVID-19, public health statistics showed.

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# Let us know your pandemic heroes

It's been a year now since COVID-19 entered our lives and changed ... everything.

In those 12 months, we've endured good, bad and everything in between.

Looking back on life in the pandemic, we'd like to highlight and pay tribute to some of the hundreds of Niagara-on-the-Lake residents, organizations, companies, entrepreneurs and others who have helped make a difference.

From front-line workers to essential service personnel, your neighbours and family



**Firefighters**



**Teachers**



**Essential workers**



**Front-line workers**

members, to friends and even strangers, ordinary folks and people with expertise – let's honour and recognize them in The Lake Report.

So, tell us: who are the pandemic heroes you know, have encountered or heard

about? Send us a note nominating them, outlining their contributions, big and small. Include a photo (if you have one), and email and telephone contact information for them (and yourself).

Working together, we will endeavour to share the good news about those who have made a difference in our community this past year.

Please send your nominations by email to [editor@niagaranow.com](mailto:editor@niagaranow.com).

# Firefighters battle blaze all night

*Continued from Front Page*

Ruller said. He estimated the damage total at \$2.5 million and said fire crews helped save between \$2.5 million and \$4 million in property.

The rural area doesn't have fire hydrants, so with the size of the fire, the fire crews were "outmatched," Ruller said, but noted no one was injured.

He said two additional tankers were called in from the Thorold Fire Department to provide more water for firefighters, on top of NOTL's own pair of 3,000-gallon tankers.

"We had a report that there may be a couple of barn cats that were in there, but beyond that we weren't in a position to do any searches based on the conditions," he said in an interview at the scene.

At least four GoFundMe campaigns have been launched to help victims recover from the fire. As of Wednesday night they had raised more than \$11,000.

One of the fundraisers was started Tuesday night by Kyle Vanderheiden of St. Catharines, who said he lost "thousands of dollars worth of automotive technician tools" in the fire.

In an online posting, Vanderheiden said as the barns burned, "I gave up watching when I saw firefighters break down our door, kneel down and fight a blazing fire."



NOTL firefighters had water trucked in to help fight the blaze. RICHARD HARLEY

Ruller said crews were dispatched at about 2:30 p.m. and he was only a couple of kilometres away when the call came in.

He could see heavy black smoke and "we upgraded the call immediately," he told The Lake Report.

When he arrived, fire had engulfed one of the three buildings at the facility, which had multiple exposures to other areas because the buildings were all adjoined, Ruller said.

"What we have here is a former chicken barn that's been repurposed and these are almost individual units where there's various occupancies. Some are doing automotive repair, some are building racecars."

In between each 500-

foot chicken barn were "plastic hoop houses where they were storing vehicles and boats and things like that. So we ran into some serious access issues in here, which became problematic for us," Ruller said.

The buildings being tightly packed together made it difficult for firefighters to get at the blaze.

"What was happening is the fire was getting into the chicken barns and they have a common attic for the whole 500 feet, and it is separated beneath by a plywood ceiling."

The fire quickly ran through the common attic space and spread to the other two units, Ruller said.

"So our crews, they can't get under it. The fire is run-

ning that concealed space." He said the only access would have been if the fires burned through the metal roofs.

"Or we try and start pulling the ceiling down, but you can't pull plywood, so we did our best to get in and get under it. We found some voids where we were able to get water in, however we ended up with building instability issues here, and we couldn't commit crews to the interior," he said.

"Our focus at that point was just a full-blown evacuation. We had crews begin searching all of the chicken barns for occupants and ensuring that everyone's out of the buildings, and at that point we shifted to defensive operations strictly."

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**NOTL active cases: 16**  
**Region active cases: 535**  
**Region deaths: 353**  
**Region total cases: 8,252**  
**Region resolved cases: 7,364**

\*Feb. 10 data per Niagara Region Public Health



**Contributed by Patty Garriock**  
 "The weary miles pass swiftly, taken in a joyous stride. All the world seems brighter, when a friend walks by our side."

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## Editorial: Let's stay home a bit longer

Richard Harley  
 Editor-In-Chief

Our chief medical officer says if we are smart and keep COVID cases down, it's possible we won't see a third wave.

That's a reason to celebrate — but not with your friends and family, just yet.

With news like that, it seems a small price to pay to continue to stay home, if it means we might not end up going back into another mandatory lockdown.

There's no doubt people

are feeling the effects of this lockdown. Combined with crummy, cold weather, it's enough to drive us all a little bit crazy.

But keeping it up for just a while longer is so worth it.

It's worth it for our business community, which can't handle another forced closure.

It's worth it for those among us who are more susceptible to COVID-19 and face a real risk of dying if they are infected.

It's worth it to see our families again, not just for

a week or two before yet another lockdown.

It's worth it for those of us who just want to get to the pub and have a good, old-fashioned in-person conversation with a complete stranger.

It's just worth it.

So as we head into the next few months, with spring on the horizon, let's be cautious and heed the advice of our public health officials.

Let's be vigilant in letting our friends and family know we want them to just stay

home for now.

As the people who know the most about this are saying, even when we open up, it's a risk.

So let's not immediately return to sneezing on each other.

Let's keep up the good fight — which it appears we could win.

And while we do that, let's celebrate the fact we're living in 2021 and the medical science is there to get us through a major pandemic.

editor@niagaranow.com

Agree? Disagree? Send your thoughts to editor@niagaranow.com.



**CORRECTION:** A headline in last week's Lake Report on writer Jill Troyer's feature on the icewine harvest mistakenly referred to students from Niagara College participating in the harvest at Pillitteri Estates Winery. In fact, the students were from Brock University.

The Lake Report regrets the error.

## Yo-yo approach to lockdowns simply won't work

Dear editor:

This is an open letter to NOTL and regional council, the medical officer of health and MPP Wayne Gates.

If anyone, as business owners and residents of NOTL, is happy with the revolving shutdown manner with which Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the COVID-19 pandemic was handled, read no further.

Hindsight is 50/50. In this instance it has taught us that the current reactive actions and yo-yo remedies just don't work.

It is killing our economy, attendant business failures and our way of life. To quote Maya Angelou, the late American poet, "If you don't like something — change it."

Well, I assume nobody likes a lockdown, so let's change it. Accordingly, as we are most certainly headed toward a Phase 3 lockdown later in the year, as a result of the oncoming COVID-19 variants which spread much faster and are purportedly more deadly, coupled with the

delay in a vaccine plan and site selection, and tourism season.

Another lockdown will be the death knell of more of our local businesses. Therefore until we have the community fully vaccinated, which appears many months away, in addition to the worn out, wear a mask, social distance and wash your hands message, we must seriously change direction and move away from the reactive shotgun approach to a new proactive, workable model.

Therefore, I ask the open letter subjects, what is your new plan?

To date we have religiously followed the "one size fits all" federal and provincial guidelines. There is national agreement, however, that they have been a disaster, as, to quote Rick Jorgensen, owner of OLiV Tasting Room: "Small businesses are better equipped than Costco, for example, to manage customer COVID compliance guidelines."

In the face of these mounting failures, our lo-

cal officials appear to be tepid in any meaningful pushback. It's time for more concerted and aggressive actions. Further knee-jerk lockdowns, as referenced above, will kill our town culture. The time for action is now.

Clint Eastwood said, "Sometimes if you want to see a change for the better, you have to take things into your own hands."

Step 1: Reinforce our expectations that NOTL be designated a high-risk spreader hub. As I suggested previously, we have a high concentration of seniors plus we are a tourist trap.

Step 2: In short order establish a proactive, mass vaccination site dedicated to NOTL residents, in preparation for the arrival of our vaccine allotment.

Step 3: Tighten the guidelines and fines for mandatory mask wearing, indoor and outdoors, within NOTL, Old Town as a minimum.

Step 4: Push the government to tighten international travel even further into Canada. Look at other

countries' success stories, e.g. New Zealand, etc.

Step 5: Impress on our government to cancel the "one size fits all" policy and implement a regional / town-specific approach. Move the decision-making to the small-town mayors, residents and business owners level.

These are a smattering of my proposals. You, as our leaders and elected officials, what are your planned changes in direction in preparation for Phase 3? And what would other residents and business owners like to see changed? A timely public response would be appreciated by all.

Release your goal and plan to vaccinate the total population of NOTL.

Will it be a focused, organized and aggressive short timeline window with a single vaccine delivery, at a single mass vaccination site, sufficient to cover the total population? Or will it be an ad hoc, dribs and drabs vaccine delivery?

