

Town, Marotta **face off** in court over historic Rand Estate

Judge reserves decision after hearing two days of legal arguments



Early plans for a hotel at the Rand Estate on John Street. SUPPLIED

Richard Harley
Editor

After two days of hearing extensive legal arguments in a St. Catharines courtroom, a judge will now decide if the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake acted properly when it announced plans for historical designation of the Rand Estate.

The legal case over the historic designation of the property kicked off in full force Monday and Tuesday in Superior Court, with the Town of NOTL and Save Our Rand Estate (SORE) on one side and Two Sisters Resorts and Solmar Development Corp. on the other.

Justice Linda Walters has reserved her decision in the case.

The legal battle stems from a contentious plan to develop the four properties of the Rand Estate, a five-hectare site located behind a stone wall on John and Charlotte streets.

Two Sisters and Solmar

want to build a conference centre/hotel and a subdivision on the combined properties.

Solmar, owned by developer Benny Marotta, is challenging the town's decision to declare a notice of intention to designate all four properties as historically significant.

The development plans are also opposed by resident activist group SORE, which previously was granted party status in the case.

The courtroom was packed with Niagara-on-the-Lake residents as Two Sisters lawyer Michael Melling urged Walters to order the town's designation notice be dropped.

His multi-part argument included allegations that: the town didn't follow proper guidelines of the Ontario Heritage Act, the outline of heritage features on the properties is unconstitutionally vague and therefore it's impossible for the developer to know what work is legal,

the town could not properly identify heritage aspects in its notice of intention to designate and planned to change those aspects later in the process and that the notice violates the town's official plan.

Town lawyer Scott Snider asked the court to dismiss Solmar's claim entirely, arguing the case doesn't actually belong in the Superior Court, but that instead the developer should take any requests to alter the land to the Conservation Review Board in the interim, where it would be reviewed by experts on heritage issues.

He argued Solmar must first seek administrative remedies before taking the matter to court and that the court should refuse to make the decision without "expert advice" from the Conservation Review Board.

"There are no exceptional aspects here to support the court's interference," Snider said.

Solmar has submitted

appeals to the Conservation Review Board, Melling said, and is involved in an ongoing pre-hearing settlement conference.

Snider said there's "no reason to believe" town council would ignore the conservation board's findings.

However, Melling pointed out council ignored the advice of its own heritage committee and staff.

The Ontario Heritage Act is not supposed to disregard a property owner's rights, he told the court.

He said he concedes the act exists to support heritage, but that's only "half the story." The property owner's rights must also be balanced, he said.

Melling argued there are "little grounds to designate" all four Rand Estate properties and that the town did so illegally according to the heritage act.

There was "no effort" in staff reports to explain

Continued on Page 2

Wells of Hope volunteers pack **shipping container** bound for Guatemala



Volunteers spend two days sorting and packing a shipping container full of useful items to send to the poor mountain regions of Guatemala. RICHARD HARLEY

Story on Page 8

Artist with **NOTL roots** turns focus back to town



NOTL native Scott Steele is bringing his focus back to Niagara-on-the-Lake, with a gallery planned to open in spring. RICHARD HARLEY

Story on Page 20

Hometown Traveller: Caught up in Hungary



Statue of Stephen, first king of Hungary, in Fisherman's Bastion, a World Heritage Site in Budapest. DON CAMERON

Story on Page 18



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Town, Solmar face off in court over designation

Continued from Front Page

how the heritage aspects meet the act's criteria, he said, adding his client and the public weren't properly informed about the plan to designate.

The description of heritage aspects was only given after the fact and the town only did its research after the notice was in place, from July 2018 to March 2019, he said.

"If the town has not identified heritage aspects, how can a (notice) meet the criteria?" he said. "This, your honour, is the public record of the decision-making process."

Snider argued that whether the property meets the standard is a matter for the heritage bylaw, not the notice to designate, and that since there is no bylaw yet, the heritage act requirements don't apply.

He said it's also not relevant that the town ignored advice from its own staff.

"If there was a lawsuit every time council didn't follow staff's advice, we'd be knee-deep in bylaw legality," he said.

With regards to developer's rights, he said protections lie in the ability for the developer to challenge decisions and apply for modifications from the Conservation Review Board.

Melling said that's not effective, because the final decision still goes back to town council.

"Council has no obligation to take the advice of the (review board)," he said, noting council added attributes to the notice to designate contrary to staff suggestions.

The town charged Solmar with illegally cutting down trees, after nearly 200 trees were cut down on one of the estate properties, sparking a public outcry.

Melling said his client never received any information that the trees removed were considered heritage aspects of the Rand Estate, and that there was no map from the town that properly outlined which parts of the estate were considered heritage attributes.

"To this date, there is no way to tell what are and are not surviving elements of the Dunnington-Grubb landscape," Melling said.

"Does this mean all mature trees and plantings are heritage aspects?"

Melling argued the terms in the notice to designate, such as "mature trees and planting" were not specific enough, and that even the town can't specifically define the heritage aspects.

The landscape elements "either are Dunnington-Grubb or not ... either are surviving or not," he argued.

"The character of mature vegetation is important," Snider said, adding that the "language of heritage conservation" is often not understood by people.

"The point is, these aren't easy questions," he said.

SORE lawyer Richard Stephenson challenged the idea that Solmar doesn't know the heritage aspects, citing a report from August 2019 by Solmar's heritage consultant Leah Wallace, which outlined specific heritage aspects.

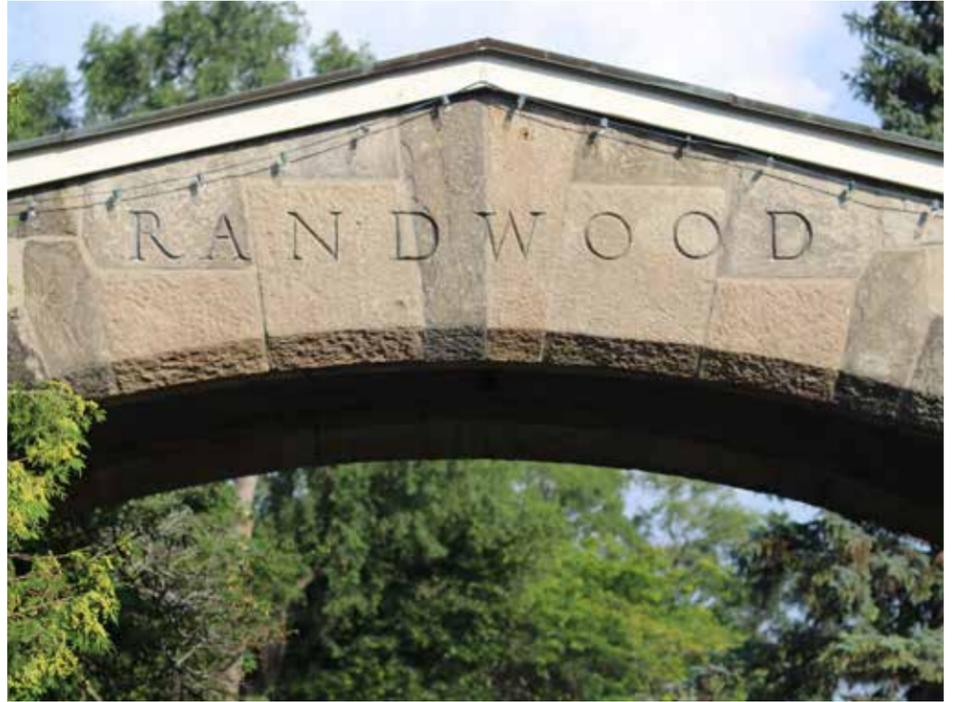
He said Wallace found that the landscape is part of the heritage value of the property and there's just a disagreement on which parts need protecting.

Solmar kept the document to itself for months before disclosing it to the town, court heard, after the town requested the report be done.

If the heritage attributes include the Dunnington-Grubb landscape, and Solmar isn't clear about what is and is not legal, the company should refrain from doing work or apply to the municipality for projects it wishes to complete, Snider said.

Certain aspects of the property have existed for 100 years, Snider said, and Solmar only purchased the lands two years ago.

"In the lifespan of those properties, that's just yesterday," he said. "And yet, after declaring intention to designate, (Solmar) significantly altered the landscape ... so what was the urgency in cutting the trees down?" he asked. "The applicant bought lands that it knew had heritage features."



One of the stone arch entrances to the Rand Estate. DARIYA BAIGUZHIEVA/FILE PHOTO

Solmar had a permit from the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) to cut the trees, Melling said, though the town claims it was expired. He said the town should adopt a comprehensive tree bylaw, as is common across the country.

Snider pointed out the NPCA has no authority over the heritage act.

He said that when the trees were cut, Solmar had only provided one day's notice. But Melling argued that no notice was actually required at all, and that one day is sufficient time for the town to send an email if it wanted Solmar to stop. No message was sent, he said.

On top of that, there are widely used methods to protect trees that simply were not implemented here, he said.

"The point is they didn't say, 'Stop doing that,'" Melling said.

He likened the charges

against Solmar to that of a person receiving a speeding ticket without ever knowing what the speed limit was, saying there's no ground for criminality if there's no understanding of the crime.

"There can be no legal debate. In order for that debate to happen, the town and SORE needed to tell my client what the illegal acts are," he said.

Solmar agreed it would designate the property at the site plan approval stage, which Melling said means only after it's approved. It's now in the design phase and therefore the designation is premature, he argued, and costing his client the ability to be able to work on the property.

Snider said the wording "approval stage" needs a "broad interpretation."

He said Melling's interpretation is "far too narrow, that one line would prevent a municipality from interim protection of heritage lands

from being destroyed."

"Not everything in life can be regulated like a numeric speed limit," Snider said.

Melling also said the notice of intention is premature and is negatively affecting his client.

The town and SORE are now telling his client no work can be done, he said, even though so far the town doesn't have the ability or knowledge to advise Solmar about the heritage attributes, nor does Solmar know what the heritage aspects are, and it's too early to know if the notice of intention is valid for much of the property.

Melling also pointed out the town has no map of the heritage aspects and that the heritage aspects identified in the notice of intention are subject to change.

All of those factors combined constitute non-compliance with the heritage act designation procedure, he said.

Residents attended the courthouse to show support for town

Richard Maxwell, who lives on the Promenade, not far from the Rand Estate, was among dozens of NOTL residents who packed the courtroom Monday and Tuesday to watch the proceedings over the future of the historic Old Town property.

For Maxwell, and many of the others, it was important to be in the St. Catharines court "just to show support for SORE," the residents group that's joined the town's legal battle against the proposal by Solmar Development Corp.

and Two Sisters Resort Corp.

"And I don't like what they're going to do with the Randwood Estate. It's totally wrong to have a seven-eight storey hotel and 400 cars parked in that area," said Maxwell.

His major concerns with the project are "oversight on houses, the traffic increase that's going to come along. There's going to be an entrance off Charlotte Street and then John Street. It's just not appropriate for the area."

He said he's also not im-

pressed with the initial designs of the hotel, or the subdivision planned to go behind the development.

As of Tuesday afternoon he said as far as the court case was going, he thought the submissions were "marginally in SORE's favour."

"I think if (developer Benny Marotta) had gone along the lines of Trisha Romance, with a boutique hotel rather than a Holiday Inn, I don't think he would have had any problems."

The other thing he disagrees

with is the "clear-cutting that was done," he said.

"You could not see a building on the Rand Estate from the heritage trail. Now you can see everything," he said.

Bob Bader, who also lives in the vicinity of the development, said he was also in the courtroom to support of the town and SORE.

"This is an important decision for the town and I think it's good for the people of the town to support our council and mayor," Bader said.

From what he heard in court

he said he thinks the town's argument is "very cogent."

"I don't see how the judge can rule any way other than for dismissing the motion. Apparently from what the lawyer was saying, it doesn't make any sense that we're even here."

He said the main thing that convinced him the town will win is "simply that the notice of intention to designate is not a bylaw."

"The process has been skewed from day one, because the developer seems to think

that he can push everybody around, including the citizens, council and our mayor. And it's nice to see that we're actually banding together and saying, 'No, there's a process.'"

If the property owners object to the town's plan for a historical designation for the site, then they should take their fight to the Conservation Review Board, he said. "And then maybe you can work with the town in the recommendations of the (board)."

"It's dumb as far as I'm concerned," Bader said.



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Councillors concerned after losing planning appeal

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva
The Lake Report

After the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal rejected a decision of Niagara-on-the-Lake's committee of adjustment, some councillors are wondering how the town should defend its decisions at tribunal hearings.

