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June 19, 2025



Glencairn fire arson, police say

Paige Seburn Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

A red gas can left behind in the ashes of a heritage home fire in Niagara-onthe-Lake is now a piece of evidence in what police are calling a targeted act of criminal arson.

On April 16, a fire tore through the historic, nearly three-acre Glencairn Hall property in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Two days later, the blaze at the unoccupied 1832 home at 14795 Niagara River Pkwy. was deemed "suspicious" by investigators.

"It is believed to have been targeted," said Const. Philip Gavin with Niagara Regional Police in an email. "The investigation is being treated as a criminal arson."

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'It's transformational'

New \$1.8 million funding to help boost NOTL irrigation systems



Sprinkler systems like this and other watering methods are what keeps Niagara-on-the-Lake's farm fields thriving. Municipal irrigation committee members say irrigation is key to sustaining local agriculture — and new funding will help upgrade and expand the system. FILE

Paige Seburn | Local Journalism Initiative | The Lake Report

hree members of
Niagara-on-the-Lake's
irrigation committee
say new funding from
a regional project is a major step
forward in making water access
more reliable for farmers — and
expanding a system that's vital to

the town's agricultural future.

In a June 9 news release, the Niagara Region announced it secured up to \$1.8 million to advance the Niagara Irrigation Initiative Project — and Coun. Erwin Wiens says between \$400,000 and \$500,000 is

earmarked for NOTL alone. The overall project is in the \$200- to \$300-million range, he said.

"It's transformational," said Wiens, a longtime committee member. "I couldn't overstate the transformational importance of what we're getting here." "Greenhouses need water every day," he added. "This is part of getting them water."

The \$1.8 million will fund two environmental assessments, Wiens said: One for a new piped

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Whisking up support: Donations sought for Canada Day cake

Paige Seburn Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

Baking a cake large enough to feed a crowd of thousands on Canada Day is no small feat — the team at Willow Cakes & Pastries know from experience.

For instance, the cost of this year's cake, in butter alone, is over \$1,700 — one part of the estimated cost of

\$8,500 for all the ingredients and supplies.

"I buy my butter at like \$5.79 a pound. It's 300 pounds of butter," said Sean O'Donnell, part-owner of the bakery. "All these things that just go into it, that adds to the cost of the cake."

This season, Willow Cakes & Pastries is asking for donations to help cover the costs. The Friends of Fort George are helping out with \$1,000 of the price tag, but the bakery wants to raise \$7,500 for its July 1 cake.

A GoFundMe was launched to help reach that goal, shared through the bakery's social media pages and in a post on the local Facebook group NOTL 4 All. To view the fundraiser, visit gofundme.com and

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Phil's Independent helps Loblaws crack parm record

Maddy Gordon The Lake Report

It was a race against the clock for hundreds of Loblaws employees across Canada this past weekend, as they took part in an attempt to break a world record for the most parmesan cheese wheels cracked simultaneously — a feat that included help from two determined workers at Phil's Independent Grocer in Virgil.

In 2014, Loblaws broke the world record for the most wheels cracked at the same time with 1,209 wheels. To defend its title, 1,800 wheels was the goal attempted last Saturday.

Store volunteers Alayna Hollemans and John Vanderlee stepped up to the challenge, using specific knives and techniques to fulfill the record requirements. The Virgil store was one of more than 450 Loblaws locations to participate in the world record attempt.

The process also had to be recorded with a clock in the frame to ensure the crack time was the same across



Phil's Independent Grocer employees Alayna Hollemans and John Vanderlee step up to help Loblaws attempt to break a world record of 1,800 parmesan cheese wheels "cracked" at the same time on Saturday. MADDY GORDON

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Hollemans said the crowd that gathered to watch the attempt wasn't what made her nervous – it was keeping up with Vanderlee's speed.

Still, both volunteers were able to crack their wheels in about six minutes.

Phil Leboudec, owner of Phil's Independent, said Hollemans and Vanderlee trained for two weeks using quarter wheels before the record attempt.

You have to use the traditional Italian method and tools for cracking parmigiano reggiano – parmesan cheese – for the attempt to count, Leboudec said.

"The parmesan is dried for at least 22 months [...] but to do that there's a very thick wax they put around it," he said. "The hard part about cracking is you've got to cut through all that."

The technique involves making small cuts on the surface of the cheese — a process known as scoring — to get through the outer layer. Then, the knives are placed at a specific angle to break through the initial cuts and crack the wheel open.

Because parmesan is known as the "King of Cheese," successfully cracking a wheel is no easy feat.

"You have to be trained," Leboudec said. "It's not something you could just walk in and do."

Part of the challenge is flipping the 80-pound wheel to work on each side. If there are only incisions on half of the wheel, the technique won't work because the knife won't be able to cut through both ends.

But even with this physical challenge, the clock

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ticking and the eyes of a small crowd on her wheel, Hollemans said the experience was really fun.

Other participating locations cracked more or less wheels, depending on the size of the store. The primary location of the record attempt was Loblaws Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto, where 20 wheels were cracked.

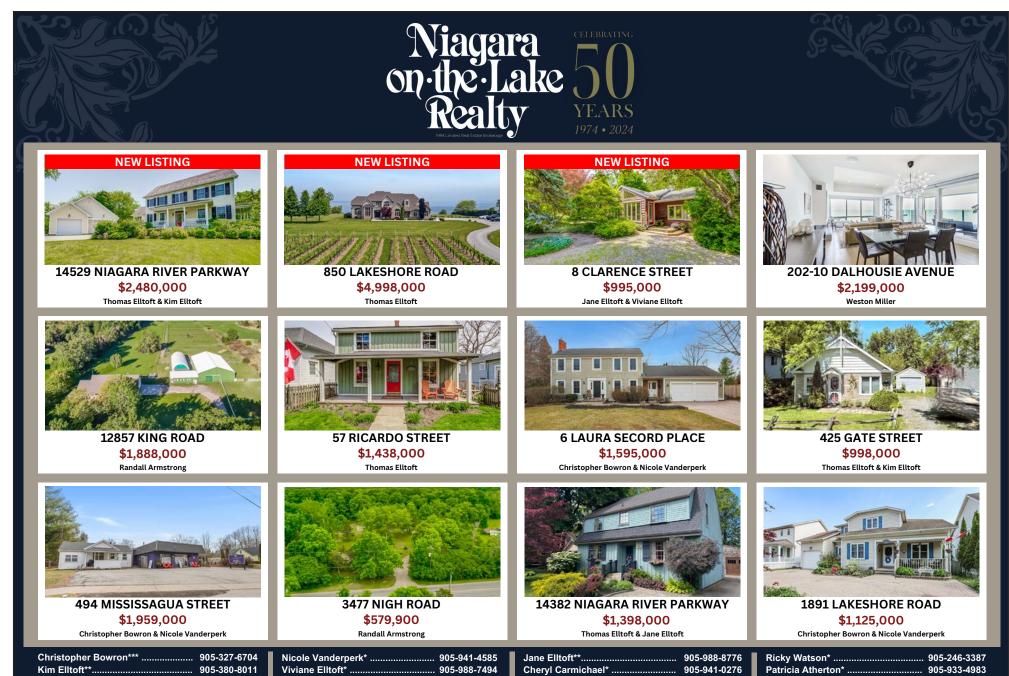
Leboudec said it's fun to host an event happening across the country.

"There's 1,800 people (referring to the number of wheels that were cracked) doing the same thing coast to coast at the same time," he said.

After Hollemans and Vanderlee successfully cracked their wheels, samples of the cheese were distributed to store custom-

In a press release, Loblaws stated the purpose of the world record attempt is to highlight its selling of authentic parmigiano regginao

As of Wednesday evening, the results of the world record attempt have not been publicly released.



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Catherine O'Donnell hands out slices of cake to hungry people at Simcoe Park on Canada Day in 2024. FILE

Willow needs \$8,500 to fund Canada Day cake

Continued from Front Page

search "Willow Cakes Canada Day."

For several years, the bakery, which has operated in NOTL for 20 years, has put together a giant cake with an elaborate theme, which is paraded through Old Town as part of the municipality's annual Canada Day celebration, before slices are cut and doled out to parade-goers at Simcoe Park.

Last year's theme was Willy Wonka, the year before, Alice in Wonderland, and the year before that, an enchanted forest.

The bakery has covered about 98 per cent of the cost of the parade cakes over the years, he said, but with the business downsized and ingredient costs rising, the bakery is asking for support this year — and some donations have already come in.

"It's a large task to bear,"

The bakery closed its only public storefront in late January, but it still operates a production kitchen, the Willow Cakes, for baking and order pickups. A retail offshoot, Willow Tea House, located inside Regal Florist, offers a smaller selection of coffee and baked goods.

The bakery may be operating on a smaller scale now, but O'Donnell said a little creativity is all it takes to keep the tradition going.

"We don't have the same kind of space, so we found creative ways," he said. "It hasn't diminished the quality of the product."

"This tradition has been

going on for almost as long as we've existed."

The Friends of Fort George organizes "the whole shebang" for the cake and provides transportation, O'Donnell said. In past years, the bakery has also received \$1,000 from the group.

"We're always appreciative that (the Friends of Fort George) have always cared enough to look out for us to the greatest extent that they can," he said. "They're a consistent donator."

O'Donnell said the bakery never factors in the cost of labour.

"Because that's like our big donation," he said. And, he added, it's a way of saying thanks to NOTL residents.

"It's really just a big thank you to the community," he said. "You can't survive in business, especially in a small town, without community."

Parade-goers can expect a surprise — the cake's theme is kept secret until it's unveiled on Canada Day.

But O'Donnell gave one hint: Look out for a piece of Niagara or NOTL in the theme.

He said the cake allows founder Catherine O'Donnell "to flex her creative muscles" and offers valuable hands-on experience for younger staff "who are trying to reach new heights within their own career."

"And at the end of the day, it's just a big bit of fun," he said. And it's a chance to do something out of the ordinary, he added.

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Gas can a part of Glencairn arson investigation

Continued from Front Page

Although Gavin said several "investigative elements" are supporting investigators' decision to look at the fire as arson, they aren't sharing what they are, except that the gas can, found on the property the day of the fire, is one of them.

Police also aren't sharing what information they have related to suspects or persons of interest in the investigation.

Involved in the investigation are detectives and forensic services from the Niagara Regional Police and investigators from the NOTL Fire Prevention and the Office of the Fire Marshal.

Niagara Regional Police media relations officer constable Rich Hingley said investigators haven't determined the estimated cost of the fire's damage yet, which may take time, especially given that this is a heritage property. The lead investigator is away until June 26, he added.

Gavin said police don't know the home's current structural integrity, which insurance workers will assess.

But within days of the fire, Jim Kettles, operations manager for the fire marshal's office, deemed it a total loss in an interview with The Lake Report.

Parts of the investigation are not being released to the public, Gavin said, including: Where the fire started on the property, whether there's evidence of forced entry or other unusual activity prior to the fire and whether the owner has been involved in the investigation or any other investigations related to the property.

