Royal Oak Community School teacher Rachel Debon makes the most of the snow with her students, sledding on Killer Hill (outside Fort George) with Grade 7 student Ruby Elliot and Diego Rey and Grade 8 student Ethan Epp. (Photo supplied)

Gateway project gets go-ahead from council

Penny Coles
The Local

Town councillors have agreed that staff should move forward with a finalized design for the entrance to the heritage district, including tendering the project.

Thanks to a $250,000 donation from resident Gerry Kovalchuk for an updated gateway at Queen and Mississauga Streets, a final design has been approved, with some changes from what councillors saw in September.

The dry stone wall, with elements representative of Fort Mississauga, including a gated archway, has been slightly scaled back in size. Both height and length have been reduced to accommodate the budget.

The major change since the project was last discussed at the September council meeting is putting improvements to the two corners on Mississauga Street on the south side of Queen on hold. The design includes two “plaza” features on the corners, with seasonal planters, paving enhancements, and seating and lighting.

On Monday, councillors heard those features could no longer be accommodated within the budget.

Continued on page 5

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Niagara measures proceed with goal of safety in schools

Penny Coles
The Local

There is nothing new about Dr. Mustafa Hirji’s desire to protect students and staff from COVID outbreaks in schools — he has said repeatedly and explicitly throughout this pandemic that he is concerned about disruptions to education, and the effects they have on children.

What is new is Niagara’s acting chief medical officer of health being reprimanded for doing what he can to make Niagara schools safe, as students are now back to in-person learning after a holiday break that was extended first due to omicron, and then by Mother Nature as a snow storm cancelled classes across the region.

On Jan. 14, the Friday before students were expected to return to school, Niagara parents received a letter outlining some additional recommendations from Public Health, layered on top of provincial restrictions.

It wasn’t long before a letter dated Jan. 15, from Dr. Kieran Moore, the provincial medical officer of health, was made public on social media, chastising Hirji for the extra measures.

Hirji told The Local he was taken aback, but not disturbed, by the tone of the letter.

“I’m certainly surprised by the degree of opposition they’ve expressed to what we’re doing. We’re guided by the science. We’re guided by our concern for children and parents and teachers, and what is going to keep them safe, and we’re very confident what we are doing here is the right thing to do for Niagara. I have no doubts about that. I’m surprised by the level of opposition, but it doesn’t really affect me beyond that.”

Moore’s letter said Hirji’s recommendations were made without consultation with the province, and could jeopardize the safety of students.

Hirji says his “enhancements” to provincial regulations were made in collaboration with Niagara school boards. Since then, after continued consultation, there was some tweaking.

The most impactful recommendation from Public Health calls for schools to continue reporting positive test results of students and staff, with a five-day isolation period of unvaccinated students and staff in a class where there is a positive COVID case. Originally, Hirji asked for a longer quarantine, but reduced it after consultation with

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The Local
JANUARY 26, 2022    Volume 4 • Issue 4

Ballet tells story of Japanese-Canadian internment
Wine industry important consideration in tourism strategy

Representatives want all stakeholders at table

Penny Coles
The Local

With the town promising a tourism strategy within the next year to 18 months, wine industry representatives want to ensure there is input from farmers, wineries, residents and other tourism stakeholders in creating the strategy before it becomes a document used to make decisions at the council table.

Tim Coons of Fellers Estates and Andrea Kaiser of Drei’s Wine Co. and Drea Kaiser Marketing, as well as continuing to work with Wine Estate Winery two days a week, were at council Monday night to provide an update on the Niagara-on-the-Lake wine industry and its impact on quality of life locally, including jobs, economic well-being and sustainability.

Their goal was to ensure the industry, and the importance of its sustainability, is well-represented in any discussion of a tourism strategy.

“Our mighty industry is made up of 42 wineries right here in NOTL, over 9,950 acres of vineyards, and 179 grape growers,” Coons told councillors.

There is the equivalent of more than 6,200 full-time jobs, all created from producing 100 per cent local wines — jobs in farming and agriculture, marketing, commercialization, and tourism, he said. “It won’t be a big surprise, but our local industry in NOTL has evolved significantly over the last century.”

Local farming began with fruit trees, starting with peaches and cherries, and, by the 1880s, the area had a thriving fruit-growing industry, which led to a large manufacturing and canning industry.

In the 1950s and 60s, the local demand for canning began to fall off — it could be done cheaper overseas, Coons said. By the 1970s the wine industry had begun to fill this gap, “giving the region hope for the future.”

The modern wine revolution in Niagara started with industry pioneers planting some of the first vinifera grapes, he said. “Our industry has grown from infancy to 9,500 acres of vineyards in just under 50 years, simultaneously gaining a reputation as a world-class agriculture, manufacturing, and service-based industry.”

Today, Coons said, wine-making is the greatest value-added agricultural industry in the world. “You might be thinking this is a bold statement, but it’s true.”

About 90 per cent of Canadian agriculture is exported —almost 80 per cent of soybeans, for example, is exported to China alone, and most of the domestic consumption is used in meal for livestock, representing little to no added value for our economy.

“Soybeans are picked at $300 per tonne, which pale in comparison to grapes that command anywhere from $770 to $2,500 per tonne, and add value right here in our backyard.”

“In our wine industry,” he continued, “we grow grapes, we farm, tend to the vineyards, and we add value through the many facets of commercializing, manufacturing, and tourism — and there are a lot of people involved to make this happen.”

At the heart of it all, Coons said, “it starts with our farmers, and their passion and dedication to growing some of the finest grapes in the world. We are a farming community with a rich history of family legacies dating back to the 1800s. And the great part is that when the wine industry thrives, our legacy is protected.”

“Manufacturing in the industry includes winemaking, sourcing, marketing, and distribution, and jobs range from winemaker and cellar hand to truck drivers and trades people.” These are “high-paying, skilled jobs, right here in our community!”

Another “almost indivisible” side of the industry is commercialization, he said, including product development, marketing and promotional activities “to create a really big reputation for our small town.”

Value is also added by bringing NOTL wines to consumers in Canada and around the globe, mostly sold through retail, e-commerce, and restaurant channels.

“And, of course, our secret, winery tourism,” Coons said, an umbrella term that includes hospitality, retail, events, tours and tastings, and restaurants, which together contribute over $280 million to the region’s economy.

“With decades of involvement in the wine industry, and a father that was considered one of its pioneers, Andrea Kaiser spoke to councillors about sustainability, and a need for the industry to be profitable.

“Our community is home to the only specialty crop area in the province and the greenbelt — think about that — and so it is imperative we look at how we continue to ensure these lands are sustainable, protected, managed and preserved for future generations.”

To protect agricultural land, three pillars of sustainability must be recognized — environment, of course, “but also community and economic well-being,” Kaiser said.

“Our industry cares deeply about the environment and protecting our land for future generations. And at the end of the day we are farmers first,” committed to working within the greenbelt to secure a sustainable future.

Producing local wine ensures a sustainable future for NOTL’s farming community, she said. During the last decade, farmland in the Niagara Peninsula has decreased by 4,600 acres, however in NOTL, “we have a good news story.”

Farmland grew by more than 200 acres, “and as the wine industry continues to succeed, it ensures a bright future for the farming community!”

“But — and this is the core of the presentation and what I’d like you to take away,” she said, “to be sustainable we need to also think about community and lifestyle.”

“Tourism and the wine industry has contributed to NOTL being named one of the most liveable places, with rankings that consider entertainment venues, restaurants and theatres, scenery and natural landscapes and “we were the top place in Ontario to be given the green medal.”

