



**Fitness centres reopen, including F-45**  
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Michel Grise does the shovelling, and Petrus Tung the sculpting, creating 12 snow people on a narrow lane in the Creekside Seniors Estate in St. Davids. (Penny Coles)

## Snowmen brighten lives of neighbours

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

The 17-acre property on Four Mile Creek Road, nestled into the Niagara Escarpment, is home to a thriving senior community, with members who believe in looking after their neighbours.

It's also currently home to 12 life-size snowmen bordering a laneway, created by one of the residents as a bit of fun to lighten the mood of those feeling hemmed in by snow and COVID, and also to solve a practical solution to the problem of what to do with the huge snowfall of the last two weeks.

Petrus Tung and Michel Grise are newish members of the Creekside Seniors Estates cooperative, on the east side

of Four Mile Creek Road, just north of Townline Road.

It would be considered a cozy, upscale RV retirement park, but more than that, it's a warm and close-knit community for those who choose to live there.

Tung says he purchased a home in the park for his mother, and when she passed away two years ago, he and his partner decided it was time to downsize and semi-retire from the Mississauga rat race, choosing to make the move to St. Davids.

And while they love their quiet life there, a short drive from the city when they want to visit friends, they found the recent snow fall a challenge for the narrow roads the small lots front on.

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## MP Baldinelli addresses protest issues

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

Conservative MP Tony Baldinelli has strong feelings about what is happening on the streets of Ottawa these days.

When the Niagara Falls riding representative had the opportunity to make his first speech of the 44th Parliament Monday, he didn't miss a chance to express his disappointment with the Liberal government leadership: "missing in action, as thousands of protesters from the 'freedom convoy'

have camped in the nation's capital and blockaded downtown Ottawa for over a week now."

By Monday night, the prime minister appeared in Parliament at an emergency meeting, but Baldinelli had made it clear by then it's time to return to a more normal life.

"Let me be extremely clear. There is no question that vaccines are critically important in our fight against COVID, and to help us get there. Canada's Conservatives have consistently taken this position through-

out the pandemic.

They have encouraged all Canadians "who are willing to get their shots," he said.

"I am fully vaccinated, and I encourage everyone who can to get vaccinated as well. It is the best tool we have, but it is not the only tool."

Conservatives are also strong proponents of rapid testing, but those are in short supply, he said, hard to find and expensive to buy. Rapid tests offer early detection of COVID, and can be an important tool

to let those who are vaccine-hesitant and unvaccinated "carry on with their lives responsibly."

He also called out the federal government for delaying approval of Novavax, a protein-based vaccine some have said they will take as an alternative to mRNA vaccines, and criticized excessive spending unrelated to COVID, while prices of everything from groceries to gas, rent and housing prices are skyrocketing.

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## Councillor responds to budget criticism

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

Allan Bisback likes to take a walk along Queen Street most mornings, from his Park Avenue home to the Old Town post office.

The first-term town councillor stops for coffee along his route, chatting with locals and hearing what they're thinking about town issues.

They don't hold back with their opinions, says the chair of the town's budget committee, although recently, with the combination of snowy, cold days and COVID, he isn't seeing a lot of people

when he's out and about.

However, after the controversy of last week's council meeting to give final approval to the town's budget, he says, those he has spoken to had mostly positive comments about it.

The same is true of the many emails and phone calls he has received.

"People are saying, 'you guys have a tough job, coming out of a pandemic. We don't envy your job. I've had a lot of phone calls, and people aren't shy. But nobody is saying it's terrible, it's a ca-

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# MP supports ‘peaceful protest’ but not disrespect



MP Tony Baldinelli, Niagara Falls riding representative, speaks about the Ottawa protests and other COVID issues in Parliament Monday. (Screenshot)

Continued from page 1

“It has been two long and difficult years, and some say it still feels like March 2020, when the country-wide lockdowns first started. From the very beginning of COVID, the Liberal government was grossly unprepared for the pandemic,” he said, linking what was occurring “outside the walls of this place today” to the government’s “unpreparedness for the pandemic.”

In an email to The Local, Baldinelli said “the frustration and disappointment which led to the protest in Ottawa in the first place, in many ways, mirrors the calls, emails and letters I have been getting from constituents throughout the riding.”

He understands and shares the frustration from the protesters on the streets in Ottawa, he added.

“We are now two years into this pandemic, and it is all too clear that the Trudeau

Liberals have failed to ensure Canadians have the tools necessary to not only respond to, but more importantly, live with COVID-19, so we can all get on with our lives and move forward.”

Baldinelli says he supports peaceful protest, but “at the same time, I absolutely condemn those disturbing actions we saw from some individuals. Canadians have a right to peaceful protest, but

they have no right to harass, threaten, and disrespect others, and no right to denigrate our national monuments. The despicable actions of some, including displaying hateful symbols, disrespecting the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, altering the Terry Fox statue, and harassing employees and volunteers at local homeless and women’s shelters, were deeply troubling, and I strongly condemn them.”

# Councillor urges solutions instead of criticism

Continued from page 1

tastrophe,” says Bisback.

“I’ve had no negative feedback about 2.99 per cent.”

He’s referring to the increase the budget delivers to taxpayers, after councillors approved the work of the budget committee, with Bisback as chair and four other councillors spending many hours going over it line by line with corporate services director director Kyle Freeborn, as they struggled to bring what was originally a 13 per cent increase down to something taxpayers could live with.

He has had questions about the levy increase for

those living in urban areas to cover storm water management requirements, but that, he says, “is nothing new,” although some residents in rural areas are confused about who pays for it.

Despite grants received to cover pandemic costs, the open-close, open-close of facilities in response to COVID, as well as the additional cleaning, screening and bylaw enforcement, takes a toll on the cost of running a municipality, while “revenues plummeted,” also a result of the pandemic.