But the property owner, which provincial records show is a numbered company (1001021589 Ontario Corp.), incorporated on Sept. 30, 2024, with sole director Scott Cameron Corbett, has been interviewed and is co-operating with the investigation, he said.

Gavin said a public report will not be released.

"That is not something that occurs," he said. Because if someone is arrested at the end of it all, and the case goes to court, sharing evidence publicly could affect the legal process.

If, for some reason, the investigation gets suspended, police will continue to keep full details private so it doesn't interfere with future investigative work.

Police are asking businesses and residents in the area with cell phones, closed-circuit video recording, or dash camera footage between 2 and 5 a.m. on April 16 to review the footage and contact police if they find anything suspicious.

Anyone with information is asked to contact investigators at 905-688-4111, option 3, extension 1009524. Members of the public who wish to provide information anonymously can contact Crime Stoppers of Niagara online or by calling 1-800-222-8477. Crime Stoppers offers cash rewards for details leading to an arrest.

The site was released to the owner, meaning the investigation of the site is over and they can return to the property for cleanup and restoration, but the investigation remains open and active.

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Down it goes, again: Traffic camera vandalized twice in less than a month

Dan Smeenk Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

For the second time in less than a month, the traffic camera in front of Crossroads Public School in Virgil has been vandalized — the camera that was installed two weeks ago to replace the one that was illegally cut down in May.

Const. Philip Gavin with Niagara Regional Police said there is no update on a suspect for either vandalism incident.

The camera, which was vandalized last Friday, came down again in much the same way the first one did on May 27. It appeared to have been taken down by a power tool.

Scott Fraser, associate director of transportation planning at Niagara Region, who owns and works with the camera, said the region has not given up on this camera in this location, which was supposed to be up and running until August.

"We are aware of the most recent vandalism of the automated speed enforcement camera in the community safety zone that includes Crossroads Public School," he said.

"We have notified the camera vendor and will be working with them to repair the equipment and have it back in service as soon as possible."

Considering two cameras have been taken down in the



The speed camera on Niagara Stone Road has been cut down for the second time in a month. DANIEL SMEENK

same place in such a short time, Fraser said the region was looking to find ways to make the cameras more difficult to bring down.

"We are currently evaluating options and alternatives to best address the issue of vandalism at automated speed enforcement cameras in the region," he said, though he didn't say exactly what alternatives the Region was pursuing.

There has been a lot of frustration within the town and the region with the speeding cameras.

Vandalism incidents involving traffic cameras have also taken place in Smithville and Welland, where three traffic cameras were vandalized in May 2024 over a few days.

Coun. Erwin Wiens, who was also a police officer in Hamilton for 31 years, said he believed from his experience as a Hamilton cop and as a NOTL councillor that Niagara Regional Police were going to do a good job on this issue, and that they

were not going to tolerate the vandalism.

"You're asking me in my perspective as a police officer," he said. "It's never, ever an excuse to do any sort of mischief."

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa, who also sits on Niagara regional council, said ultimately, people should not get angry at the camera.

"It's your responsibility to drive according to the rules," said Zalepa.

The penalty for the vandalism of a speed camera worth more than \$5,000 is a charge of mischief over \$5,000 with a potential maximum penalty of two years in prison, a \$5,000 fine, or both.

If anyone has information about this incident they are encouraged to contact the Niagara Regional Police Service at (905)-688-4111 or Crimestoppers Niagara at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477). You can visit Crimestoppers online at crimestoppersniagara.ca.

daniel@niagaranow.com

Man arrested following shooting incident

Staff The Lake Report

A Niagara-on-the-Lake resident is in custody after his arrest last week in connection with an incident of gunshots fired at a home in town.

Police have arrested 62-year-old Edgar Lefebvre and charged him with the reckless discharging of a firearm, careless use of a firearm and possession of a weapon for a dangerous purpose.

Lefebvre appeared in a video bail hearing in court in St. Catharines on June 13 and was remanded into custody, the day after his arrest on the afternoon of June 12, after gunshots were reported at a home in



Niagara Regional Police officers near the scene at York and Queenston roads last Friday. DANIEL SMEENK

NOTL on Queenston Street, east of Homer Bridge, near the border of St. Catharines.

Niagara Regional Police specialized units, including the Emergency Task Unit, K9 Unit and Crisis Negotiation Unit, were deployed to the scene. Officers surrounded the property as a precaution.

Police say no one was injured in the incident.

Police are asking anyone with information to contact investigators at 905-688-4111, option 3, extension 1009701, or reach out anonymously through Crime Stoppers of Niagara.

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NOTL still struggles to be accessible

Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

The Niagara Region's joint accessibility advisory committee awarded several local businesses this spring for their efforts in making their places accessible, including four in Niagaraon-the-Lake.

But two of the NOTL committee members who helped decide who got those awards said that, despite what four businesses are doing, the situation is far from ideal for people with disabilities in NOTL.

Dave Antaya, a committee member since 2018, said he has been involved in accessibility issues for more than 40 years.

He said that despite the 20-year-old Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, mandating that businesses in Ontario become wheelchair accessible by Jan. 1, 2025, many businesses in the town are simply inaccessible to people living with disabilities.

In 2023, Pamela Turner-Smith, a NOTL resident with mobility issues, told The Lake Report that she couldn't get into 60 per cent of the businesses on Queen

Antaya said the situation has not changed in that area much since then.

"Merchants in general throughout the entire town are quite inaccessible in many ways," he said. "Steps to get into buildings, access to be able to move around within the building, washrooms, and all kinds of different things."

Lauren Bubnic, the other member of the committee from NOTL, goes further, saying that the problem goes from not having an accessible indoor walking track and elevator at her local community centre to other kinds of accessible innovations that many people are commonly used to.

"There aren't enough automatic doors in the town," she said. "There aren't enough accessible washrooms, and all the businesses have multiple steps."

"One business did make a graded ramp of their own (in the downtown)," said Bubnic. "But that was the only improvement that I've

The issues here provoke a common response from businesses in the Historic Old Town.

A common complaint from them is that their heritage status makes it diffi-





Top: Debrah Rotundo is one of many Niagara residents who have mobility issues. She hopes Niagara-on-the-Lake becomes more accessible. Bottom: The BMO on Queen Street was one of four NOTL recipients of an award from the Niagara Region for accessibility. They are one of the few businesses that has upgraded to meet accessibility requirements, advocates say. DANIEL SMEENK

cult, expensive and contradictory under local bylaws to retrofit buildings with accessible ways to enter and go through their premises.

This view was also expressed by Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa, who said, "We have an extensive heritage district that creates challenges to accessibility that other municipalities don't have."

Both Bubnic and Antaya said there was some merit to this point, but neither of them believes this is a real obstacle that overrides the need for accessibility.

Both, in fact, believe that making heritage buildings accessible can increase their revenue in the long run.

"These 100-year-old buildings didn't used to have things like sprinkler systems," said Bubnic. "But it's mandated now. So, things like automatic doors and the ability for people with walkers to get in ... should be something that's 101."

Gabriel Reznick, a staff lawyer for Toronto-based disability law firm ARCH Disability Law Centre, said that heritage laws do not give people the right to not provide what people with disabilities are owed.

"Any heritage law would

still need to comply with human rights legislation," he said.

So, with a problem of accessibility that has been known for decades, what is taking so long for it to be solved?

Antaya believes this problem begins at the top, with enforcement by the provincial government, going all the way to the town and local businesses.

"The (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act) is a law," said Antaya. "But there is no cop on the planet that would be in a position to enforce the law. It's being ignored by the government from the top down."

Bubnic said that a voluntary system does exist in the town of NOTL for complaints relating to accessibility, but that the lack of enforcement makes it difficult to really create an accessible world.

"There's no policing around that," she said. "It's not like public health where if a business is not compliant, you can report them. I'm not aware of any bylaws they can use."

"The (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act) is a provincial thing. There's a voluntary system, but it's legislated. There's a gap there."

When asked why businesses were so slow to comply with people with disabilities, Antaya said, "It's simple, money."

Given the awards sent out this year, Antaya was asked why some businesses have done better at making their businesses more accessible.

He said that pressure to do so was a major contributing factor, and that government facilities tended to be more compliant.

"The municipal, provincial and federal facilities have been hardcore compliant," he said.

Zalepa also highlights what the town has done for its facilities relating to accessibility. One of the NOTL buildings to receive an award this year was the local community centre.

"Our own facilities that are publicly owned, where we can build new properties or do new renovations, are AODA compliant," said Zalepa. "Which is the key thing that our town has direct control over."

Bubnic agrees that the public sector buildings have typically done better than the private sector at providing accessible services.

But she also hopes that there can be different incentives for private businesses to become compliant with the AODA, as the current reality does not bring about change.

"They're just sitting back and waiting for funding," said Bubnic.

Antaya said that making businesses more accessible is ultimately something which benefits the business as much as it benefits those with accessibility needs. But he believes that a lot of things need to happen before more people with mobility issues can get the same access to the world as those without them.

"There's no classic 'snap your fingers' approach," he

The four businesses that were given the Accessibility Matters Here award by the advisory committee in Niagara-on-the-Lake were the NOTL Community Centre, Southbrook Winery, Jackson-Triggs Winery and the Bank of Montreal, NOTL Branch.

Marah Minor, the town's communications coordinator, said the town "continues to enhance accessibility through digital tools, facility upgrades and inclusive design."

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Welcome to The Village, a very charming community of period style houses. This home was built in 2017 with numerous upgrades by the current owners and elegant finishes such as hardwood floors, gas fireplace, crown moulding, French doors, and custom designed built-ins and cabinetry. The main floor offers an open concept kitchen/living/dining room with dramatic vaulted ceilings, a separate sitting room off the foyer, and a primary bedroom with walk-in closet and five piece ensuite washroom. Upstairs are two additional bedrooms and an open family room that overlooks the living and dining room. The finished lower level is extremely spacious and bright with a kitchenette and dining area, recreation room and home office. The one car garage has an additional parking space in front, and the back/side gardens and patio are beautifully landscaped. This lovely property is located just minutes away from the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, and is walkable to the nearby plaza with Shoppers Drug Mart, LifeLabs, medical center, a future Foodland grocery store, banks, and more. Surrounded by wineries, orchards, and golf courses, experience all that the Niagara Region offers in this quiet and idyllic neighbourhood.





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\$1.8 million for irrigation is crucial for crops: Wiens

Continued from Front Page

system in the Lincoln and St. Catharines area below the escarpment, and the other to upgrade the existing system in NOTL, according to the region's project webpage.

"The next step in upgrading the existing irrigation system in Niagara-on-the-Lake is to update and consolidate the town's three existing irrigation reports based on the town's recently completed irrigation system strategy and master plan," the release states.

Wiens said the funding is for the completion of environmental assessments, which is "just the preliminary work." This will help determine the most environmentally and economically efficient location for the system, one that's also viable for agriculture.

"It will start the engineering process," he said.