Samuel Young  
 NOTL

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# NEWS/OPINION

## Please wear **reflective gear** when walking at night

Dear editor:  
This dark photograph shows two unidentifiable, very hard-to-see NOTLers walk their dog on a cold, still, precious evening last week.  
I love my neighbours and hate the sight of blood.  
So many walkers, runners and bicyclists wear black or dark blue clothes, even after dark.  
Please: Wear bright or

reflective gear, stripes, blinking lights, whatever. The Lake Report wants good news, not tragic news. Stay healthy!  
Not to be presciently morbid, but it's not a question of "if," it's a matter of "when" someone will be whacked here in our town if we're not visible on evening outings.  
Ross Robinson  
NOTL



Can't see anything? Drivers can't see you when you're wearing dark colours at night. ROSS ROBINSON

## Chautauqua needs **speed bumps** now

Dear editor:  
The Chautauqua neighbourhood needs speed bumps!  
There was a real traffic problem in this area last summer and it will be worse this coming summer.  
Even now on nice days the traffic is unbelievable.  
Given how long it will take council to consider other ideas (one-way

streets? which will not slow speeders) before any action will be taken, and the fact that this needs to be done soon, may I humbly suggest that several of the largest legal speed bumps available be put in ASAP along Niagara Boulevard and Shakespeare Avenue to start?  
Sheila Doyle  
NOTL

## Reduce council size to save money

Dear editor:  
I am writing further to The Lake Report's front-page story, "Town of NOTL needs to find additional revenue sources: Bisback," published on Feb. 4.  
Coun. Allan Bisback, here is an idea: Let's reduce the number of town councillors to five from eight.

Just what is it that eight councillors do that five can't?  
Toronto has 25 councillors for a population of a few million.  
Our ratio works out to about one councillor for every 1,000 people of voting age.  
Harold Asikyan  
NOTL

## Being **with peers** important to kids' health, development, says NOTL mother, psychologist

Continued from Front Page

"I am worried she may never be able to go back to school. She spent much of her first year of school out of it at home being sick. That was before COVID, so I'm worried for her all the time," said Bowslaugh.  
A stay-at-home mother, Bowslaugh said the frustrations of doing her daily duties as well as keeping an eye on her children has been a little frantic, but manageable.



Olivia Bowslaugh, 5, is doing online learning during the pandemic. SUPPLIED

"It's stressful trying to virtual school while chasing a toddler around, but it isn't an impossible challenge. I've reached out to our teacher and she gave me some tips on how to keep my daughter from running away from the computer," Bowslaugh said.  
Another Niagara-on-the-Lake mother, Aksana Kavaliova, whose daughter, Elina, is in Grade 5 at Crossroads, said it is a relief to see kids head back to class. She thinks it's good for young people's well-

being and mental health.  
Kavaliova, a psychotherapist, said COVID has put new mental health stresses on young children, changes she's seen over the past few months.  
Being in the classroom with other kids is important to develop social skills, she said.  
"It is really important

to talk about kids' mental health," Kavaliova said.  
"Older adults or adults with older kids don't see it this way. We, on the other hand, see how even this past month changed many kids," said Kavaliova.  
Older kids can manage online learning, "but younger students need a real classroom, real interaction to develop their social skills."  
**Safety guidelines in place at NOTL schools**  
Elementary students went back to the classroom Monday and schools are taking extra precautions to prevent potential spread of COVID-19.  
Students will undergo daily COVID-19 screenings for symptoms, to space six-feet apart in classrooms and maintain social distancing between classes.  
The Niagara Catholic District School Board says on its website that students and staff must wear masks at all times, including outside, unless they have a medical exemption.

Schools also will be able to do asymptomatic testing of students, per recommendations from Niagara Region public health. Families will be notified before testing occurs, the board said.  
The District School Board of Niagara is following similar protocols and provides additional COVID-19 safety information along with self-assessment tools and information as to school outbreaks, active case numbers and closures.  
None of Niagara-on-the-Lake's elementary schools have reported any COVID-19 outbreaks so far.  
For post-secondary schools, such as Niagara College and Brock University, the province is recommending online learning. Students who are required to be on campus must wear a non-medical mask, both indoors and outdoors.  
At Niagara College, a mask and screening tests are required to enter buildings.

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Love, Rita

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Niagara-on-the-Lake



Left: Justin's sailboat drifted out into the middle of the lake ice Monday. Right: Niagara Regional Police on scene at the Niagara Sailing Club during the boat rescue. RICHARD HARLEY

## Boat hermit suffers from **mental health issues**, say sailing club members

*Continued from Front Page*

to talk more about it.

Another sailing club member reached Tuesday agreed to talk on condition their name would not be published.

They said the man had been drying out and burning his own feces to stay warm on the boat.

The man had previously been brought to shore to dock at Navy Hall and although people involved in

helping Justin said they'd been given permission for him to stay, Niagara Parks asked him to leave.

From there, he anchored farther out in the Niagara River, closer to Ball's Beach.

On Monday, The Lake Report received multiple emails and calls from people concerned about the man's safety.

"The hermit that is living in his sailboat on the Niagara River somehow lost

his mooring to Navy Hall and drifted down to Ball's Beach," said an email from dock area resident Ron Simkus, who publishes a weekly report on lake water levels.

Patricia Ridesic, a NOTL resident who takes daily trips to Navy Hall and has been following the situation, called Monday to say it was time police did something about it.

"When he was at the Navy Hall he should have

been removed from the boat ... because he's a danger to himself and if anybody has to rescue him," Ridesic said.

She said she heard someone was "monitoring" the situation, but questions how that could be done from shore.

"I don't know what monitoring actually means," she said.

She also questioned why no family members have tried to help him.

"Obviously the guy can't make the right decisions for himself," she said. "And there must be a family somewhere."

On Tuesday she called again and was relieved the man had been brought in by police.

She was concerned police had been "dodging their duties" by not bringing him in sooner.

"They should be trying to solve this the best they can. I mean, the guy has family,

surely. Those doctors who must know about him. They have to try a bit harder."

Niagara Regional Police spokesperson Const. Jesse Vujasic said the man was "apprehended for his safety under the Ontario Mental Health Act and taken to a local hospital for assessment and care by medical personnel."

"He was not arrested." Citing privacy concerns, police refused further comment.

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Liam and Daphne Cadeau take a break after skating up a storm on their home pond rink. PHOTOS BY RICHARD HARLEY

## It's a Canadian thing: Family pond skating a source of joy during COVID lockdowns

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

It's 11:30 a.m. on a Monday and the Cadeaus are tying the laces of their skates to head out to play some hockey during a break in online school.

First order of business, shovel the snow off their home rink, a pond in their backyard on Line 3 Road.

It's not a quick affair — the rink is three-quarters the size of regulation hockey rink — though being on skates helps a bit.

Dad James Cadeau shovels in his white Montreal Canadiens jersey with help from son Liam, 13.

Along with his sisters Sophie, 12, and Daphne, 10, Liam skates around and plays shinny on their home rink.

"You never see them this excited to shovel the driveway," mom Erinn Lockard says in an interview.

James Cadeau says you "really have to be careful" when deciding whether it's safe to skate.

He drills down in about eight different places to check the thickness of the ice.

Because the pond is deep, "I've gotta be 100 per cent sure there's no thin spots," he says. "It's at least five inches thick all the way around."

In recent years there hasn't been as much skating time, due to warmer weather, Cadeau says.



Left: The Cadeau family, minus one, stands out on their home pond hockey rink. Right: Liam Cadeau enjoys skating around.



But today, the ice is rock solid. "You could almost drive a car on there now."

"It's not fed by any underground water, which makes it freeze really nice because you don't have to worry about flowing water," Lockard says.

She says it's nice to have a place for the kids to get outside and have some fun, especially during COVID lockdowns. It gives the family a bit of extra exercise and something to do.

Though she prefers to stay off the ice.

"I don't own skates. I'm more the hot chocolate person," she says.

In a normal year, the family has skate parties when the ice is safe.

They've even put logos on the ice in the past.

"I'm sure you couldn't guess what logo was in the middle," she jokes. Her husband is a big Habs fan.

The ice is a little bumpy this year, she said, due to the way it's been freezing on and off.

She says the family has tried different ways to smooth the surface, but they haven't quite found the perfect solution.

"We've tried different ways to come up with Zamboni ideas, but there's no water out here, so to haul it from (the house) to here is like a pain in the butt," she says.

Thanks to some friends, they have some new ideas this year they might try out. The rink is on an old irrigation pond that hasn't been used in a "long time," Lockard says.