Parking has always been a good source of revenue for the town, “but it took a nosedive,” says Bisback.

Other sources such as rental of town facilities, and town programs at the community centre “went down the tube,” and contributed to the hit to revenue.

Only one councillor opposed the budget, and although Bisback strives to remain professional, he is troubled by the criticism levelled at councillors, not only over the budget, which they all agree is not sustainable, but for their overall performance during this term, which will come to an end following an October election.

If he’s heard any negative comments, it’s about the behaviour of councillors, that

“you guys aren’t getting along.” That’s the perception. They joke that we need to get along more. It’s okay to disagree, as long as we do it in a professional manner.”

What to him is unprofessional is a councillor “misstating facts and misleading the public” in an emotional moment, with statements that are untrue, he says.

He would have preferred specific questions about the budget, and solutions for some of the issues, that could have been brought to the attention of the audit committee at any time during their months of meetings. Councillors who are not members of the committee were encouraged to attend, and welcome to ask questions.

Bisback knows future budgets at a three per cent increase will not likely be possible, with union negotiations for staff salaries coming in the year ahead.

He suspects budgets will have to match inflation, which currently runs



Allan Bisback stops for coffee when he goes out for a walk every morning, giving him a chance to chat with locals about town issues. (Photo supplied)

around 4.5 per cent. “I wouldn’t expect it to be less than the average inflation rate going forward.”

The uncertainty of COVID was a major consideration with this year’s “maintenance 2.0” budget.

“We’re in a better position financially than last year,” says Bisback, but the tax increase continues to be a reflection of “we still don’t know what to expect.”

The councillor says he takes his role as an elected representative seriously. Responding to criticism this council is trying to do too much, he disagrees, and had a conversation with CAO Marnie Cluckie that confirmed his thinking.

Council, he says, has put forward visions for the future through various initiatives and studies, and it looks like it has a lot on its plate. “But they don’t all need to be done in the next nine months” of this council term. “We’ve hired a very good CAO who is doing a great job of leading staff and setting priorities. Our CAO is comfortable saying when we have to slow things down or speed things up. That’s the role of a CAO.”

Including those items in this budget ensures the money is put aside to get them started. Some of them will be funded by grants and development fees, not taxpayers, he adds.

He hopes to be on council next term to see them advanced. “I want to be part of the team that makes decisions, provides leadership, and leaves a legacy for this town.”



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# Goal of school sale ‘what’s best for Willowbank, community’

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

With the former Laura Secord Memorial School about to go be put on the market, both the board of Willowbank, its current owner, and town councillors want to be sure the sale is what’s best for both Willowbank and the Queenston community.

It’s been more than a decade since the sound of a school bell or voices of youngsters on the playground at recess could be heard in Queenston, and much about the village has changed since then, including the former elementary school property, which served local youngsters from 1914 until 2010 before becoming the lower campus of the Willowbank School of Restoration Arts.

Willowbank purchased the building in 2012 through a partnership with the town, planning on using it to expand restoration arts classes.

But a decade later, after a thorough analysis and review of the future direction of Willowbank, board vice-chair John Scott says the decision to sell Laura Secord wasn’t difficult at all — it has been “vastly underused” during the last decade, and deserves to be maintained, in good repair, with a role to play that will benefit the community.

Willowbank has shown good stewardship to the property, but that takes a lot of resources, he says.

None of the current members were on the board when Laura Secord was purchased in 2012, says Scott, so they also had to investigate why it was purchased, and discovered “the school didn’t evolve the way it was expected.”

While some of the space was initially used for classes while the Willowbank building was closed and undergoing restoration, that only lasted about two years.

The restoration work on Willowbank is not complete, and never will be, explains Scott. Instead the building itself will be a classroom that will continue as a “living laboratory” for students to work on, developing their



The original part of Laura Secord Memorial School was built in 1914, and has a heritage designation. (Penny Coles)

skills of the various eras represented in the Queenston mansion.

He finds it a fascinating concept — one that offers learning opportunities not available anywhere else in Canada — and also a difficult concept “to get your head around” the first time you see it, especially the Bright Room, the main salon that has different walls restored to different eras.

In his time on the board, he has become passionate about the unique educational program Willowbank offers, with hands-on skills for those interested in learning about heritage restoration by using the Willowbank building itself, and because of that direction, the lower campus is no longer needed.

“We’re very conscious of being good citizens of Queenston, and we don’t want it to fall into disrepair,” Scott says. “We want to do what’s right for the community.”

In the years since 2012, a chunk of the Laura Secord property has been severed, divided and sold as three residential lots. That money went to pay off debt and to fund some major renovations to Willowbank, includ-

ing an elevator and air conditioning system, amongst other projects.

Another section has been developed as a natural park through a public/private partnership with Willowbank, its students involved in the design of the park.

The remaining property that includes the former elementary school is still zoned institutional, says Scott.

The goal of the sale is to maximize the revenue for Willowbank, to be put aside as an investment. Although the board has no intention of trying to “steer its sale,” the goal is to do what will benefit the community, he stresses.

An opportunity to talk to alumni this fall helped convince him the board is moving in the right direction to secure the future of the school of restoration arts. Hearing what they are doing now, and the positive things they had to say about their Willowbank experience, was welcome news. “They loved that funky feeling that allows you to work collectively, and to really learn.”

Hopefully, he says of the Laura Secord building, “someone else will do something wonderful with it.”

There are still “two

amazing artists” using the upstairs space — they have a one-year lease — “and it would be great if whoever purchases it allows them to stay. That’s a personal point of view,” he says “But we don’t know where it’s going to go.”