“But what I find most interesting about the three pillars of sustainability is the one almost often forgotten — the need to be profitable to be sustainable.”

A local tourism strategic plan must ensure long-term sustainability, she said.

“Certainly COVID has presented unprecedented challenges, as have so many other businesses, but even before COVID many wineries were struggling to be profitable.”

Kaiser asked council to pause on any decisions related to tourism until the strategy is complete, and to work with the wine industry to create a “better NOTL for everyone.”

She referenced a tourism strategy developed in the 1990s and a report put together by TEMCO, a tourism management committee led by Debi Pratt, tasked with ensuring a sustainable tourism and wine industry, and suggested a similar process be developed to put a plan in place that is good for businesses, as well as the quality of life for residents.

“What we’re really asking,” she said, “is don’t put the cart before the horse. Do the work with the industry, our neighbours and our community, to figure out a tourism strategy, and then use it to make decisions at the council table.”

Coun. Wendy Cheropita told council she has seen a tourism strategy “as the number one priority” for the town, with a strategy providing a roadmap to both guide tourism and ad

Councillors at Monday’s virtual meeting can’t agree that the tourism strategy must be the town’s highest priority.

Wine industry representatives Tim Coons (middle left) and Andrea Kaiser (middle right) were at council to ask that the industry and all stakeholders, including residents, be included in strategy discussions. (Screenshot)

Penny Coles said she shared the “discomfort” that it should be a priority.

“Tourism has more impact on NOTL than anything else, and we’re not giving it the due process it needs. I think it should be a priority.” Staff should be thinking about it, she said, and it needs to be done before the election.

Coun. Clare Cameron said she shared the “discom- fort” that it should be a priority “above all else,” tying the hands of staff, without knowing what else might come up.

Cheropita’s motion was defeated, with Arsenault, Bis- back, Cameron, John Wiens and Disero voting against it.
Enhancements to reduce spread in schools, community

Continued from page 1

school boards, he says. In a second letter to parents dated Jan. 21, he explained the five-day dis-

missal as "the minimum period of risk, and par-

ents should be attentive of any symptoms a child
can develop shortly after dismissal or even after the
days are over."

"Where parents have access to rapid tests and are concerned about a child's exposure to COVID-19 infection, Public Health recommends testing five days after last being around someone who had COVID-19," his recent letter says. "Testing earlier that may not be reliable," he explains in his Jan. 21 letter.

In bold print, the let-
ter says students who are vaccinated with two doses will be exempt from such dismis-
sals. That was his clearly stated intention in the Jan. 14 guidelines that were sent to parents, al-
though some media out-
lets were reporting Mon-
day that was a change to his recommendations.

Parents of all children in a cohort where there is a positiv-e case will be no-
tified, and "can make an informed decision whether they choose to keep their kids at home, he says.

Provincial regulations do not require the dismiss-
als of students, vaccinated or unvaccinated, when there is a positive case in their class, referring to the increased transmissibility of omicron and the nega-
tive consequences of stu-
dent dismissals.

Provincial guidelines are that parents will not be made aware of posi-
tive COVID cases in their children's schools unless an ab-
senteeism reaches 30 per
cent, which had occurred in 10 per cent of Ontar-
io schools by Monday, although 28 per cent of schools had not reported their absenteeism.

Hirji's other enhance-
ments call for students from Kindergarten up to

wear masks, unless they have a medical note from their
doctor, "in direct opposition to provincial guidance," Moore's letter says, and regular testing of CO2 in classrooms to en-
sure adequate ventilation, that is also not required by the province.

In his letter Moore says he opposes weekly moni-
toring because there is no correlation between CO2 levels and viral transmis-

sion.

Hirji explains high CO2 levels could indicate poor ventilation in a class-
room, and moving hepa filters from other areas of the school where readings are low could improve ventilation. In limited cas-
es, the purchase of more

local school boards for the last two years, he said. "I saw an opportunity to build on the good foun-
dation of the province," Hirji said he looked at what the science says, and that other boards have done, and worked with Niagara school boards to be "aggressive up front to stop infections."

He called his addi-
tional recommendations a "made-in-Niagara en-
ancement of provincial guidelines."

Councillors also com-
mented on Hirji be-
ing criticized unfairly throughout the pandem-
ic.

When Hirji sent his letter out to parents about the additional measures on Jan. 14, "hundreds of parents across Niagara breathed a collective sigh of relief about the safety of schools, and protect-

"Let's remember chil-
dren are contracting COVID, they're taking it home, and their parents are taking it into their workplaces and the rest of the community."

The vast majority of parents "do not want to spin the roulette wheel that is omicron when it comes to their children's and their family's safety," he said.

Pelham Coun. Diana Hudson said Hirji has been targeted throughout the pandemic unfairly, for doing his job.

She told him she was sorry to see him again "dragged into social media. I think you're doing a great job focusing on how best to protect us from a very difficult situation."

Grimsby Coun. Wayne Fertich suggested the re-

gion should get rid of the "acting" part of Hirji's ti-
tle.

"It would send a great message to the province that we support Dr. Hirji," he said.

Lord Mayor Betty Dis-

cro, who has supported Hirji's pandemic mea-
sures on occasions when other councillors did not, told The Local she continues to support what he is do-

ing, and was surprised by the provincial response — his intention was to build on provincial restrictions. A lack of communication has been an issue in the past, however, and is key, so that councillors are not taken unaware when questioned by their con-
stituents, she said.

"He's starting off at a point we can all agree on, and that's what's best for the kids. And he's the per-
son who knows the epi-
demiology of what's go-
ing on, and understands what's best in the region and what we should be doing."

She repeated what she has said in the past, that as a councillor she doesn't have the expertise or knowledge to know what's best, or "to call him to task."

Every region will have its own unique issues, "and I trust what he is seeing and saying to us."

In the past, when he has deviated from pro-
vincial regulations, it's al-
ways to be on the side of caution, and "I would say he's been right."
Hirji not alone in Ontario with extra measures

Continued from page 3

He says Hirji stated only 25 per cent of children had acquired infections in school, and 75 per cent became infected in the community, yet Niagara is not instituting additional measures to restrict community transmission. “The 25 per cent figure was misconstrued,” says Hirji. Through contact tracing, the region has determined that 25 per cent of children became infected by attending school or activities at school. Another 50 per cent contracted COVID outside of school, visiting friends or taking part in sports and other activities. The other 25 per cent, we just don’t know.

All or none of those infections could have come from school, outside school or a split of the two, he says, and the 25 per cent that is known “is definitely very significant. Any infection we can stop is an infection we want to stop. If there are reasonable common sense steps to reduce them, why wouldn’t we take those steps?”

The 25 per cent of infections that were a result of school spread occurred last September to December, during a time when there were more strict measures in place to keep students safe, including dismissing cohorts when there was an infection in the classroom. “If we didn’t have that dismissal, the 25 per cent would have been higher.”

That measure was effective in limiting spread in the fall, and his intention is to continue being aggressive, “to stop the spread and minimize disruption in the long term.”

“We’re in a new scenario here we haven’t experienced before, dealing with omicron in schools,” he continues. “All we’ve learned from around the world, and in schools here, means putting the best protection in place to keep students and staff as safe as possible.”

And with students just now returning to school under threat of the rapid spread of omicron, he adds, “we’re not going to know what will happen until we see what the experiences in schools are.”