Coun. Gary Burroughs raised a question Monday during a committee of the whole planning meeting on what could be done after the zoning application, which was refused by the town's committee of adjustment, won approval at the tribunal hearing.

"I don't know if I'm outraged or extremely disappointed," Burroughs said. "We can't appeal it any further but it's wrong."

His comments came in regard to the application submitted by the owner of 26 Delater St.

The applicant, Andrei Arvinte, proposed building a new house and a detached garage, and applied for variances from the town's zoning bylaw related to height, lot coverage and setbacks for the proposed dwelling.

In a report prepared for the urban design committee review, town staff recommended reducing the height of the house to conform to the 8.5-metre maximum height as set out in the Dock Area Secondary Plan and that the roofline be reconfig-



Coun. Stuart McCormack chairs the committee of the whole meeting Jan. 6. DARIYA BAIGUZHIEVA

ured to be lower in profile, as required by the town's urban design policies.

The applicant then submitted a revised application that conformed to the Dock Area plan and the zoning bylaw and had eight variances. Staff also recommended approving the requested variances.

At a public hearing on June 20, 2019, one resident spoke in favour and one person spoke in opposition of the application, according to the staff report.

The person who spoke against the application commented on its height, lot coverage, side yard setbacks, average finished grade, impacts to the streetscape and tree protection.

Despite staff's recommendations, Arvinte's application was refused by

the town's committee of adjustment as the application didn't meet "the four Planning Act tests" for a minor variance, according to the committee's minutes from the June 20 meeting.

The applicant then appealed to the tribunal and won.

A town report to council in October recommending retaining legal counsel and a registered professional planner to represent the town at the hearing to defend the committee of adjustment's decision. Another recommendation was to send legal counsel to reach a settlement with the applicant.

Councillors voted down the first recommendation and directed legal counsel to settle the matter and present it to the tribunal.

Based on the planning evidence provided by the

town's senior planner Mark Iamarino during a hearing on Nov. 18, 2019, the tribunal approved Arvinte's request as it was "minor in nature" and the infill development is compatible with the surrounding area in regard to the heritage character of the neighbourhood, according to the report.

"I think it's a disaster what we've just gone through and what we're going to go through on that particular property and how it's going to affect that whole area," Burroughs said Monday.

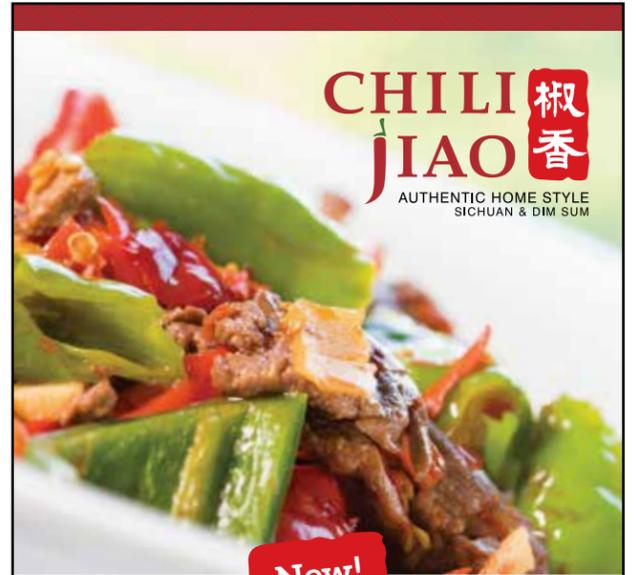
"When it's brought forward, if a committee of adjustment happens to disagree with our planning staff, we need to know what that means if we're going to go to a hearing like this."

Coun. Clare Cameron said she shared Burroughs' concerns and "a sense of dismay."

"It's unfortunate but hopefully this is a learning moment for all of us," she said.

"Before we get to this stage of appeals and lawyers and where we're really up against the wall, this to me is another example how an early dialogue with an applicant is so important."

Town council could also look at hiring an outside planner who would defend council's decisions at the hearings, Lord Mayor Betty Disero told councillors.



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Hamilton woman charged after mall Boxing Day dispute over parking space that went viral online

Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

A Hamilton resident has been charged with assault and uttering threats after a video showed a woman making racial comments toward an Asian woman and hitting her in the parking lot of the Outlet Collection at Niagara on Boxing Day.

Niagara Regional Police said the incident began with a dispute over a parking spot at the mall, a media release said.

In the one-minute video, which was posted to Facebook, the assailant raises her middle fingers and tells the second woman, "I love you, too," before hitting the phone in her hand.

She proceeded to tell her to "film me all you want," after making a number of racial comments. Before the video cuts off, the assailant asked someone in her vehicle for her phone so she could call 911.

Patricia Zammit, 51, is to appear in court on Feb. 3.



Patricia Zammit, 51, is to be in court on Feb. 3 to face charges of assault and uttering threats. SUPPLIED

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Contributed by Norm Arsenault:

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Contributed by Patty Garriock

"A child of five could understand this. Fetch me a child of five."
 – Groucho Marx.

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Editorial

Council's history of **ignoring** expert advice

Richard Harley
 Editor

During this week's court proceedings regarding the fight over historic designation of the Rand Estate, the case was made that if Solmar Development Corp. wants to alter aspects of the property, it should seek remedy from the Conservation Review Board, which will then make a recommendation to town council.

Town lawyer Scott Snider told the court, "There's no reason to believe town council would ignore the (Conservation Review Board's) findings."

Actually, there are more than a few reasons to believe that even if the conservation board did recommend allowing work on the property, council wouldn't approve it.

It doesn't take a scholar to

conclude the town is doing everything it can to stall Solmar's progress on the property.

For instance: Snider seems to ignore the fact that the town previously rejected advice regarding the designation of heritage attributes on the Rand Estate from its own heritage committee and town staff.

He seems to ignore the massive pressure on the town from an active resident group opposing work being done on the property, to the point that some people will call the authorities over the sound of lawnmowers.

Snider seems to ignore strong statements from council about the preservation of heritage aspects, directed at the Rand Estate situation.

And there's also the fact our town elected an almost entirely new council

whose members ran on heritage values.

We're not attempting to be pro Solmar or anti-NOTL heritage preservation, so please don't start claiming otherwise. This is not about choosing sides.

But the fact is NOTL council has a history of ignoring the expert opinions of its own staff and others (note also the story this week on Page 3 about the town's defeat at a Local Planning Appeal Tribunal hearing).

In litigation, lawyers make a lot of arguments to try to sway opinion in their client's favour. Sometimes those arguments are valid, cogent and rooted in reality. Sometimes they are a real stretch and maybe even a bit disingenuous. This seems to be one of those occasions.

editor@niagaranow.com



NOTL tax rate is low but comparing it to other municipalities is **meaningless**

Dear editor:

The headline on the continuation of your main story in the Dec. 19 edition of The Lake Report said "Niagara-on-the-Lake still has one of lowest tax rates in region."

While that is factually correct at the municipal level, it is meaningless, and arguably misleading.

The residential tax rate is a simple mathematical calculation i.e. total revenue needs of the municipality divided by the total assessed value of residential properties in the municipality.

Therefore, if Town A and Town B had the same revenue needs and the assessment value of Town A was twice the assessment value of Town B, the tax rate in Town A would be half the tax rate in Town B.

This would largely explain the difference in tax rates between NOTL (0.23 per cent) and Niagara Falls (0.56 per cent).

However, it's more complex than that. Other factors include the makeup of the tax base (residential versus industrial / commercial and agricultural – all of which have different tax rates), what other revenue sources the municipality has, what services the town provides its residents and the size of the town.

A larger town has lower revenue needs per property owner for each individual service.

Complexity is further illustrated and confused by looking at the regional tax rate. In 2019, NOTL residents were charged 0.73 per cent whereas Niagara Falls residents were charged 0.57 per cent. Go figure!

Or NOTL residents paid 0.005 per cent (not a typo!) in education levies whereas Niagara Falls residents paid 0.16 per cent!

This is probably due to the relative number of students in each municipality.

Clearly, a meaningful comparison of tax rates between municipalities requires a much fuller explanation than what was supplied in your article.

Regards,

Bob Wheatley
 NOTL

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OPINION

Was it **necessary** to fire bird bangers on Christmas Day?

Dear editor:
I have read with interest the various letters in The Lake Report from all sides regarding the bird bangers used by the wineries. I have not felt I needed to add to the noise and clamour until Christmas Day.

While walking the dog on this most special of days I was appalled to hear the bird bangers.

During the First World War the guns fell silent on Christmas Day, not so lucky in Niagara-on-the-Lake in 2019.

One can only assume that those particular winery owners are either corporations whose principals live nowhere close to town or are absentee owners who also live far away.

They obviously have no interest in their neighbours, in being a good neighbour or in the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake at all.

Can you imagine what tourists thought who came for a lovely, quiet, calm and peaceful stay in this pretty town?

Perhaps the town council should consider checking the noise levels of the bird bangers. I cannot believe that they are within the decibel levels allowed.

Also perhaps we need a bylaw about noise on special, religious days in this town. Yes, I am a Christian and I understand that not everyone else is, however, the vast majority of this town is. Give us peace and quiet on this one day of the year please!

Kathy Recourt
NOTL

Town as whole has **many** active cemeteries

Dear editor:
I read with some interest the Dec. 12 article, "Town's online burial map lets you search cemetery plots."

This new map is a great resource, however, the author states in the article that the Lakeshore cemetery is the only active burial ground in town.

I hasten to correct this statement but I know for certain that St. Mark's, St. Vincent and St. Andrew's all have active cemeteries. It is possible that you would consider St. Davids and Willowbank "active."

Donald Combe
Sexton
St. Mark's Cemetery

Editor's note: Mr. Combe makes an excellent point. Our story should have pointed out that Lakeshore is the only active cemetery that is operated by the Town of NOTL.

Red Roof needs **support**

Dear editor:
Good morning and happy 2020!
This is my first email of the new year to all of our supporters. It is perhaps, the most important one.

We are wrapping up our Gifts from the Heart holiday campaign. This campaign is instrumental in the success and continuation of our respite programs for children with special needs.

Thank you to all that have already donated. For those of you still wishing to consider, you can follow the link below to make a contribution that could help us reach our goal of \$60,000.

Every little bit helps, and if it's not something you are able to do now, perhaps you could share this link with anyone you think could help us out. Go to <https://www.redroofretreat.com/giftsfromtheheart> or simply Google: Gifts from the heart Red Roof Retreat.

All you need is love; all we need is your support.

Steffanie Bjorgan
Red Roof Retreat

On budget, councillors need to **think** like owners

Dear editor:
It's budget season and here we go again.

Float the possibility of a double-digit increase to rile up the residents and then fine-tune the numbers down to a 9.48 per cent "feel good" level hoping we are gullible enough to buy in when it's subsequently approved.

Hell, it worked in the past, it's a tried and true political shell game -- after all, we are all gullible, right? At least that's what they think.

I am a retired senior citizen, a former multi-plant international manufacturing owner with corporate business turnaround experience.

Accordingly, having business exposure in six continents, Antarctica excluded, I feel eminently qualified to speak to the budgeting process and all its gamesmanship nuances. At 80 years young, you might say I have seen it all.

My charge or mission statement to all of my former managers, supervisors -- in fact, all employees -- was simple and direct, namely: "Think like an owner -- That dollar you are about to spend is your own."

Sadly, politicians do not think like that. Rather it is spend, spend, spend, we can always increase taxes.

We presently have seated on council several current and former successful and distinguished business owners.

I would strongly suggest that none of them would approve a 9.48 per cent increase in their own business budgets.

They need to think like owners and remember to treat municipal money as their money.

There are two types of budgets: The business budget (owners and stakeholders) and political budgets. Which one are we getting?

In summation, there is fat and pork in every government budget. Annually, we have numerous interests looking for handouts, we know who they are and every year we accommodate them with ever increasing demands eg. our Chamber of Commerce, which our merchants should be supporting more.

My message to council: Let's get serious -- think like owners -- and cut this 9.48 per cent increase in half.

Samuel A. Young
NOTL



A letter from Santa: Thanks for helping Palliative Care

Dear editor:
Each December, I wander around the community looking for opportunities to bring holiday cheer to everyone.

This year with the help of donations from many local businesses and families, Santa raised more than \$3,000, in support of the wonderful work of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Palliative Care Service -- an average of well over \$100 a visit!

Thank you to everyone who participated.

And a special thanks to The Lake Report for help getting the word out.