The overall project could help make more marginal



Erwin Wiens sits atop a tractor at Erwin Wiens Vineyards Ltd. He says efficient irrigation is key to maintaining healthy crops and a successful future for agriculture in Niagara-on-the-Lake. SUPPLIED

land usable for crop production, he said.

"This (project) is one major aspect of how we will maintain our sustainability in agriculture."

Committee member Aaron Oppenlaender said the funding and overall project could help farmers who currently lack water access by expanding the system into harder-to-reach areas.

"It's going to benefit all growers," he said.

All aspects of NOTL's irrigation system will grow and improve with this project, "which is excellent

news," he added.

Fellow longtime committee member Kevin Buis said the funding will allow the committee to update engineering reports and move closer to putting parts of its long-term irrigation master plan into action.

"I think it's a heck of a good start," said Buis.

"We'll start to work on some final design," Buis said. "And hopefully be able to start to cast what some of these projects will look like."

The funding comes from the Government of Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership, the Canada Infrastructure Bank and the Greenbelt Foundation.

The Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership is a five-year, \$3.5-billion program aimed at strengthening Canada's agriculture, agri-food and agri-based products sector.

More public/private partnerships funding the balance of the estimated \$1.8 million project include: Ontario Tender Fruit Growers, Grape Growers of Ontario, local Niagara Greenhouse Growers, the Town of Niagara-onthe-Lake, Town of Lincoln, City of St. Catharines and Niagara Region.

In 1988, a private member's bill known as PR88 was passed, allowing farmers in NOTL to legally use their drainage ditches to irrigate crops.

"At the time, we were the only one that was allowed to use drainage ditches for irrigation water," said Buis.

Of this allowance, Wiens said, "It was huge and we're still reaping the benefits.

Now, this is the next stage of something like that."

Wiens was part of the original committee and, after years representing farmers, getting into politics allowed him to help connect the dots to move the project forward.

"I have not met one person that does not think this is a good idea," he said.

"For Niagara-on-the-Lake to be successful, the region has to be successful. We won't be successful independent of them."

Wiens said efforts to expand NOTL's successful irrigation system to other parts of the region have been underway for years.

"It's so rewarding to see it happen," he said.

NOTL's environmental assessment will be less expensive since the town already has a system in place, said Wiens.

And with the town already being further along in the process — work in NOTL could begin sooner than work in the Lincoln and St. Catharines area below the escarpment, he said.

"A lot" more funding will be needed to upgrade NOTL's irrigation system, Wiens said, but the exact amount won't be known until the environmental assessment is complete.

"We'll know more of that once we work through this phase," Buis said.

Oppenlaender said the project is essential for the future of farming in the region.

"Water is the future of our agriculture," he said.

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Exciting News!

We're thrilled to welcome you to Artistry by the Lake 2025, taking place June 28 to July 1 at Queen's Royal Park in Niagara-on-the-Lake!

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40th annual Strawberry Festival is Saturday

Dan Smeenk Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church is set to ring in summer with the return of its annual Strawberry Festival on June 21.

An estimated 5,500 people are expected to attend the event, now in its 40th year, to enjoy an array of strawberry delights — from fresh quarts of berries to crepes, yogurt, homemade meat pies and jams.

The family-friendly festival will also feature a silent auction, live entertainment, a dog park area, and children's activities including bouncy castles, obstacle courses and Lego.

Originally called the Strawberry Social, the event was launched in 1985 by the St. Andrew's Women's Association and featured shortcake, drinks, a bake sale and a silent auction.

The event has since expanded but maintains its



The annual Strawberry Festival returns this Saturday at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. FILE

roots in community and seasonal celebration.

Doug Dineley, who has been involved in the festival since the first year, said strawberries were chosen because they are one of the first fruits farmers can harvest each growing season.

"Farmers can grow a lot of strawberries during a period when things aren't

so busy," he said, making a summer festival possible.

Dineley said the food has remained a consistent highlight.

"As far as foodwise, the strawberries have probably been essentially the same for 39 years," he said.

Planning begins in February, said Julie Hunter, co-chair of the festival and a property committee mem-

ber. Permits are submitted in March, and by May, preparations are running smoothly.

"Everybody knows more or less what we have to do," said Kathy Hunter, the festival's chair organizer and a church member. "All hands are on deck and we hope everybody shows up."

After the day's excitement, Dineley admitted with a laugh, "I'm glad it's over."

Jokes aside, the church is proud of the community support and turnout each

"We don't want just strawberries; we want really good strawberries," Dineley said. "We want people to go home and remember how good the strawberries were."

The event also raises funds for St. Andrew's, which has stood at 323 Simcoe St. since 1855.

The Strawberry Festival runs Saturday, June 21 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., just north of Centre Street.

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📍 Outlet Collection at Niagara Thursday, June 26

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Descendant of Wilderness owners returns for private visit

Dan Smeenk Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

Graham Claus, 96, returned to his ancestral family home, the Wilderness, last Wednesday, with his family by his side and "overwhelmed" with emotion.

After a long period of disconnection from an important piece of family history, Claus, the oldest living descendant of the original Wilderness owners, got to see a private viewing of an indelible part of his family history before the end of his life.

Graham Claus is five generations descended from the original owners of the Wilderness property, a place which has historical significance, and recognized by the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake as a heritage property in 1994.

The Claus family was also joined by members of the Niagara Foundation, which now owns the property. They gave him a framed picture of the property in his honour.



From left, Mike Niles, Janice Claus, Donna Claus Chiborak, John Claus, Niki Claus and Graham Claus (front). The Claus family got a private tour of the Wilderness last Wednesday, as they are direct descendants of the original owners of the property. DAN SMEENK

Claus said a lot of research went into tracing his roots into this property.

"I started doing research about 40 years ago," he said. "I discovered 10 rails of microfilm, and I went to the archives in Ottawa, Toronto, and the public library in St. Catharines, where I met Ruth Parker's daughter."

Parker one of three sisters who owned the property. She died in 2013.

"She helped me a lot," Claus said of Parker's daughter.

The Wilderness property, located at 407 King St. and bordering Regent Street, is on the site of a residential home that goes back to the 18th century.

The property has served many uses over time. It was first a meeting place between a European-descended owner and Six Nations people, who presented Ann Johnson Claus with the land the home is on for her "many deeds of kindness."

These include her father, Sir William Johnson, who negotiated the Treaty of Niagara with 24 First Nations groups in 1764.

Johnson Claus' son, the Hon. William Claus, built the first house on the land, which was destroyed by the American army's arson during the War of 1812.

After the original house was burned, a new one was built on the same five-acre land in 1816, which serves as the current building with alterations and additions done as recently as the 1970s.

The house served as a hospital during the 1820s and eventually took on its current name, the Wilderness, at the beginning of the 20th century.

But the site is also notable as a place of natural beauty on top of its history with humans. There is a large gingko tree on the property and sycamore trees line its King Street boundary, making this a unique place.

"There's so much history, whether it's Indigenous, British military, or horticultural history," said Lyle Hall, chair of the Niagara Foundation.

After Ruth Parker died, she left half of the property in the hands of the Niagara Foundation, which eventually bought out the remaining half of the from Ken Reid and took over the whole property again last year.

The foundation has been doing restoration efforts on the property ever since and started accepting visitors earlier this month. They also launched a \$1 million campaign to help in these efforts.

"This is true to Ruth's wishes," said Hall. "We're rehabilitating the house and bringing in some kind of programming."

Last Wednesday, the story came right back to Claus.

It also goes directly back through his family line all the way to the founding of the Wilderness, a history that is not likely to ever be lost on him, and which he finally gets to see for himself.

"I'm still humbled and honoured to be invited," he said.

daniel@niagaranow.com

Willowbank students help restore national historic site in Maritimes

Paige Seburn Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

Most college students hand in their work to a professor. Students from Willowbank in Niagara-onthe-Lake installed theirs at an 18th-century fortress in the Maritimes last week.

Parks Canada in Cape Breton, N.S., signed a three-year agreement with Willowbank School of Restoration Arts, Algonquin College and Holland College to involve students in the restoration of the Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Site.

Alanna Wilson was one of six students from Willowbank who travelled to the historic site to install handbuilt shutters she helped craft back in NOTL, putting into practice skills she learned through the private career college's heritage conservation diploma, the only program it offers.

"I'm so thrilled that I got to be a part of it," said Wilson, 31. She enrolled last year and is graduating in 2027.

"How many students can say that they've already done, you know, some work on and for a national historic site? It's a very special and unique opportunity," she said.



Willowbank students install custom-built shutters at the Fortress of Louisbourg as part of a national heritage restoration project with Parks Canada. SUPPLIED

"Our whole class was so excited when we found out."

The agreement, signed last June, has so far had students focused on crafting shutters for the 18th-century fortress after a review of blueprints and meeting with Parks Canada's lead conservator, ahead of their

installation this month.

Installation of the shutters began on the afternoon of June 9, after a morning spent touring the site with Parks Canada staff and carpenters. It was done by Tuesday afternoon.

Wilson said it was special not only to build the

shutters using traditional methods alongside modern tools, but to see their work installed on a national historic site visited by millions — knowing it would become part of the building's story.

"It's something that not everybody gets to do," she said.

Willowbank's executive director, Katie Houghton, said the experience highlights the program's handson, one-of-a-kind approach, where "students get an introduction to everything that fits within the heritage landscape."

"It's just such a wonderful opportunity for students to really apply their learning at a national historic site," she added. "It really allows the whole experience to be brought to life."

Wilson said the "unfriendly" weather and climate at the site make it tough on wood and wood components, especially features like shutters.

"They find that their shutters are rotting quicker," she said.

Eight students worked on the shutters at Willowbank, but only six of them travelled east to help install them on site due to the other two having work commitments, Houghton said.

She said Willowbank,

located in an 1834 mansion in Queenston, offers one of the few programs in Canada where students can learn these types of skills. That's why Parks Canada approached the school to take part in the Louisbourg project, she said.

"We were just so happy that our students could have the opportunity," she added.

Students graduate with a three-year diploma in heritage conservation, combining classroom theory with hands-on training in traditional techniques, Wilson said. The first two years are in-class and the last year is an internship.

"For me, it's a very unique program," she said, adding it's the perfect marriage of practical education and theory.

The experience at Louisbourg is already opening new doors, Houghton said.

One of the site's head stonemasons is set to visit Willowbank this summer to give a guest lecture on how extreme weather affects masonry — a connection sparked by the students' time on site and one the school hopes to continue building on.

"We have people from that site wanting to come out to us," she said. "Just from our students being out there." Wilson's involvement is far from over, she said, but what comes next is still being determined. She is, however, ready and willing to continue wherever she's needed.

Her class is already encouraging incoming students to take part, too.

"For us, it was such a valuable experience," she said, adding that some students are considering going back for their third-year internships.

"Because the staff in Parks Canada were so great," she said. "They were fantastic hosts."

This summer, Wilson is interning with the Town as a heritage planner through a placement arranged by Willowbank.

"I'm super excited that my first summer with Willowbank, I'm actually able to work in the field," she said.

"It feels very fortunate and very lucky."