With the high number of infections in the community, the most effective tool is still getting vaccinated, “no matter what protections are in place in school.”

The decision to dismiss unvaccinated students and staff if there is a positive COVID case in their class was made to limit infection, he says, because unvaccinated people are more likely to become infected and spread it to others.

But at the same time he hopes parents will be encouraged to get their children vaccinated, “to get vaccination numbers up, protect our schools, protect those children, and keep everyone in school without disruption.”

While the choice to dismiss unvaccinated students might set them apart from others in their class, “it’s an unfortunate fact that we’re dealing with COVID-19 and the prospect that infection is going to spread in schools, and we have to take some action to protect them.”

Hirji says he hopes parents will reconsider their choice and have their kids vaccinated, “so we don’t have to make that distinction.”
Continued from page 1

$250,000 budget. But with a finalized design in place, said Kevin Turcotte, Manager of Parks & Recreation, “the town can look for grants and other sources of funding, with those features ‘shovel ready’ when the money is available to pay for them.”

Plantings for horticultural beds have not been finalized, although councillors were showed a “palette” of what might be used. Smith explained there would be a combination of perennials, deciduous, evergreen and broadleaf evergreen plantings, “so every three months, there would be a combination of perennials, deciduous, evergreen and broadleaf evergreen plantings, so every three months, there would be a combination of perennials, deciduous, evergreen and broadleaf evergreen plantings.”

Turcotte assured councillors that parks supervisor J.B. Hopkins will be involved in plant selection, to make sure it ties in with the main street.

He also explained the scope of the beds can “pivot” depending on the outcome of a study of the infrastructure for that intersection currently underway, with an engineering report on the bump-out expected soon. The height of the wall, which was one of the main concerns of residents, is about the same or lower than what is there now, with the exception of the archway on the west side, Brad Smith, senior landscape of Sefarian Design Group, which is in charge of the project, assured councillors.

The staff recommendation, which councillors approved Monday, was to finalize the design, and move forward with a tender for the work. Tendering can begin this spring, with construction to start in September, after the peak of the tourist season.

Also recommended and approved was to go ahead with hiring Dean McLellen to build the dry stone wall, without tendering that portion of the project, which comes at a cost of $130,000.

While the town has a policy for tendering such projects, CAO Marnie Cluckie explained that in certain circumstances, which would include this situation, council can decide to allow single sourcing, which councillors agreed to for that particular part of the work, given McLellen’s skills and experience with dry stone walls.

They were told McLellen is the only certified master craftsman in Canada recognized by the British Dry Stone Walling Association, and is also a teacher of dry stone and stone masonry, and a faculty associate at the Willowbank School of Restoration Arts.

Coun. Gary Burroughs said he was concerned that the changes to the wall made it dry stone to be more of a heritage feature, as well as taking some inspiration from Fort Mississauga, which was in response to residents, concerns. Also, an obelisk that was originally part of the design, “a sticking point with residents,” Turcotte said, has been discarded. The current design has been refined to “open up the views and help frame the intersection a little better.”

Burroughs was the only one to vote against the motion to move the project forward, because of two issues, he said - that the provisional plaza features aren’t more developed, and the fact that there will no longer be a sign at the intersection.

Project to be completed spring of 2023

This is a drawing of the design approved for the Queen and Mississauga Street intersection, although there has been no decision on whether the traffic bump-out will remain or be removed. (Supplied)
COVID remains a global problem that needs to be solved

Wayne Gates, MPP Special to The Local

Our kids deserve a safe return to school. Kids, parents and education workers in Ontario deserve better. No contact tracing, no testing, no education workers, no plan for air quality, and no vaccination efforts for our schools. This was the school reopening plan that was given to us by the province. As parents and children got ready to go back to school at the start of 2022, we were struck with several confusing last-minute decisions. Delays in returning to school – especially those you learn about days before your kids are supposed to return -- are rarely welcome news. Despite these confusing delays there was still no real plan for a safe reopening for our kids, and that is what concerns me most. Kids need to be in school and they need to be safe—we can't continue to provide half measures which will put us right back in the same place with kids at home.

Because of this reality, I was relieved to hear Dr. Mustafa Hirji, acting chief medical officer of health for the Niagara region, is introducing additional safety measures to ensure our kids can return to school safely. Our region is making a real effort to keep the schools in Niagara safe. Ensuring high air quality and vaccination efforts for our schools is what the school reopening plan was all the right way to go, and that Niagara must be cognizant of the spread we are seeing in schools. He knows in order to continue to keep Niagara safe, we need to be one step ahead of this virus.

This is especially important in our community because we have so many seniors. Before the rise of the omicron variant, nearly one-third of community outbreaks were traced to schools. Simply put, schools were causing spread in our communities that was offering pathways for this virus to attack our parents and grandparents.

On Jan. 15 Dr. Kenmore, the province’s chief medical officer of health, sent out a letter to Dr. Hirji and criticized his efforts and asking him to conform to the province's less-detailed and less-safe plan. Why are provincial public health officials trying to impede efforts to make Niagara schools safer? Local public healthofficials have been on the front-line of this pandemic, and they know the local realties of how COVID-19 is spreading.

I thank Dr. Hirji for standing up to provincial officials and continuing to work with local school boards to keep schools open and safe in Niagara. To my knowledge, when other provinces have had political problems with their health officials, provincial officials pressured them. I have also been windows for education workers, to immediately begin recognizing that a one-size-fits-all approach does not work. For depression, the mission is not done – there is no goal more important than that. We can't stop trying, but global health officials have been on the front-line of this pandemic, and they know the local realties of how COVID-19 is spreading. We can't stop trying, but global health officials have been on the front-line of this pandemic, and they know the local realties of how COVID-19 is spreading. We can't stop trying, but global health officials have been on the front-line of this pandemic, and they know the local realties of how COVID-19 is spreading.

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Help available to focus on wellness in 2022

Community Health and Wellness Committee Special to The Local

The year 2021 has closed, and it has been quite a ride: physically, economically, mentally and socially. COVID-19 has dominated the health scene, but there have been significant mental and social impacts too. We look to 2022 with hope and determination to make things better.

One significant aspect of our life that we could focus on is our wellness. What is wellness? It is actively working towards a state of better health and well-being through targeted intentions, choices and actions. In other words, through specifically thinking about it, and doing something about it. Keeping a positive attitude, and continuing to learn, are important aspects of our mental and social health, particularly in these challenging times.

A good example of how to do this is to take advantage of the wide variety of virtual programs offered by our local Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library. There are several interesting sessions in January and February, ranging from Financial Literacy to Genetic Genealogy.

A new Learn & Live (Life-long Learning) program has recently been initiated in Niagara-on-the-Lake. A series of presentations were offered last October to December, titled Coming of Age: The Wellness of Learning. Planning is under way to deliver several new series in 2022 on a wide variety of topics. Visit the NOTL Public Library event calendar at notlpubliclibrary.org for details on all these sessions.

Another excellent opportunity is the Third Age Learning lectures offered in St. Catharines - the next one is scheduled (virtually) on Feb. 15, and is on Hot Zones. Why pandemics and inequality are so stubborn problems, a timely topic. For more information on this program, please contact registrations@imaggar.ca.

For physical activity, try the outdoor skating rink in Virgil behind the Meridian Credit Union and Centennial arena (1567 Four Mile Creek Road, Virgil). This rink was generously organized by community volunteers.