Your community support looks good on you. Happy New Year.

Santa for Niagara Palliative Care
NOTL

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We encourage all residents to support The Lake Report through an annual "voluntary" subscription. We suggest just \$50/year (less than \$1 per issue) per household. **That's less than most people spend on coffee.**

Larger donations are also greatly appreciated.

Donations can be made online at www.lakereport.ca, or cheques can be mailed to the NOTL Post Office, L0S1J0, PO Box 724.

Please make cheques to The Lake Report.

- Richard Harley

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Letters ideally should be under 400 words long. Occasionally, longer letters may be published. All letters may be edited for conciseness, accuracy, libel and defamation.

Please include your full name, street address and a daytime telephone number so that authorship can be authenticated.

Only names and general addresses (eg. Virgil, St. Davids, NOTL) will be published.

Send your letters to editor@niagaranow.com or drop them by our office at 724 Mississauga St., NOTL.

The Lake Report



Developer Benny Marotta responds to town's **growing** legal bills

Dear editor:

Like so many other residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake, I read with interest the article published in The Lake Report and online at Niagara Now referencing the town's budget for legal fees increasing by \$1 million in 2020.

And while we agree with Lord Mayor Betty Disero that it is normal for municipalities to have ongoing lawsuits, we don't agree that spending this large sum of money is common for small municipalities such as ours.

I would like to take this opportunity to address my fellow residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake to share our perspective on the events of the last two years.

As an active member of the business community here in Niagara, it was our dream to build a hotel, so it is regrettable that the dispute regarding the Randwood Estate has become more than a legal battle and political issue. It is deeply personal, with attacks levied against our family by a vocal few.

It is and has always been Solmar's intention to work collaboratively with the town. It's unfortunate that incomplete drawings of our plan for the Randwood Estate were shown at a heavily attended public meeting, causing a groundswell of negative sentiment for a project that we are so passionate about.

The premature sharing of these designs is what prompted us to apply to LPAT – the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal – without the participation of the town's design committee. It is our intention to submit new plans and work hand-in-hand with stakeholders to come to an agreement.

I'd also like to address the much-discussed cutting down of trees at 200 John St. to prepare the land behind the hotel site. Let me assure you that we would never proceed without approval.

Solmar followed the required application process and was approved to commence the work. It was not until after the work was complete that charges were laid by the town for cutting trees. This information is available in the public affidavit that has been filed.

Finally, the lands for Solmar's planned community on the Rand Estate have already been zoned residential for years, prior to the transfer of title by the previous owner of the lands, making the interim control bylaw on development in Old Town questionable.

Whether it is Solmar or another development company, the plan is for these lands to be built on. The interim control bylaw is costing more in legal fees as it is hurting other developers as well.

At this time, the town is facing more than 12 court battles, including a lawsuit from another developer calling for \$500,000 in damages. It is in the best interest of everyone – residents and taxpayers of this great municipality – that the town work collaboratively with developers, including Solmar, to resolve these issues.

Over the past 30 years Solmar has built an impressive reputation developing and planning communities throughout southern Ontario, with excellent Tarion ratings along the way.

In addition, we have worked closely and successfully with Niagara-on-the-Lake in the past to develop Cannery Park in St. Davids, a well-planned community that is home to many families currently thriving in school and local businesses.

These types of communities continue to help grow the economic viability allowing families the opportunity to continue to live here generationally, the future of every municipality.

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake spent hundreds of thousands on legal fees in 2019. In 2020 the fees will be much higher than in 2019, and it's the taxpayers who will pay the bill. It is my sincere hope that the councillors elected will consider the future economic and tourism opportunities for the community as a whole, for today and tomorrow.

Benny Marotta
NOTL

Mixing pot and hiking a **crazy** idea

Dear editor:

A front-page article on Dec. 26 in one of NOTL's community newspapers was headlined, "New adventure tour to pair cannabis and hiking in NOTL."

This is extremely disappointing. "Hiking and cannabis – the perfect combination?" Please tell me that this is a joke!

For the last two years or so, Owen Bjorgan's column in our local media have inspired and educated us about the great natural resource that we have right here in the Niagara Region. I have truly appreciated his wealth of knowledge about the great outdoors and the biodiversity in our backyard.

However, his latest scheme to provide cannabis for his hiking clients is truly beyond comprehension. In fact, it is crazy!

He is quoted as saying that cannabis can help people see nature in a different light or perspective. I can assure him that this will certainly be the case.

Throughout his many columns, Mr. Bjorgan has constantly championed the personal benefits that our natural environment can provide – a healthy natural "high." Now, his clients will be hiking and puffing pot to escalate that high. How sad.

In light of the staggering statistics of impaired driving, from alcohol and cannabis, I am shocked that this new venture would even be a consideration.

I would like Mr. Bjorgan to explain the following two quotes to me: "I feel like cannabis and the outdoors pair very well together," and "I hope they walk out of the forest with a greater appreciation of the biodiversity in Niagara."

They will be walking out of that forest with a greater appreciation of something, but it will certainly NOT be biodiversity.

For the sake of increased safety on our roads, I would encourage these hiking pot smokers to walk all the way home after their trek through the forest.

Mr. Bjorgan, please reconsider this ill-considered venture, and keep our forests free of pot.

Buddy Andres
NOTL

Tourism industry must **contribute** more to offset town's costs

Dear editor:

I find it interesting that the only reported focus of Niagara-on-the-Lake town council in reviewing the 2020 budget was pruning expenses to reduce an estimated 9.48 per cent tax increase for the coming year.

Town revenue should not be totally based on resident assessment.

This town has a sig-

nificant tourist industry, supported by the town in providing parks, floral maintenance, parking and conveniences for short-term visitors at a cost of probably over \$500,000.

The beneficiary of the tourist activity is primarily secured by the Queen Street businesses and landlords. Why not make charges directly to these visitors to offset those expenses?

There is considerable idle unused land in and around Old Town, some owned by the town, which could be used for additional parking, with a shuttle service where necessary, which could charge a fee of at least \$10 per day.

Parking in Old Town, three blocks on either side of commercial Queen Street, should be at a convenience premium cost to

discourage overuse.

Four- or five-hour resident parking permits around the golf course (\$100 per annum) would reflect actual use required by players and one-hour permits could be continued but at a cost of \$40 per annum.

Town provision of concessions in the parks (both Simcoe and Queen's Royal) could increase visitor enjoyment, create student

employment and provide meaningful profits to offset maintenance costs of those well-used tourist locations.

As well, the town should charge a modest levy on overnight visitors to Old Town hotels, B&Bs and private home short-term rentals to recover promotional expenses.

The municipality also could require a contribution from the Chamber of

Commerce and its members to offset some of the costs of servicing the 3 million tourists who visit Niagara-on-the-Lake annually.

The budgetary aim should be to have income and expenses related to tourism in balance so that the assessments on residents relate only to the services provided for their benefit.

Martin Richardson
NOTL



Pauline Reimer Gibson
Audiologist

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In memoriam

For obituary and memorial inquiries, please contact editor@niagaranow.com.

Desmond Bruce Regehr

It is with great sorrow we announce the passing of our dear, courageous son Desmond on Dec. 27, 2019.

Born in Oakville, Ontario, Oct. 15, 1960, to proud parents Daniel and Anne Marie Regehr (nee Brennan). A brother to Heather (Mark Williams), Diane Haliski (Mark Holmes) and Teresa Regehr, attentive father to Cody and Bailey (Aaron Charles), ADORED grandpa to Lana, Eamonn and Aine, loving uncle to Devin Coppola, Noel Haliski, Cassidy Regehr and step-neice Tara Haliski. Cherished nephew to Kathleen Sharpe, Terry Brennan and Susie Regehr. Predeceased by Hannah Granger, Irma Anderson and Michael, Harry and Dennis Brennan.

Des grew up in Niagara-on-the-Lake, attending Parliament Oak School, NDSS and Mohawk College.

His love of mechanics brought him to Newark Motors (now Timmy's) where he apprenticed and worked for many years. He was an extremely hands-on fellow, flipping houses and running a Snap-On Tool business, later driving the city bus for St. Catharines and doing computer repair.

Desmond married Wendy Sexsmith in 1983. They had two children, Cody and Bailey, to whom Des was a conscientious and devoted father. He instilled in them strong morals, healthy lifestyle habits and a robust sense of humour.

Tragically at age 35, Desmond suffered a spinal cord injury, leaving him to live out the next 24 years as a quadriplegic with limited function. On Feb. 14, 1997, we were humbled by the outpouring of support from our community as we all "opened our hearts to Des" at a fundraiser at the NOTL Court House.

The family would like once again to thank all of you who so graciously donated your time and efforts to making the event the epic success it was, providing Des the necessities to move forward.

... friends, neighbours, relatives, town residents, many local musicians, St. Andrew's Church, the Rotary Club, and numerous local businesses. Thank you!

Known as a prankster and the life of the party, Des was also very meticulous and always had his ducks in a row. He initiated, hosted and documented countless family reunions, before and after his injury, keeping us close to many cousins and extended family.

Family meant the world to Des. He will be dearly missed and fondly remembered.

A private burial with family will take place at St. Andrew's on Jan. 11, followed by a celebration of Des' life at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Sailing Club for close friends and family of Des.

In lieu of flowers, donations to Spinal Cord Injury Research of Ontario would be appreciated. <https://sciontario.org>

Neumann, Peter Michael



With very heavy hearts we announce the passing of our father, Peter Neumann on January 1, 2020, at the St. Catharines hospital in his 89th year. Predeceased by his wife Edith (2017). Brother to the late Joseph (Nancy) Neumann, Pauline (late John) Voyer, late Edna (late Dan) Ciancio, late Rudy (Jeanne) Neumann, Ron (Barbara) Neumann and the late Caroline (Vincent) Benvenuti. Brother-in-law late Ernie Schellenberg (Susan). Loving father to Nancy (Doug) Widdicombe, James (Kathleen) Neumann, Denise (Paul) Fuhr, Kristine Neumann, Peter (Cathy) Neumann. Wonderful grandfather to Kara (Aaron) Tate, Drew (Luna) Neumann, Logan (Cooper Robinson) Widdicombe, Chelsea Widdicombe. Andrea (Rene) Solis. Great-grandfather to Ayla Tate and Frankie Neumann, Siera and Kaiden Solis. He will always be missed by his puppy Cooper, who visited him daily. Loved by so many nieces and nephews. A bit about Pete: He started his football path playing for his hometown St. Catharines Collegiate. At 19 years old, he was recruited by both the Hamilton Tiger-Cats and the Toronto Argonauts. Pete not only made the team that first year in 1951 but ended up playing beside Ralph Sazio, who would one day be his coach. Peter, #74, had an illustrious fourteen-year career with the Hamilton Tiger-Cats. During those years he was named a CFL Eastern All Star nine times, and a CFL All Canadian All Star in 1964. He played in eight Grey Cup games, winning three in 1953, 1957 and 1963, and was inducted into the Canadian Football Hall of Fame in 1979. In 2011, he

was inducted into the Tiger-Cats Wall of Honour, whereby his name has been hung high in Ivor Wynne Stadium (Tim Hortons Field) and a plaque hung on the Tiger-Cat's Walk of Fame. We want to offer a special thank you to the staff and Dr. Jayawardene at the Royal Henley. You have become our family. Your support and love for both Mom and Dad have given us such comfort every day when we walk through your doors. We laughed together, we cried together, but you have always had my (Nancy's) back for four solid years. Both Mom and Dad loved and appreciated you more than you will ever know. Peter will be sadly missed by all who grew to know him. A true sports enthusiast, we know he will be continuing to watch every game. On Saturday, January 25, 2020, at the GEORGE DARTE FUNERAL HOME, 585 Carlton St., St. Catharines, there will be a visitation held from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. followed by a 2:30 p.m. funeral service in the chapel. The family invites everyone to join them for a Celebration of Life of Peter held at 4:30 p.m. at White Oaks Conference Resort, 253 Taylor Rd., Niagara-on-the-Lake. At a later date a private burial will take place. In lieu of flowers, donations to the Heart and Stroke Foundation or the Niagara Humane Society would be appreciated.

Online Guest Book - www.georgedartefuneralhome.com

Among the survey's
key findings:

80%

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75%

of The Lake Report readers
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Wells of Hope: Shipping a container to mountains of Guatemala

Seeing the difference we can make is 'life-changing' and 'very humbling,' says NOTL volunteer

Richard Harley
Editor

It starts with humble spir- its and ends with a shipping container leaving Niagara-on-the-Lake, destined to change lives forever.