She imagines plenty of kids skated there long before her family started to use it.

It's about 12 feet deep in the middle, though the water level is lower this year, Lockard says.

In the summer, the family also swims in the pond.

A previous owner put in an aeration system to keep the water from going stagnant.

Now the pond has a few fish and a turtle, and various wildlife like herons and ducks will stop by on occasion.

As this chilly COVID winter settles in, Cadeau says they'll be out on the ice every day until it thaws.

It's a great distraction, "something to take away all the craziness that's going on in life."

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# Climate-change crossroads: *A ceremonial journey*

Kyra Simone  
Special to The Lake Report

On Feb. 4, some NOTL residents noticed a curious sight: two people canoeing on frigid Lake Ontario. From her backyard near Niagara Shores Park, Victoria Donald called out to offer assistance or hot beverages.

While they didn't need her help, they explained their journey was a ceremonial one – from the mouth of the Niagara River to Toronto. They were motivated to take this exceptional action by the impacts of climate change.

This is the fourth such journey for Waasekom Niin, from Saugeen First Nation and Kettle & Stony Point First Nation. He began in 2016, travelling in the traditional way of the Great Lakes Anishinaabe peoples as a form of ceremony and prayer.

I was able to speak with Waasekom while he waited out some treacherous weather in Port Dalhousie. He acknowledged that this undertaking is dangerous, but like a form of fasting, it is a sacrifice on behalf of others.

But, he also says, new understanding emerges from each one of his journeys. "This is a form of inquiry, as well as a way of documenting climate change and giving a voice to the water."

The unusual timing of the journey is intentional. According to Waasekom,

"We're in desperate times. These are the desperate measures we're taking to find an answer."

That said, the paddlers are adapting as conditions change to ensure safety. "We came to make offerings, not to be an offering!" Waasekom laughs.

**CLIMATE CHANGE MOTIVATION:** While the first day of the journey was lovely and bright, such warm conditions are abnormal this time of year.

Ice cover on the Great Lakes is at a record low. Because many fish species need this ice cover to reproduce, climate warming destabilizes the very foundation of lake ecosystems.

*Niigaani-gichigami*, what we call Lake Ontario, is the last stop in the Great Lakes system before water flows through the St. Lawrence River to the Atlantic Ocean.

"It's an indicator for the health of the other lakes. It's the same water," says Waasekom.

Just as the lakes are intertwined, he observes, "Water connects us all, water unites us."

In his work as a water advocate, Waasekom has seen many effects of climate change firsthand, progressing in real-time. After enduring blistering heat waves on a journey last summer, this winter voyage shows the other side of the same coin.

Many animals that would normally go south have ac-



Waasekom Niin (right) and Waawaashkeshii Nini Henry begin the ceremonial journey on Feb. 4. SCOTT PARENT

tually stuck around. Geese and cardinals, for example, have stayed north in the warm conditions.

This is certainly concerning, but we can learn a lot from these creatures. "They're adapting with the reality of climate change a lot better than we are."

The human race, ironically, is also in a sort-of necessary hibernation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Waasekom says it's important to think of this time as "incubation," rather than isolation, so we can emerge from this dark winter in a new, more resilient form.

**THINKING (SEVEN GENERATIONS)**

**AHEAD:** Waasekom's initiative, *E'daapnigaadeg Shkapjiganan* (Picking Up the Bundles Canoe Journey), is named for a central Anishinaabe metaphor.

In this culture, decisions are made with seven generations of descendants in mind. Teachings from his ancestors, the Minisinook, described that humanity would come to a dire crossroads, with one path leading to destruction.

These ancestors understood how to work in balance with the Earth, and left "bundles" of knowledge for generations to come. "Picking up the bundles means to pick up our sacred

responsibilities as human beings – to this Earth and to each other."

We're at this fork in the road now and our actions will unquestionably affect our descendants. "Seven generations from now, they're going to look back and question our negligence ... but they're also going to see that some people took up the mantle to pull us out and get us to where we need to be," he says.

Waasekom's journey is about restoring balance and encouraging us all to redevelop a sincere relationship with the land. "Find that park, find that body of water, find that creek, that

forest. (Find your) relation to that land, that space. From that relationship, you'll know how to take action."

"It's about our great-grandchildren's future and their grandchildren's future. Are we going to be worthy ancestors?"

For more information, see the @MinisinookCanoeJourney Facebook page.

*Kyra Simone is a NOTL-born nature lover with a master's degree in biology. In her spare time, she advocates for sustainable change, picks up garbage, makes recycled jewelry, and transforms furniture bound for the landfill.*

## Museum documentary highlights *unique figure* from Black history

Julia Sacco  
Special to The Lake Report

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum's latest documentary club discussion brought a unique figure in Black history to the spotlight.

The Zoom meeting on Feb. 5 led by Barbara (Babs) Worthy brought forth community discussion on a documentary from The Canadians: Biographies of a Nation titled "Rose Fortune."

Fortune was a Black Loyalist and the child of runaway slaves. The family settled in Nova Scotia's Annapolis Valley.

In Canada, she was an entrepreneur who worked as a baggage carrier and ran a "wakeup call" service that alerted people in nearby inns about missing departing ships, according to the Canadian Encyclopedia. She also was the first female police officer in Canada.

The film seemed to open viewers' eyes to the truths of Nova Scotia's role in slavery and the turmoil that many, including Fortune, faced.

"It's sort of strange that a community founded on Quakers, strict Christians, would have engaged in (slavery) without a hesita-

tion," said Christine Earl. "I think (Fortune's) life was in danger because of the Fugitive Slave Act and any ship pulling in could have carried men, bounty hunters, slave hunters, who could have taken her back very quickly," said Denise Ascenzo.

The documentary, while important and informative, seemed to fall short of viewers' expectations in terms of details.

"I really enjoyed a lot of the information and I also enjoyed the fact that they found relatives or the descendants of this woman,

I appreciate that but I feel like I wanted more," said Ascenzo.

Other attendees shared a similar sentiment.

Despite those perceived shortcomings, people left the discussion with a better understanding of an important figure and a thirst for more information on Black Canadian history.

The next Doc Club meeting on March 5 will be a discussion about a film on Agnes MacPhail, Canada's first female MP.

To register, contact Barabara Worthy at [bworthy@nhsm.ca](mailto:bworthy@nhsm.ca).



Rosemary Sadlier. SUPPLIED



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# TD Niagara Jazz Festival **reinvents** itself online

## Innovative approach keeps musicians, videographers employed while supporting restaurants

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

In a time of hardship for musicians due to a lack of live gigs, the TD Niagara Jazz Festival is still paying performers, while creating new jobs and partnerships to support Niagara restaurants at the same time.

Festival executive director Juliet Dunn has continued to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic, switching from live shows to virtual events online and finding new ways to engage her audience through community partnerships.

The result has been new opportunities for musicians, videographers, restaurants and even a marketing student. Not to mention bringing a bit of entertainment for people stuck at home during the provincial lockdown.

For her Twilight Jazz Series, Dunn has partnered with local restaurants to offer dinner and jazz packages. People can purchase a ticket to the show and a meal from an area restaurant, available for curbside pickup before the performance.

"This is a great way to



Sunday's show will see Louis Armstrong/New Orleans Trad Jazz tribute featuring Dr. Brice Miller and the NuTrad Jazz Trio perform. SUPPLIED

work with partner restaurants," she said. "They're really suffering, as are the musicians, so it's kind of a win-win."

She said restaurants come up with a menu that allows them to make money and "everybody's happy."

"So, for example, if it's \$39, we're giving say \$20 to \$22 to the restaurant, depending on their menu items," she said. "We sell a ticket, they sell a dish."

The goal is to have

partner restaurants in each Niagara municipality, Dunn said, so there's something close to home for anyone who wants to join in.

"We're not there yet, but we've got one in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Falls, St. Catharines and town of Lincoln, and that way, people can order and just do curbside pickup," Dunn said.

In Niagara-on-the-Lake, she's partnered with Club 55 on Niagara Stone Road.

Club 55 owner Bill Neufeld said the partnership has helped expose the restaurant "to a demographic we may not have reached without it."

He said as Niagara restaurants "navigate the rapid changing restrictions," partnerships like this are important.

"If any sense of prosperity is to meet us on the other side it has to come from a sense of locals supporting each other."

On top of helping restaurants, the musicians are grateful for the work, Dunn said.

"During a pandemic they're getting barely any work, and so they were just so grateful to be able to perform. If we can keep that going, that's a win as well."