Another option is to explore the Upper Canada Heritage Trail in Old Town. Phase I of the trail has been completed and is located on an abandoned railroad right-of-way that goes south from the Old Town, beginning near King Street and John Street, to East and West Line. It takes you through Carolinian forests and vineyards. For more information about this trail, please visit heritagetrail.ca.

Whatever you do, connect/collaborate with others and our community, despite and because of the pandemic, is important for our wellness. Plan your wellness activities now! Stay healthy and safe.

NOTL Community Wellness Committee

I would like to address the substance of a letter to the editor (Where will recognition end? The Local, Jan. 12.)

I would like to ask, when will recognition begin? When will it be recognized that the LGBTQ+ people have given up their happiness, their family, their freedom, and their lives during the periods of the Underground Railroad, the War of 1812, the First and Second World Wars and during our very times today? How were these losses incurred? In two different ways. First by direct persecution. The second by neglect. Our society today just does not care about the sacrifices the LGBTQ+ people have made as evidenced by the complete absence of recognition.

When will recognition begin — with rainbow colours painted on the road? Let’s see. Other populations of ours have been given Voices of Freedom Memorial Park, Black History Month, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Indigenous Remembrance Day, our national flag at half-mast for a period of one year, and 40 Billion Dollars. Surely our LGBTQ peoples deserve the same, at least as a beginning. They have earned it.

I am for one looking towards the hundreds of thousands of dollars that I will receive in recognition and compensation for the family I could have had and to which the decades I was forced to live in fear, hating and self-hating.

Peter Barwell
NOTL

While Canadians are generous to charities, especially during times of crisis, it is difficult to keep that going for two years during a once in a generation pandemic. There was a groundswell of support for charities in the early months of the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, but understandably that support is difficult to maintain as community members may now move past the crisis mode. However, at the same time, the demand for charitable services has not decreased, but instead charities have seen a significant increase in demands for services. The result is that many charities can no longer meet the demand, as they are stretched and challenged both financially and with staffing to the point where some may not survive. Research from Imagine Canada estimated that as many as one in four charity organizations may not be able to continue to operate. We cannot ignore the crisis facing the charities Canadians and residents of Niagara depend on. Now is not the time to give in to “pandemic fatigue” I urge you all to reflect on what you have to be grateful for and what you are able to offer others, even at this difficult time. Please consider supporting your local NOTL Community Fund through the Niagara Community Foundation, to help the local charities that do so much to support our community.

Mike Berli
Chair, Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Fund

Help available to focus on wellness in 2022

At the start of a New Year, it is time to give thanks to the editors of our local newspapers for their patience and endurance over the last 12 months in sticking to the task of informing readers what is going on locally.

In particular, their forbearance in publishing the many letters they receive on readers on all sorts of topics. In the interest of free speech, they have diligently printed letters that, quite frankly, should not be printed. We should thank them for doing this. Some of the weekly scribblers are the worst. They feel that they should force their thoughts down our throats. At a time when inclusivity is the watchword, they should just sit down and take

When will recognition begin?

We are in this together

Letters! We want letters!

If you have a letter to the editor you’d like to see published, please send it to penny@notllocal.com. Please try to keep it to about 350 words. Sorry, but we won’t publish anonymous letters. And please stick to the issue at hand, rather than attacking those involved. The deadline is Monday at noon.

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at karen@notllocal.com

Julia at 905-934-1040
at julia@notllocal.com

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Kimiko’s Pearl an original Bravo Niagara! ballet

Story represents generations of Japanese-Canadian family

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

Bravo Niagara! Festival is moving into a bold new frontier with the commission of an original ballet, and a sneak peek of the first act to premiere online on Feb. 5.

Kimiko’s Pearl captures a story with deep personal meaning to mother and daughter co-founders Chris Mori and Alexis Spieldenner, while at the same time encapsulating the experiences of thousands of Japanese Canadians who were detained and dispersed during World War II.

The roots of the project harken back to Spieldenner’s thesis at Duke University in 2012, “Voices of Four Generations: A Story of the Japanese Canadian Community from Issei to Yonsei.” The project gave her a chance to delve into her own family’s history in Canada, beginning with her maternal great-grandparents, Shuzo and Natsoe Ayukawa leaving Japan to start a new life here at the beginning of the 20th century. They settled in Mission, BC, where they built a strawberry farm before they were removed from their property during the war.

With the power of a few research grants behind her, Spieldenner was able to dig deeper and deeper into her family’s past, discovering, along the way the struggles her ancestors faced that weren’t talked about from generation to generation.

Bravo Niagara! Voices of Freedom Festival in the past has focused on the experiences of the Black, Romani and Jewish communities. When Mori decided it was time to bring her own culture to the forefront, she thought of her daughter’s thesis, and reached out to some family members, one of whom sent her a dropbox full of photos neither woman had previously seen.

One photo that stood out was that of a trunk, Mori’s grandfather’s name and an arbitrary number painted upon it. It had been donated by Mori’s aunt Hiro Kaita to the Canadian War Museum. Upon further digging, Mori discovered that her grandfather had actually built the trunk while he and his family were being held in an internment camp in BC dubbed New Denver.

“The trunk was accompanied by a poem written by Kaita after the Canadian government signed the papers for redress atoning for the treatment of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War,” Mori says.

“The poem really sums up a lot of the feelings that the Japanese Canadians who experienced the internment felt but never talked about,” Mori says.

“These repressed feelings,” adds Spieldenner, “is about the metaphor of the trunk holding those memories, were really powerful.”

Originally, Mori envisioned a short music video, with musical music from Canadian composer Kevin Lau, interspersed with some of those family photos. But the resilience of her forebears convinced her it had to become a bigger project.

“I always dreamed of presenting a ballet, so I went back to that dream,” Mori remembers. “When we filmed Memoria, our Holocaust program, it was co-produced by Jeff Herd, the former executive director of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet. He came here and stayed at my dad’s house. I ran the idea by him, and that’s how it started.”

Mori and Spieldenner brought in Howard Reich, the retired critic for the Chicago Tribune who had also helped with Menorah. Reich set down to flesh out the story to cover four generations in the lives of a Japanese Canadian family, with Mori’s and Spieldenner’s ancestors as the base.

“The pearl of the title came to Mori after re-reading her aunt’s poem. ‘It’s about how a pearl is made,’ says she. ‘It’s this irritant that over the years, layers and layers develop to make the pearl. It represents the intergenerational reverberations, how it affected every generation. There wouldn’t be a Bravo Niagara! if it weren’t for my parents. They started with nothing after the internment to develop a successful business.’

Mori and Spieldenner put together a creative team, the majority of whom are Asian, including Lau, sound designer Aaron Tsang and choreographer Yousuke Mino. Herd signed on as director and enlisted Royal Winnipeg Ballet principal dancers Alanna McAdie as Kimiko, and Chenxin Liu and Yue Shi as Shizuo and Natsoe Ayukawa. (Photo supplied)

The character Kimiko is a 15-year-old Toronto girl who discovers an old family trunk containing a diary and keepsakes. The diary brings to life the story of her ancestors fleeing poverty and displacement as the base. It takes her through the cruelties of internment brought about by the invasion of Pearl Harbor, then the family’s efforts to restart their lives in post-war Toronto, where Mori’s grandparents Lau gathered four expert and accomplished musicians to bring the score to life.

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It is fascinating to know the story and to experience the beauty and drama of both the music and the dance in the nine-minute performance. McAdie embodies Kimiko, digging into the crate to read the diary, while Shi and Liu tell the first 40 years of the story through movement. There is joy, wonder, playfulness, toil and despair, all climaxing with the government’s decision to intern Japanese Canadians following the Dec. 7, 1941 bombing of Pearl Harbour by Japan.