That's the goal for Wells of Hope volunteers, who spend the whole year tracking down useful items to send to the poor mountain regions of Guatemala, where the adage rings true: one man's trash is another man's treasure.

On Monday, Dec. 30, one of those containers left Meyer's Fruit Farms on Irvine Road packed with school desks, chairs, medical supplies, firefighting equipment, backpacks, bicycles, tools, clothes and 52,000 dry, packaged meals.

"It's a major operation," says Wells of Hope chair Scott Maxwell.

It takes about 50 people two days to make it happen. First, the items are brought to Meyer's, so volunteers can sort and label them, then there's the heavy lifting of loading a container with as much as it can possibly fit, like a game of Tetris. This year the contents of two transport trucks were packed in.

"Behind the scenes, there's another 20 or 30 people that collect things all year long, do all the manifests, all the paperwork," Maxwell says. "That's a going concern. That it has to be done exactly and correctly."

If a container isn't properly packed, it can cause delays and problems at customs. In the past, the charity faced trouble when a bag of sugar somehow made its way into the shipping container. Sugar is forbidden from being imported into Guatemala, and the mistake held up the shipment for months, Maxwell says.

"We even had to apply

some political pressure to get it released," he says.

If the sorting and packing isn't enough work, before any of that happens, volunteers are tasked with choosing what will go in the crate. Maxwell says the group tries to find items that are going to affect as many lives as possible.

"Because our shipping costs are so high, we want to ship things that are valuable and necessary, not just things that people in Niagara are casting off. The first thing is we ask is, 'What do the mountain people need?' Instead of us guessing at what we think their needs are, we ask them what their needs are, and then we try to be as selective as we can to try to provide that."

The tools they give away are in many cases "the first tools that people actually own personally," he says.

"They don't actually have tools of their own, so the fact that we're giving them things like lineman's pliers to do fencing and wire fencing and things like that are tremendously important."

He says the tools often affect more than one person's life, because the people there will lend and borrow a tool when needed.

Wells of Hope has also built schools, bridges and, of course, water wells. What it builds is also driven by a direct need in the chosen community.

In Guatemala, children often face challenges and dangerous conditions even getting to school, so in 2019 the charity built a bridge to help them cross a dangerous river that had claimed the lives of two children.

With unsanitary drinking water being a leading killer globally, the group also drills wells to access clean water for communities. Education also is a priority, as a generation of well-educated children can benefit an

entire nation.

"This year the emphasis was school desks and chairs," Maxwell says. "It's not enough just to build the walls. You've got to also provide the desks and chairs."

Along with about 170 chairs and 80 desks, the group sent 550 backpacks, too.

"For the backpacks, I mean that's a Christmas that many of the kids won't get, so it's something that's very special that way. But it also demonstrates our continued support to the schools that we've created that we provide the backpacks to those schools. Same way that the schools that we've expanded, we try to furnish them the best we can with desks and chairs."

He says the group is also getting into curriculum development, and hopes to put a library in each school as well.

It costs Wells of Hope about \$8,500 to send a shipping container, Maxwell says. And that is less than it would cost a company sending products to sell. Wells of Hope is able to ship the container tax- and duty-free after verifying the shipment with Caratis, the economic arm of the Catholic church.

"If it wasn't, we couldn't afford to actually pay the importation tax on it," he says.

The group also ships one container per year to help people in the cities of Guatemala.

"It's a year-long process," Maxwell says, and it takes a community to pull it off.

"Meyer's Fruit Farms is essential to the success of what we do. Because they allow us to use the facility over a number of days, we can inventory everything properly, collecting it from various locations and then make sure that the manifest is as correct as possible



Frank Memme, Don Evans and Mary Van der Zalm help sort two transport truck loads of items bound for the mountain regions of Guatemala. RICHARD HARLEY



Wells of Hope chair Scott Maxwell directs a complex operation of getting as much as can possibly fit into the shipping container. RICHARD HARLEY

and then ship it all out in a fairly efficient time. Today we did it in two and a half hours."

From the loading dock, the container heads to Montreal to be put on a ship, and then travels directly to Guatemala, where it's brought by a truck to Wells of Hope's permanent camp and distributed by volunteers there.

Marcel VanRuyven has been to Guatemala six times to help out.

"What we in our society might consider to be rubbish is extremely valuable to them, and reusable. Just because it's got a scratch or it's dirty or it's out of style doesn't mean it doesn't serve an extremely valuable purpose," he says.

On one trip there, the volunteers were building a school to replace one whose walls were corn stalks tied together, with a loose piece of plastic overtop for the roof, he says.

"And underneath were like crates and things that

they used for desks. We built them a new concrete school with a steel roof and that provided them an environment where their books didn't get wet. When the rainy season came they were able to continue going to school. And these desks afford them a great deal of comfort. The more comfortable you are, of course, the less that's distracting you from being able to learn."

From that perspective, he says, the stuff Wells of Hope sends down is "pretty important."

He says he has directly seen the impact on people's lives, though Guatemalans are enduring.

"You know what, you don't need to bring them stuff to put a smile on their face. The funny thing is, with the little they have, they're almost always smiling anyhow. Whereas when you look around our society, kids have got everything and they're not smiling a bit."

"We bring them a soccer

ball and they'll run out in the field. And what they typically might use for a soccer ball is tape wrapped around an old sweatshirt or something."

"It's very humbling," he says. "It's life-changing when you experience it. You walk away and you just shake your head. You realize how good you have it."

Anyone wishing to help out can sign up through the Wells of Hope website at www.wellssofhope.com and can volunteer specifically if they have skills and attributes they think can be of use.

"But you can also help a great deal just by going on to our website and volunteering to be part of the newsletter," Maxwell says.

"The newsletter is quarterly, and it regularly communicates what's going on and how people can specifically help with our three fundraisers that we run throughout the year, as well as the different drives that we do."



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Buy Nothing Project for NOTL started by local resident

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Julia Buxton-Cox says her newly launched Facebook group, Buy Nothing Niagara-on-the-Lake, has already exceeded all her expectations.

Since its launch on Jan. 3, the group has attracted more than 200 members. The purpose of the group is to spread goodness in town and allow residents to get together and have a face-to-face interaction.

“So far, I’ve been really pleased to see people offering to pick things up or drive things over or get together to meet,” Buxton-Cox said in a phone interview.

The group is a local branch of a worldwide Buy Nothing Project, where group members can lend, offer or look for services and goods.

So far, NOTL residents have gifted pots and pans, paints and stains, bedsheets, tennis racquets with tennis balls, a pet bed, a crate, dish towels, jars and mini plastic containers.

One resident also offered the use of her a 14-foot trailer.

“It’s amazing, people are posting really good things,” Buxton-Cox said.



Julia Buxton-Cox said she doesn’t want to see waste going into the landfill. DARIYA BAIGUZHIEVA

When something has been given away, the members are asked to edit their post to indicate it’s been gifted and leave their posts up to show other members what they can post and ask for.

Group members will also be able to offer their time and skills, Buxton-Cox told The Lake Report.

To be accepted in the group, people have to live within the boundaries of NOTL, not belong to any other Buy Nothing Project groups and be 19 years or older.

Buxton-Cox noted there has been a lot of interest from residents living in St. Davids and on Concessions to join the group.

As a group administrator, Buxton-Cox has completed seven days of training on

various modules and how to set up the page, deal with various requests and solve any problems.

Buxton-Cox encourages everyone to get involved and be bold in asking for things they’re looking for.

“It is a good way to meet neighbours. We’re trying to encourage things other than anonymous porch pickups, like meet your neighbour if it’s something small or maybe meet for a coffee at the community centre,” she said.

“There are no opinions to give, there’s no fear of speaking out or asking for what you need or sharing or giving. It’s total acceptance right from the beginning.”

The group can be found by searching Buy Nothing Niagara-on-the-Lake on Facebook.

A new year and Newark Neighbours needs donations to restock shelves

Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

Just before Christmas the Newark Neighbours’ packed food bank signified the extensive giving spirit of Niagara-on-the-Lake residents, but the organization has a strong need for donations now that the holiday season is over.

“It’s Christmas, everybody’s been so generous. We’ve got lots of treats, lots of things for the kids,” food bank manager Marion Ollerhead said when she was sorting final holiday boxes for pickup by clients before Christmas.

The thrift store and food bank is located just off John Street near the Riverbend Inn & Vineyard.

The small store doesn’t have much extra storage space, she said, so the bank fills quickly over the holidays.

But after all those donations are picked up, she said the shelves are empty and it can be a struggle to restock them for the almost 40 clients who rely on the food bank to supplement their meals.

“The food bank looks very different after the holiday. The bank gets depleted.”

Clients must apply and are accepted based on income. She said clients – families, couples or individuals – come in to pick up food every two weeks.

“We do Thanksgiving and all the major holidays,” she said, as well as regular pickups through the year.

Ollerhead said the organization is “incredibly grateful” for all the donations it receives, adding that she’d like to encourage people to keep the food bank in mind now that the holidays are over.

She said it can take a long time to restock over January and February.

NOTL resident donates ski jackets to migrant workers

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva
The Lake Report

Thanks to a Niagara-on-the-Lake resident, migrant workers arriving in NOTL will receive a little extra warm welcome.

Village resident Mark Brown donated more than 50 yellow and blue ski jackets for the migrant workers’ welcome kits Tuesday.

Brown, who is a president of the Canadian Ski Patrol Central Zone Ontario, said since the patrollers’ uniform colours changed from yellow and blue to red and white about five years ago, volunteers weren’t able to use old uniforms any more.

Some of the donated jackets have been gently



Pat Klotz, Dianne Hughes, Mark Brown, Julia Buxton-Cox and Dorothy Wiens carry donated ski jackets to the Cornerstone Community Church. DARIYA BAIGUZHIEVA

used, while the majority haven’t been used at all, Brown said.

“Many of (the workers) coming from the south don’t have winter clothing, so we thought this would be a good cause,” Brown told The Lake Report. “Our mission is to help people, so the fact that we’re able to help some visitors to Canada is great.”

Brown said he decided to donate the jackets to the workers after hearing about their arrival from his neighbour Dianne Hughes, who said it was all about raising awareness.

“Three years ago, you couldn’t get anybody to reach out and now they’re thinking of us first,” she

told The Lake Report. “More neighbours are involved now with the Peach Pickers Picnic and give donations. That kind of thinking wasn’t there three years ago. That’s so awesome.”

Virgil’s Cornerstone Community Church has also provided a room for storing items donated for the workers’ welcome kits.

Henry Schein Canada has donated toothbrushes, toothpaste and dental floss. NOTL residents, who have been organizing the welcome bags, also purchased 500 gloves, while the St. Andrews Glen Homeowners Association donated reflective safety vests and safety harnesses.