The musicians and videographers all get paid, of course, thanks to funding from TD, various sponsors and grant money.

Still, it needs to be complemented by ticket sales.

The festival spent a good deal of time offering free shows while figuring out the technical parts of livestreaming gigs.

"Last year we did over 70 performances and actually all but two were free. Which was great, but we're realizing, well, that's not a model we can do forever because we've got to have some ticket sales to help balance it out," Dunn said.

She said musicians get paid a minimum amount for the performance, which is boosted if ticket sales are strong.

"Our last show ... we had more ticket sales than we

thought, so we said, 'Hey, here's some extra money.' So the musicians were quite happy as you can imagine," she said.

While the hope is to get back to live performances, Dunn said she doesn't see things returning to normal any time soon.

She's even looking at having restaurants close to where some of the performers are living, and could be partnering with a restaurant in Calgary for an upcoming youth performance.

It's been tricky getting the online format to work, Dunn said, but people are still buying tickets and enjoying the shows.

"It's all new. We're learning as we go. What we've noticed is on event day we need more volunteers online to help guide people if they can't figure out how to get the show link and stuff like that."

She's still hoping to partner with a restaurant in Old Town, she said.

She wants to be able to use the partnerships she's made with restaurants to open up more venues for jazz when live shows can resume.

## Brushstrokes from the 'Brink: Gallery hosts virtual series

Colin Brezicki  
Special to The Lake Report

Newcomers to the Niagara region may not be aware of a cultural gem in their midst.

RiverBrink Art Museum, in the historic village of Queenston, has been open to the public since 1983.

Formerly the home of renowned art collector Samuel Weir, Q.C., the art museum is open year-round and features exhibitions from his private collection along with displays of contemporary art and works on loan from other public and private collections.

While COVID restrictions prevent physical visits, director/curator Debra Antoncic and her staff have assembled an exciting

series of online talks, workshops and virtual tours for members and non-members over the coming weeks.

Antoncic and retired conservator Sandra Lawrence have launched a five-week course on the works of Peter Paul Rubens that runs on Thursdays until Feb. 18.

Animator Cristal Buemi presents a four-week course on "Mindful Art Making the Frame by Frame Way Online Animation" and invites participants to enter the magical and meditative world of stop-motion animation, as inspired by the Japanese aesthetic Wabi-Sabi.

The sessions are held on Saturdays.

Membership (individual and family) offers these courses at significant

reductions along with other benefits, including a discount on all paintings, jewelry, objets d'art and books sold in the museum shop.

An intriguing and exciting initiative to give the public "ownership" of a selection of Samuel Weir's collection is the "Adopt-an-Artwork" program. Individuals can fund one of several designated paintings, prints or sculptures and have their name attached to the work whenever it is exhibited. Many of the included works are available to view and adopt on the RiverBrink website.

The gallery offers online opportunities to view artwork from the Weir collection at no charge (though a voluntary donation is

always an option) through the monthly Weir Collection Wednesday videos on YouTube and through virtual iterations of Coffee with the Curator.

Details of all these attractions can be found on the easily navigable website <http://www.riverbrink.org/>.

There, readers can explore membership options, along with bus trips to the AGO and other galleries, and walking tours in historic Queenston. These will all be resumed when restrictions are lifted, but thanks to technology Niagara residents can immediately participate in a wealth of artistic experience at RiverBrink.

Colin Brezicki is a member and volunteer at RiverBrink Art Museum.



Peter Paul Rubens, The Honeysuckle Bower, 1609, oil on canvas. Alte Pinakothek, Munich. SUPPLIED

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Left: Staff at VanNoort Florists are getting ready for Valentine's Day. Right: Willow Cakes & Pastries staff are busy preparing Valentine's Day treats. In photo: Heidi Jimm-Johnson (top left), Megumu Kawarada (top right), Carol Giang (bottom left) and Annika Johnson (bottom right). SUPPLIED PHOTOS

## Love is in the air

# NOTL businesses prepare for Valentine's Day

Vicky Qiao  
Special to The Lake Report

In-person shopping and restaurant dinners may be cancelled because of the pandemic — but love isn't.

With Valentine's Day around the corner, businesses in Niagara-on-the-Lake are making sure that people can still celebrate the special occasion with their loved ones.

Regal Florist, for one, is expecting an extra busy week.

It's going to be a strong Valentine's Day thanks to COVID "and just people reaching out to each other," says Darrell Boer, the owner of Regal Florist.

The Virgil florist has been in operation for over 30 years and for Valentine's Day this year, Boer says

many people are ordering flowers not only for their romantic partners but also for friends.

"Because of COVID, we can't see our friends face to face," he says.

"Valentine's can be an emotional time for some anyway and it pulls on people's heartstrings. They're not just thinking of their husband or wife, they're thinking of their friends as well."

With travel restrictions and public health measures in place, many people won't be able to unite with their loved ones on Feb. 14. And some choose to send flowers for their valentines although they can't deliver them in person.

"We got orders from all across Canada and the U.S. even," says Boer, noting he

had just taken an order from a man in Buffalo.

"His girlfriend is here (in) Niagara-on-the-Lake, he can't see her, he can't get across the border."

Having been in business for 60 years, Van Noort Flower Studio is another florist that has been bringing blossoms and joy to the community.

"I've been in this for 35 years and I never tire of flowers. Never," says Sharon van Noort, the co-owner of the studio. "They always put a smile on my face and I work with it every day,"

People who can't see loved ones because they are in nursing homes, for instance, are sending more flowers because they can't take them out to dinner, she says.

Social media is one of the

top strategies Van Noort Flower Studio has adopted since the pandemic, Van Noort says.

"Flowers are very much a visual thing.... people like to see them, and when they can't come in and pick out what they like, it's hard for the consumer."

Van Noort says she has been posting almost every day on the studio's Instagram account and getting a lot more followers.

Her store isn't the only small business that has to change its tactics.

"We went from this high-end patisserie where people were coming in and spending a couple of hours at a time, sitting and enjoying our coffee and a croissant, to now being just a seller," says Sean O'Donnell, of Willow Cakes and Pastries.

The patisserie has been partnering with other small businesses and entrepreneurs as a way to tackle the challenge and provide a better experience for customers, O'Donnell says.

For this Valentine's Day, the store partnered with a local jeweller (who happens to be O'Donnell's niece's teacher) to create a heart-shaped chocolate jewelry box.

"It's got chocolate designs, chocolate flowers on it ... and your choice of a pendant and chain to go with it."

The chocolate smash-box is another Valentine's Day special created by the patisserie. The person who receives it can smash the hollow chocolate shell open to find a surprise inside.

"We've been fairly fortu-

nate. We've seen a lot more local turnout and a lot more new customers than we have in the past," O'Donnell says.

Van Noort says getting gift certificates is a great way to help local shops survive during this challenging time.

"Go and buy that gift certificate and dinner for your favourite restaurant. I can't say it enough with small businesses and you live in a small town, we got to support each other."

For Valentine's Day, Van Noort is hoping to take the restaurant experience home to enjoy her favourite local wine and Haggard fried chicken sandwich from Silversmith Brewery.

"Honestly, best burger going. So I'm hoping that my husband and my son will order that for me," she says.

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*An invitation*  
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## Pumphouse forum highlights making wise charitable choices

Gail Kendall  
Special to/The Lake Report

A small group of NOTL residents were treated to a virtual presentation Saturday put on by the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre on how to be wise when making charitable gifts.

The online event, called the Joy of Gifting Wisely, was hosted by Pumphouse board chair Lise Andreana and marketing co-ordination Aimee Medina with presentations by local philanthropist Gerry Kowalchuk and Niagara-on-the-Lake financial planner Paul Lalonde.

Participants had the opportunity to learn about two key components of gifting – why and how – with a rare insight into donor and estate planning expertise.

Lalonde offered ways to manage finances and escape paying high taxes through charitable donations.

Kowalchuk, who had a successful career in the investment field, is an avid donor to charitable causes he is passionate about.

In 2014, he established a fund through the Niagara Community Foundation to help underprivileged families and children.

He gave an impassioned presentation regarding his awareness of hardships experienced by others over a span of many years that led him to becoming a regular donor.

“Charitable giving has brought meaning into my life,” Kowalchuk said. “I have no doubt that since 2014 my life is much fuller and, in a nutshell, I have a sense of purpose.”



Gerry Kowalchuk. SOURCED

## Grant helps keep Pumphouse classes going during lockdowns

Aimee Medina  
Niagara Pumphouse  
Special to The Lake Report

The Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre may have closed its doors due to the provincewide shut down, but it continues to engage the community virtually.