Art Miki, the president of the National Association of Japanese Canadians from 1984 to 1992, fought for and signed the agreement for redress with Prime Minister Brian Mulroney in 1988.

The settlement included a payment of $21,000 for each survivor of internment and a $12 million community fund. Mulroney also delivered an apology for the wartime internment policy to the House of Commons of Canada.

Miki, a third generation Japanese Canadian, experienced displacement as a child 80 years ago. He and his family were forced by the government to move from their fruit farm near Vancouver to Ste. Agathe, Manitoba, into a one-room house that they had to share with other families.

Miki lives in Winnipeg,
Good samaritans save the day for Upper Canada Lodge

Penny Coles
The Local

Denise Murphy can’t say enough about two young men who came to the rescue during last week’s snow storm.

As the director of resident care at Upper Canada Lodge, she woke up to a different world that Monday morning, and wasn’t sure how she, or anyone else, would get to the long-term care home on Wellington Street. Anyone else, would get to the home knew the staff at long-term care homes are essential — without them, residents wouldn’t be fed or given the daily care that is a necessity, she says.

Murphy, who lives on Dixie Avenue in Chautauqua, was relieved to get a phone call from Lori Sentineal, one of the nurses at the home, to say her son would pick Murphy up.

Lori’s son Wyatt had woken her up early, knowing how important it was for her to get to work and ready to drive her, and he then offered to help Murphy.

“I walked to the top of Dixie,” she says, knowing he wouldn’t have made it down the street.

But that wasn’t all — he spent the day driving around in his pick-up truck getting Upper Canada Lodge staff to work, through two shifts, with his friend, Maksat Shasaparov, travelling with him. They often had to help shovel around the door and walkway so the person they could get to the truck, and to help them over the snow banks.

“We wouldn’t have had any staff without them,” says Murphy. “Thanks to them every resident received full care, and not only that, “they even got the cooks to work, and residents also had a hot breakfast.”

It was also important that family members who couldn’t get to the home knew the staff were at work looking after their loved ones, she says.

“I just started off planning to get my mom to work,” says Wyatt. “I know that with the necessity, she says.

Wyatt took their addresses, saying they couldn’t get there, and residents also had a hot breakfast. “We wouldn’t have had any staff without them,” says Murphy. “Thanks to them every resident received full care, and not only that, “they even got the cooks to work, and residents also had a hot breakfast.”

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Eden students evacuated over unknown threat

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

Eden High School was subject to an undisclosed threat this past Monday morning.

Niagara Regional Police uniform officers were called to the school at about 10:45 a.m. following the report of the received threat, and students and staff were moved at the time into a lockdown situation while awaiting further instructions.

The Local was able to speak to a Grade 11 Eden student who preferred to remain anonymous. The Virgil resident was in the cafeteria at the time. She and her fellow students there were subsequently moved into the library by some staff members.

“An announcement came on moving us into a hold-and-secure lockdown,” the student told The Local. “We were locked down for an hour and 20 minutes.”

Like many of her fellow students, she texted her parents to tell them what was happening and to assure them she was okay.

“I was a little bit scared,” she admits. “We had done these (lockdowns) before, but only for about 10 minutes. Once it started to get progressively longer, everyone was wondering what was happening, and people started feeling anxious.”

She said as time went on, the students seemed to get calmer as the uncertainty continued, brightening the anxious feelings.

At about 12:10 p.m., she says another announcement came over the PA urging all students to arrange for a ride home at that time, two hours and 35 minutes earlier than the usual dismissal time.

Carolyn Loconte of the District School Board of Niagara said the school and the board communicated directly to Eden families to provide them with essential information, and also posted information about Eden publicly to social media accounts.

Students who take transportation were bussed home at that time, while those still waiting to be picked up by parents were moved to a nearby location with staff in the meantime.

“IT’s been a crazy year,” the student said, referring to Eden’s early move in December to online learning after a COVID outbreak, and controversy over principal Shaun Burns Instagram post about heavy metal band Iron Maiden in October. “I wish it could just be normal.”

Niagara Regional Police confirmed in a Monday press release that out of an abundance of caution, students and staff were evacuated to ensure their safety while officers searched the building.

No one was physically harmed during the incident, it said. Detectives are continuing to investigate and there is no known ongoing threat to public safety at this time.

Anyone with further information is asked to contact detectives at (905) 688-4111, dial option 3 ext. 1022200. Or CrimeStoppers at 1 (800) 222-TIPS (8477).
Pied-billed grebe can sink, rather than dive

David Gilchrist
Special to The Local

A single specimen of the pied-billed grebe (Podilymbus podiceps) was spotted originally in the marina beside Nelson Park (beside King’s Point) on Ricardo Street.

It was seen bobbing along and diving in among the much larger Canada geese. Its size was diminutive in comparison. It was surprisingly agile in its ability to dive and seemed to be able to stay long under water and swim comparatively long distances. This made it difficult to determine where exactly it would surface. The following week, I observed it out along the waterfront and was able to get a few more photographs.

This little diving grebe is one of the smallest and reportedly quite a common member of the grebe family. It gets its name due to the fact that during breeding periods its body has a black band thus ‘pied’ or having two colours. Their brown bodies are built differently than the diving waterfowl commonly seen and instead of having to lift slightly out of the water and dive, they can sink quickly, much like a submarine, underwater. This is due to their ability to ‘squeeze’ air out from their feathers and air sacs. As they are able to achieve neutral buoyancy in this fashion, they don’t have to fight to stay underwater like other diving species. They can even submerge slowly with only their heads appearing above water.

They feed on a variety of items, including small fish, aquatic insects and other invertebrates, frogs, tadpoles and aquatic plants. In our waters, zebra mussels and round gobies would probably be utilized as a food source during winter. Another interesting fact is that they construct floating nests from vegetation. Their call is loud and unusual to hear. All in all, another interesting bird to be on the lookout for in ponds and marshes in spring and summer.

“One might wonder what all the fuss is about, spotting a razorbill,” he says.

“That particular species, the king eider spotted in December, is well out of its range and very rarely seen in the Great Lakes Region. The black and white seabird lives in colonies on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. It belongs to the auk family and is the closest living relation of the extinct great auk. They catch fish with their sharp, hatchet-like bill and are known to dive as deep as 100 metres in search of food. So, a very interesting ‘catch’ to be added on a Birder’s Life List.”

Gilchrist says he has not seen it after several days of looking. It may have moved on, although he was keeping a lookout for it this season along our waterfront. “It continues to be sighted closer to the American side, making it necessary for a scope to be used to sight it,” he says.

Photographer David Gilchrist spotted a razorbill at a great distance, on the other side of the river, where it will stay. (Photo supplied)
And the snow just keeps on coming

An irrigation pond becomes a pretty awesome skating rink in the winter, shared by the Pillitteri family, Meyers Farms and Quiet Acres - both amazing neighbours, says Joe Pillitteri. Enjoying the rink on a recent sunny day were cousins Johnny Pillitteri and Steven Pillitteri-Smith and cousins Serafina Martinelli, Anna Pillitteri-Smith, and Juliet Pillitteri. Pillitteri says he’s learned it’s important to get snow off the edges of the pond to prevent them melting. “Because I love my kids and nieces and nephews so much, I use an ATV and plow blade to push all the snow to the perimeter of the pond, use the snowblower to launch it off the pond, and use the ice resurfacer to flood the ice. (Photos supplied)
Music Niagara and other festivals present July in January

Help for mental health problems impacted by pandemic

Mike Balsom Special to The Local

Music Niagara Festival is collaborating with 10 other classical music organizations from across the province to bring a little bit of summer to your winter. The 11 festivals have banded together to form Classical Music Festivals of Canada (CFMC). Their website goes live Jan. 28 with the launch of July in January, an online event featuring live music shared by each organization.