Board members have already had six different groups approach them with ideas for different uses. “As soon as we announced we were selling it there were some feelers out, but we don’t know where it will end up.”

They also don’t know what kind of money they are looking at. “Someone will have to give us some perspective on what it would be. Our goal is ‘as much as we can get,’ to retire a small mortgage and have enough funds to invest as an endowment fund for the Willowbank School of Restoration Arts.”

Willowbank, he emphasizes, “is fine. It’s not a sale of financial need. It’s for the long-term. It would be foolhardy to use the money for operations. This is an investment for the long-term education of Willowbank students.”

As a volunteer, Scott, whose love of education led

him to the board of Niagara College, which he chaired for a time, and more recently to Willowbank, will be providing the oversight on the sale.

And he is receptive to meeting with councillors, and the community, to discuss the future of the Laura Secord property.

Councillors at Monday’s planning committee meeting had a brief discussion about the sale, with Coun. Erwin Wiens asking that the town approach Willowbank board members to talk about “the spirit” of the 2012 purchase of the elementary school.

His recollection, he said, is that the town facilitated the purchase of Laura Secord from the District School Board of Niagara to preserve it.

The original portion of the school was built in 1914, and was designated a heritage building by the town.

Wiens said his concern is that the property will be purchased by a developer, and a few years down the road will be turned into a subdivision.

“Hopefully someone on the board remembers what the spirit of the purchase was then, and will be amica-

ble to working with us.”

“I understand fair market value,” he continued, “but we (the town) helped them get it, and it would be a shame to lose it,” which is what will happen “if we don’t act now, and act quickly.”

He asked that someone from the town reach out to the Willowbank board, “before they reach out to a real estate agent,” and “facilitate something at that property that will be to everybody’s liking.”

Lord Mayor Betty Disero said she is happy to ask the board members if they will work with the town, “and figure out what will be best for that property.” Staff is already looking at how the town was involved in the sale, she said.

But she cautioned councillors the value of the property makes it unlikely the town would be able to purchase it.

Scott says he welcomes discussions with the town, perhaps another educational facility, or anyone who might have a proposal that would benefit the community.

“It’s good that people are concerned. That’s great. We are too. We’re happy to talk to them.”



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# Fire chief leaving department for new challenges

**Penny Coles**  
**The Local**

Nick Ruller loves a challenge. He likes to push himself, and to learn new skills. He also loves his job as fire chief of his home town, but he's ready to try something different. "That's just my personality. It's how I'm wired," he says. He quotes the saying, "Comfort is the enemy of growth," which tells him that it's not okay to get too comfortable, but rather to grab the opportunity to grow, and to develop a new range of skills that builds on his experience in NOTL, and in Toronto, where he worked before

coming home to Niagara to raise his family. This explains why he is leaving a great job to try something different, as a platoon chief in Brampton, which is also a management position. Fire departments that are staffed 24/7 have shifts, and platoon chiefs are the shift supervisors, he explains. He didn't rush into the job he's accepted, he says. It's important to be part of the "right team," as he is in town, and he feels he will be in his next position. "I'm leaving one great team for another high-performance team." Relocation was not an option, he adds. He won't be moving from the town where he grew up. He and his family all have their friends here, and are part of a community they don't want to leave. When he settles into his new job, he will continue to volunteer with the Old Town fire department, knowing it is short of volunteers, and that he wants to continue contributing to his community, serving and protecting the residents of NOTL. As excited as he is about the new job, it hasn't been an easy time for him. His father had just made a trip from out west in an RV, and after spending a couple of days here with the grandkids, he and Nick hit the road together, a chance for the two of them to re-

connect after time apart during COVID. They made it as far as Florida, when his father died suddenly. Nick, with all his training, was suddenly on the other side of an emergency, calling for help, and having emergency services arrive in a very difficult and emotional situation. With all his experience and training helping others in similar situations, being on the receiving end gave him a different perspective, and a renewed appreciation of what those in emergency services are called on to do. Although it isn't easy, he says, his experience of helping others in their grief has helped him handle the grief that has followed him home from Florida, knowing he has to move forward each day. He says it's his nature to be the optimist, to look for the good in what is happening around him, and that is helping him deal with the loss of his father. He refers to the words of CAO Marnie Cluckie in the news release about him leaving as a good explanation of who he is. In her message of thanks to Ruller for his commitment, teamwork, and community focus, Cluckie said, "I will always be grateful for his collaborative approach, optimistic outlook on life, and value-based leadership." She also described him as a "thoughtful and strategic leader who strives to create a positive culture of trust and respect, enabling everyone to work toward common goals and objectives." "Under Nick's leadership, there have been vast improvements in Fire Services, and he has developed a terrific team. Nick can leave with the confidence that this dedicated, motivated, and professional team will continue his strong trajectory." He agrees he can leave with confidence, knowing council and staff support

sustaining a strong volunteer force, he says. "There will be no shortage of work to be done, or challenges as the department evolves," he says, but a solid foundation will help it move forward. "It's in a good position. The CAO has been absolutely amazing to work with, with has a genuine interest in seeing the organization succeed." He is leaving behind a solid team, a supportive council, and a strong staff, with the emergency services department well situated to move forward. "It is in good shape, but not because of me," he says. A very long list of achievements during his time with the service would imply otherwise. He leaves at the end of the month, and a "robust recruitment process will be initiated shortly," the town news release says, with more information forthcoming about the appointment of an acting chief until the position is filled.