Willowbank is still accepting applicants for its heritage conservation program starting in September, with a few spots remaining. The deadline is Aug. 20, but applications may close sooner if the program fills up.

Houghton said she's "happy to arrange a tour and speak more to the program."

paigeseburn@niagaranow.com





Seventh hole is for the birdies at NOTL club

Kevin MacLean The Lake Report

The seventh hole at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club can be tough on players.

At this time of year, besides large trees, large bunkers and wind-whipped Lake Ontario, there's a new wrinkle: dive-bombing by red-winged blackbirds.

For the past month or so the tiny birds have been aggressively defending their turf, protecting a nest from predators. And golfers.

While the first fledgling offspring have apparently left "home," at least one adult bird has taken up residence in a larger tree between #7 green and #8 tee.

On Tuesday, women's 18-hole league captain Yolanda Henry says almost all golf participants had some close encounters with the angry flier.

But that didn't deter Henry and others from posting some good scores.

The captain's 85 was best gross score, followed by Carroll Baker (91) and Cathy Murray (93).

Sharron Marlow and Henry tied for low net with 67, while Margot Richard-



Golfers are being dive-bombed by red-winged blackbirds that are protecting their territories. SOURCED/PIXABAY

son, Judy Mantle, Murray and Baker were net 72 and Maria Townley and Tracey Peters had 75.

Fewest putts: Ginny Green, Baker and Marlow (31), followed by Maria Townley and Lisa Allen (31). Trish Anthony birdied #12.

In the women's ninehole league on Tuesday, Peggy Larder captured the Captain's Cup, a low-net competition.

Other winners: Maureen

Dickson (longest drive #2), Patty Garriock (longest drive #8), Barb Werner (closest to pin #4) and Suzanne Watson birdied #6.

Heather Buchanan had the best gross score in Monday's Business Ladies league. Other winners were: Bobbi Corcoran (longest drive #1), Susan Flight (closest to the 150 on #2), Ruth Dowsett (closest to pin #4), May Chang (longest putt #7), and Christine Merza (closest to pin in two on #9).

In the men's Woofs league on Tuesday, Glenn Murray was the big winner, shooting a 1-over 37 and firing his tee shot closest to the pin on #4. Mike Mott was low net (30.5) and Ted Carmichael's birdie won the hidden hole prize.

Last Thursday in men's league play, Steve Millward's even-par 36 scored best gross honours. Jim McMacken was one shot behind.

Bill Garriock had low net (29) and Millward was second with 31 net.

Other winners: Peter Falconer (longest putt #2), Patrick Craig (longest drive #3 and closest to the pin #4) and Bill Smethurst (closest to pin #9).

Birdies by Millward (#6) and McMacken (#8) earned \$55 gross skins. Net skins, worth \$60 went to Garriock (#1), Martin Vagners (#2) and Tony Sanfelice (#8).

In the weekly putting contest, Cal Cochrane, Jeff Jacques and Jared Mines all missed their chance at scooping \$500, which bumps the prize money to \$600 this week.



Have an opinion you want heard?

Send a letter to the editor to editor@niagaranow.com



The Lake Report

OPINION



Publisher: Richard Harley Editor-In-Chief: Richard Harley Managing Editor: Zahraa Hmood Editor Emeritus: Kevin MacLean Design & Layout: Richard Harley **Advertising:** Megan Vanderlee Contributors: Denise Ascenzo, Dr. William Brown, Penny-Lynn Cookson, Andrew Hawlitzky, Brian Marshall,

Linda Fritz, Patty Garriock, Steve Hardaker, NOTL Museum, Ross Robinson, Julia Sacco, Paige Seburn, Kyra Simone, Tim Taylor, Jill Troyer, Garth Turner, Dave Van de Laar, Janice White, Joanne Young and many more members of the community



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#32: Instead of throwing out old towels, give them to a humane society as they are needed to help with animal care.

This tiny column gives tips to help promote kindness in our lives and spread joy and happiness.



Contributed by Patty Garriock

"What you get by achieving your goals is not as important as what you become by achieving your goals." - Zig Ziglar

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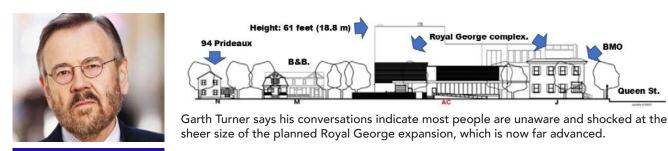
Fawning over deer at Peller

Photographer Dave Van de Laar captures a tender moment at Peller Estates on Friday, June 13, as a mother doe gently licks her fawn — a poignant glimpse of the guiet beauty that still thrives in Niagaraon-the-Lake, and a reminder of what's at stake if we fail to protect the natural habitats that so many species, like us, call home.



Opinion

Stage fright: How Shaw will rock Old Town



THE TURNER REPORT

Garth Turner Columnist

Visit the corner of Victoria and Prideaux in Old

There stands a stately clapboard heritage home, likely the most spectacular real estate flip in NOTL, the work of one of our prominent power couples. Now asking \$3.85 million. So gilded is it that some locals dub the place, at 94 Prideaux, "Versailles."

As you stare from the sidewalk up to the gables of the second storey soaring overhead, turn and look up Victoria toward the main drag.

Now imagine, one property away, the flat industrial roofline of a new building twice the height of the mansion. That's right, the height of another Versailles stacked atop Versailles.

Also picture the removal of the heritage property behind the BMO branch. And the double garage beside that. Plus the Victorianmotif house next door.

In their stead, a hulking monolith structure, a twometre-high fence, a driveway for large trucks, loading docks, industrial garbage bins plus a long pedestrian accessibility ramp.

All this will be one face of the biggest, tallest structure in the downtown. It will tower 61 feet (18.8 metres) over Victoria Street.

In all, four heritage buildings will be offed. The iconic Queen streetscape will be forever altered, the 120-year-old Royal George erased, trees sacrificed and apparently you have nothing to say about it.

Thanks to the Shaw Festival and a provincial government with a build, baby, build fetish, NOTL's transformation from an authentic heritage oasis to a theme park with a historic vibe continues. In fact, it's hitting overdrive.

Seems few people living in, or caring about, the ancient beating heart of this place are aware of the Shaw Festival's plan to erect a \$110-million, hulking box with a façade stuck on the

Yes, we all know the tired Royal George has an underwear problem. Most folks have heard it needs renovating. And a lot are aware the Ford government ponied up \$35 million in public funds to pay for it.

But the Shaw guys have other plans. When done, they'll own the place.

"I saw the notice the town sent around," says a longtime owner around the corner. "But nowhere did it say anything about a project this massive, or what it might do to the streetscape."

Indeed. The stunning details are contained online, not in the flyer. More was unveiled at a public meeting earlier this week. Thus far media coverage focused on the premier making good on his pre-election promise of largesse.

The festival itself has kept its message low-key and reassuring.

"The transformed Royal George will try to maintain the unique heritage character of Queen Street, and we will aim for it to be North America's first carbon neutral and Rick Hansen Gold Certified performing arts centre, offering unparalleled levels of accessibility. This will require a larger footprint but will ensure we can continue to deliver the style of classic theatre on which our reputation rests, in ways that will meet the needs of the audiences and workers of tomorrow."

Silent is the way this project will actually chew up an entire half-block, darken the sun with its height, insert a Milton-style industrial building in the heritage core and involve years of heavy construction.

What about safeguards? The heritage cops? Zoning? In a town where you can't replace your porch without a hassle, how the hell did this slip through?

Well, council exempted Shaw from restrictions contained in its expanded heritage zone. No public hearing on that.

The town cites provincial legislation as essentially forcing the project to be greenlit. "Note that third party appeals are restricted for this application as per Bill 185, Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024," says its notice to residents.

"Planning Act appeals may be filed by the applicant, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, a "specified person" [utilities], and any public body."

But not you. Surprise. Garth Turner is a NOTL resident, journalist, author, wealth manager and former federal MP and minister.

garth@garth.ca



WHO WON THE WAR OF 1812?

A PANEL DISCUSSION | July 12, 2:30 to 4:30 p.m.

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Development questions and considerations

Dear editor:

I commend Stuart Mc-Cormack and his team at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Residents Association for setting things in motion to bring newly elected faces to town council at the next election. Challenges and questions abound for consideration. These are some.

One challenge that the Niagara-on-the-Lake Residents Association has is the manner in which NOTL is geographically structured and represented.

Old Town, Virgil, Glendale, Queenston, Chautauqua and St. Davids have population bases that are not united in their interests but rather focused on their specific needs rather than the collective whole.

This allows the existing town council to essentially divide and conquer the electoral base by not having the entire electoral base engaged in important issues that may only apply to one residential area. And, neither of these geographical population bases has specific representatives upon which each district can rely to argue or negotiate their specific causes within town council.

A NOTL Residents Association may resolve this through the election of like-minded Councillors, but perhaps it would also be appropriate to have a specific Councillor elected by the constituents in each geographical area to represent each residential area's interests. A plebiscite?

The town's infrastructure needs to be addressed. Town council and staff have not focused on (or ignored) the lack of existing infrastructure capacity (such as



Gienek Ksiazkiewicz writes that the Town of NOTL should employ a qualified engineer to help address poor storm drainage and sewage treatment capacity issues. FILE

sewage capacity and water hydrology), particularly when sewage capacity and flooding have been demonstrably shown to be in need of upgrades. While infrastructure shortcomings have been ignored, real estate development has continued unabated.

For example, the St. Davids stormwater and roadway master servicing plan and class environmental assessment (sewer capacity) was last completed in January 2003. Does anyone think that, after 22 years, a new master plan is required? And, the sanitary sewer and water master plan for St. Davids cannot be found by town staff — where is it?

We know that the sewage being pumped from St. Davids to the Niagara Falls is exceeding the capacity of that treatment plant, and sewage is being periodically dumped into the Niagara River. Niagara Region is planning to build a new South Niagara Wastewater Treatment Plant at a cost of approximately \$400 million to rectify this. But this just didn't appear overnight.

NOTL council and staff should not have been ap-

proving developments in the St. Davids urban boundary during the last five years or longer, knowing that the infrastructure, as it is, doesn't support further residential/commercial expansion.

The treasurer/CAO (or town council/staff) should have adequately budgeted for infrastructure capacity (such as drainage) to allow for future real estate development.

Town council claims that it relies on staff professionals for their expert opinions and makes decisions based on these experts. However, the town does not have anyone with a P. Eng., P.L. (Eng.) on staff to evaluate/ vet engineering reports paid for by developers - engineering reports probably designed to promote the developer's project rather than pointing out any shortcomings in that development and the town's infrastructure.

Supposedly, there have been engineering reports paid by a developer couched in exculpatory language designed to exclude them from any liability issues that may arise as a result of errors or omissions their reports might contain.

In a small community such as Niagara, where everyone knows everyone, businesses that rely on work directed to them from both governmental bodies and developers within the region are not going to want to upset their sources of income.

As a result, you have to wonder whether engineering consultants (or others) contracted by the town are likely to (out of self-interest, a.k.a. future potential revenue streams) contradict other known neighbouring business entities that are advocating a particular development.