During the winter months, the arts centre is offering free and paid art classes, workshops and lectures online for students of all ages, thanks to the Resilient Communities Fund grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

The fund was developed to help non-profit organizations recover and rebuild from the impacts of COVID-19 and continue meeting the needs of Ontario communities.



The Niagara Pumphouse has been adapting to the pandemic with online classes for all. SUPPLIED

“This pandemic has been so hard on our community but it’s places like the Pumphouse that are getting us through and showing how our communities are coming together,” said Wayne Gates, MPP for the Niagara Falls riding.

“The way they’ve moved their classes, workshops and lectures online to

continue to engage our community is so wonderful. These times have been so hard on people and their ability to continue to reach out to our community and provide a learning space and artistic output is so very appreciated during this time. I am so proud to have the province funding their initiatives.”

Adapting some of the art classes and workshops to remote delivery is one of the Pumphouse’s major priorities for 2021. Through the Resilient Communities Fund grant, not only art programs, but also events and member services are made accessible online and delivered safely to the community.

When it is safe to do so, in-person programming will resume with updated health and safety protocols.

In addition, a high-quality ultrafine particulate HEPA air purification system will be installed in each room to greatly improve indoor air quality.

More information on Pumphouse programs is available at, [www.niagarapumphouse.ca](http://www.niagarapumphouse.ca).

## RIDDLE ME THIS

I’m (usually) white and used for cutting and grinding. When I’m damaged, humans usually remove me or fill me. For most animals I am a useful tool. What am I?

Last issue: I’m a god, a planet, and measurer of heat. Who am I?

Answer: Mercury

Answered first by: Jason “Riddle Master” Baker

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Sheelah Young, Jeff Weir, Susan Hamilton, Sheila Mead, Wade Durling, Sheila Meloche, Glenn Ashenurst, Sylvia Wiens, Mike Drolet, Catherine Willick, Howard Jones, Gary Davis, Mary Drost, Pam Dowling, Joan Busbridge, Michele Fortuna, Katie Reimer, Elaine Landray, Margie Enns, Sue DeGrandis, James Langendoen, Josh Langendoen

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

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# ‘Witness Tree Project’ provides **folklore, history** about NOTL

Snehal Kataruka  
Special to The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake’s Communities in Bloom committee is on a mission to document and protect trees that have “witnessed” history in town.

And they’re looking for help from residents.

This week the committee launched its Witness Tree Project, which provides an interactive map to the location of various trees, along with the estimated age of the tree, information about the species and some local history and folklore.

The program is aimed to teach people about the town’s cultural past and help advocate for trees, said Communities in Bloom committee member Janet Trogdon.

“The idea is to create a database that will result in a trail of trees that residents and visitors will enjoy by getting out on a walk or learning about them online.”

Janet said she remembers her father “many decades ago” telling her the local legend that the shade of a tree at the former Parliament Oak public school was



Left: An old oak tree at Newark Park. Right: Janet Trogdon and her dog Pixie in Paradise Grove. SUPPLIED PHOTOS/RENE BERTSCHI



once used as the setting for a meeting of Parliament, on a hot day when politicians wanted to escape the heat.

“Whether it’s a local lore or fact, the stone marker dated 1915 does stand where a beautiful oak tree once did. Preserving this story and so many others help us understand how we became the community we are today,” she said.

The program will also focus on the town’s colonial and Indigenous history, as well as raise environmental awareness through historical stories about the area, she said.

So far committee members have documented 24 trees, including a 175-year-old maple near Strewn Winery.

Committee members use submitted information

from residents to help find out the history of the tree, such as the reason it was planted.

“This process includes determining the age and type of a tree, whether it is a native species, the reason it was planted, and what it has witnessed,” said a Town of NOTL media release about the tree project.

The progress of the project is still evolving, Trogdon

said, noting the project was restricted until the fall of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Communities in Bloom considers the Witness Tree Project as a work in progress and want (it) to evolve and grow with input from residents who have a connection with our town,” she said.

“The trees can act as a location marker about an

event that happened.”

The committee is asking for the public’s help in nominating trees of perceived significance to be canvassed and studied. Residents can nominate trees at the initiative’s website.

Trogdon said they’re still working on ways to verify the information submitted, but she’s hopeful the project will have more trees listed by April.



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Boyd Hopkins, 11, chases friend Lennox Meadows, 10, for the puck while doing some shooting drills on the frozen One Mile Creek. PHOTOS BY RICHARD HARLEY

# Frozen creek a **COVID** respite for local kids



Top: Aimée Meadows, 6, Emily Foster, Cassidy Swan, 6 and Billie Swan, 8, enjoy an afternoon on the ice. Bottom: Ty Sherlock, 10, plays some hockey with friends.

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

It's the "first time in 24 years give or take" that One Mile Creek has frozen enough for skating, say longtime Chautauqua residents Stephanie Tribe and Shane Sherlock.

But this year it's pretty much perfect, and despite lockdowns, the ice is attracting lots of local skaters.

Their son Ty Sherlock was among a group of kids and adults using the ice Saturday afternoon.

Tribe, who lives around the corner from the creek, which abuts Niagara Boulevard, said the ice is a "pandemic blessing" and that so far no one has complained about people enjoying the outdoor surface.

"The kids have been every day and no trouble," she said. "A bunch of

people old and young from Ty's crew played hockey for hours today."

She said a neighbour's son even came out and shovelled the ice.

Emily Foster, a mother from Virgil whose kids were skating for a couple of hours, said with arenas being shut, it's nice to get outside for some fresh air and exercise.

"We were desperate to do anything outside and get active," she said.

"They couldn't get out of the house fast enough when I told them we were going skating. They didn't care how cold it was, they were so excited to get out."

She said she hopes people will see being outside skating as a positive thing, rather than "counting the numbers" of people there.

In total at that time there were about 10 people skating around.

Ty, who said he's been on the ice a lot, said it's nice to be able to play hockey with his friends.

"It's all frozen and we get to play hockey every day," he said.

While the province remains in lockdown, provincial regulations allow for outdoor exercise.

Dr. Mustafa Hirji, Niagara's acting chief medical officer of health, said while skating is a great way to exercise, people shouldn't be gathering with friends from other households.

"Skating on a pond is a perfectly fine way to get your exercise, just like going for a walk outside would be. The thing to look out for here, though, is that we have a limit on the size of social gatherings right now that no more than five people can be together," he said.

"And so if you're on that pond, assuming it's not that large, it probably shouldn't be more than five people at any time there, so that you don't fall afoul of those gathering limits."

He said people should stick to skating with just their family members.

"So, you know, a couple of family members can go out to the pond and spend time skating together, but you shouldn't be going out and socializing with your neighbours or another friend outdoors at the skating pond because that goes against what the stay-at-home order is really asking us to do right now."

The same goes for hockey, he said. A scrimmage or shooting a puck around with the family is OK, but doing so with people from other households violates provincial orders.

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## Giving surplus back **wasn't** library's first choice, board chair says



Library board chair Daryl Novak at his home on the Niagara Parkway. RICHARD HARLEY

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

While the NOTL Public Library is willing to help the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake solve its revenue problem, it had not planned to give 75 per cent of its \$100,000 surplus back to supplement the town's operating budget.

"It was not ever our suggestion or first choice," said Daryl Novak, chair of the library board, during a request to council last week for a reduction in the amount returned.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake library requested the town only take 50 per cent of its surplus, so the rest could go toward the library's capital reserve, which is projecting a deficit. However, councillors narrowly voted to take the full 75 per cent, which helped to reduce the town's tax levy increase.

In an interview Monday, Novak said while library board members are not angry, they are "a little disappointed" in the town's decision to claw back \$75,000 of its surplus, which came largely from being fiscally responsible in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The move was sort of "smoke and mirrors," Novak said, with the town reducing the library's grant money

equal to 75 per cent of the surplus, since it doesn't have the power to ask for the surplus money.

"Where it's a bit smoke and mirrors is the municipality cannot take the surplus away from us, legally, and they can't actually instruct us how to spend it. But there's nothing that says that the municipality can't reduce our operating grant," he said.

"So, basically they're saying, 'Just for this year we're going to reduce your operating grant, by a number which happens to be equivalent to 75 per cent of your surplus. And the rest is up to you, library.'"

Lord Mayor Betty Disero, who cast the tie-breaking vote in favour of denying the library's request, said while she's always been a supporter of the library, this year is different and everyone needs to work together.