Nick Ruller is leaving his position as fire chief at the end of the month. (Photo supplied)

## Outbreak over at Niagara Long Term Care

**Local Staff**

After reporting weekly about staff and residents with COVID, executive director Chris Poos is "thrilled to share that the outbreak at Niagara Long Term Care has been declared over by Public Health." He continues, "we are so thankful for our hard-working dedicated staff and

extremely appreciative of our families who were understanding every step of the way as we navigated this COVID-19 outbreak." The home will be re-opened slowly, he says, "with the safety of our residents, their families and our staff top of mind." Many of the safety practices will remain in place, including mask and face shields for staff, daily rapid testing for staff, in-unit dining with limited capacity at tables, cohorting of residents, and cohorting of staff to specific home areas. "We look forward to expanding the number of designated caregivers for our residents and opening up the home back up to general visitors, following the Ministry of Long Term Care and provincial guidelines," says Poos.

## Music Niagara's Not So Late Show



Pianist Guy Few and soprano Julie Nesrallah are two of the musical guests for the first segment of Music Niagara's new *Not So Late Show*, hosted by local comedian Joe Pillitteri and filmed by Niagara College at The Library at the Pillar and Post. Quartetto Gelato performs as the house band, while other guests for the first show include Shaw Festival artistic director Tim Carroll, young violinist Sora Sato-Mound, wine economist Greg Wertsch and winemaker Yannick Wertsch from Between the Lines Winery. The *Not So Late Show* debuts online this spring. (Mike Balsom)

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# Shaw opening play ‘will leave you enriched’

## *This is How We Got Here* opens difficult discussions

**Mike Balsom**  
Special to The Local

It’s the earliest opening ever for the Shaw Festival Theatre, as the 10-day run of *This Is How We Got Here* kicks off the 2022 season Wednesday, Feb. 9. But the unconventional start date is not the only way Shaw is shaking things up.

Written by Keith Barker, a Métis artist and playwright, *This Is How We Got Here* is a complex story of love and loss, at times both heartbreaking and heartwarming. Four characters - best friends, sisters and spouses - struggle to reconnect in the wake of a tragic loss that is all too familiar in Barker’s Northwestern Ontario hometown.

In an entry on the Shaw website, Barker laments the loss of three people close to him via suicide.

“The most significant teachings I have received have been about how to live with and move through great loss,” he writes. “This play also came out of my frustrations with the shame and silencing I have witnessed from people who are uncomfortable with suicide and death.”

Barker is the outgoing artistic director of Native Earth Performing Arts and a 2018 Governor General’s Literary Award finalist for *This Is How We Got Here*. It’s original run at that Toronto theatre won the 2020 Dora Award for outstanding new play, and received three nominations for production (Independent Theatre), direction (Barker) and scenic design (Shannon Lea Doyle). That same year, *This Is How We Got Here* received the Playwrights Guild’s Carol Bolt Award.

Sixth-year Shaw veteran Kristopher Bowman ap-

peared in the Toronto production, and reprises the role of Paul at Shaw this month.

“It deals with a lot of challenging issues,” Bowman admits. “It’s a beautiful play that swims in some very deep waters. Paul is a Northern Ontario boy who plays hockey, works on cars, and fights. He doesn’t talk about his feelings. He only cries when his dog dies. It makes him emotionally constipated.”

Bowman says for Paul, anger is the emotion that drives him more than any other. To feel grief, to experience loss, to open his heart and let the pain spill out, are foreign ideas. Without the tools he needs to deal with his unfathomable sorrow, he can’t navigate his way successfully through it.

“It’s taxing,” Bowman says about embodying Paul nightly. “It leaves me emotionally spent. It’s well worth performing, though there is a tax to be paid for your spirit. But it’s the nutrients you put into the garden. I want to make it worthwhile, I want to make it honest. I have to allow myself to be open to the pain.”

Through many long days of rehearsal, Bowman says each member of the cast - Jonathan Fisher, Nicole Joy-Fraser and Jenn Forgie - as well as director Barker and some of the production crew, have had to remove themselves to gather their composure. For Bowman, the loss of Paul’s son brings back emotions of losing his father. And he reflects on his own relationship with his 13-month old son River.

“Your body doesn’t know the difference between the stress that you use in make-believe and stress that you know is real. Your body goes through that physiological state, and your mus-

cle memory is long. You do your best to protect yourself from it, but at that moment it’s like working with plutonium.”

Presented as it is in partnership with Native Earth Performing Arts, and in light of playwright Barker’s own experiences, it’s not lost on any involved that the Indigenous community across the nation has been devastated by high rates of suicide.

Fittingly, the cast and crew have turned to a traditional Indigenous custom, holding smudging ceremonies both before and after each rehearsal. They have also enlisted a local Indigenous Elder named Albert to provide counsel and guidance periodically.

And, as they did two years ago during the Toronto run, there will be a question and answer session following each Shaw performance to address the emotional highs and lows for both production members and theatre goers alike.

“We do the Q & A because we feel the audience should be held,” says Bowman. “At our last performance, we put the helpful phone numbers on the back for suicide prevention. And we want the audience to know that we are okay as actors. It’s a gut-shot of a show, and it’s important to talk about the process.”

He continues, “we had this woman who talked about how she had attempted suicide years ago. She told us after the play that it was the first time that she really understood what she had put her parents through. It was a fascinating moment, highlighting how many people it affects.”

Despite the heavy subject matter, Bowman says *This Is How We Got Here* has many light moments that will have the audience laughing at the human nature of the characters as they interact with one another.

“We do go to some dark

pockets of the story,” Bowman admits, “but there are so many moments when you see so much love, compassion, understanding, humour and warmth. There is a lot to be said for seeing the resilience of these people, pressing on in that adversity. It’s challenging, but when you see it, you will be enriched. The view from the top of the mountain is beautiful, but you don’t get there without climbing the mountain.”

Bowman, an embedded artist at Shaw, gives great credit to artistic director Tim Carroll for taking chances and stepping out of the usual comfort zone with plays such as this one.