It's also unknown how many external consulting contracts the town has contracted over the years, and whether a cost-benefit analysis has been done to see if it's financially worthwhile to have a qualified engineer on staff.

The town has people employed in the environmental stewardship department, they have a climate change co-ordinator and they have customer experience representatives. From my perspective, wouldn't it be just as important, if not more important, to have a qualified engineer on staff as well?

The urban design committee should be empowered. Presently, they have no power or authority, but council/staff can say residential representatives were consulted — good optics. Perhaps it's time to empower them?

Finally, town councillors need to be appropriately remunerated commensurate with the time and effort they put in because it's really a full-time job.

Gienek Ksiazkiewicz St. Davids

The IRISH HARP PUBLE RIDDLE METHIS

This week's riddle is "Jeopardy!" style.

Category: FAIR AND SQUARE

The Texas State Fair "no rules" cook-off for this food does have rules: it must have fillers such as beans and onions.

Last issue: REGIONAL FOOD

Clue: They may sound undesirable, but these charred tougher pieces cut from a brisket point are a staple of Kansas City BBQ.

Answer: What are burnt ends?

Answered first by: Sue Rautenberg

Also answered correctly (in order) by: Stefanie Buikema, Jane Morris, Bob Wheatley, Lynda Collet, Mike Gander, Jeff Lake, Becky Creager, Wade Durling, Esther VanGorder, Katie Reimer, Lynda Hosty, Margie Enns, Sheila Meloche, Marla Percy, Edna Groff

Email answers to editor@niagaranow.com, with your name, for a chance to win a \$25 Irish Harp Pub gift card every week. (Subject line: Riddle me this)

*REMEMBER TO PUT "WHAT IS" FOR JEOPARDY QUESTIONS!

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Elizabeth Gordon, Executor of the Estate for the <u>Estate of Norman J. Edmondson</u> (Deceased March 31st, 2025) 1591 Concession 4 Rd., Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON LOS 1J0 June 2, 2025

NOTICE TO CLAIM PERSONAL BELONGINGS

To whom it may concern,

This letter is to advise that the Estate of Norman John Edmondson located at 1591 Concession 4 Rd., Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON, LOS 1JO, is in the process of being administered. Any persons who have left personal belongings at this property are hereby requested to make arrangements to retrieve their items.

All items must be collected no later than June 30th, 2025. Unclaimed property may be considered abandoned and will be disposed of at the discretion of the estate.

To arrange a pickup or verify ownership, please contact the undersigned at the contact information provided above.

Proof of ownership will be required.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Gordon, Executor – Estate of Norman J. Edmondson

Contact Information:

Mark Gordon 416 729-3752 Email: mark_gordonca@yahoo.ca

Have an opinion you want heard?
Email us.

Celebrate with Royal Oak for 10th anniversary

Dear editor:

In a few days, a small group of local residents will celebrate a significant milestone that ought to be celebrated more widely — the 10th anniversary of Niagara-on-the-Lake's Royal Oak Community School.

Royal Oak is a thriving institution in the heart of Old Town that has delivered, maintained and grown a badly needed service to Niagara-on-the-Lake — a not-for-profit elementary school in the heart of the community.

The fact that Royal Oak even exists is a small miracle for Niagara-on-the-Lake. It makes the town, all parts of it, a better place, and the more people know about it and why it's important, the better it is for all of us.

Royal Oak was founded in 2015 after a bitter battle by residents to keep Old Town's public elementary school, Parliament Oak, from being closed by the District School Board of Niagara. The DSBN didn't listen, and today the Parliament Oak site is a pile of rubble.

Rather than sulk, the families and individuals who founded Royal Oak decided to be positive. Full disclosure: I was on Royal Oak's founding committee and served as its first board chair. Today, I am just an observer and admirer.

People wanted a local school their kids could walk to. Having a school in the heart of NOTL attracts young families, and it's integral to keeping the town from becoming a geriatric Disneyland.

A decade later, Royal Oak Community School is fulfilling a deep need in Niagara-on-the-Lake, without asking for a lot in return.

Royal Oak's students enjoy a program that combines academic rigour with outdoor learning, creativity and social responsibility. Its programs instill values — what it means to be a citizen.

In an era plagued by

online trolling and gratuitous anger and hate, this is priceless.

"Our 10th anniversary is a testament to what happens when a community rallies around a vision, for meaningful education while reimagining what is possible in schools," says Julia Murray, Royal Oak's head of school.

It also shows what Niagara-on-the-Lake can do when it imagines what is possible for the town — when residents get together because they share an idea and then make it happen. That's something we all should celebrate.

David Israelson NOTL



Analyzing the Shaw's plans for the Royal George Theatre



ARCHITEXT

Brian Marshall Columnist

I have been an ardent fan of live performance theatre for most of my life. I was five years old and seated in the Eaton Auditorium when I first witnessed the magic created by actors upon a stage. They transported me into an alternate reality which engaged my child's imagination so completely that it was never fully released. To this day, I remain hooked on live theatre.

Looking back, I must have been a pain to my mother and aunt — both regular theatre-goers — demanding, wheedling and sometimes begging to be included when they attended a play. And particularly when that performance was at the Eaton Auditorium.

It was a grand venue designed by the French architect Jacques Carlu, whom Lady Eaton had commissioned to create a 1,264-seat auditorium on the seventh floor of the new Eaton's College Street building in Toronto. The building was a tour-de-force in the Art Moderne style and Carlu carried this forward on the seventh floor to design spaces which evoked a sense of being in a luxury ocean liner.

From 1930 to the late 1960s, the Eaton Auditorium was considered to be the cultural centre of the city. It was where one went to see the opera, classical recitals, the ballet, vocal performances and, of course, plays.

But, pursuant with the opening of the Eaton's Centre and the sale of the College Street building to a developer, the auditorium was closed in 1976.

Although the new owners of the building promised — as a provision within the agreement of sale — to preserve the seventh floor, in short order the developers applied for a demolition permit, claiming that its preservation and restoration were not financially feasible.

A court battle ensued and, in 1986, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the 1975 heritage designation of the building under the Ontario Heritage Act protected the seventh floor from demolition.



The Royal George rebuild plan doesn't respect NOTL's streetscape, writes Brian Marshall.

Now, while it may not have been exposed to a wrecking ball, there was nothing that required the building owners to use, maintain or restore it. Thus, the owners sealed off the seventh floor and, for the next 27 years, it sat in an advancing state of moldering deterioration.

Finally, in 2001, under the ownership of Great West Life Realty Advisors (who had purchased in the building in 1997), restoration of this iconic space began.

The auditorium was reopened on May 1, 2003 under a new name that recognized the original architect. The Carlu was reborn.

It's probably no surprise, given my attachment to live theatre, that over the past few decades my wife and I have regularly attended performances at the Shaw. In fact, since 2017 it isn't Christmastime until we attend the performance of A Christmas Carol in the Royal George.

Despite the fact the seating is cramped, the lobby small and the building somewhat the worse for wear, there is something about this venue which pulls at my heartstrings.

Unlike the Eaton building and auditorium, the theatre does not represent great architecture — it was built c. 1915 as a simple vaudeville house and has seen a lot of changes over the years, with its current facade a Peter Stokes' 1970s design.

Still, it has been a contextual and social feature of the Queen streetscape throughout its existence and particularly so after the Stokes' intervention.

So, I must admit to being somewhat saddened when the Shaw announced their plan for the redevelopment of the Royal George — which is to say, the old lady will come down and a new theatre built in its place.

However, at the same time, I understand that its foundation is compromised, the quality of its construction (original and subsequent remodels) suspect and the building's limitations place difficult constraints on its operation as a modern theatre

Much as I might wish otherwise, sometimes the old simply has to make way for the new.

Therefore, I looked forward to the opportunity to review the Shaw proposal in its entirety ... something I had the opportunity to do recently.

Quite frankly, there are a lot of things I like about the proposed facade. The projection incorporating the pediment, vertical elements and openings that recall the existing facade and use of a sympathetic marquee above the main doors are of particular note.

That said, I struggle with the size of the openings and the expanses of plate glass doors and windows. I am also challenged by the Victoria Street wing of the building — which will be constructed after the demolition of three 19th-century buildings — with a proposed facade that presents as commercial/institutional (and includes a loading dock), threaten-

ing to fundamentally alter the streetscape of Victoria within the heritage district.

Still, these are items which can be addressed by relatively minor architectural adjustments to the plans.

What cannot be considered minor?

The proposed building is a behemoth completely out of scale with the existing Queen streetscape. It is not a little bit taller than the other buildings on Queen, it is more than twice the height of the next tallest building.

The proposed fly tower will rise to just shy of 62 feet (about 5.1 storeys), will be roughly triple the width (of existing) as viewed from Queen Street and, combined with the new third storey, create a backdrop massing that will completely dominate and overshadow the historic streetscape of the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District.

To be clear, I support the Shaw's overture for redevelopment of the Royal George. However, it must be done sympathetically, within context and not at the expense of the Part V heritage district.

Brian Marshall is a NOTL realtor, author and expert consultant on architectural design, restoration and heritage.



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OPINION (%)



Hockey enthusiasm so parochial in Canada



ROSS'S RAMBLINGS

Ross Robinson Columnist

Hockey can be such a great game, loved by so many in so many parts of our very large country. Happily, women are now so very involved, both as amateurs and professionals

As a kid, I was a huge fan of the Canadiens and the Leafs. In Kirkland Lake, Winnipeg, Toronto and St. Catharines. Later, as an adult, before the stratospheric salaries and legalized gambling began to dominate the NHL, I eventually lost interest.

Nevertheless, I was caught totally off guard last week in Butler's Sports Bar, during game five of the finals between Edmonton and Florida. The stranger in a Penn State hat sitting next to me at the bar asked,

"What quarter are they in?"

I hesitated before responding, "Actually, in hockey we call them periods." Food for thought. Maybe we should call them thirds. With a stretch of my imagination, let me explain my roundabout (I know, a polarizing word here in NOTL) reasoning for this choice of word.

In basketball, they have four quarters, and in football, they play two halves. So, perhaps in hockey we should play three thirds. A bit awkward in Quebec, though.

Are we in agreement? Back to game five of the finals last week, and another stranger at Butler's cheering loudly for the Oilers. He was about 35, with his wife and their 11-month-old son. My new pal Vijay Nirmal from Mississauga was actively wearing his Oilers sweater, #99 GRETZY. In large and proud letters and numbers. His wee son was wearing a wee sweater reading #97 McDAVID. Orange and blue.

Mom was more subdued sartorially, but still very much an Oilers fan. Spending a lot of her time taking care of the



With no big screen hockey action at Gretzky's Winery for the Stanley Cup Final game five, serious Edmonton Oilers fan Vijay Nirmal and his 11-month-old son joined a few locals at Butler's Sports Bar. ROSS ROBINSON

young one, as Dad got progressively louder and louder about helping his team score. And hopefully win. The game went to overtime. Again. What a

Oilers fan Vijay told me how last year he had flown out to Edmonton for game seven of the finals, to cheer with some friends in "the Moss Pit." Like a music concert and the mosh pit, but for Edmonton hockey, the Moss Pit. How clever.