Music Niagara founder and artistic director Atis Bankas is excited about the opportunity to introduce music lovers from Ottawa, Gananoque, Parry Sound, Picton, Stratford and elsewhere to the vast array of quality music that is perennially on the program here in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

“It’s a great cross-promotion for us to spread the news of our own unique character,” Bankas tells The Local. “Our brand shows our local. ‘Our brand shows our connection and community building. Like Music Niagara, the other festivals were forced to pivot to online offerings of their usual live performances over the past 22 months. Many invested in state-of-the-art audio and video recording to share livestream performances as artists became increasingly comfortable with virtual venues.

The expertise gained by the 11 artistic directors through that transformation lent itself to the idea of July in January. “Our thinking was to give everyone, from the youngest members of society to the seniors who are struggling in isolation. Lord Mayor Betty Disero says she’s concerned about those who need help.

“Whole pandemic has brought forward the issue of mental health and wellness, and the impact of isolation. I’m afraid we don’t have the resources to deal with it. Mental health problems, combined with the impact of this variant, are making it very difficult for people of all ages to cope.”

There is so much focus on the pandemic and how to deal with it, says Disero, that there aren’t enough people or resources to address mental health issues. “As a community we need to find ways to help those who are struggling to get through this.”

Music to perform in recent Music Niagara Festivals are Sora Sato-Mound (top left), Donovan Locke and Alisha Oliver (top right), Emma Meinenken (bottom left) and Atis Bankas, Victoria Kogan and Dobrochna Zubek (bottom right).

It’s important to talk about mental health, and reach out to others to see if there is something we can do to help, she adds. Just talking can help relieving some of the anxiety and depression others may be feeling. “I encourage everyone to call a friend, chat with them, have a conversation. It will help to feel a little less isolated.”

“My hope is that people will see him and he will get invitations to play at other festivals. The festival’s name, with ‘Canada’ in its title rather than ‘Ontario’, hints at potential future plans to expand the offerings beyond the provincial borders. And Campbell and the others are hoping that the website created to deliver July in January becomes an ongoing frequent stop for classical music lovers worldwide looking to expand their horizons.

CFMCF’s inaugural online festival launches Jan. 28 via the website classicalfestivals.ca, and will remain available for an undetermined time following that day. It’s free of charge, and visitors can peruse any of the 11 participating festivals. Viewers are encouraged to support the participating arts organizations by donating through links on the website.

Penny Coles The Local

Awareness of mental health and wellness is always an issue that requires attention, even more so during COVID.

The pandemic affects everyone, from the youngest members of society to the seniors who are struggling in isolation.

The Red Violin, Mozart’s birthday celebration, the trio from the Shaw and Music set, and the Fairs Connection show that was held inside the new barn in the Pillar and Post Garden in summer, 2021.

As well, “thousand Islands Playhouse artistic director Eric Friesen, a former host and producer for CBC and NPR public radio, interviewed each of his colleagues, giving them a chance to explain what their unique classical music festival is all about.”

Campbell reflects on the videos he has seen thus far and confirms that there is no duplication of repertoire among them. Every attempt was made to allow each festival to present something unique and fresh that can appeal to a wide range of musical tastes.

“There is some incredibly inventive and marvelous programming going on with all my colleagues in Ontario,” says Campbell.

“It’s very rich. And I’m amazed at how quickly they all signed on for this.”

“The collegiality of each of the artistic directors was wonderful,” Campbell adds. “We’re all in this together. We’re all friends, and this shows how united the classical music scene is in Ontario. ‘They all get it, that the more people know about all the festivals in Ontario the better it is for everyone.’

Campbell agrees that the online presentation can only serve each festival well in giving them a chance to bring their offerings to new audiences. And it should benefit the musicians, too.

“We have a program for you, for experts, and our (Festival of the Sound) video features a wonderful young pianist,” Campbell says. “My hope is that people will see him and he will get invitations to play at other festivals. The festival’s name, with ‘Canada’ in its title rather than ‘Ontario’, hints at potential future plans to expand the offerings beyond the provincial borders. And Campbell and the others are hoping that the website created to deliver July in January becomes an ongoing frequent stop for classical music lovers worldwide looking to expand their horizons.

Since 2010, Canadians have joined in conversation to reduce the stigma around mental health issues, inspire action and help create a Canada where everyone can access the mental health support they need.

For information on how to get help and for COVID-19 resources, visit https://festalk. bell.ca/en/covid-19.


If you are experiencing a mental health crisis, call 911 immediately or go to your nearest emergency department.

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“People are beginning to better understand how important it is to reach out to each other, and help each other.”

The Canadian Mental Health Association assures us it is normal to feel increased levels of stress and anxiety due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Social gathering restrictions and economic lockdowns have remained in place far longer than was first anticipated, and many are finding the activities and coping strategies that got them through difficult times early on in the pandemic are not working as well as they used to.

Bell Let’s Talk Day is today, Wednesday, Jan. 26. It’s an annual occasion to help drive progress in mental health, and bring awareness to mental health issues.

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Being a good neighbour

The town is asking residents to help shovel out fire hydrants whenever they can, putting forward the re- quest as “good, safety-minded advice,” because it will take some time to address all fire hydrants after a heavy snowfall. Fire Chief Nick Ruller thanked all those who have helped out during the recent snowstorm. Resident Randy Klaassen has his own take — he shoveled out a hydrant on a neighbour’s prop- erty, saying “my motives were purely selfish, in case our house should be the one to catch fire.” Others could do the same, either out of courtesy, or “self-in- terest,” he suggests, and adds, “make sure the blue reflectors are visible from the street,” so drivers can see them at night. It took him about 30 minutes to chisel and shovel through the frozen berm of snow, which the snowplow made. (Randy Klaassen)
Pumphouse hoping for 1,000 origami cranes

Penny Coles
The Local

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Pumphouse Arts Centre has embarked on a project that has volunteers and staff re-energized and enthusiastic, after two years of the emotion-al rollercoaster of COVID.

The arts centre is hoping to have 1,000 origami cranes to say thank you to the many essential workers who have contributed to our health and safety through COVID, and it’s time to involve the public in the project, which is both remarkably simple to execute, and incredibly rewarding on many levels, says board chair Lise Adreana.

An ancient Japanese legend, she explains, says the crane, considered a mystical or holy creature, is rumoured to live for a thousand years. It promises anyone who folds a thousand origami cranes will be granted a wish by the gods, or bring happiness and good luck. They can be made by one person or by several in a group.

She discovered the legend while spending time online during one of her sleepless nights. “I’m always looking for ways to engage our community with projects that have at least some artistic component,” she says.

“It’s a really interesting story, and it seems like the right time, and a really interceting way for the Niagara community to come together during COVID and say thank you.”

There are many in the community who are feeling isolated and lonely, she says, including those who are used to volunteering but have had to put that on hold, and this is something fun they can do from home.

The town has been very co-operative, allowing the cranes to be hung in the windows of the community centre in the days leading up to March 22, the second anniversary of the COVID lockdowns in Ontario and across Canada.