“I think great art moves the mercury. I really appreciate that the Shaw is giving patrons more options. It’s one of those pieces that is very honest, that encompasses opinions that aren’t very often put on a stage in

this community. Having a new point of view gives our patrons a chance to receive a reward for experiencing something new.”

*This is How We Got Here* is on stage at the Jackie Maxwell Studio Theatre from Feb. 9 to 19. It’s recommended for ages 14-plus, with an approximate running time of 75 minutes with no intermission. Performance times and tickets are available via <https://www.shawfest.com>.



Playwright Keith Barker (from Native Earth Performing Arts)



Shaw actor Kristopher Bowman (David Cooper)

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John Bald Team Leader



# EDITORIAL

## New, easy way to shop local, support local

The town has embarked on a campaign to asking residents to shop local. Supporting local businesses during this pandemic, and encouraging restaurants to shop local, is not new, but this is a real concerted effort that comes along at the perfect time.

Businesses, restaurants, gyms, the Shaw Festival, are all open, hoping they are on the way to economic recovery, and although many of us are ready to get out and enjoy all this community has to offer, others are not. This economic development initiative is an online business directory, a 'one-stop-shop,' for all of us. It shows us what is available in NOTL, and how to find it.

As it launches this initiative, the town has a contest for us, to get us in the mood to shop. Go to [shopnotl.ca](http://shopnotl.ca) to learn how to win one of two \$250 draws for local businesses featured on the ShopNOTL website.

Who doesn't love a contest? Give it a try.

More good news, as restaurants reopen, is that some of our local establishments have earned a place on the top 100 OpenTable list — a website for restaurant reservations.

We know our local restaurants are great, and there are so, so many it's hard to choose when we're in the mood to go out. Valentine's Day is coming up, and given the stage of the

pandemic this time last year, we probably weren't going out to celebrate. Maybe it's time. Or order pickup. Either way, feel the love.

Maybe we can even work on feeling the love for all those who are angry, because with all that is going on around us, everybody seems to be angry at somebody. If we're not angry at some level of government for vaccinations mandates and all the other restrictions that have been protecting us through the pandemic, we're probably angry at the people who are.

Chill with a glass of Niagara-on-the-Lake wine. Enjoy a meal from a restaurant in town. And if you're feeling

motivated to buy a little gift for someone you love, see what you can find locally.

Hopefully our business owners are seeing an end in sight, a time when life won't be quite so much of a struggle. We can help them get there.

And while we're feeling the love, or at least trying to, it's time to start thanking all our essential workers again. We don't have to go outside and make noise, or even make signs for our windows, although that's a nice thought. We can just try to remember to say a sincere thank you to the many, many exhausted workers who are more likely to be the butt of someone's anger than gratitude these days.

Our health care workers, our teachers, everyone who makes everything we do on a daily basis possible.

And especially thank the 90 per cent of truck drivers who are vaccinated, and just trying to do their jobs and keep themselves, their families and everyone around them safe, like most of us are.

Maybe in some small way that will make up for those who are instead saying thank you to the protesters, the extremists, the anarchists, who are dancing on top of their trucks, taking saunas in the streets, bringing their kids to play in bouncy castles and generally creating a street carnival where people

live and work, protesters who apparently think it's a good idea to overthrow the government, and while they wait for that to happen, insult health care workers on their way to save people, including those who are unvaccinated.

But we're getting off the topic of feeling the love... Anyone out there old enough to remember The Beatles might recall one of their hits — not one of the best, but a good message. All you need is love, it's easy.

Well, maybe not easy these days, but definitely worth remembering.

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

## New species created by different forces, slowly



**Owen Bjorgan**  
Special to The Local

You are reading this as *Homo Sapiens*, the scientific name assigned to our species. That's us as human beings, but what about the other estimated 8.7 million species on earth?

Today, I want to present two of the driving forces that lead to the creation of a new species, also known as speciation. It's kind of a big deal, and has major implications.

We're talking about allopatric and sympatric species creation. An allopatric spe-

ciation event occurs when an actual physical divide, like a mountain range or a large river, continually separates a population of plants or animals and causes them to evolve more independently. A sympatric speciation event unfolds when a population of an organism lives in the same geographical area, but differences in characteristics such as food or habitat preference causes them to diverge into a whole new species.

This beautiful process doesn't happen overnight. Generally speaking, it takes thousands to millions of years, depending on the circumstance. Once the new subset of organisms can reproduce exclusively with each other, find food, shelter, and survive, you

have yourself a new species on the biodiversity block.

Through filming my Hidden Corners nature documentaries, I've been fortunate to have visited rivers and mountains around the world that have split a previous species into two new ones. It's a powerful feeling to be on the water of that river, or on the peak of that mountain, knowing how such charismatic but ancient features have played this role for so long.

How long is a long time? Take tree kangaroos in the tropics of Australia. First of all, a tree kangaroo is what it sounds like. It's basically a much smaller and compact version of a kangaroo, but this marsupial lives a mysteriously slow life in the treetops of Aus-

tralia's eastern rainforests.

I'll never forget when my tour guide, and now a good friend, told me something awesome about the murky jungle river I was looking at, that the Daintree River has been dividing species for over 120 million years. This textbook and profound example of allopatric speciation was right before me, and looking upstream into the misty, rugged valleys, I felt this archaic connection to such an established and timeless river. In comparison, the Niagara River is certainly mightier on all parameters, but it is only 12,000 years old.

Australia's two species of tree kangaroo live on opposite sides of the river. Bennett's tree kangaroo lives on the north side, with Lumholtz's tree kangaroo living from the southern banks down. What is amazing is how these two species once descended from the same common ancestor a long time ago. With the soupy inter-tidal river constantly making it tricky for one population to reach another, the ancestor species inevitably split and became two separate species, according to the physical barrier of genes.