Known formally as the Ice District Ford Tailgate Park, but lovingly named after Joey Moss. Located just outside of Rogers Place, where the Oilers play, at 103 Avenue and 102 Street, and with a legal standing room capacity of 5,500.

This is a wonderful Canadian and human story, which I really want to share.

For over 30 years, Joey Moss was a beloved and important member of the Edmonton Oilers and Edmonton Eskimos teams. A locker room attendant with a sunny disposition and a tireless work ethic, totally dedicated to both teams. Born with Down syndrome, Joey Moss worked hard and professionally and passionately.

He was treated with great respect and love and was recognized with championship rings and lots of love. And regular paycheques.

He was a cherished member of the Edmonton sports community, and was eventually immortalized with the fan venue sobriquet the Moss Pit.

Gretzy and his teammates all respected and loved Joey, and he totally loved them back. Sitting next to the players bench, belting out "O Canada," cheering every victory and saddened by every loss.

So my new pal and Edmonton Oilers fan Vijay Nirmal and his family had come to wonderful Niagaraon-the-Lake for a fun, totally Canadian weekend. They travel a lot and are heading to Ubud in Bali next month for a family wedding.

A feature of their Niagara getaway weekend was going to be watching the Oilers/ Panthers playoff game at Gretzky's Winery on Niagara Stone Road. On a big screen with a bunch of boisterous Niagara hockey fans. Vijay the Dad had his Gretzky sweater (not jersey) dry-cleaned and ready for the game.

Traffic on the Q.E.W. wasn't too bad, and they stopped by Reif Estate Winery on the Parkway for a tour and Chardonnay tasting. A Greek snack at Gyro's on the Lake on Queen Street, and then they arrived at Gretzky's in time for the opening face-off (not puck drop).

The Nirmal family were having a wonderful and unique family getaway in Niagara. But, as they parked their car in an almost empty parking lot at Gretzy's, only a couple of staff members were getting into their cars and driving away.

Confused. Flummoxed. Bewildered. Perplexed. They asked one of the staff members what was going on.

Nothing was going on at the eponymous Gretzky's Winery for the hockey game.

The Nirmal family deftly shifted to Butler's Sports Bar and did their best to be true Canadian hockey fans.

Great pizza and cold beer. A fair number of hockey fans. But boo, the Oilers

Here in Ontario, are we really hockey fans? Or just Leaf fans? Just asking.

In defense of the Gate Street hotel | Denounce war, embrace love from its architect

Dear editor:

While I appreciate Garth Turner's comment in June 5's Lake Report ("The Turner Report: Open the floodgates? Then expect the flood") that the proposed hotel at 222 Gate St. is "gorgeous," as the architect, I take issue with him using the term "fake."

This building actually reflects a period when large elegant homes were being built in Niagara-on-the-Lake in the late 19th century, similar to most of the buildings in every community, which are reinterpretations of earlier styles.

For example, at the Harbour House Hotel, I adapted the shingle style that was popular on the American East Coast from the period between 1880 and 1910. At Queen's Landing, I borrowed design elements from the Green Briar Hotel in West Virginia.

With the Shaw Club Hotel, I added vernacular elements from the mid-1800s, such as the verandahs. At the Pillar and Post, we used the simple shapes of workers' houses as they were

more compatible with the old canning factory.

All of the hotels our firm designed in the Old Town connect visually to a previous historic period and therefore appear to always have been part of the community. This philosophy of design is called contextualism, and it shows how most towns were built slowly over time, reflecting the changes in tastes and styles that occur every generation or so.

As to land use, Mr. Turner agrees that, with garbage bins, a restaurant, a hotel and a grocery store adjacent to this property, it is no longer suitable for a house. Traditionally, when a vacant property has commercial zoning on two sides, from a planning point of view, it can be considered an area in transition and its use changes to the use of the adjacent properties.

David Jones, the owner, concluded that a hotel would be the most appropriate use of the land. As architects, we designed it so it looked like it might have been there since the early 1900s.

We also eliminated any

driveways, so there's no additional vehicular traffic on Gate Street. There's no pedestrian entrance on Gate Street either, so there are fewer people on the sidewalks than there would have been even if it was a singlefamily residence.

Finally, unlike the many hotels that have already been approved for the Old Town, this design complies with the height bylaws, the setback bylaws and the parking bylaws of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

In conclusion, we can lament the fact that the properties close to Queen Street are no longer suitable for single-family houses, but the community has to decide what the best alternative use is.

We're suggesting that a building that is attractive and looks like a house, doesn't add traffic to the street, has no restaurants (with their associated noise and odours) and complies with the Town's bylaws is an excellent use and probably the best alternative.

Wayne Murray *NOTL*

Dear editor:

Like almost all Baha'i communities across Canada, about half of your neighbours here in Niagaraon-the-Lake who are of the Baha'i Faith are Iranian-Canadian.

They are, of course, extremely concerned about the current conflict between Israel and Iran, where many still have relatives, friends and loved ones. But they, and the entire worldwide Baha'i community, pray for peace - not just between Israel and Iran, but in Lebanon, in Syria,

and, of course, for peace and justice in Gaza and the West Bank.

Baha'is also pray for the safety of both the Israeli and the Iranian people, and they do not forget all the other suffering peoples of the world — in Ukraine, Sudan and elsewhere.

Baha'is believe that the lasting international peace we all desire can be accomplished when humankind finally renounces political social, military and socalled patriotic solutions to its problems.

One of the Baha'i prayers

includes the phrase "Make haste to love! Make haste to give!"

It seems so simple. But to love in this way, we all know, requires self-discipline, patience and many other qualities we may find difficult to sustain.

However, peace — first within ourselves, then within our families, our communities, our countries and finally in our increasingly small and fragile world — seems well worth the effort.

Hugh Church *NOTL*



We welcome your letters

The Lake Report welcomes your letters to the editor. Please, write early and often. 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 496 Mississagua St., NOTL.



'Anything Goes' sparkles at the Shaw Festival

ANYTHING GOES

(out of five)

Festival Theatre, 2 hours 30 minutes, one intermission, ends Oct. 4. Music and Lyrics by Cole Porter. Original book by P.G. Wodehouse & Guy Bolton and Howard Lindsay & Russel Crouse. New book by Timothy Crouse & John Weidman. Directed and choreographed by Kimberley Rampersad.

Penny-Lynn Cookson Special to The Lake Report

Anything goes? Yes, indeed it does in this sparkling adaptation of the 1987 Broadway revival based on the 1934 hit.

"Anything Goes," directed and choreographed by Kimberley Rampersad with music direction by Paul Sportelli, delivers big time.

Easy for us to love is the unabashed joy, energy, superb choreography and dancing, the convincing performances and, of course, the memorable music and witty lyrics of that master of the Great American Songbook, Cole Porter.

The setting is the early 1930s during the Great Depression and the S.S. American is sailing from New York to London with a ship's manifest that is highly questionable. To sail was to be transported yet escape and for the wealthy, a special luxury.

The 1930s were the Golden Age of the great steamships of Britain, France, Italy, Germany and the United States, all in competition for the fastest transatlantic crossing and for celebrity passengers.

Charlie Chaplin has cancelled his passage to



The Shaw's production of "Anything Goes," an adaptation of the 1987 Broadway revival, features big energy, superb choreography and compelling performances, writes Penny-Lynn Cookson. DAVID COOPER

the chagrin of the ship's captain, but on board is a well-known evangelist and nightclub singer.

Reno Sweeney is played by a vivacious Mary Antonini who brings the charisma, confidence and voice the part demands. She sings a strong "I Get a Kick Out of You" and "You're the Top," holding her own against former Reno stars Ethel Merman, Patti Lu-Pone and Sutton Foster.

Reno is accompanied by her four Angels, the sassy and sexy gospel/nightclub singers and dancers, Charity, Chastity, Virtue and Purity. Their tap dancing with the ensemble sailors had the audience cheering.

We're at sea so there's love, but it's complicated. Reno loves Billy Crocker, the young stockbroker and stowaway in besotted pursuit of the prim heiress and debutante, Hope Harcourt.

Hope loves Billy but is engaged to a stuffy English

aristocrat, Lord Evelyn Oakleigh, and believes it proper to obey her mother. The widow, Evangeline Harcourt, is determined to recoup the status and wealth lost by the Wall Street crash of 1929.

Jeff Irving has the looks, charm and voice required for the role of Billy. Celeste Catena as Hope, brings a sad stoicism of duty to marry for money. Their solos of "Easy to Love" are of longing which soon fires up to desire in their dance duet "It's De-Lovely."

Sharry Flett as Evangeline Harcourt brings refinement, elegance and a flirtatious bent in her quest to achieve her goals. Shawn Wright as Elisha Whitney, plays for laughs a gruff, near-sighted Wall Street banker, Yale man and boss of Billy.

The surprise delight is Allan Louis as Lord Evelyn, a personable but stuffy twit with a penchant for American slang and a wild side, enthusiastically demonstrated by performing "The Gypsy in Me."

The lovable gangster on the lam, Moonface Martin, played by Michael Therriault, aspires to move from Public Enemy #13 to #1 for greater celebrity appeal. His brassy moll, Erma Latour, is promiscuous, smart and fiercely independent with a New "Joisey" accent strongly delivered by Kristi Frank.

This production is mesmerizing for its embrace of references. Sets are designed by Cory Sincennes in the Art Deco style of the era. Standing lanterns for the American echo the huge, tiered lights in the famous first-class dining hall of the S.S. Normandie.

The flying bridge with double staircases allows for imaginative choreography and observation of the deck action and dancing from above. Side-by-side berths below decks effectively use the doors for a Feydeau type farce of actors dashing between rooms.

The lighting designed by Michael Kangas triggers and enhances changes of mood, action and location beginning with the giant porthole on the front curtain through which we first see the changing light of sunset to dusk on the waves of the sea. Dancing vertical stage lights and lit portholes continue to syncopate and change colour, enhancing events on stage.

The Hollywood movies of the 1930s were a source of sophisticated glamour profoundly influencing fashion, manners and aspiration. The wardrobes, makeup and hairstyles of movie stars such as Clark Gable, Carole Lombard, Jean Harlow and Joan Crawford were avidly followed and emulated.

The boyish flapper style of the 1920s changed in the 1930s to women's garments

cut on the bias to flatter the body and by featuring wide shoulders, narrow waists, fur trim and brighter colours.

Long, revealing evening gowns of silk and satin clung to the body and sparkles were meant to dazzle. "Anything Goes" is worth seeing for the veracity, variety and beauty of wardrobe alone under the design and guidance of Sincennes.

Cole Porter's melodies and lyrics were written for theatre as witty marvels of rhyme and suggestion, often naughty, seldom censored. They reflect a man born to wealth and privilege, educated at Yale, who lived grandly in Paris, Venice and New York and yet instinctively understood and touched all levels of American society.