A very NOTL new year



Town crier Thomas Pekar gives a rousing huzzah to ring in the new year. RICHARD HARLEY

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<h2>The Lake Report</h2> <p>COMMUNITY FAVOURITES: Legion Fish Fry every Thursday 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Duplicate Bridge at the Community Centre Tuesdays and Fridays at 1 p.m.</p>			
12	13	14	15
Icewine Festival Ukulele Workshop - 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre	Committee of the Whole: General - 6 p.m. - Council Chambers Fun Duplicate Bridge - 9 a.m. to noon - NOTL Community Centre Babies and Books - 11 a.m. - NOTL Public Library	Duplicate Bridge (ACBL Sanctioned) - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre NOTL Rotary Club - Noon - NOTL Community Centre Niagara Golden Age Club: Seniors Euchre - 1 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre Transportation Committee - 2 p.m. - Council Chambers NLH Workshop: Developing My Personal Style - 7:30 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre	NOTL Toastmasters - Niagara College Danforth Campus STEAM Story Time - 11:45 a.m. - NOTL Public Library German Conversation - 9:45 a.m. to 11:20 a.m. - NOTL Community Centre Lord Mayor's Economic Advisory Committee - Committee Room 1 Grinder Pump Committee - Council Chambers Yoga with Melaina Tree - 9 a.m. - NOTL Community Centre
19	20	21	22
Icewine Festival Ukulele Workshop - 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre	Council - 6 p.m. - Council Chambers Fun Duplicate Bridge - 9 a.m. to noon - NOTL Community Centre Babies and Books - 11 a.m. - NOTL Public Library Beer and Books: The Orphan Master's Son - 7 p.m. - Old Winery Restaurant	Duplicate Bridge (ACBL Sanctioned) - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre NOTL Rotary Club - Noon - NOTL Community Centre Niagara Golden Age Club: Seniors Euchre - 1 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre	NOTL Toastmasters - Niagara College Danforth Campus Branch 124 General Meeting - 7 p.m. - Le... Room Branch 124 STEAM Story Time - 11:45 a.m. - NOTL Public Library German Conversation - 9:45 a.m. to 11:20 a.m. - NOTL Community Centre Chess Club - 5 p.m. - Library Yoga with Melaina Tree - 9 a.m. - NOTL Community Centre

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Report

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Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	9 Seniors Drop in: Casual Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre Homeschooler Drop in - 9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. - NOTL Public Library	10 Duplicate Bridge (ACBL Sanctioned) - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre Knit a Bit - 2 p.m. - NOTL Public Library Coffee with the Curator - 11 a.m. - RiverBrink Art Museum Icewine Gala - 7 p.m. - Fallsview Casino Niagara Falls Icewine Festival - -	11 Shaw Festival Film Series: Wild Rose - 3 p.m. - Shaw Festival Theatre Icewine Festival Purple Pedals Indoor CycleThon for Black Tie Purple Ribbon - 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. - Vino Velo
15 - 7 p.m. - el J Patterson 11 a.m. to Public Library ion Group a.m. - NOTL omic ee - 7:30 p.m. - mittee - 9 a.m. from Salt to Community	16 NLH Workshop: Learning to Improvise - 7:30 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre Seniors Drop in: Casual Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre Homeschooler Drop in - 9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. - NOTL Public Library Open House for Gate Street Road Reconstruction Project - 4 p.m. - Operations Boardroom, 3 Lorraine St. Customer Experience and Technology Committee - 4 p.m. - Council Chambers	17 PA Day Fun at the Rink and Fort George - 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. - Fort George Icewine Festival Duplicate Bridge (ACBL Sanctioned) - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre Knit a Bit - 2 p.m. - NOTL Public Library PA Day Flix: Mulan - 2 p.m. - NOTL Public Library	18 Icewine Festival Shaw Festival Film Series: Woman at War - 3 p.m. - Shaw Festival Theatre Talk: The Decline of Bees and Pollinators - 2 p.m. - RiverBrink Art Museum Great Winter Warm up: Celebrate MCC 100 Anniversary - 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. - Bethany Mennonite Church Niagara Dinner Dance Club - 6 p.m. - Royal Niagara Golf Club
22 - 7 p.m. - el J Patterson I Membership Region Club 11 a.m. to Public Library ion Group a.m. - NOTL - NOTL Public from Salt to Community	23 Agricultural Committee - 2 p.m. - Council Chambers Seniors Drop in: Casual Bridge - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre Homeschooler Drop in - 9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. - NOTL Public Library NLH Workshop: Playing with Rhythm - 7:30 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre	24 Icewine Festival Duplicate Bridge (ACBL Sanctioned) - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - NOTL Community Centre Knit a Bit - 2 p.m. - NOTL Public Library January 2020 Red Tent Event - 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. - Red Roof Retreat	25 Icewine Festival Shaw Festival Film Series: Rocketman - 3 p.m. - Shaw Festival Rocking for the Homeless - 3 p.m. - Club 55

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Icewine Festival returns to NOTL

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva
The Lake Report

One of NOTL's most beloved festivals, a celebration of icewine and all things wine, is returning to Niagara-on-the-Lake, offering a magical winter getaway for locals and visitors alike.

The 25th annual Niagara Icewine Festival will kick off in Jordan on Jan. 10 and switch over to NOTL for two weekends before ending on Jan. 26.

The festival draws thousands of visitors to town, Nicole Cripps, events co-ordinator for the NOTL Chamber of Commerce, told The Lake Report.

The festive activities in NOTL will start with the Sparkle and Ice Gala at the Court House ballroom on Jan. 17 from 8 to 10 p.m. There will be food and wine samples from 16 different wineries and 10 restaurants. Juliet Dunn of the TD Niagara Jazz Festival will provide live music. At 10 p.m., guests will head out for an icewine toast and fireworks. Tickets cost \$95.

The Icewine Village will take over Queen Street for



The Icewine Festival brings out locals and tourists alike to enjoy the sweet drink. Celebrations start on Jan. 10 in Jordan. SUPPLIED/MIKE SANSANO

two weekends, Jan. 18-19 and on Jan. 25-26. Visitors will be able to enjoy icewine from 22 NOTL wineries paired with food samples from 13 Signature Kitchen restaurants.

Live music will fill the historic Old Town street, which also will feature a variety of ice sculptures. At the entrance to the village will be two eight-foot-tall sculptures depicting icewine bottles.

The village will be open from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays, and from noon to 5 p.m. on Sundays.

Tokens cost \$6 and glasses are \$5. Admission is free

but samples are purchased using tokens.

There will also be a Flash and Panache Cocktail Competition on Saturday, Jan. 18, from 9 to 11 p.m. Admission is free, sampling is by a token.

The White on Ice Dinner on Jan. 24 will see some changes this year. The progressive-style dinner will start with a welcome reception and hors d'oeuvres at the Court House.

Guests will then split into three different groups and each will be driven to one of the three restaurants: Peller Estates Winery, Prince of Wales Hotel and

Oban Inn. The groups will then switch locations for the next two courses.

Everyone will then come back to the Icewine Village on Queen Street to enjoy dessert and an icewine toast while watching fireworks.

"I'm very excited," Cripps said. "It's a lot of work of organizing everything but once they're happening and everyone is there and you see everyone enjoying it, it just makes it all worthwhile."

With the purchase of a Niagara Icewine Discovery Pass, guests receive an icewine glass and five tokens.



Coffee with lord mayor kicks off the new year

Dariya Baiguzhiyeva
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake council is kicking off New Year with a series of coffee meetings as part of its community outreach efforts.

Monthly meetings will be held across all five communities in NOTL: St. Davids, Queenston, Virgil, Old Town and Glendale. The idea is to get out into the community and by talking to residents find out their concerns, said Lord Mayor Betty Disero.

"I go to a lot of events and talk to people but usually it's a bit of a rush. I've brought people with me today that are taking notes on everything, so I can refresh at the end of it," Disero told The Lake Report. "I just like talking to people, going out and meeting, and finding out what's going on."

"I think it's a better way to be able to represent (residents)."

The meetings are not limited to lord mayor only as other councillors have been invited to attend as well, Disero said. The events don't cost the town or taxpayers any money, she said.

The first meeting of the year drew about 25 people to Kirk Hall at St. Andrew's Church on Tuesday. Joined by Couns. Allan Bisback and Erwin Wiens, Disero answered questions from the residents.

The hot topic among residents seemed to be increased licensing fees for short-term rentals.

"It's a new homeless situation for these young families," said NOTL resident Jane Andres. "We already see what's happening here with young people, they

have to go to St. Catharines, there's just no availability of short-term rental. It's much more deep-rooted than 'this neighbourhood's struggling with that.' This is a whole cultural shift."

She also said town council will be reviewing four bylaws – in relation to noise, short-term rentals, cannabis and long-term rentals – and the community will be able to engage in discussing these issues.

Another NOTL resident, Julia Buxton-Cox, asked how with the influx of tourism, NOTL can be an example of a green community.

She also suggested installing more water-filling stations across the municipality. Disero said the town will try to put out more recycling containers in the areas of bigger population and also asked residents to bring their own mugs to such coffee events.

One resident shared her concerns about people moving out of the Glendale area, while another resident asked about water testing at Ryerson Park.

Disero also encouraged residents to use the town's online complaint form, so that the staff can collect data and look at trends of what's happening around the municipality.

After the meeting, Chautauqua resident Ian Gillespie said having interactions with town councillors over coffee was a "great concept."

"As a resident, we're learning what's bothering other people and what areas (need to be) checked out," he said.

A list of upcoming coffee meetings can be found at www.niagaranow.com

New yoga at community centre

Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

Take a deep breath and ground down – Melaina Gasbarrino of Salt to Tree is bringing her passion for healing and her ideology of living with the Earth to the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre, where she will offer Wednesday morning yoga classes for five weeks starting Jan. 15.

Soft-spoken Gasbarrino is a certified 200-hour yoga teacher. After training in Costa Rica and teaching yoga and reiki, or energy healing, around the world, she said she wanted to offer lessons closer to home.

"This area is lovely because we're surrounded by nature all the time," she said.

Her aim is to bring that connection with nature into



Melaina Gasbarrino will be bringing her yoga teachings to the NOTL Community Centre. BRITTANY CARTER

her classes, creating a more grounding practice.

"Whenever I teach a class it's focusing on grounding yourself."

She said she wants to provide variety while maintaining a healing, relaxing tone.

"One class might be a little more of a flow and one might a little more grounding and restorative. I just

want to give that variety to people. I find that there are some days when I just want to do a crazy intense yoga class and some days, I just want to lay in savasana for an hour."

Savasana, or "corpse pose," is a restorative posture that involves lying flat on your back. It's often used for relaxation at the end of a yoga practice.

During her new classes at the community centre, Gasbarrino said she wants to offer a slow, steady experience to ease people into it.

"It'll start off a little more slow pace, but then rising to do different postures that will give you that stretch. I do like to hold the postures for a little bit longer to provide that little extra stretch," she said.

"So, it's a varied scope for people that attend classes."

As well as the 9 a.m. community centre classes, she is available for a private sound bath with reiki and yoga classes, and she will also hold reiki sessions at the Virgil Chiropractic and Wellness Centre on Tuesdays from 3 to 7 p.m. starting Feb. 4.

Visit her website at SaltToTree.com for class details.



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Richard West releases book 'Recollections of War'

Brittany Carter
 The Lake Report

Do you remember the stories your parents told growing up, the impression they left and the impact they had on your life?

Niagara-on-the-Lake's Richard West recalls his parents' wartime anecdotes and has weaved them into a collection of 21 short stories in his new, self-published book "Recollections of War."

West wanted to capture a snapshot of life during the Second World War by revealing the way ordinary people dealt with such a substantial historical event.

"I think it paints a picture of how very ordinary people deal with a very big thing, something far bigger than them. And they don't go running around screaming. They just get up in the morning and carry on with it."

It was simply life and during the moments captured from 1939 to 1946 he demonstrates how different that life was.

Most of the stories take readers through his father's experience as a corporal in the British army, he says.

But some centre around his mother and the reality

of living through the blitzing of bombs back home in London.

West says he compiled his short stories into a collection instead of forming them into one story because he didn't want each experience lost through too much character development and intricate plot lines.

Instead, he wanted to convey the feeling of each moment in time. But he says a sense who his parents were and their personalities, to the best of his memory, can be seen through conversations and interactions in each piece.

"I'm just trying to make their recollections into something bigger. And hopefully people get something from it."

He says he hopes the stories will give people and, in particular, younger people, a sense of how different life was during the war – not just in the sense of technological advances and the transition from his memory of mostly horse and carts on the road to the rise of motor vehicles.

"It was much more than that. The world was very different. The way people dealt with it I think was dif-

ferent," he says.

West, now 70, grew up in London in the '50s and some of his happiest memories are of playing in the "literal bomb sites" left over from his parents' war. The stories his mother and father told made him feel as though he was a part of that time in history.

"It left me with a real feeling that I was close to this event that happened, even though it was before I was born. So, I'm left with a feeling about it."

Although he wasn't alive during the war and he couldn't portray in detail how it actually felt to live through it – through his writing he says he tried to convey the emotion his parents passed on.

"I had these stories messing about in my head for, oh, 25 years, I suppose."

West spent his career as an engineer and says he didn't pick up a pen for creative writing until much later in life. While commuting one day, he says he realized how much he liked to read and wondered what it would take to write a book.

With his engineering background, he wasn't particularly adept at writ-



Richard West self-published his book "Recollections of War." It is available now on Amazon. BRITTANY CARTER

ing, he says. "I was terrible at spelling and terrible with grammar."

But with a desire to get his stories "out of his head," he decided to start writing anyway. He picked up a notebook and pen and dove into writing whenever he had time.

"Over the next several years, from about 1993 to 2000, when I was on planes and things, I would write and write – and I actually wrote a book," he says.

That was his first foray into writing, and though he

says only three people have read that first book, he's now since published three others through Amazon, has had several excerpts from "Recollections of War" printed in The Lake Report and submitted a couple short stories on Commuterlit.com.

He attributes joining of the NOTL Writers' Circle with pushing him to pursue the craft more seriously. "You exchange your work and people go, 'Oh this is good,' or 'This could use some work,' etc. So, I

started writing more and getting involved with the circle."