"I have never, ever refused in my tenure on this council to give money to the library board and even when it impacted other projects for the town, I've always been very supportive of the library board," she said.

"I'm hopeful that in the long run they will understand and they will continue to believe that they can come to us when they need to and we will be there for them," Disero said.

"But we need their help

now, and it would be a completely different story if this was coming from a source of revenue that did not have an impact (on taxpayers), but this is coming directly from the tax levy."

She pointed out the Niag-

**"If we weren't showing a significant surplus, there would have been no question and no issue about the allocation for this coming year,"**

DARYL NOVAK  
NOTL LIBRARY BOARD CHAIR

ara-on-the-Lake Museum returned 100 per cent of its surplus back to the town in the same fashion through a reduced grant, while the town itself also gave 75 per cent of its surplus back to the operating budget.

While the town has said the change will not affect the library's grant next year, the concern Novak and library board members have is that the impacts of COVID-19 aren't known for 2021. They fear if town revenues continue to decline, the library won't get its full funding in 2022 either.

"What happens if the parking revenues don't come back? What hap-

pens if the municipality is in a difficult situation next year? It will make it just that much harder for us to be able to request what we need for the year, but also to deal with these issues that we were having around the capital reserves," Novak said.

He said he trusts council will contribute the full grant next year.

"Councillors have been very good about saying, 'No, no, no, we understand that this is just a one-time reduction in your allocation. It's not that next year we're gonna say, 'Well, you know, last year they got (X), well that's their new base,' " he said.

"It's not for a second that I think anybody's going to pull a fast one," he said.

The town originally wanted to decrease their grant by the full \$100,000 surplus, Novak said.

"Then it came down to, 'Well, you know, you'll keep 25 per cent of the surplus.' So we thought, alright, let's show willing. It wasn't our first choice but acting as team players if the municipality is having a real cash crunch etc., let's suggest that we keep 50 per cent."

"That suggestion was rebuffed."

Looking back, the library could have spent some of the funds on equipment earlier, he said.

"If we weren't showing a significant surplus, there would have been no question and no issue about the allocation for this coming year," he said.

Novak pointed out a Deloitte service review of the town in July identified the library as one of just two town areas that is performing above standard.

He also noted the library was the only town appendage to make staff cuts.

"That was what created most of the surplus. And now the town is saying thank you very much, we'll reduce your allocation based on that."

According to the budget report for 2021, the Town of NOTL now has 107 full-time staff members and is expected to hire out 73,696 contract hours in 2021, compared with 76,655 in 2020.

Novak said despite being disappointed, there's no "bad blood."

"Nobody's screaming, nobody's being mean to each other. It's just unfortunate purely because we're concerned about what the municipality's income is going to be next year, and we could have looked after ourselves a bit more if we had not been told that our grant this year was going to be reduced."

"Our capital reserves are a little on the tight side. Really, we didn't have a lot of money," Novak said.



Library an **important** tool for residents during pandemic, board member Robin Williams says

Having an accessible public library is essential to the health and well-being of the community, library board trustee Dr. Robin Williams told council during the budget presentation.

Williams, a pediatrician and public health expert, said the library is essential "social infrastructure" for the town and residents who are handling the pandemic differently.

"We are living in incredible times, I don't need to tell you that, and some are faring better than others. There's no question," she said.

"We're even starting to hear not only about a second wave and a third wave of COVID, but a fourth wave, which is about the longstanding shadow that this pandemic is causing on mental health for families, for kids, for older seniors, etc."

Williams is also acting as a special adviser at the province on COVID matters.

"So I'm living and breathing COVID," she said. "And I have to remind myself that we can't get lost in the present. We need to stay focused also on the future because there will be a future, we will get beyond this."

She said she thinks the library will be "a significant player in the social and the economic recovery in Niagara-on-the-Lake."

Libraries have shifted and adapted over time, and the focus is "more than keeping the magic of reading alive," she added.

She noted the library offers access to ideas and resources, connections to people and virtual programming.

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# Friends conspired to mark 80th birthday

Kevin MacLean  
The Lake Report

Celebrations and parties are verboten at this stage of the pandemic, so many milestones are passing without any acknowledgement.

A group of Donna Lailey's friends decided that marking her 80th birthday was important so they hatched a plan to surprise the Niagara-on-the-Lake resident on her big day last Friday. While observing all COVID-19 protocols.

Thanks to Donna's husband, co-conspirator David Lailey, a handful of her friends were able to sneak onto their property and decorate the exterior with balloons while the couple



A surprised Donna Lailey on her 80th birthday.  
KEVIN MACLEAN



was out.

It was all done quickly and surreptitiously, so that when the Laileys returned an hour later, Donna would find the surprise.

Mission accomplished. "I was really surprised," the former high school teacher and winery owner said after another friend dropped off a cake on the front porch. "I

had no idea."

Plans almost went awry at the last minute. "David was planning our daily walk and said we had to leave by 11:30 a.m.," she told The Lake Report.

But yet another friend stopped by and suddenly they were running late. Knowing the "decorators" would arrive momentarily, David insisted that they go for a drive instead of a walk.

So they did and, with military-like precision and despite the windy weather, the balloon brigade carried out its mission.

Five days later it was David's 81st birthday, but it looks like he'll have to wait a while for his big celebration.

# Ross' Ravings: Wallbangers missing the camaraderie

Ross Robinson  
Special to The Lake Report

During the global pandemic, Wallbanger hockey players have been sleeping in on Sunday mornings. Not dreaming about slick goals or brilliant saves, but about dressing room banter, hot showers and team breakfasts at Silk's Country Kitchen.

Did Blue Team win or lose? It doesn't really matter. It's the guys and the fellowship. But, seeing the ponds and rivers so active with skaters young and old sort of hurts. Hockey is just so much fun, even for us aging pylons.

Here in Niagara, we haven't had a week of natural ice for over 20 years, so this is such a joy.

And, now, with fun, comes more and more regulations and rules.

"City rinks open — No hockey" yelled a headline in The Standard and The Review last week. Now this is over regulation! Who needs to live in a communist country to hear the word "No" too often?

No hockey on rinks in Canada? How about Oktoberfest in Munchen with no bier or bratwurst? How about the Indy 500 with no loud cars? (Nothing over 55 decibels, eh?) How about skiing in the Swiss Alps near Murren and Wengen, but no yodelling or schussing? How



Boots and coats wait idly as skaters enjoy the frozen creek.  
RICHARD HARLEY

about Algonquin Park with no canoe tripping?

Or the world famous Calgary Stampede, the Greatest Outdoor Show in the World, with no calf roping or chuckwagon races?

It was great to walk by Lansdowne Lake (aka One Mile Creek) in Chautauqua last weekend, scraped again by enthusiastic Curtis ("Hey, I just wanted to get a good skate in") Collard, and to hear the sound of skate blades carving Mother Nature's fairly smooth frozen ice.

There was neighbour Diana Donnelly having fun in French and English with her children Aimee and Lennox. They didn't want to go home for dinner, but after getting a promise to come back for more skating after eating and doing their homework, the kids took off their skates and wandered up Wilberforce Avenue.

Could anything be more Canajan? Perhaps the maniacal laugh of the northern

loon, as Robert Service limned over a century ago from a lonely Yukon lake. But, skating is different, sort of unique to us up here in Canada.

On the City of St. Catharines website, there were 19, count'em 19, "No's" under City Rink Rules. No pucks or sticks, No tag, No skating backward, No carrying children, No erratic skating, No, I'm not making this stuff up. Have a look yourself.

Back now to Wallbangers hockey. Last week, in the Blue Team dressing room early. The requisite cheap verbal shots about perceived weight gain, a bit of unsolicited relationship counselling for a brow beaten husband, trying to help a teammate who had forgotten one shin pad.

Then, I was on the ice, trying to control the front of the net in the deep slot. Too much pushing and shoving near the net, and cross-checks from my pal Pete Vanderperk. Marcel

Lounsbury, a clean player but a mean player, on his turf. Best to avoid these two tough defencemen.

Late in the game, Red Team power forward Terry Nord, a really good hockey player, broke in on the left wing, and ripped a wrist high. Blue Team goalie Ward Simpson made a scintillating save, keeping the game tied. Vic Tee and Bill Dickson got into a nasty and loud scrum in a corner, but before it got serious they both became fatigued and agreed to let bygones be bygones.

Thank goodness, as it could have been embarrassing, with no referee to break up the combatants. Gotta love three generational hockey, trying hard but lovin' it more.