Despite constant pain from a riding accident that crushed his legs, Porter continued to score music and create clever lyrics of love, art, music, literature, travel and everyday life.

Botticelli, the Louvre, Strauss, jazz, swing, cocaine, Ovaltine, seduction, the Nile, the Coliseum, champagne, Camembert, politicians and poets, all in and guaranteed to amuse.

Porter brought a light-hearted effervescence and joy to a world, including his own, of upheaval, pain and suffering. In our current period of uncertainty, not entirely dissimilar from the 1930s, this timely Shaw production of "Anything Goes" has audiences erupting in a catharsis of cheers, whoops and whistles of appreciation. Well-deserved.

Penny-Lynn Cookson is an arts and culture historian, writer and lecturer living in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Pumphouse exhibition a tribute to coastal life and simpler times

Staff
The Lake Report

The Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre is inviting the public to step back into simpler times with "Summer Haven," a solo exhibition by Canadian artist Rob Crosby, on view from June 25 to July 27.

An opening reception will be held Sunday, July 6, from 2 to 4 p.m., with artist remarks scheduled for 2:30 p.m.

The exhibition reflects Crosby's nostalgic connection to his East Coast roots, shaped by summers spent painting by the ocean, surrounded by maritime life and the rhythm of coastal communities.

Born in Sydney, N.S., in 1960 and now based in Ontario, Crosby said his heart remains tied to the East Coast, a connection evident in the subject matter of his work.

"In this fast-paced world, it's time to get back to simpler times and memories," said Crosby. "Fishing, cruising around in your old car, or just going for a walk to de-stress—I hope my work conveys a feeling

of calm and relaxation."

His paintings, often grounded in realism, are driven by his own travel photography and use layered acrylics to add depth and atmosphere. Each piece, he said, is rooted in colour, texture and emotion.

"I only paint what fascinates me—whether it's the colour, the texture, or the emotion it stirs," he said. "I hope the viewer enjoys the experience as much as I do."

Crosby's work has been exhibited widely for more than 30 years, including

shows at the McMichael Canadian Art Gallery, Glenhyrst Art Gallery, Lunenburg Gallery, the Art District Gallery and past exhibits at the Niagara Pumphouse.

He is also a regular participant in Canadian art festivals.

Pumphouse officials say the exhibit offers a visual retreat for visitors looking to reconnect with quieter moments and traditions.

More information about Summer Haven and other upcoming events is available at niagarapumphouse. ca.



"Old Shack," acrylic, by Rob Crosby. Crosby's exhibit "Summer Haven" is at the Pumphouse June 25 to July 27.

NEWS |

Ginger Restaurant and Orchid Inn close after decades of serving community

Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

This summer is going to be different for Cindy Chung. After closing down the joint restaurant and inn she spent the past three decades running, she says she's going to be busy having tea with all the customers who are sad to see her go.

After almost 30 years of serving locals and visitors in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ginger, the intimate Mary Street restaurant, officially shut its doors on June 15, along with Orchid Inn.

Chung, a NOTL resident, is retiring at age 70, after delaying her plan to do so for five years due to CO-VID-19.

She opened Ginger in 1997 and, in 2006, expanded the family-run operation by adding the Orchid Inn — a small, country-style inn located on the same property.

The small staff of five — Chung, her two sons Thane and Seth Garth and cooks Adam Bobro and Phil Wall, who's been there since day one — will all be leaving with the closure.

Since announcing the closure in a June 7 post on the restaurant's Facebook page, Chung said customers have been happy for her retirement but emotional about seeing her and the establishments go.

"They always say: Happy for me and sad for them," said Chung in an interview.

"We are sad too, in a way, because it's a long time."

Chung did not disclose how much she sold the business for and chose not



From left, Adam Bobro, Seth Garth, Cindy Chung and Thane Garth stand outside Ginger Restaurant in its final days. After nearly 30 years serving Niagara-on-the-Lake, Chung is retiring — leaving behind a legacy of food, family, and friendship. PAIGE SEBURN

to share the names of the new owners, but confirmed they are based in Niagara and will officially take over on June 30 and plan to continue operating an inn and restaurant.

"Like we used to do," she said, adding that she's not sure if the name Ginger will stay, though it's more likely they'll choose a new one.

But none of the existing staff will be staying.

"I think they will take a little break and decide what to do," she said. "It will be completely new management and new people working, as far as I know."

Chung said there was something special about running a business in NOTL — a small town

where, over the years, she got to know many people personally.

"I become a friend," she said. "And then I promise to have tea with so many of them."

The town also became a home for her family. Both of her sons, chef Thane and manager Seth, grew up in the community and worked at Ginger. Still, she never expected them to take over.

Running a small business is a lifestyle, she said — and with her sons now raising young families, she wanted them to have other options.

Chung said her favourite memories of running Ginger and Orchid Inn weren't grand events, but the ordinary, everyday moments.

One that stood out, though, came during the pandemic, when locals went out of their way to order takeout and support the restaurant through difficult

"That was really nice of them," she said.

And none of it would have been possible without the people who worked beside her, she added.

"All of them are very, very devoted and nice and work hard. I have to thank them," she said.

To Chung, customers became more than just diners or guests.

"I appreciate their business and I appreciate their friendship," she said, adding that in the final weeks before closing, she truly felt that appreciation returned.

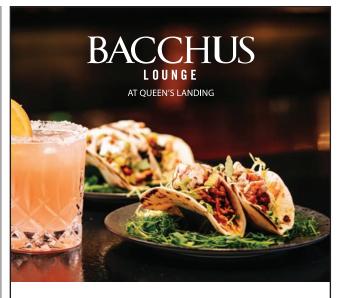
"We know how much we will be missed — and it is good to know," she said.

The restaurant tried to seat as many people as possible during those final weeks, but there just weren't enough tables for everyone hoping to enjoy one last meal at Ginger, she said.

As for what's next, Chung plans to spend the summer having tea with friends and customers — just like she promised. And when winter comes, she hopes to be somewhere in Hong Kong.

While she'll stick to cooking the simple, homestyle dishes her granddaughters love, the heart of Ginger's menu will live on through her son, chef Thane, she said.

"The menu is from my son, Thane," said Chung. paigeseburn@niagaranow.com



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Get your summer on!

Pollinators take centre stage at garden tour

Staff The Lake Report

As Pollinator Week gets underway across Canada, Niagara-on-the-Lake is celebrating the essential role of bees, butterflies and birds with a garden tour aimed at highlighting their importance to the ecosystem.

The NOTL Horticultural Society's 2025 Gardener's Garden Tour, held July 12, will showcase pollinatorfriendly landscapes designed and maintained by local residents, all in support of the buzzing biodiversity needed to keep flowers blooming and food growing.

Timed to coincide with the national awareness campaign, the self-guided tour features a variety of gardens throughout town, including native species, wildflower beds and conservationfocused designs.

"This week isn't just about raising awareness," said Sandra Stokes, co-chair of the 2025 event. "It's about making thoughtful choices in our own backyards to give a helping hand to bees, butterflies and birds."

One of the gardens featured this year is The Living Classroom on York Road, where Master Gardener Betty Knight has replaced invasive species with native

alternatives such as butterfly milkweed, bearberry and New Jersey tea.

"Every flower here is a lifeline for pollinators," said

The garden includes bee bowls to provide water to pollinators and is also home to birds of prey like hawks, offering a visible reminder of how all species are connected in a fragile natural

For Stokes and co-chair Susan Jurbala, the event is as much about education as celebration.

"When people see what's possible in a neighbour's garden, they often feel inspired to give it a go

themselves," said Jurbala. "That's how change starts one garden at a time."

Organized entirely by volunteers from the NOTL Horticultural Society, the tour reflects the town's strong sense of community and dedication to environmental stewardship.

Tickets are \$25 in advance until July 11 and \$35 on the day of the tour. Children under 12 are admitted free. The event runs rain or shine, with the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre serving as the tour's headquarters.

More information and tickets are available at www.notlhortsociety.com.

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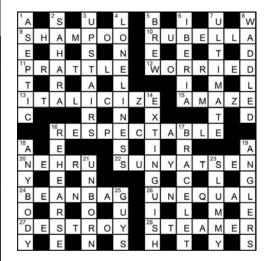
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- 4. Helper (9)
- 10. Dressing (10)
- 11. Atop (4)
- 12. Ministers (9)
- 13. Bender (5)
- 15. Sets of equipment (4)
- 17. Female big cat (10)
- 19. Herefordshire town (10)
- 21. Type of heating fuel (4)
- 22. Reprimand (5)
- 24. Contented (9)
- 27. Waist band (4)
- 28. Volume for preliminary artistic studies (10)
- 29. Steam locomotive (4,5)
- 30. One of these means almost
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Down

- 2. Truce (5-4)
- 3. Isolated (5)
- 5. Snow vehicle (7)
- 6. Notion (4)
- 7. Fabricated (7-2)
- 8. Hangman's knot (5)
- 9. Emphasize (9)
- 14. Wig (9)
- 16. Ignorant person (9)
- 18. Whipping boy (9)
- 20. Makes journeys (7)
- 23. Gaiety (5)
- 25. Legend (5)
- 26. Capital of Norway (4)

Last issue's answers

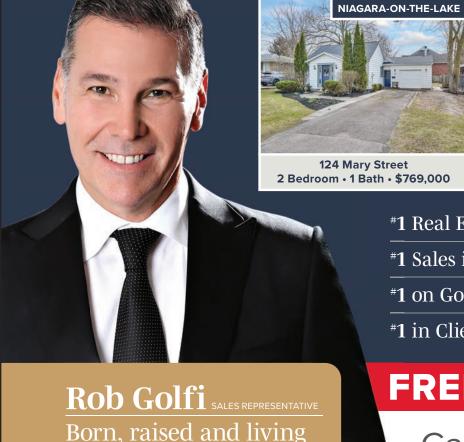


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EXPLORING HISTORY



Six Nations Band of the 37th Regiment at Camp Niagara, c. 1908

In honour of June being National Indigenous History Month in Canada, today's photograph shows a musical band of Six Nations warriors from Haldimand County's 37th Militia Battalion. By the 1890s, warriors from Six Nations made up two companies of the 37th. This battalion attended Camp Niagara during the summer from time to time for training. This photograph shows the brass band, which was very popular with the soldiers at Camp as well as with the residents in town! Some of the men of the 37th saw action during the First World War.



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Healing through tradition at the Niagara Regional Native Centre

Paige Seburn Local Journalism Initiative The Lake Report

Losing her father meant losing her strongest cultural connection.

Now, during National Indigenous History Month, Halley Irwin is sharing how she found her way back — and how she's helping others do the same through the Niagara Regional Native Centre's cultural programs and events.

"These cultural programs matter so much. They help us reclaim who we are," said Irwin, the centre's director of development and community engagement, in an email.

After time away in her teens and early adulthood, Irwin returned to the centre — where she's been able to reconnect with the teachings her father, a Six Nations-born artist, once shared.