He says his creative method might be different than many other writers – he simply writes what he likes and sort of "works it out as he goes." But he's found a passion for the craft and is working on two more books now.

"Recollections of War" and his other works can be found through his personal website at www.richardwest.ca or on Amazon at www.amazon.com/author/westr.

Regency Skate is fort's newest tradition

Brittany Carter
 The Lake Report

Wholesome, old-fashioned entertainment brought families like the McKays to the Vintage-Parks Canada skating rink Saturday for the annual Regency Skate event.

Participating in reenactments is very much ingrained in his family's life, Chris McKay said. Together with his wife Shayna and two boys, David and Iain, the family donned their best "regency wear" while skating laps around the outdoor rink.

But they're more involved than just participating in Niagara-on-the-Lake's newest winter tradition – McKay said he was the one who suggested holding the event. Through reenactment events

over the years he said he's spent a lot of time with Peter Martin, the fort's event co-ordinator.

"He and I have worked together for a decade. We just kind of come up with ideas for things that we can do here, and this was one of them. We were just sitting around chatting, and I was like, 'We have a skating rink here. Have you ever thought of doing a Regency Skate party?'"

Last year the first Regency Skate began the new tradition and Parks Canada's corporate programming co-ordinator, Scott Finlay, said he doesn't think it will die out any time soon.

"I think that what we've established is actually a pretty good winning combination of things. Everyone seems to enjoy what we've

put on," he said.

"That's what traditions are based on, right."

McKay said he really liked the idea of showing the leisure side of reenacting.

"For me, and for a lot of the reenactors, it's nice to see an event that doesn't necessarily focus on the military. I know it's really popular to have guns and muskets and firing at the forts, and we all certainly like that as well. But there's another side to the regency and another side to the reenacting," he said.

He said he thinks that's why the regency skate has been such a success so far.

"It's the other leisure activities they would have done as well," McKay said.

It's that old-fashioned atmosphere that Finlay said

he thinks people are looking for.

"I think it's just a really wonderful old-fashioned thing to do, you know. You've got the bonfires going, you can go get hot chocolate, take a ride in the carriage," he said.

Free carriage rides were offered from the rink to the fort with admission to the fort during the event. Skating at the outdoor rink is free, but skates can be rented for \$5.

After skaters and reenactors flashed their intricate period costumes while mingling and skating for a few hours, the best attire was judged by Finlay and Julia Greevic, an interpretation co-ordinator for Parks Canada, in a quick fashion show.

Abel Land took the prize



Chris McKay and Ryan Clark skate laps around the rink. BRITTANY CARTER

for the men.

"Anyone brave enough to wear those skates deserves to win," Finlay said.

Land strapped traditional period skates to his boots, going a step above costume expectations.

"I wouldn't expect anyone to wear traditional skates," Finlay said before spotting Land easing his way onto the ice before judging time.

The rink will remain open until March 22, weather dependent.

Family and evening skate:
 Friday – 5 to 9 p.m.
 Saturday – 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 2 to 5 p.m., 6 to 9 p.m.
 Sunday – 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 2 to 5 p.m.
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 Friday – 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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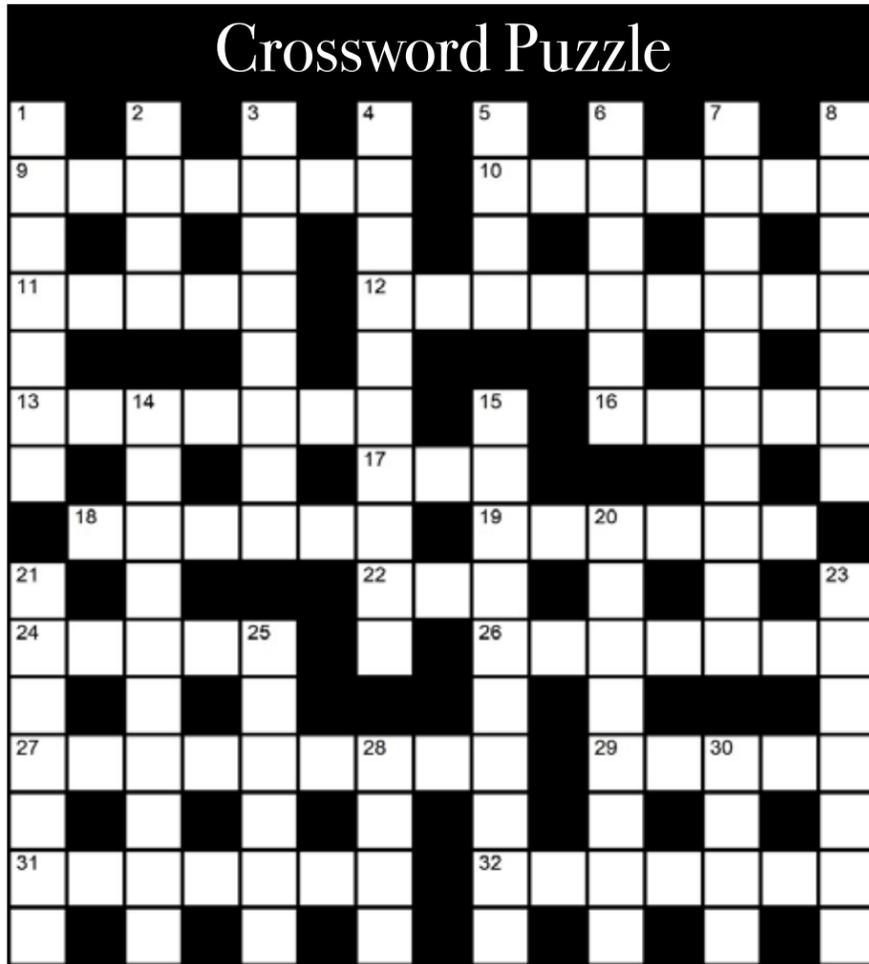
The Lake Report is looking for puzzle makers who would like to help develop this page. We are seeking both standard and cryptic crossword writers. editor@niagaranow.com

Across

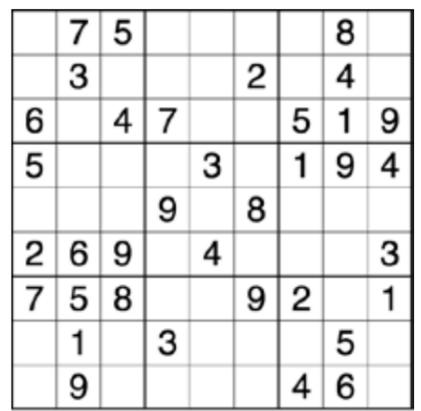
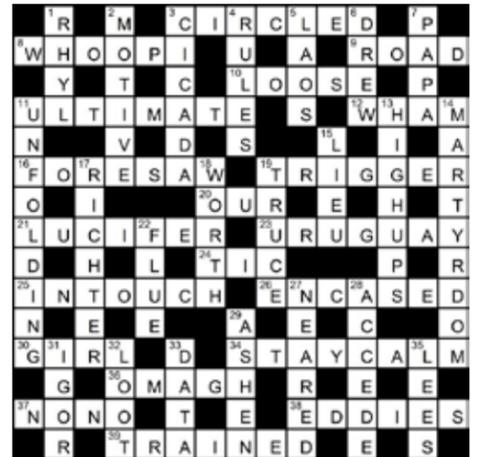
- 9. Georgia's capital (7)
- 10. An ancient one had a bird problem (7)
- 11. Banish (5)
- 12. Comparable (9)
- 13. Road journey refreshment break (3,4)
- 16. Wield (5)
- 17. Fish eggs (3)
- 18. Oddball (6)
- 19. Entirely (6)
- 22. Pre-DVD technology (1,1,1)
- 24. Dorian Gray's vice (5)
- 26. Door knockers (7)
- 27. Seen behind the scenes (9)
- 29. Believer in karma (5)
- 31. Found between sea and shining sea (7)
- 32. Make clear (7)

Down

- 1. Try (7)
- 2. Bluff King Hal's regnal no. (4)
- 3. First-class (4-4)
- 4. View unfavourably (10)
- 5. Youth charity (1,1,1,1)
- 6. Monotonous routine (6)
- 7. Next? (6,4)
- 8. Adjusts beforehand (7)
- 14. If it's too hot, get out of it (3,7)
- 15.. New actress about spreading the word (10)
- 20. Last remaining chance of relief (4,4)
- 21. Tofu base (7)
- 23. Publishing (7)
- 25. Home of the Prado (6)
- 28. Oil-rich monarchy on the Arabian Peninsula (4)
- 30. Old boatman (4)



Last issue's answers



Huzzah! It's the lord mayor's annual New Year's levee

Richard Harley
Editor

Toasts were made and a cannon was fired as almost 200 Niagara-on-the-Lake residents rang in the new year at the Lord Mayor's Levee at Navy Hall.

The annual soiree sees the hall reception open to anyone who wishes to stop in, offering punch for both kids and adults.

As is tradition, NOTL's town crier Thomas Pekar addressed the crowd before the cannon was lit.

"For those who contemplate revelry, please note the following insights from your sheriff: Life is too short, break some rules, forgive quickly, kiss slowly, love truly and laugh with abandon. Do not feel guilty for anything that puts a smile on your face.

By the powers bestowed upon me as town crier, I declare today 2020 NOTL New Year's Day. Huzzah, Huzzah, Huzzah," he proclaimed.

NOTL resident Gus Koroneos brought out his whole family to join in the celebrations.

"It's really nice, you know, nice festivities, all the dignitaries here and the cannon firing is always nice for the kids," said Koroneos.

While the cannon was quite loud, he said the kids were prepared.

"They plugged their ears," he added.

"The most important part about what we're doing here today is we're having fun," said Pekar.

The festivities kicked off on New Year's Eve with an "unofficial levee" at the clock tower, which Pekar

also spoke at.

More than 200 people gathered to watch the clock strike midnight.

Pekar said he and Lord Mayor Betty Disero are aiming to get the clock tower bells to ring for 2021.

"We're trying to organize with (the lord mayor) to get the bells in both the Court House and the cenotaph to ring," he said.

This year they couldn't make it happen in time, so Pekar brought his town crier bell down to the steps of the courthouse.

In true NOTL fashion, he addressed his "lordships, worships, parsnips and fish n' chips" before giving a similar speech to the one above.

"We welcome our neighbours from all Niagara. Compassion we practice; we have welcomed and



Eric Borrows, Suzanne Vaillant and James Rolston celebrate the new year at the town's annual levee at the Navy Hall. RICHARD HARLEY

accepted refugees from gridlock and grind, the many new refugees from the GTA who have watched too many episodes of Green Acres and come to settle in NOTL, where all is serene and idyllic and boring. For my Muppet fans, it is the season of the hearty, a spe-

cial time of caring, the ways of love made clear. And it is the season of the spirit, the message, if you hear it, makes it last all year."

"We just started a new first event," Pekar said.

The privilege of lighting the cannon is auctioned off each year via a donation to

Friends of Fort George.

With the money raised, "we underwrite the employment of high school students to work with Parks Canada. This year I believe it was 14 high school students," said Pekar.

"All guys like to blow stuff up, make big noises."

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Wallbangers: Two major hockey games played a world apart

Ross Robinson
(#9, Blue Team)
Special to The Lake Report

Sunday was another great day for hockey. Early in the morning in Virgil, Ont., and early in the evening in Ostrava, Czech Republic, two hockey games were decided by heart and luck, as well as skill and fitness levels. When played properly, hockey is a magnificent game that can be enjoyed by players of all ages and skill levels.

Virgil is a small town in the agricultural Niagara region, home to the town hall for Niagara-on-the-Lake. Ostrava is the industrialized capital city of the Moravian-Silesian region, 275 kilometres east of Prague and only 15 kilometres from the border with Poland.

At about 7:10 a.m. in the Meridian Credit Union Arena, the Wallbanger Blue and Red Teams faced off, with players aged 15 to 82. Wallbanger traditions continued under the watchful eyes of Commissioner Bill Dickson. There were three father and son pairs out. As ever, no referees, ensuring a penalty-free and fairly clean contest. The laws of the jungle have prevailed for some 36 years now, and only rarely are angry words



Wallbangers Red Team goalie Rob Vanderperk lost a friendly bet with Dave and Mark Shantz early Sunday morning. At Silk's Country Kitchen after the game, Rob bought them a hearty breakfast to settle up. The father, son and goalie host. SUPPLIED

exchanged.