The response has been great, and although they’re asking for 1,000 cranes, says Adreana, “we could end up with 10,000. There’s a lot of space in the community centre windows. The more the merrier.”

The volunteers who have begun making the cranes have been very creative, using hand-painted paper. Plain white paper can be used, kids can colour it with crayons — they will all make a lovely display, she says. “I can’t wait to see them all strung up. It’s going to be amazing.”

The deadline for submitting cranes is March 2. With the Pumphouse closed, Adreana suggests putting the cranes in a zip-lock bag and using the drop box outside the building.

The plan, when it’s time to take them down is to donate the strings of cranes to essential workers and organizations, such as local long-term care homes, as a another way to say thank you.

After two years of the pandemic, the community is still eager to help people get through it, and not only is the timing perfect, but the project will be therapeutic for those who make the cranes, and for those who see them at the community centre. “It’s a project that can engage everybody,” says Adreana. “Our volunteers are all so excited about it.”

There isn’t a lot we can control during the pandemic, she adds, but this is an opportunity to create something artistic, “and that always makes you feel better.”

For help, there is a YouTube video that shows an easy method of creating a traditional origami crane, at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FyC7pkT-dE0

All you need to begin with is a square of paper — six inches is a good size to start with.

The Pumphouse’s administrative assistant, Jodi Eppler, has already started folding the cranes, and has received some from residents. (Photos supplied)

Cranes can be made of origami paper or plain white paper, or get creative and hand-paint the squares before folding.

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FOUR PIZZAS, TWO SALADS
and attended the performance of the first act of Kimiko’s Pearl. Mori and Spieldenner were thrilled to host the man who fought so hard for the apology and compensation for those who suffered in the 1940s.

With 2022 marking 80 years since more than 20,000 Japanese Canadians were interned, Miki sees the Bravo Niagara! project as an important one to commemorate the sacrifices that were made by the community.

“With the recent loss of Mori’s father (Spieldenner’s grandfather) Tsugio (Robert) Mori on Dec. 29, the timing of the premiere is even more deeply poignant,” reflects Mori. “He followed our journey all through the past year. He watched this and his eyes would well up with tears and emotion.

“He was very proud that his Japanese Canadian story was being told,” Spieldenner adds. “And he really connected it with the community across Canada. He was supportive all along and proud that we were doing this.”

Of her mother Ryuko (Ricki), who passed away in 2010, Mori says, “the apology was a turning point for her. She taped (Mulroney’s) apology letter to her office. She was always proud to be a Canadian, even after the government did that to them. We’re finding out that that is the culture of the Japanese.”

For Spieldenner, knowing that her thesis at Duke from 20 years ago was the genesis for this new creative work is awe-inspiring. “I never imagined it would set the stage for this project,” she says. “It’s incredible to be able to honour my grandparents and great-grandparents with what is ultimately a story of hope that will pay tribute to the resilience of the Japanese Canadian community.”

The Saturday, Feb. 5 premiere is scheduled for 7 p.m. and will include long-time CBC host Mary Ito in a discussion with Howard Reich about how the story came together. Registration is required for the free event to be hosted on the Zoom platform. For information and to register, visit bravoniagara.org/live.
While attending Mohawk College, he taught retail and apprentice members for their education packages for their education program. He was the president of the PGA of Canada from 2006 until 2008 and was granted honorary membership status in the Professional Golfers’ Association in 2008. Crosbie also served as president of the PGA of Ontario, was named an Honorary Director of PGA of America and is the chair for the Golf Canada Hall of Fame committee.

He is proud of the work he has done to help develop the PGA of Canada Benevolent Fund, which provides temporary assistance to past and present PGA of Canada members and apprentice members who find themselves in financial hardship. The fund provides basics such as clothing, food and shelter, as well as financial assistance for mental and physical health care services to those in need.

He says he was never a tournament player of any note, and points to his skills around the green as the best part of his game. And over all those years working at golf courses, he’s never had a hole in one.

“I’ve come really close, on the edge a few times, but I’ve never had one,” Crosbie laughs. “I’ve had some good scores, but usually for nine holes. I’ve had a 29, a 30, a couple of 31’s, but I found the problem I had was that there was always something going on at the club, always something on my mind. By the time I got back to the shop, my attention span had changed.”

Crosbie is an honorary member at Bayview and makes a point of getting back to the Toronto area to play a couple of rounds at his old club annually. He also hosts Bayview members when they visit the Niagara region.

Warren and his wife Deborah moved to Old Town about 12 years ago, when he retired from Bayview. He was certainly familiar with the Niagara area from a young age, as his younger brother was a goalie for the old St. Catharines Black Hawks in the 1970-1971 season.

The lifestyle of NOTL and its wineries and restaurants drew the couple to the region, and they both love the town’s proximity to both Toronto and the U.S.

Crosbie does still enjoy about a dozen rounds per year, mostly divided between the NOTL Golf Club and Cherry Hill in Ridgeway, where some high level tournaments have taken place.

But rather than walking around a stretch of nine or 18 holes, these days Crosbie’s walks take him around town with Debra and their dogs.

As he takes his rightful spot in the PGA of Canada Hall of Fame, he reflects on a local connection to his 32 years at Bayview.

An interesting thing, one of the teaching professionals that was at the club in Toronto for some time was George Clifton,” Crosbie says. “If you look at the list of professionals at the club here in town, he was the professional here in 1948, which was the year I was born.”

Crosbie will be sharing space in the PGA Canada Hall of Fame with that very same George Clifton following his induction this week.
Predators have three good games, eight away leading to playoffs

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

The Greater Metro Junior A Hockey League (GMHL) will resume its regular season this Monday, Jan. 31. That’s five days later than its previ-
ously announced plans, but in line with an Jan. 19 an-
nouncement by the provincial government.

To accommodate for the rescheduling of games lost during the January prov-
ince-wide shut-down of non-elite amateur sports, the season will be extended two weeks to March 6, with the 2022 Russell Cup Playoffs beginning on March 7. The league plans to have every team finish a 38-game regular season schedule by then, con-
densed from the usual 42.

Playoffs will remain four rounds, with the top seven teams in the North and South Division standings automat-
ically qualifying for postsea-
son play. The final eighth seed will be determined from the usual 42.

The Greater Metro Junior A Hockey League (GMHL) recently an-
ounced their player power rankings that weren’t mentioned in this section, please contact:

Meet the Predators

Name:  
Maxwell Bredin
Jersey number: 9
Age: 18
Birthdate:  September 5th, 2003
Height:  5’11”
St. Davids, NOTL
Name:
Nickname:  Brezzer
Favourite hockey player:  William Nylander
Favourite ‘hype’ song:  “Blitzkrieg Bob”
by The Ramones
Hockey highlight:  My first goal in Junior Hockey (happened to be a game winner against the West Island Cyclones)
Other sports you play:  Soccer
Favourite ‘cheat’ meal:  Takeaway
Secret talent:  I can juggle a golf ball with a 69 degree wedge
Owner, general manager and head coach Robert Turnbull hints that he’s far this season.

The top spot in the South Division’s power rankings is held by Dante Massi. Massi’s 41 as-
ists are the sixth most in the league, while his 51 points put him in fifteenth in the league in scoring with 53 points. The Niagara Falls native is a re-
lentless playmaker and a con-
sistent thorn in the side of his opponents, battling against much larger players to set his teams up for chances.