"Being here at (the Niagara Regional Native Centre) has given me opportunities to experience those traditional crafts and reconnect with the knowledge he carried," she said.

Irwin said the centre's programs, shaped by Elders, traditional knowledge keepers and community voices, aim to strengthen identity and wellness.

She said the centre is "more than a service provider. It's a cultural home."

Programs include: Cultural resources, health outreach, Indigenous healing & wellness, traditional foods & harvest and language programming.

Regular intergenerational gatherings, open to all Indigenous community members, are also core to the centre's work, she said
— from the annual "Nurturing Our Roots" powwow
and Youth and Elders Conference to drum nights and
events like the Strawberry
Social, Fall Harvest and
Winter Social.

"Cultural gatherings are core to building a sense of belonging and community," Irwin said.

"It's not just about learning traditions, it's about living them," she said.

All of the centre's programs can be found at nrnc. ca/program-guide.

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Clayton Logan, head veteran at the 2024 Nurturing Our Roots powwow. SUPPLIED/IAN MARACLE

Obituaries

David Wiwcharyk



WIWCHARYK, David

(Selfie taken May 2nd 2025 celebrating their 55th wedding anniversary in Algonquin Park)

David Julian Wiwcharyk, born November 17, 1951, peacefully passed away surrounded by family on May 15. David is survived by his beloved wife Victoria (Vicki, nee Lewis), son Josh (Niki), grandson Jack, sisters Joanna (predeceased) and Regina, numerous in-laws, nieces and nephews, and close friends Luis, Kira, and Luke, who had become like family.

Dave grew up on Larkin Road in Niagara-on the-Lake and went on to live a life filled with friends, adventures, and a variety of careers spanning from industry to entrepreneurship before finally discovering his passion as a certified psychotherapist (RP, CTP), where he applied his diverse and resilient life experiences to his practice. When he wasn't reading, Dave enjoyed, hiking, road-trips, and boating. He was a warm and beautiful man who was known for his patience, loyalty, good humour, and quiet strength.

Following Dave's wishes, cremation has taken place. Friends and family are invited to a memorial service at 2 p.m. on June 21, 2025, at the Calvary Church, 89 Scott Street in St. Catharines, to be followed by an enthusiastic Celebration of Life at Club Heidelberg, 569 Lake Street, St. Catharines - the same hall where Dave and Vicki celebrated their wedding in 1970.

Christopher Pillitteri



PILLITTERI, Christopher James —

It is with great sadness that we share the passing of Chris Pillitteri on June 10. Chris was raised on his family fruit farm in Niagara-on-the-Lake. He attended Wilfred Laurier University graduating with Honours in Business Administration. He worked 37 years at Manulife Financial in various positions up to Chief Underwriter of Group Benefits.

Chris enjoyed volunteering at Trinity Village, as a board of directors member.

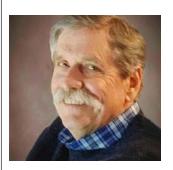
Chris is survived by his one true love, Cheryl. He is also the favourite parent of Nicholas (Katelyn) and Megan (Derek Goetz). Special Grandpa to Ashton and Sox. Leaving behind siblings Joe (Debbie), Trina (Dave), Laurie (Chris) and Greg (Jeanette); in-laws the Green's; and many nieces and nephews and their spouses. Predeceased by parents Joseph and Rita Pillitteri. A big thank you to those who took great care of Chris at St. Mary's Hospital and Innisfree House Hospice.

A celebration of Christopher's Life was held at the Westmount Memorial Celebration Centre in Kitchener on Wednesday, June 18 and interment followed at the Williamsburg Cemetery in Kitchener.

Expressions of sympathy can be made to Muscular Dystrophy Canada.

Let us help you share memories of your loved ones. Email megan@niagaranow.com for package options.

Henry Prewitt



PREWITT, Henry Brookes - of Niagara-on-the-Lake died on June 15, 2025, at the age of 79 after a long struggle with cancer. Brookes was co-owner of Camp Northway, the oldest girls' camp in Canada, and Camp Wendigo, the boys' canoe-tripping camp. He will be greatly missed by family and friends.

Brookes was born in St Louis, Missouri, on May 23, 1946, the third of four children of Ann Russe Prewitt and Arthur Lansing Prewitt. His father was a businessman, and his mother owned and ran Northway and Wendigo,

which are located in Algonquin Park. Although Brookes lived and attended school in many places, including St Louis, Miami, Washington DC, Paris, and Toronto, the anchor of his life was Algonquin Park, where he spent his summers as a guide at Northway and Wendigo and where he would eventually become director. After graduating from York University, he received his Juris Doctor from Osgoode Hall Law School in 1974. He practiced law into the nineteen-eighties at the Toronto law firm Lamont & Lamont and remained lifelong friends with the Lamont family. After his marriage to Virginia Crutchley ended in divorce, he moved with their two children, Wilson and Rebecca, to Niagara-on-the-Lake. By this time, he was owner and director of Northway, which he bought from his mother in the nineteen-seventies. In 1992 he met Joan Dodds, who held a summer job in Algonquin Park, and invited her for a paddle on Cache Lake that ended in a kiss; the rest is history. They married in 1996 and Joan eventually became co-owner and director of Northway, as did Wilson and Rebecca.

As camp director, Brookes had a talent for adjusting to changes in the camping business without abandoning the camp's rustic traditions. He was an excellent listener and was consistently generous and tactful when any problems arose. Because he did not take himself too seriously, it was easy to overlook his power in 'leading from behind.' People who attended or worked at Northway during his years as director were made to feel an essential part of the community. Brookes welcomed his many nieces and nephews to the camps, all of whom attended for free as campers or worked as counselors or guides.

A devoted brother to his three siblings, Brookes made regular visits to St Louis when his beloved older brother Fred was dying of cancer, often sleeping overnight in Fred's hospital room. It was during these visits that he became aware of the need for good palliative care. Thus, he began volunteering with the Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Palliative Care Service and for many years worked as a visiting volunteer and then a coodinator, eventually serving on their Board of Directors. He received two Provincial Volunteer Service Awards for 10 and 20 years as a Palliative Care volunteer. In 2010, he was recognized with the June Callwood Circle of Outstanding Hospice Volunteers by the Hospice Association of Ontario. He sat on Ethics Committees for Chateau Gardens and the Niagara-on-the-Lake and St. Catharines General Hospital.

Brookes was the patriarch of his extended family, bringing the family together for reunions, making a point of developing friendships with his nieces and nephews, and helping everyone through life's vicissitudes. But he would not have liked to be called patriarch. He was self-effacing about being the male director of a girls' camp and often sought advice from many of the women who attended Northway over the years. When it came to any difficulty, personal or professional, he was a wise, witty, and patient friend. Up until the end, he could make his family laugh, and he greeted visitors at his bedside with a quiet smile.

He is survived by his wife Joan; his son Wilson Prewitt of Pemberton, BC; his daughter Rebecca Prewitt Smith and his son-in-law Roddy Smith of Toronto; his sisters Elizabeth Yates of Kanata, Ontario and Judy Prewitt Eiland of Northampton, MA; and his grandchildren, Brookes and Julia Smith.

Cremation has taken place. A private family service will take place at a later date. Memories, photos, and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com.



FEATURED (%)



Early June flowering shrubs to help your garden shine



GROWING TOGETHER

Joanne Young Columnist

Here in Niagara, early spring brings a plethora of blooms. With all the fruit trees, magnolias and forsythias, there is no end of flowers.

But as we move into early summer, we start to lose some of that magic of spring and need to add in some shrubs that will extend interest and colour into summer.

Here are a few shrubs that will keep your garden bursting with blooms.

Summer snowflake (Viburnum plicatum tomentosa)

A showy, medium-sized shrub with a broadly rounded form. The tiered horizontal branches magnificently display the showy white, lacecap flower clusters.

This viburnum is a repeat bloomer, flowering at least three times per year. Does well in full sun or part

It can be used as an excellent specimen plant, in a mixed garden, or even as a hedging plant. Summer Snowflake can reach eight to 12 feet tall and six to eight feet wide. Possibly larger with age.

Weigela (Weigela florida)

Weigelas are an oldfashioned shrub that has been used in gardens for a long time. They are known for their brightly coloured trumpet-like flowers. The flower colour ranges from white to like pink to bright pink to red. Because of the tubular flower shape, hummingbirds just love them.

In recent years, they have developed several varieties with different leaf colours such as burgundy, gold and variegated (white, green and pink leaves). They have also developed many varieties that are dwarf and fit into any garden.

Some of the varieties that I often use in designs are: Sonic Bloom (a heavy,



Sonic bloom pink weigela. Weigelas are a popular garden shrub known for brightly coloured trumpet-like flowers.

flowering shrub that grows about four feet tall), Spilled Wine (a dwarf variety with burgundy leaves), and My Monet (a dwarf form with white, green and pink leaves). The dwarf forms grow about two to three feet high and wide.

Fringe tree (Chionanthus virginicus)

Fringe tree is a small, deciduous tree in the olive family (Oleaceae). It is native to the Carolinas up to southern Ontario. Its genus name comes from the Greek chion, meaning "snow," and anthos, meaning "flower."

This plant grows best in full to part sun, with the best foliage in partial shade and the best flowering in full sun. It can tolerate a moist clay soil and can also tolerate some drought.

Fringetree grows from 12 to 20 feet tall and wide, naturally with a multistemmed, rounded habit, though it can be trained into a single trunk. In late spring or early summer, unique, fragrant flower clusters with creamy white fringe-like petals appear.

There are both male and

flowers have longer and coarser petals. The female produces showy blue-black fruits, maturing in late summer, which provide a food source for birds and wildlife. Both male and female plants are required for cross-pollination.

A clear yellow colour appears to provide some brightness to the fall landscape, and the bark, with its scaly dark brown ridges and red furrows, brings winter interest. In the nursery, it may be difficult to determine if the plants are male or female unless they have fruits present.

Fringe tree is a nice specimen plant in lawns and also works well as a flowering tree in a native garden. Plant it in small groups along a woodland border or take advantage of the sweetly scented blooms in a children's or sensory garden

Chinese flowering dogwood (Cornus kousa)

There are a few species of flowering dogwood. Our native one, Cornus florida, blooms early spring before the leaves emerge. The Chinese flowering Dogwood (Cornus kousa) starts blooming early June

through to late June.

Chinese flowering dogwood is a small, deciduous flowering tree or multi-stemmed shrub that typically grows 15 to 30 feet tall, with a vase-shaped habit in the early years but eventually maturing to a more rounded form.

The showy parts of the kousa dogwood "flower" (approximately three to five inches in diameter) are the four narrowly pointed petal-like white bracts which surround the center cluster of insignificant, yellowishgreen, true flowers.

The flowers are followed by red, strawberry-like fruit in summer and persist into fall. Fruits are technically edible, but are usually left for the birds.

Dark green leaves turn attractive shades of reddish-purple to scarlet in autumn. Mottled, exfoliating, tan and gray bark on mature trees is attractive in winter.

Need to add colour and interest to your June garden? Check out these plants the next time you are at the garden centre.

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



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