It was good to have Evan McCaughey on the ice with us, back from the disabled list. His shiny new helmet and full face mask seemed to fit, and he is definitely a Top 3 defenceman. His Red Team teammate Terry Nord, and Blue Team's J. R. Lewis, the pride of Petit Rocher, on the north shore of New Brunswick, are two prototype Top 6 forwards. These two athletes battled hard, each of them winning about half of the puck battles.

J. R. tallied twice, and his second marker was a true bewdy, eh? Roofed it past Red team goalie Rob Vanderperk, top shelf, where Momma keeps the peanut

butter, socks and underwear, knocked the water bottle off the net, all that...

Blue Team defenceman Josh Wiwcharyk, always an offensive threat, seemed to be in a creative mood, successfully completing several Savardian Spinneramas on his zone entries. Danny Gallivan, the legendary English voice of the Montreal Canadiens, would have loved it.

The Red Team is hoping Pete Vanderperk returns soon. He has missed about four games, after banging his little toe on a coffee table during the festive season.

It seems that talented golfers are also fine hockey players. Wallbanger players

include NOTL Golf Club men's champion Joe Doria, and Sean Simpson, who played in the final four-some last summer. Also, assistant club professional Ricky Watson is a fast and creative skater. One of his golf highlights last summer was being a key member of the winning foursome at the Chautauqua Open.

Perhaps Ricky should bring his golf mentor Doug Garrett out for Wallbanger hockey.

Traded for the game to Red Team, to even up the sides, Phil Torrel had a hat trick. One of his goals deflected off his chest after a high shot from captain Carl Glauser, but hey, a goal is a goal. There were no fans to throw hats on the ice, but we remember. No hats, but Phil was treated to a cold and frothy Oast House Barnraiser beer later in the day, during the World Junior Hockey gold medal game.

Oh yes, who won the Wallbangers game that morning? I can't remember, but I do know there were no losers. The game is the thing.

Please join me in congratulating Canada's junior hockey team on their first place result in Ostrava.

We are so fortunate to live in Canada ... in 2020.

Legion open mic going strong four months in

Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

New and returning performers are buzzing about the NOTL Legion's Open Mic as the monthly event keeps on rocking after its first four Sundays.

Holmes Hooke has stepped up to the mic to perform his folksy and spoken word renditions since the first day, and he says he'll "definitely keep coming back."

"The venue is totally comfortable and they have a really great sound system," he said.

Hooke plays what he calls a "jingle stick,"

which is a repurposed hockey stick fastened with beer bottle caps.

"There's no limit to what you can play. (The open mic) is not genre-specific," he said.

Crediting Randy Busbridge, aka "Buzz Hummer," for organizing and hosting the event, Hooke said he would "love to see more people" coming out and taking advantage of the space.

The Legion offers a warm and encouraging atmosphere, he added.

"It allows me to keep my chops honed and I get to play in front of a receptive audience."

First-timer Gail Hawkins said her friend Brenda Parks had been giving her a gentle nudge to head to the Legion and step up to the mic, and last Sunday a group of her friends decided to go.

"I thought, 'I'll bring my guitar and see how it goes.'" But as she got to the Legion, she said she decided she would just go for it, because "life's too short."

Hawkins performed a few original songs and played some classics, and she said she "felt really good" about the experience afterward.

"I was really nervous. It was a new experience for

me. I was super impressed with the crowd and super impressed with the quality of performers. It's such a great atmosphere," she said.

Hawkins said other than being "famous in her living room," she really hasn't performed for an audience before, but the Legion's open mic was welcoming and encouraging.

"One hundred per cent I'll be back," she said.

The Open Mic is hosted by Busbridge on the first Sunday of every month from 2 to 5 p.m. at the Legion Banch 124 on King Street in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

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COOKING WITH COLLIN



A sweet, spicy, sticky sauce

Collin Goodine
Special to The Lake Report

Who doesn't love chicken wings? This is a recipe that is a little out of the ordinary but allows all the pleasure of getting your fingers sticky and saucy eating chicken wings. It is an approachable sauce that is truly satisfying when completed.

It is a sweet spicy sauce that can also be used for chicken satays, spring rolls and dumplings.

Thai Wing Sauce

Ingredients:

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 white onion | 2 Thai chilis |
| 4 limes, juiced | 1 cup plum sauce |
| 1 can pineapple chunks | 1/2 cup soya sauce |
| 2 cans coconut milk | 1 cup sweet chili sauce |
| 2 cups red chili paste | 1 cup water |
| 2 cups sugar | 1/2 cup peanut butter |

Directions:

Chop onion and add everything (except the peanut butter) into a medium-sized, thick-bottomed pot.

Simmer for 30 minutes.

Place into a food processor and turn on high until smooth and strain through a fine-mesh strainer.

While still warm, whisk in the peanut butter.

STAY FIT NOTL



Danielle Lepp and Jaclyn Willms perform a curtsy lunge. Lunges require no equipment and can be done anywhere, anytime. STAY FIT NOTL

Consistency key to getting in shape

Jaclyn Willms
Special to The Lake Report

This year I'm going to start exercising."

"This year, I'm going to lose all my extra weight."

"This year I'm going to take better care of myself."

If a healthier 2020 is one of your goals, showing up daily is key to making it last throughout the entire year.

New habits are not born overnight, but over time. Consistency is key for everything.

If you are trying to rehab

an old injury, strengthen your body or lose weight, being consistent is going to be the deciding factor if whether you're going to be successful.

You didn't gain weight or create bad posture overnight. You didn't develop an unhealthy diet or lifestyle in one day.

At Niagara Fit and Fit-side Express, our specialty is making exercise and clean eating easily accessible in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

To help you kickstart your 2020 fitness goals,

here is a lower body workout you can do anywhere, anytime with zero equipment.

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 2. Alternating Reverse Lunges
 3. Curtsy Lunges
 4. Plank with Alternating Leg Lifts
- Do each exercise 12-16 reps for 3 sets.

BONUS: Add an extra set or pulse to increase the burn.

Visit our instagram @niagarafit for the videos of the exercises

Shaw Festival Film Series a social hub on Saturdays

Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

The Shaw Festival's Saturday afternoon Film Series booted back up this weekend with countless seat-saving coats scattered over auditorium chairs before showtime, marking the established tradition of arriving early, claiming a spot and socializing in the lobby before the film's 3 p.m. start.

To the outsider, the film series may seem to simply be a medium for screening specially cultivated films from the Toronto International Film Festival during the theatre's winter down-

time – but for the NOTLers who attend each showing, it's become an anticipated hub of social gathering and entertainment.

Franca and Angelo Miniaci, both sipping red wine in the lobby before the film, said they just discovered the series last year and plan to continue attending.

"The films are all terrific," Franca Miniaci said, adding that she's most excited for the last film in February: Once Upon a Time in ... Hollywood.

"It's a great way to spend a Saturday afternoon," she said.

Nancy Mouget has volunteered with her husband

Alfred selling raffle tickets before the film since the series' inception in 2006.

The couple often volunteer their time and she said this was a great way to give back to the Shaw Festival. From their vantage point of the raffle table, she said she watches the lobby fill up as people greet and mingle before heading into the theatre.

"It's interesting. You'll see a woman come in alone and she'll grab a glass of wine and meet up with other women."

Mouget said the films are all "really good," but people are coming out to socialize more than anything else.

They don't just arrive on time and watch the film; it's become a gathering point for people to catch up and spend the afternoon, she said.

Mary Bullen arrived early with her husband Keith, like many in the crowded lobby, to claim their seats. She said the film series is something they have been looking forward to, and they have been coming for several years.

"It's such a community thing. People come to meet friends, it's really nice," she said.

"It's really a village event."

This year, Gooddine Catering will offer selections



Ken and Nancy Decker with Gloria and Bill Harman from Virgil before Saturday's film screening at the Shaw Festival theatre. BRITTANY CARTER

of gourmet food for sale in the lobby from 1:30 p.m.

Over the next seven weeks, the remaining selection of films presented by the Shaw Festival in association with Film Circuit

of the Toronto International Film Festival will be screened.

Tickets are \$12 each and can be purchased online at ShawFest.com/films.



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EXPLORING PHOTOS

WITH JIM SMITH



Niagara Home Bakery

Literally everyone in town knew John and Paul Albrechtsan of the Niagara Home Bakery. It was probably one of the most frequented stores in town. Up to the early 1960s, John would deliver bread and baked goods right to your door. Coming from Denmark, their father was the original baker. The store was eventually taken over by his sons. The recent passing of John leaves only one member of the family still living in town, Dianna, the youngest and only daughter. This composite picture shows John with the most famous long johns ever made and Paul holding an unsliced loaf of high boy bread, which would almost melt in your mouth

SUPPLIED PHOTO/JIM SMITH

The Lake Report

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The Lake Report encourages readers to support the businesses that advertise with us. **These businesses allow us to operate and keep the paper free and independent.**

When you're looking for a service or product, check The Lake Report and support someone who lives in your hometown. There are plenty of great businesses inside to choose from — **don't forget to mention you saw them in The Lake Report!**

The Lake Report would also like to acknowledge and thank those who have made financial contributions to the paper. **Your donations and contributions help support young, local journalists, as well as student interns, local charities, and so much more.**

We encourage all residents to support The Lake Report through an annual "voluntary" subscription. We suggest just \$50/year (less than \$1 per issue) per household. **That's less than most people spend on coffee.**

Larger donations are also greatly appreciated.

Donations can be made online at www.lakereport.ca, or cheques can be mailed to the NOTL Post Office, L0S1J0, PO Box 724.

Please make cheques to The Lake Report.

- Richard Harley

The Lake Report

FACTS

The Lake Report recently conducted a readership survey, and sent information on how to participate to every farm, residence and apartment in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

More than 80% of people surveyed chose The Lake Report as their preferred choice for local news and information.

SOURCE: TLR Readership Survey; October 2019

ARCHITEXT

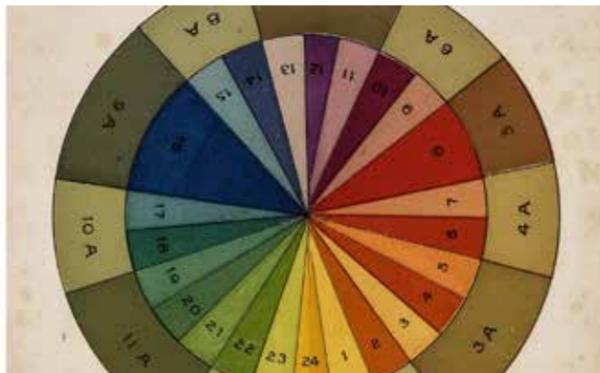
A colourful history

Brian Marshall
Featured

For some reason there is a commonly held opinion that the homes of our immigrant ancestors were boring and somewhat sombre places.

When asked to visualize the colours used in early 19th-century houses, most picture muted earthy tones that were perhaps complemented with white or dull green.

In fact, this impression could not be further from the truth. Colour, often vibrant colour, was used whenever and wherever it was available. In real terms, more than any other factor, cost of the limited number of pigments used to tint



A paint colour blending wheel, frontispiece from the Painter's Handbook, published in 1887. SUPPLIED

the paint, and the home's architectural style, dictated the colour choices.

White paint was a staple. However, this was not the "white" we are used to today. Prior to the advent of titanium dioxide pigment in the early 1900s, white paint was compounded using white lead, chalk and/or lime mixed with linseed oil, a thinner and hardener. This produced a cream or off-white tonal quality that was often "warmer" than the brilliant white of today.

In Georgian homes at the

turn of the 19th century, a range of grey and peach tones were accented with deep, rich colours such as burgundy, gold and, for the affluent, blue. Blue pigment being extremely rare and costly made the colour a statement of financial success.

As an interesting side-note, paint made with Prussian blue pigment would, under exposure to the sun coupled with yellowing imparted by aging linseed oil, gradually turn into the deep grey-hued green commonly

associated with Niagara Georgians.

Early Regency homes drew on the Georgian palette, but by the end of the style's first decade of popularity had shifted to both lighter and paler colours. Creams, sage greens, pumpkin hues, muted blues and stoney greys were common on exteriors, while the interior colours were brighter and complemented by pale trim in period whites.

On the exterior of Neo-classical (and subsequently Greek Revival) houses period white, off-white, gray or ochre paints were the colours of choice. They all were meant to emulate the natural stone used in Roman and Greek temples and if a contrast paint was used it would typically be either dark green or black. Rich hues of gold and green were reserved for interior use.

This brings us to colours of the Gothic Revival and later styles, which we'll look at in a future column.

Did you know?