With about three minutes left in another tight Wallbangers game, Blue captain Bill Dickson found me open for a stretch pass. I gathered it in going over the checkered red line, went around Redman Rick Sherk, and had a breakaway on Red goalie Ward. Just as I was going to make a great deke ...

I heard the tinny loud and anxious sound of a snowplow hustling down our bumpy street. I looked at my watch. It was only 7:30.

I had been dreaming. Our COVID-19 world is challenging, eh?

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GAMES 



*Have some fun*

**Across**

- 1. Egg-shaped (4)
- 4. Occurring after one's death (10)
- 9. Kind of engineer (10)
- 10. First son of Adam and Eve (4)
- 11. Six (4-5)
- 13. Also-ran (5)
- 16. Garment of ancient Rome (4)
- 17. Nobles (5)
- 21. Accustom (5)
- 22. Sailor (7)
- 23. Caterpillar (5)
- 24. Paces (5)
- 27. Harmonize (4)
- 30. Plot of ground (5)
- 33. Monarch (9)
- 35. Old Peruvian (4)
- 36. Immeasurably deep (10)
- 37. Overstate (10)
- 38. Indifferent (2-2)

**Down**

- 2. Small community (7)
- 3. Satan (7)
- 4. Portion of time (6)
- 5. Small bag (6)
- 6. Consecrated (4)
- 7. Former Portuguese territory in S China (5)
- 8. Join (5)
- 12. Name of a thing (5)
- 13. Dens (5)
- 14. Gravy (5)
- 15. Staggers (5)
- 17. Coral builder (5)
- 18. White heron (5)
- 19. Shatter (5)
- 20. Golf clubs (5)
- 25. Lattice (7)
- 26. Winged horse (7)
- 28. Against (6)
- 29. Previously (6)
- 31. Addition (5)
- 32. Loud, resonant sound (5)
- 34. Showing unusual talent (4)

**Crossword Puzzle**

1	2		3		4		5		6		7		8	
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17		18		19		20					21			
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35														
37														38

Last issue's answers

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
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# Tobogganing at Fort George's 'Killer Hill'



Old Town resident Katrina Rayner, 17, toboggans down "killer hill" at Fort George Sunday. RICHARD HARLEY

## Dr. Brown: How important is the **size** of the brain?

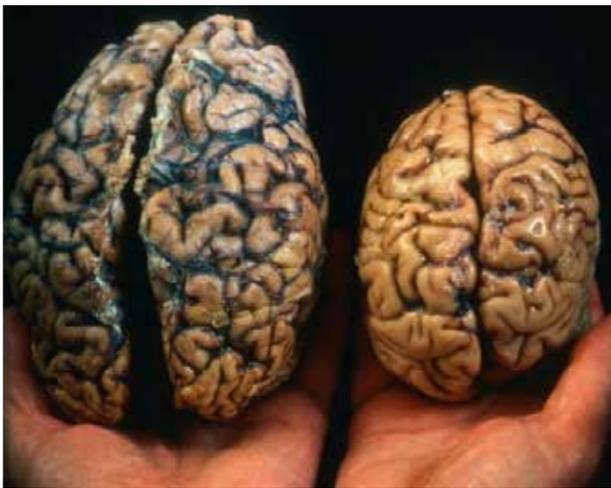
*Dr. William Brown is a professor of neurology at McMaster University and co-founder of the Infohealth series at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library.*

Dr. William Brown  
Special to The Lake Report

The size of the brain clearly isn't everything.

For example, the size of the human male brain may on average be 100 CCs larger than the female brain but in case you haven't noticed recently, women are fast becoming the leaders in science, medicine and slowly breaking the long-standing stranglehold men have had in politics, at least in democracies.

And elephants and sperm whales possess far larger, more folded neocortices and many times more nerve cells compared to humans. Yet, as clever as they are, they're no match for humans in most cognitive traits, although like chimpanzees and some other animals, they possess an impressive



SOURCED IMAGE

level of social intelligence, sense of fairness, kinship and caring for one another's welfare that rival our own when we're behaving.

Modern humans, and based on recent studies, our extinct cousin species, the neanderthals, developed what anthropologist Richard Leakey called the two cornerstones of human cognitive powers – storytelling and religion. The emergence of both depended on the evolution of sophisticated symbolic language and

a powerful enough imagination to create virtual, alternate realities populated by worlds.

To quote Leakey: "One thing we can be sure about ... is that once consciousness passed the threshold of self-awareness and death awareness, there welled up in the human mind the Big Question: Why? It is not a straight request for an answer; it is a search for meaning in the midst of uncertainty. What is the meaning of life? What is

the meaning of the world I find myself in? How did the universe come to be?"

Posing those questions led modern humans to develop countless creation mythologies to explain the mysteries of life and death and narratives by which the world might be understood.

This innate tendency to imagine worlds other than the obvious physical reality that surrounds us is a feature of most creative artists and scientists, too and was probably a feature of every society from our very beginnings. On the science side of the ledger, we need look no further for examples than the works of Albert Einstein, Niels Bohr, Stephen Hawking and Roger Penrose.

Where would we be without Einstein's thought experiments, which imagined how space, time, mass and gravity might be related to one another in his famous treatise, "General Relativity."

Or a favourite of mine is his imagined notion in 1905

of how the random motion of thousands, if not millions of atoms, might account for the random jostling of far larger pollen particles floating on the surface of the water. And going further, how his approach might be used to prove that atoms existed and reveal something of their size.

Or what about Bohr's intuitive grasp of the quantum world or more recently, the creative work of Hawking and Penrose about the nature of black holes long before the first black hole was actually seen in 2019.

I just finished reading Penrose's 1999 book, "Shadows of the Mind: A search for the missing science in consciousness," in which he imagines how quantum mechanics might affect consciousness. For me it was a challenging read, but also an example of what a brilliant mathematician and theoretical physicist can bring to what hitherto has been the sole province of biologists and clinicians, without I might

say, much clarity.

That's what the human mind can do, of which there are plenty of other examples in the creation of music, the visual arts, theatre and all the other arts, and engineering or more to the present, figuring out how we're going to get through this pandemic.

No other animal has shown the curiosity to ask and attempt to understand how nature works, including figuring out how our brain thinks, feels, plans and generally goes about its conscious and unconscious business.

That reflective curiosity about ourselves and the world around us extending from the farthest reaches of space and beyond to what's in front of our face, is surely unique among species and one of the subjects of the BRAIN series at the NOTL library.

The BRAIN series begins on Wednesday, March 3, at 2 p.m.. Please register with the NOTL library.



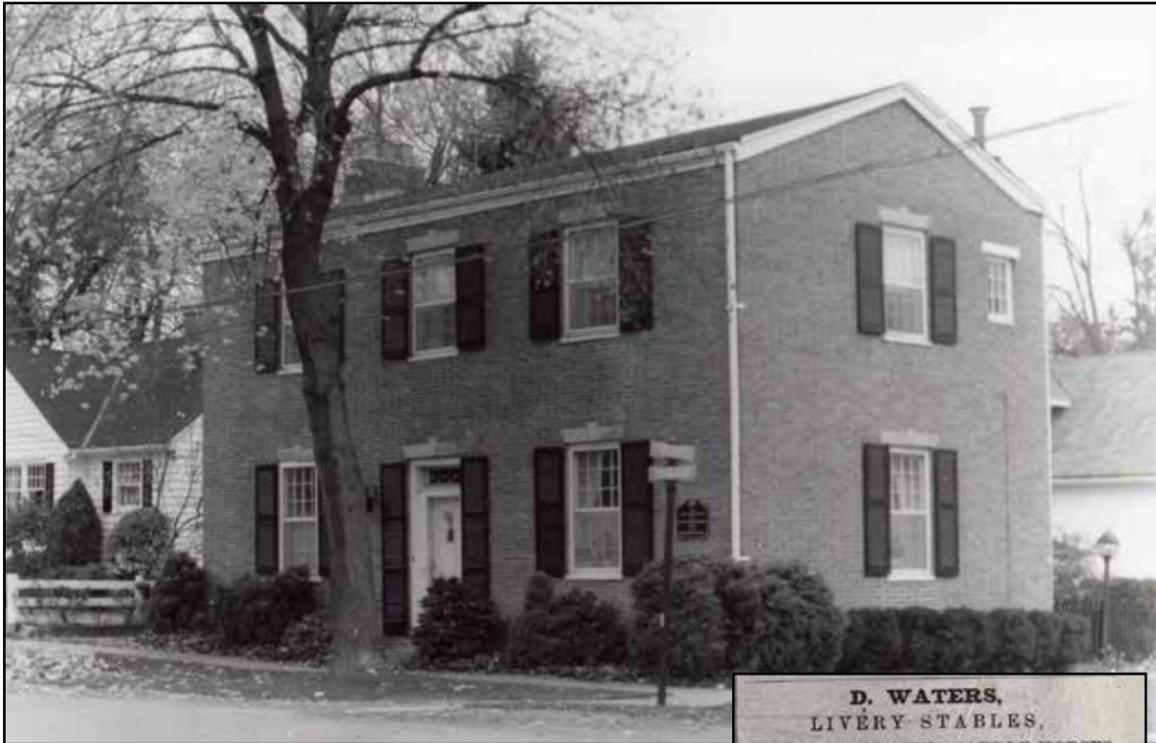
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LIVERY STABLES,  
CARRIAGES, BUGGIES, SADDLE HORSES.  
*Cabs at all hours. Horses Boarded.*  
Regent Street, near Royal Hotel, NIAGARA.