“Dante is our workhorse,” Turnbull says. “We’ve got a lot of great hockey players, and I’m proud of what they’ve achieved. And a lot of points that these guys have gotten have come from play-
ers that weren’t mentioned in the list.”

At number 10 is Jesper Eriksson, the Predators lead-

ing scorer who is tied for 11th in the league in points with 56. The big bodied,
smooth-skating Swede also leads Niagara with 27 goals. He brings a European style of play to the team with his superb puck-handling skills and a knack for creating space in front of opposing goalies.

Fellow Swede Pontus Madsen is number 14 on the list and the second highest ranked defender in the South Division. Though he didn’t join the team until a month into the season, Mad-
son currently leads all Pred-
ers defenceman in points, with 23 in only 16 games.

The top spot in the South Division power rankings is held by Kory Sylvester, the di-
visions leading scorer with 50 goals and 88 points for the 7 and 21 Windsor Aces. San-
tino Foti of the North York Renegades is ranked second, with Mike Marchesan of the St. George Ravens in third. Both have netted 41 goals so far this season.

Jesper Eriksson at Meridian Credit Union Arena carries the puck down the ice.

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Jesper Eriksson at Meridian Credit Union Arena carries the puck down the ice.
OBITUARY


It is with tremendous sadness we announce the passing of Merion Clément in her 89th year on Thursday, January 20, 2022 in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Beloved mother of Christina (Tina) Clément, sister

TO TREBIE, HEINZ OTTO "HARRY" JUNE 15 1932 – JANUARY 23, 2022

Bringing an end to a wonderfully activity-filled life, Harry departed this world preceded by his beloved wife, Effie. Mourning his loss are his sister, Traudel (Eggen) and her husband, Heinz, and his niece, Christina (Letcher), her husband, Thomas, and their daughters, Jessica and Lina, all of Seligenstadt, Germany; and, here in Canada, Harry’s stepdaughter, Beryl (Tupman), her husband, Jim, their sons, Lowell (Joy) and Lionel (Lauren), and great-granddaughters, Leela and Izaia; as well, Harry’s stepson, Scott (Bird), and his wife, Amy, and sons Matthew (Erika) and Mark (Mishelle).

Harry’s life was not an easy one, but he triumphed over his difficulties with optimism, determination and hard work. Harry was born in Stuttgart, Germany, and experienced the horrors of WWII at first hand as a young lad, being required to walk through his neighbourhood after allied bombing attacks to report any fires. Later he was moved to his grandfather’s farm for safety until the conclusion of the war. When not in school, he labored on the farm. After the war he worked in a vineyard in Lausanne, Switzerland, becoming a skilled cooper and cook, before emigrating to Canada in 1956. After three years as a sous-chef on lake freighters, Harry took up permanent employment in the office of American Can Company (later Ball Packaging) in Niagara Falls until his retirement in 1996.

During his time in Canada, Harry became well known for his dancing prowess on Saturday nights at such venues as the German Village and Club Heidelberg. In addition, he was an active long-time member of the Lawn Bowling Club, the St. Albain’s Club, and the Dinner Club, all of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Harry loved to travel, returning to Germany for regular visits and tours and later extending his visions to many countries from Russia to South America. At home he planted a vineyard and dug out a basement by hand to create a private wine cellar. He took up a hobby assembling model steam trains, and then built a rail line through his gardens around the exterior of his country house to run his trains, assisted in proper regalia, by his young grandsons. This hobby led to more travel; to steam train competitions as far south as Louisiana.

Harry had a remarkable ability to pick up phrases in foreign languages, in some cases becoming quite fluent, and made friends easily by addressing newcomers with a few words of their own language. He exhibited a deep affection for his family and friends, delighting in providing barbecue dinners for groups on the weekend, and generously assisting his grandsons.

Harry will be missed by anyone who had the chance to know him. His family wishes especially than the nursing staff of Linhaven Extended Care Home and the Dialysis Department personnel at the St. Catharines Hospital for their kind care and attention to Harry’s needs.

Under current pandemic conditions, provincial restrictions limit the number of guests at visits, funerals and internments. All visitors must wear a face mask and practice physical distancing. For the following visitation times, relatives and friends who wish to attend must RSVP online through Lillian Menonnoite Church, 572 East & West Line, Niagara-on-the-Lake, with visitation one hour prior to the service. Burial will follow in Niagara Lakeshore Cemetery. Visit thebca.ca or call the funeral home (905-468-3255) for further information. If desired, memorial donations may be made to the Alzheimer’s Society of Ontario or to a charity of your choice. Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com

ANDRÉS, LILLIAN — Lili’s passing was just one instant in a full and lovely life. She was with her family for as long as she was meant to be. Not a minute longer, not a moment less. Lili was born on August 10th, 1927 in Aberdeen, Saskatchewan and passed away peacefully at Port Colborne Hospital in her 95th year on Friday, January 21, 2022. For 58 years, Lili was married to her sweetheart Henry (Hank) Andres (predeceased 2005). Dearly loved mother of Marlene (Danny) McCarthy, Linda, Bob (Mary), Larry (Ling) and Bert (Al) and adored by her 6 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren. We will miss her dearly. Survived by sister Elsie Koop, brothers Con (Melvina) Unger, Joe (Michelle) Unger, sister-in-law Ruth Unger and many nieces and nephews. Predeceased by brothers John and Peter Unger and sisters, Anne (Cy) Mitchell, Jess (Harvey) Gossen.

Mom had a wonderful and full life; a hard worker, devoted to her family, and committed to years of volunteer service with the Children’s Aid Society, the Upper Canada Lodge Nursing Home and the Christian Benefit Shop. She loved her volunteer work and when there was a need in the family, Mom was always there. A special thank you to the staff at Pleasant Manor, Niagara Falls Hospital and Port Colborne Hospital for all of their love and care for our Mom.

Under current pandemic conditions, provincial restrictions limit the number of guests at visits, funerals and internments. All visitors must wear a face mask and practice physical distancing. For the following visitation times, funeral service and burial, relatives and friends who wish to attend must RSVP online through Lillian Clément’s obituary on Morgan Funeral Home’s website (www.morganfuneral.com). The life of Lillian will be celebrated on Monday, January 31, 2022 at 11 a.m., at Bethany Menonnoite Church, 572 East & West Line, Niagara-on-the-Lake, with visitation one hour prior to the service. Burial will follow in Niagara Lakeshore Cemetery. Visit thebca.ca or call the funeral home (905-468-3255) for further information. If desired, memorial donations may be made to the Alzheimer’s Society of Ontario or to a charity of your choice. Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com

SUDOKU SOLUTION

Sudoku solution from January 19, 2022

0 6 3 1 9 7 2 4 8
0 2 7 9 8 4 5 3 9
4 6 8 2 3 5 1 6 7
6 8 2 9 4 7 5 1 3
7 9 1 6 8 3 2 4 5
8 1 3 2 4 9 5 6 7
6 7 9 1 2 4 3 5 8
4 1 9 8 5 6 7 2 3
2 4 8 5 6 7 3 9 1

To place an Obituary or In Memoriam in our Classifieds, please contact Julia at: julia@notllocal.com or 905.934.1040

Deadline is Tuesdays at 1 p.m.
Resident quite fawn-d of her visitors

Sally Jackson lives in the Old Town, on Balmoral Drive, backing onto Two Mile Creek. She loves to watch, and photograph, the deer who make their way into her back-yard, especially one day last week when she had a record number visit, including one missing a rack of antlers.