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Hometown Traveller: Our Hungarian border adventure

That time in the Soviet era when we mistakenly drove to an unauthorized crossing



Vörösmarty Square in Budapest showing entrance to the famous café. DON CAMERON

Mickey and Don Cameron
Special to The Lake Report

No sooner had I met my Hungarian cousin, also named Mickey, in Kapuvar, the small town in the northwest where our families have lived for centuries, than he asked me, “Would you like to change some dollars on the black market?”

I would and I did. It seemed like a good idea at the time.

Hungary in 1979 was still under the Soviet yoke, with strict regulation of the currency, the forint. Every official transaction was accompanied by a detailed chit that was to be retained, along with all receipts for spending, and made available when the visitor left the country. The exchange rate was abysmal.

Forints were not to be taken out of Hungary, making it not such a good idea for Don and me to be trying to drive through Yugoslavia for a few days in Italy while carrying a large sum of unaccounted-for cash.

As the first member of my family to be born in Canada I spoke only Hungarian until I started school. It was pre-communist Hungarian which, I was told by a student friend, contained words that were not allowed. When the communists took over, they “cleansed” the language of any class or social distinctions. In the Budapest museum I chatted with an old security guard who said, “Oh, please keep talking. It’s so nice to hear that language again.”

We had been in Hungary for about 10 days, spending five basking in the spa of the Art Nouveau-style Gellért Hotel and Medicinal Baths. Every morning we donned our dressing gowns and waltzed through the marble and tiled corridors to sit under a lion’s head pouring thermal water.

The present building dates from 1918 but as early as the 13th century it was the site of a hospital. Patients were bathed in the spouting spring waters. Later, the Turks built bathing establishments. On the

roof is an outdoor pool with the original wave-generating device installed in 1927.

Not to be missed was the Vörösmarty Café on Vörösmarty Square, now known by its original name of Gerbeaud. More than 150 years old, it is described on a current website as “rather touristy, crowded and slightly overpriced but worth a visit.”

During the communist era the state took over ownership and renamed it. Some of its old grandeur also was lost. Today it has regained its lustre, with fine wood panelling, crystal chandeliers, lavish brocade wall covers, and marble tables. The lengthy display case that spans most of one wall offers a dizzying array of pastries and cakes — even, if you must, carrot cake.

Before heading for the Yugoslav border we spent a night at Lake Balaton, the largest in central Europe. The northern shore has been noted for its wine production since Roman times, the southern shore is lined

with resort towns.

We were keen to sample fogas (pronounced foe-gatch), a fish related to the salmon family but a species found only in Lake Balaton. The whole fish is placed in a U-shaped cage and deep fried. It arrives at the table in that shape, upright, the head and tail standing tall.

But now we sat in our rented car at an unauthorized border crossing with gates closed front and back where a soldier in front and another behind pointed rifles at us. Our maps had somehow directed us to a military road. At a crossroads as we approached the border we passed two soldiers, one on the phone, and a large guard dog. At least we had a comfortable car.

Our travel agent in Toronto had arranged for a Russian Lada but when we picked it up in Budapest we learned we hadn’t paid enough and had to make up the difference. They just happened to take dollars.

Our plan was to drive through Yugoslavia to spend a few days in Italy.

People from Niagara-on-the-Lake travel to some of the most interesting places on Earth and we’d like to hear about your vacations.

So, if you have ever wanted to be a travel writer, here is your chance. Send us a travelogue story about your vacation, along with some photos.

It’s impossible to include everything, but stories ideally should be 250 to 600 words and focus on a unique, quirky or particularly interesting aspect of your trip. It can be about a vacation you have just taken, one you’re on now (lucky you!), or a holiday you took a few years ago.

Sometimes, just a picture is worth a thousand words. So, if you aren’t able to write a story about your trip, send us two or three snapshots from your holiday and we will try to publish some of them.

In all cases, smartphone photos are perfectly acceptable. Just make sure each digital image you send us is around 1 to 2 MB in size. Include destination information and the names (from left) of everyone in each photo. And tell us who took the photo, if possible.

As a bonus, bring along a copy of The Lake Report and include it in your photo!

Send your stories and photos to editor@niagaranow.com and be sure to write TRAVEL in the subject line.

Happy trails.

That called for an official permit, obtainable from a garage in Budapest. Eying the clunky Lada, the garage owner said, “You can’t take a car like that out of Hungary,” and upgraded us to a sleek Opel Ascona.

“I’m not paying any more,” I told him, which he reluctantly accepted. Nevertheless, he arranged for us to stay at a friend’s B&B on our final night before flying home.

At the border two guards emerged from their kiosk, examined our papers and told us to get out of the car and open the trunk. After they emptied it and did a thorough search we were allowed back in. Next they asked for our receipts and any unused forints, which Don handed over to be reimbursed when we returned.

A guard then turned to me: “Do you have any money?”

“Oh, no,” I said, “I let my husband handle all our money.” In the old Hungarian I was using “husband” which also translates as “lord.”

The guard turned to his

colleague: “Look at that. She lives in Canada but she still respects her husband.” With that, the guns were put down, the gates opened and we were through.

Of course, I did have money but it wasn’t accessible. The night before, in the Hotel Claudius in Szombathely, so called because the town was founded by the Emperor Claudius, we had taken precautions. As a dressmaker I made most of my clothes, among them a denim skirt with a wide waistband. With my travel sewing kit I cut open the waistband. We inserted the folded currency and I sewed it up again.

Back at work in Toronto I recounted my adventure to friends. It reached the ears of a manager who was organizing a group to launch a new project. He asked to see me. “When I heard what you did in Hungary I thought ‘That’s somebody I want on my team.’” Overnight I went from being a temp to a permanent employee.

Never underestimate the benefits of travel.

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COMMUNITY



We invite you to submit photos and stories for consideration in this section. Send your submissions to editor@niagaranow.com for a chance to be featured.



Hoping your new year was a blast!

Community photos



Diane McCalla, Brenda Parks, Gail Hawkins and Phaedra Howell come out at the Legion's Open Mic for the first time on Sunday. BRITTANY CARTER



Albert Ho, Murray Wilcox, Judy McHattie, Diane Croker, Richard West and Gord Pollock of the Tribe of Seven. Not pictured is seventh member Marilynn Crow. BRITTANY CARTER



Gail Hawkins performs some original songs at the Legion Open Mic Sunday. BRITTANY CARTER



THE GOLDEN PLUNGER

With Betty and Jane

Teenie Panini



Sam Futia accepts the award for Teenie Panini. THE GOLDEN PLUNGER

We went to Virgil looking for a panini. We stopped at a place that promised to have some teenie ones. We didn't find a panini, large or teenie, but what we did find was an awesome washroom. The bathroom was large, bright and clean. The owners clearly are committed to and had given much consideration to accessibility. In this regard they set the standard. The café is in the old Virgil fire hall, which meant that a lot of prep work went into making the space suitable for a café. They did not skimp on their attention to the safety and accommodation of all their potential guests when they designed the restroom. Everyone was considered in the design of this bathroom and we think it should make everyone feel welcome and confident in using the facilities.

4/5 Golden Plungers



NOTL DART LEAGUE

Each week, dart teams face off at local restaurants and pubs. Find scores here weekly, exclusive to The Lake Report.

Silks Jini	102
Legion Guzzlers	95
Close Shavians	92
Guyz	90
Legion Airs	82
Legends	71
SandTrap	71
Dartbags	41



Tarot of the week

Lisa Tache/Special

DATE: Jan. 9, 2020

The Star of hope and optimism. Wish upon a star. Anything is possible. This is a time of personal growth and

development. Dreams can come true. The Star offers restored hope and faith, and a feeling that you are truly blessed. It is a pleasant, loving period in your life, filled with positive energies, emotional stability, and a deeper understanding of yourself and others around you. Your heart is full of hope. Allow yourself to dream in any way possible so you can reach the stars. You are making some major changes in your life, turning yourself from the old you to the new you and bringing a new vision. "Out with the old and in with the new!" Live your authentic self. Stay open to new ideas and development and listen to the voice that is inside you.

ASK YOURSELF THIS.

What gives you a renewed sense of hope and faith right now?

RIDDLE ME THIS

I have many hearts, but no other organs. What am I?

Last Week: I have keys, but no locks, and no rooms. What am I?

Answer: A piano/keyboard or maple tree

Answered first by: Lynne Stewart

Also answered correctly by: Alfred Mouget, Quinn Tiller, Dinorah Centeno, Julia Klassen, Margie Enns, Chuck Jackson, Katie Reimer, Sheila Meloche, Gary Davis, Karen Davis, Jacob Willms, David Galvin, Marilyn Vann, Jennifer Lang, Wendy Bosela,

Email answers to editor@niagaranow.com for a chance to win a prize.



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FEATURED LOCAL STORY

Artist with **NOTL roots** brings focus back home

Spring opening of Steele Gallery will see dozens of pieces of art available from a small pop-up location on John Street



Scott Steele holds one of his photorealism paintings. Steele will be opening an art gallery in NOTL in spring. RICHARD HARLEY

Brittany Carter
The Lake Report

Scott Steele is pragmatic – he says he learned early if he wanted to make a living as an artist he would need to work hard; that’s exactly what he’s done every day since realizing his artistic aspirations decades ago.

And though he says he’s been creating art his whole life it wasn’t until he travelled to Europe during a two-year stint as a model in his 20s that he learned to really understand the craft. “I never appreciated Van Gogh. Then, you go on a walking tour in the south of France, and you see a plaque and a painting, and you look where he was painting.”

Steele says seeing those paintings up against the backdrop of their origins reignited his creative spark.

“Oh my god, I get what he was trying to do, with the blues and the yellows. And it helped me realize that I liked Van Gogh. By seeing that stuff in real life,” he says.

But seeing masterpieces up close didn’t just garner his artistic appreciation, he resolved that he could capture the beauty of what he saw on canvas himself.

“I realized what I saw, I said, ‘Oh I can paint that.’”

Now at 54, Steele says he could confidently call himself a working artist, something many creatives may not be able to say. He grew up in Niagara-on-the-Lake and lives in Toronto.

He says he doesn’t look like an artist, but quickly retracts his comment, adding, “What does an artist even look like?”

Sitting casually in a flannel shirt and baseball cap,

he does give off a salt-of-the-Earth, hard-working vibe. “Not that any of that really matters,” he adds about appearances.

He is certainly no stranger to hard work, though.

“Initially you don’t think you can make a living doing art, but then I sort of have,” he says.

For him, it comes down to putting in the time and just painting, even when it loses its fun.

“It’s still a job. If I want to get paid, I need to get the work done.”

He’s been able to make a living wage off his art for most of his career. Early on, he says he owned and operated an interior design business with his wife, before leaving the business to her and diving deeper into his paintings.

“Like you just do art as a hobby. You’re never told

that you can make a living in art, or it’s very hard. It is very hard,” Steele confirms. And it doesn’t come without its sacrifices.

In prioritizing his work he’s let other areas of his life fall short.

“I’m going through a divorce right now,” he says.

Would he make the same choices and do it all again if he had a do-over? He says he’s not so sure. But this is the road he’s on now and he says he’s going to keep working and creating marketable art.

Steele pays attention to the latest home décor, follows colour trends and tries to create pieces that people would want to put in their homes. He says if he paints something that no one wants to buy, he’ll refocus and try another style.

With his preferred medium painting with acrylics,

he bounces from creating intricate realistic paintings to bold, stunning pieces.

While he’s spent his life working hard and honing his skills, he says he’s also managed to seize opportunities that came his way. Those opportunities didn’t always fall into his lap, but he learned to follow open doors, often to his benefit, he says.

Walking through the Distillery District in Toronto several years ago, he noticed a vacant space in a building, which sparked the idea of opening a gallery. And although he didn’t leave the house that morning with plans of being a gallery owner, after a chance encounter with one of the developers while standing in front of the building that afternoon, he ended the day with the contract in the works.

“I said, ‘This would be the perfect gallery.’ He said this was supposed to be something else, but the lady backed out.

Steele responded, “I’ll take it.”

“So, five minutes ago I wasn’t thinking of opening a gallery, and all of a sudden it’s available.”

He ran that gallery for seven years.

He has since closed that space but will soon be showing his work in gallery space at The Lake Report office on John Street in NOTL.

Steele Gallery will feature his paintings alongside art from local metal sculptor and Scott’s uncle Richard Steele. The gallery is set to launch in the spring.

Until then he can be found on Facebook at Scott Steele Artist.



NOTL: SPECIAL WINTER EDITION

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