The Daintree River in Australia is one of the world's oldest examples of allopatric speciation, or the creation of new species by geographical separation. (Owen Bjorgan)

trality. Down in this equatorial part of the world, and thanks to allopatric speciation, it's not uncommon to have species of animals that are unique to one valley. The high mountain ridges create a physical break and tall ask for jungle animals, so many reside in the various valleys for the rest of their lives. Some eventually become new species, thanks to being cooked up in the steamy seams of the mountain.

As for the new species created by sympatric speciation, let's consider the apple maggot (*Rhagoletis pomonella*). One of the predominant pests that infects our domestic apples is actually from a fruit fly. The species of fruit fly once laid its eggs entirely in native hawthorn tree fruits, but when apples were introduced to North America, some parts of the fruit fly population had their appetite change. It now appears that sympatric speciation is paving the way for a new and

independent species of fruit fly which goes for apples, and the original one which still sticks to hawthorn.

It is likely that the less they interbreed, the closer we get to paving the way for a new species of fruit fly. It is already close, and this is just one example of how it happens.

Let's not forget how humans can be forces of allopatric and sympatric speciation, too. Canals, large urban areas, degradation of food sources, and other manufactured obstacles can cause populations to quickly shift, adapt, and perhaps evolve. However, these scenarios shouldn't necessarily be shown with a positive light.

Considering how quickly and profoundly humans can alter and divide the ecosystem of an area, speciation may not actually occur successfully. Rather, you would more likely be faced with the serious decline of a genetically unique population, given that human land alternation outpaces a species' ability to evolve healthily, and slowly. This is what is likely to happen to black bears on the Bruce Peninsula, as they increasingly find it harder to travel south and around Georgian Bay to connect with the rest of Muskoka and Ontario's bears.

Makes me wonder, will our species ever evolve into a separate offshoot, to the point where we'd have to call this animal a new species? That won't be happening in any of our lifetimes.

## View from the couch

**Donald Combe**  
Special to The Local

In *Falling for Figaro* (Netflix, 2020,) the heroine leaves a fantastic job and a handsome boyfriend to chase her lifelong dream of becoming

an opera singer. She travels to a remote Scottish village to study with an eccentric opera coach, where she meets a fellow opera student and romance ensues. Great story, great film.

*English teacher who loves to go to movies. Until he resumes going to theatres, he has graciously agreed to share his opinions, through "short and sweet" exclusives, of Netflix series and movies for The Local.*

Donald Combe is a retired

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# COMMENT

## Local LETTERS

### OUTniagara calls for crosswalk in heritage district

To Lord Mayor Betty Disero and Niagara-on-the-Lake Town Council: OUTniagara, a non-profit organization that unites, supports and celebrates Niagara's sexual- and gender-diverse communities, is adding its voice to endorse a permanent installation of a Progress Pride rainbow crosswalk at the intersection of Queen and King Streets in the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District.

We congratulate the town's diversity committee and many businesses in the area for endorsing the installation of the rainbow crosswalk, and encourage town council and the heritage committee to do the same. The proposed project, like the rainbow flag the town raises in June to recognize Pride Month, is a visible affirmation and recognition of the multi-generational lives and contributions made by Niagara's 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. A rainbow crosswalk and potential rainbow benches in NOTL's heritage district would signal strong support for communities that historically are unrecognized, under-represented, underserved, and underappreciated. Heritage districts in other Ontario towns both big (Hamilton, Milton) and small (Brantford, Kincardine/Owen Sound, Midland), have already added rainbow crosswalks to support and recognize sexual-and gender-diverse communities.

In a Community Strengths and Needs Assessment survey facilitated by Wisdom2Action for OUTniagara, and funded by a generous federal grant, several respondents of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community specifically mentioned the positive impacts of a rainbow crosswalk, and concerns such as vandalism:

- "I think visual displays of support make me feel best. Things like the signs on lawns or the painted sidewalk that was in downtown St. Catharines. They make me feel good when I see them."
- "I love the Pride Cross-

walk. Seeing it and walking on it makes me more emotional than I thought it would. It seems like a small thing, but more murals and pride flag visibility could make a difference as well."

- "The crosswalk was a good start/symbol. Governmental support is good, but there could be more representation.

- "Keep opening businesses, making park benches and crosswalks. Put it everywhere so that it can't be ignored. That those who belong to this group aren't bad people, or wrong for existing.

- "This community needs to know that we are here and we aren't going anywhere, no matter how much they vandalize a rainbow crosswalk."

- "The slow response to the vandalized crosswalk was really disheartening and it feels like the city was grossly performative and have already forgotten this."

The proposed installation of a rainbow crosswalk falls well within the intent of the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities and the town's own Heritage District Plan. By joining the Coalition in 2020, the town committed to "respecting, protecting, and promoting human rights and diversity." The town's District Plan was written in 1986, and even though it did not consider the possibility for installations such as the Progress Pride crosswalk and bench, it does advocate for well-designed and "special and inviting individuality" reflecting the town and district.

As a major tourist destination, the positive goodwill and economic impact of installing a rainbow crosswalk cannot be underestimated. Imagine visiting from a country where 2SLGBTQIA+ people are imprisoned (or worse) because of their sexuality and/or gender identification, and seeing a welcoming flag, crosswalk or bench.

Some members of the heritage committee have expressed concern that the colours of the

proposed rainbow crosswalk are "too jarring" and suggested that they be toned down. OUTniagara strongly objects to this proposal. When American activist and artist Gilbert Baker designed the rainbow flag in 1978, he intended it to be a declaration: "Our job as gay people was to come out, to be visible, to live in the truth. A flag really fit that mission, because that's a way of proclaiming your visibility or saying, 'This is who I am!'" Subduing the colours suggests adhering to a historical colour palette is more important than supporting an internationally recognized symbol of human rights.