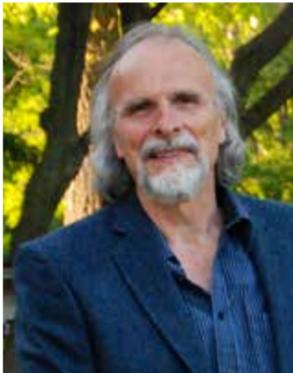
## Daniel Servos Waters

Daniel Servos Waters was one of the first successful Black businessmen in Niagara during the mid- to late-1800s. He first ran his carriage service out of his home at 243 Gate St. but after 1875 ran it from 55 Prideaux, the Promenade House, pictured here, where he had more room to expand. It was a prime location with its proximity to the Queen's Royal Hotel, the wharf and the railway. On the off-season, he focused on local trade and had a contract with the town to transport poor people in the community on a one-way ride to Toronto. When the business got too much, Daniel leased it to Michael Greene, who later opened a livery on King Street. Daniel died in 1899 and several community members attended his funeral. He is buried in St. Mark's Cemetery.



## State of affairs

Brian Marshall  
Columnist



Brian Marshall.  
SUPPLIED

As all my regular readers know, I believe the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake requires a comprehensive set of architectural guidelines that is both descriptive and proscriptive, in which a Heritage Conservation Plan (for the entire town) would form an important part.

That said, let's examine the current state-of-affairs with respect to heritage conservation:

Does the town have a comprehensive plan of this sort?

The answer is "No."

Our town conserves its irreplaceable heritage through a combination of

goodwill (from government, business and public), volunteerism, the province's "Heritage Tool Kit", the Ontario Heritage Act, and the Queen & Picton Streets Heritage Conservation District Plan.

Ah-hah, you say, we do have a community specific written plan for at least a part of NOTL!

That's true and in 1986, when it was authored by Nicholas Hill, the plan was one of the most comprehensive that had been written in Canada to that time. Indeed, as I once again

read its 203 pages, it struck me how well it had stood the test of the intervening 45 years.

Yes, it is outdated and missing some important details, but had it been used as basis for a "living" plan, it could have evolved into something quite remarkable.

If the 1986 Conservation District Plan had been complemented by evolving parameters set under the auspices of the municipal heritage committee, corrected to reflect new historical research as it was published, heritage detailing added when it became available, and adjustments made in consideration of the ever-burgeoning tourist trade on the heritage streetscape, we would now be in possession of a truly sweeping Heritage Conservation Plan which might have encompassed the entire Town.

Unfortunately, this would have required the same type of political will and

foresight as would have been required to adopt the 1986 Plan's recommendation for the establishment of satellite parking lots in order to keep tourist vehicles from lining our residential streets. Neither the parking lots nor a "living" plan happened.

Subsequently, in 2016, a draft for a new Heritage Conservation Plan was published. In my opinion, this document is significantly inferior to the 1986 plan. For example, given the proposed new parameters, I could design and build a 21st-century Modern house within the Heritage District. Thankfully it was shelved.

Our need for a truly encompassing Heritage Conservation Plan remains critical. Without one the conservation work of Hill, Stokes, Chapman, et al. could be lost. Our town has the talent, the expertise and the skills. Do we have the will and commitment to save what we love?

## Obituary

### Diane Moreau



Diane Jeannine Neilson Moreau (Hemmings) passed away peacefully on February 3, 2021, aged 75 years. Diane was born on September 2, 1945 in Montreal, the daughter of J.H.J. Guy Moreau [1901-1966] and D.L. Winnifred Neilson [1909-1969]; she received her R.N. in 1966, her B.N. in 1970 and her M.Sc. N. in 1975 at McGill University. She was the first

psychiatric nurse to publish her research with her colleague doctors at medical conventions around the world; and she was a psychiatric nursing consultant with several medical institutions and on the teaching staff at various universities in three countries. With this experience Diane moved to more academic aspirations leading to an M.Sc. at Wichita State University in 1996 and a Ph.D. in communications and rhetoric at University of Cardiff, Wales in 2006. In later years Diane taught at Brock University in three faculties.

Diane is survived by David, her husband of 48 years, her son James and his wife Anne, their children Asher and Morgan in Winnetka, Illinois, her daughter Katherine in Austin, Texas, and her brother Guy in Pointe Claire, Quebec.

As the family migrated from her base in Canada, Diane lived and worked in all four corners and middle of the USA; in the beautiful surroundings of Worcester, the Cotswolds, South Wales and Canary Wharf in Britain; and finally telling the family in 2008: "I'm now going to live in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Where are you going?" She visited diverse foreign parts around the globe, by destination cruises, conference attendance and train trips. She used her French and Spanish to get by in many places. And her deep academic passion for political rhetoric made her a news junky. Much of this came from her doctoral studies, her time in Washington DC as a Capitol Hill lobbyist and a docent at the Library of Congress, and delivery of linguistics course material to her university students. In her retirement years Diane chaired both the highly successful Niagara-on-the-Lake Community in Bloom Committee, and the Horticultural Society during a reorganization. She enjoyed participating in a Current Affairs group, a "knitting" group and a book club. Diane's volunteer ethic was exemplary; her well-tempered style of engagement and her intelligent recommendations for preferred objectives were well received.

Forever troubled by the early loss of her parents, Diane became a friend to many along the way and in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Her sensible approaches, her insightful suggestions and her incisive decision making will be missed. She clung to life with determination and courage to the end, continuing to keep up her social calendar with friends. Exceptional care by Drs. Conen, Phillips, Ishkanian and Hasany, as well as nurse practitioner McKelvey, at the Walker Cancer Centre, and by St. Elizabeth nurse Perry will always be remembered by our family.

A private burial has already taken place at the Niagara Lakeshore Cemetery. There will be a celebration of Diane's life at some later date. Donations in her name would be gratefully received by the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum, of which she was Life Member. Arrangements in the care of Morgan Funeral Home, Niagara-on-the-Lake. Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at [www.morganfuneral.com](http://www.morganfuneral.com)



Pauline Reimer Gibson  
Audiologist

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  - Olde Smokey ..... \$16  
*(bacon, KC BBQ Sauce, crispy onion, cheddar & chipotle mayo)*
  - Bacon Cheese Burger ..... \$16  
*(cheese, bacon, lettuce, tomato & pickle)*
  - Beyond Meat Burger ..... \$16  
*(lettuce, tomato & pickle)*
  - Bacon Portobello Mushroom ..... \$16  
*(bacon, mushrooms & Swiss cheese)*
- EXTRAS: Sautéed onions or mushrooms on a burger +\$2

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- Chicken Fingers ..... \$15
- Steak and Guinness Poutine ..... \$17
- Reuben Sandwich ..... \$17
- Meat Loaf Sandwich ..... \$16
- Turkey Club Sandwich ..... \$16
- Chicken Caesar Wrap ..... \$16
- Buffalo Chicken Wrap ..... \$16
- Shepherd's Pie Poutine ..... \$16

EXTRAS: Gluten-free bread +\$2

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- Liver and Onions ..... \$17

EXTRAS: Mushy Peas +\$3

### SALADS

- Caesar Salad ..... \$12
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FRIDAY: Fish Fri-Yay ..... \$16 - 1 piece | \$24 - 2 pieces  
*Haddock served with fries, homemade coleslaw, tartar sauce, & lemon wedge*

SATURDAY: Baked Chicken Curry ..... \$16  
*Served over basmati rice, fresh cut fries or half & half*

SUNDAY: Roast Beef Dinner ..... \$20  
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