Visible support via a crosswalk is an important starting place for much-needed conversations about who is and isn't welcome in Niagara-on-the-Lake. It would display critical support, especially for youth who are finding their way in a sometimes hostile and oppressive world. Statistics around self-harm and suicide, particularly in trans and non-binary communities, speak for themselves. Ongoing evidence of harmful speech and physical violence against members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community regionally, nationally, and globally further the need for visible support.

OUTniagara urges that the crosswalk be the beginning of follow-up commitment by Niagara-on-the-Lake to 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, and that explicit strategies for positive action be developed around important issues like trans health care services, transportation, housing, and discrimination. OUTniagara is available to act as a consultant for any much-needed discussions.

We will be watching the proceedings with interest, and will hope for a positive outcome to the rainbow crosswalk initiative.

**Kerry Goring**  
Co-chair OUTniagara  
**Celeste Turner**  
Co-Chair OUTniagara

## Local LETTERS

### Reader suggests other locations for rainbow crosswalk

To date, the residents of NOTL have had scant opportunity to express any opinion on the matter of a rainbow crosswalk whatsoever, let alone the location. So I am hopeful that we will be able to have some input into this sensitive issue, as some residents have strong

preferences.

Consideration should be given to an entrance to the town, ie 55 Niagara Stone Road and Mary Street, as this seems to be the most travelled route into town. Alternatively, perhaps closer to the town hall (at Niagara Stone Road and Four Mile

Creek Road), which would demonstrate strong support by our city leaders. I, among others, am strongly opposed to it being located in close proximity to the Cenotaph.

**Jean O'Malley**  
NOTL

## Hunting seems senseless

Thanks to Shirley Madson for her enlightening article (Town needs to review its hunting boundaries, The Local, Feb 2).

I first saw the pile of peaches on this same property a few years ago. My husband, a reformed, guilt-ridden former hunter told me what it was for. I was horrified by what this would lead to. We walk at Niagara Shores daily and spotted a rare piepald deer (piebald deer have varying amounts of white hair) every few weeks. This beautiful rare animal disappeared and I've always dreaded the possibil-

ity that she tasted the peaches and was killed. This hunting is senseless, cruel and unnecessary, in or out of town. I simply cannot imag-

ine the need to destroy these beautiful creatures.

**Beth Macdonald**  
NOTL



The piebald deer often seen near Niagara Shores Park may have been killed by hunters. (Photo supplied)

## Lest We Forget should not be associated with protest

I am responding to the letter by Janet Hemphill (Local should devote page to convoy, The Local, Feb. 2).

I am astounded that she says that the paper should "be voice for those standing tall for our freedom...Lest We Forget"


Lest We Forget, should not be used in reference to the truckers who illegally

occupy our capital instead of how it is meant to honour those who gave their lives in defence of our country and freedoms. Having stood at ramp services in Kandahar for 20 of our fallen soldiers while I was in Afghanistan as I did, the letter writer obviously has no idea of what a hero is.

As to the truckers, they

are a very small percentage of truckers in this country and their demands to get rid of restrictions are already in process. They should also realize that if they are not vaccinated they are not getting into the U.S. anyway, regardless of what our governments do.

**Doug Johnson**  
NOTL



### 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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# Gyms, breweries happy to be open

**Mike Balsom**  
Special to The Local

Niagara-on-the-Lake's gym and hospitality proprietors are elated to be back in business since the province began to ease restrictions on Jan. 31.

With their first weekend behind them, the doors were finally thrown open at Silversmith Brewing. The Exchange Brewery and Ironwood Cider House, where customers were eager to enjoy a chance to socialize while enjoying their drinks.

Lauren Leprich, a supervisor at Silversmith, said the first few days were a bit quiet, and the Thursday snowstorm put a damper on the reopening, but things picked up for the weekend.

"We're really appreciative that people have begun to come back out again," Leprich says. "They're so happy to be back, super ap-

preciative to be out again after so many lockdowns. It's been really nice to see people, to talk to people again. We did take-out (during the lockdown), but it's not the same as having people here."

Leprich credits Silversmith's "really great team" for contributing to the restart. They're planning to begin presenting live music again on Thursdays, which she hopes will help get people out of the house and into their Niagara Stone Road location.

Kathryn Dodington, events coordinator at The Exchange Brewery, says though this time of year is typically quiet, she is already beginning to see a return of tour groups and hotel guest visitors, boding well for a very promising February long weekend.

"Pandemic fatigue is definitely showing now more than ever," Doding-

ton writes in an email to The Local. "Our guests have shared their pleasure with being able to get out and connect socially in a safe

environment. Most of them are eager to chat and connect; the craft beer industry is a very social space. Nothing compares to the con-

nection we have with customers at the brewery being able to responsibly enjoy locally made craft beer in a safe and social setting."

The Exchange has kept the social aspect going during lockdowns with

Continued on page 9



Lauren Leprich is ready to serve at Silversmith Brewing Company (Photo by Mike Balsom)

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# Ironwood Cider House can finally show off



The fitness centre at the community centre is open, but with reduced hours for now. (Photos by Mike Balsom)



Richard Liu is excited to be showing of Ironwood Cider House, the former Sunnybrook Estate Winery on Lakeshore Road.

Continued from page 8

events such as virtual trivia nights, but plans are in the works to safely host in-person versions beginning this week. As well, Humour & Hops Comedy Night host David Green is recording an album at the brewery on March 18, with a double featuring eight comedians. Plans are also afoot for the return of their popular Sourpalooza Beer Festival as an in-person event on Saturday, March 26.

The Exchange was also able to maintain some pres-

ence during lockdowns via an online sales model focused primarily on free local shipping within 25 kilometres of the brewery and delivery in southern Ontario. But sales were nowhere near the level they were in pre-pandemic times, leading to some staff layoffs. The current reopening allows them to bring some of those staff members back.

Ironwood Cider House also capitalized on online sales, but owner Richard Liu is excited about the opportunity to finally be able to show off the huge changes at the former Sunnybrook

Estate Winery. The Local last checked in with Liu just under a year ago in the middle of a major expansion of both the production and hosting elements of the Lakeshore Road site.

Liu says after a long process, Ironwood finally received its occupancy clearance in mid-November, not long before the province put an end to hospitality on site.

Sales last weekend were slow, most likely due to the weather, he says. And though there are signs that tourists are returning to NOTL, he worries a bit

about the lack of American visitors crossing the border. Those who did visit Ironwood, though, were clearly happy to be out socializing once again.

“Our business is about selling positive experiences to people,” Liu says. “That’s why we have our gallery, with about 12 pieces all from local artists. We want to create an experience for people.”

Rising materials costs for both the construction and their production facility did complicate matters during the pandemic. And with slower sales,

that meant product was sitting on shelves longer than originally anticipated. That’s okay for the Sunnybrook-branded wines, but ciders have a shorter shelf life, leading to some challenges with logistics.

In an effort to meet those challenges, Liu, ever the innovator, is turning his focus to developing some unique, innovative new ways of using a distilling process that will have a positive impact on their product line.

With construction now behind them, Liu sees the reopening as an opportunity for Ironwood to

maximize the new facility. He’s also made some organizational changes that he says will help them handle growth as they find their way to full operation.

“2022 is a make it or break it year for us,” Liu says. “And we’re hoping to start planning for a grand opening event sometime in the fall that will involve the community.”

Across the parking lot from Silversmith, Jack Addams Williams of local gym F-45 says people are flooding back to his facility

Continued on page 10



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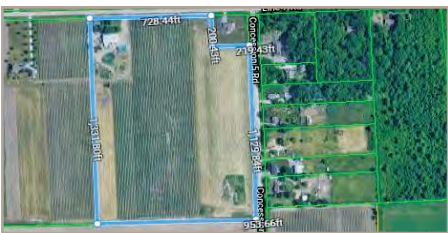
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# ‘People feel extremely safe here’ at F-45

Continued from page 9

to resume their 45-minute functional workouts.

“We paused everyone’s memberships for every one of these lockdowns,” Williams says. “We know a small number of people won’t come back, but most are itching to get back into movement, seeing people again. It’s partly the social element, on top of getting fit, moving and feeling better. Our retention has been

absolutely brilliant.”

A Monday night visit to F-45 found a socially distanced group of 16 people (50 per cent capacity) of various ages on rowing machines, stationary bicycles, battle ropes, kettlebells, free weights and floor mats. The 45-minute sessions are spaced out to give Williams and his staff time to sanitize all equipment.

“People feel extremely safe here,” Williams says. “Our people know that COVID doesn’t exist on

surfaces. Gyms and restaurants have been ostracized when there’s no data to support closing us down. We’ve never had anyone contract COVID in our facility, and we’ve only had three people contact us to say that they had COVID.”

Williams is hoping we’ve seen the last of the lockdowns.

“This last one was really tough,” laments Williams. “We do have an online option that we can run with live Zoom classes, but if we

have another lockdown it will be incredibly difficult for us to survive.”

Tuesday afternoon a few regulars could be spotted upstairs in the fitness area of the NOTL Community Centre.

Town supervisor of recreation Dan Maksenuk says after four closings and reopenings, they have the routine down to an art.

“Currently everybody attending the gym has to show proof of vaccination, along with a piece of ID,”

Maksenuk explains. “No advance registrations are required. Our building has a capacity of 300 people with no specific limit for the gym, but we are definitely keeping an eye on it. I think the maximum we’ve seen is about 15 at any given time.”

They’ve been freezing memberships during the lockdowns and extending end dates accordingly, or offering refunds for those who don’t wish to return.

“We still have a lot of members who haven’t re-

turned at all,” he says. “I think the pandemic has changed some people’s minds about working out at a gym. Some have probably purchased equipment to do their workouts at home, or are taking part in the outdoors. But on the flip side, we’re seeing a whole bunch of new faces.”

Gym hours at the Community Centre are slightly reduced, with opening hours from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. Mondays to Fridays, and 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekends.



Jack Addams Williams of F-45, on Niagara Stone Road, says members are happy to be back, working out regularly. (Photos by Mike Balsom)



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# Peter Warrack awarded Meritorious Service Cross

**Mike Balsom**  
Special to The Local

Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Peter Warrack is no stranger to earning honours, awards and attention for the work he has done to fight human trafficking. But nothing could have prepared him for discovering that he is a recipient of the Meritorious Service Cross (MSC) from Governor General Mary Simon's office.

"I was very taken aback, totally surprised," the humble financial investigator tells The Local. "With any of these awards, it's actually kind of embarrassing. I really see myself as just the custodian of the award for a whole bunch of people who continue to do good work. In one word, it's surreal, that's how I felt, and still feel about it."

Warrack discovered he was to receive the award a few months ago, but couldn't go public with his knowledge. When he returned to NOTL from a trip to Europe, his voice-mail contained a message from the Governor General's office. He called the number that was given and was informed of the honour that day.

He had to wait until the official announcement came from the federal government just over a week ago to discuss the award.

The Meritorious Service Decorations - Civil Division recognizes the extraordinary people who make Canada proud, through acts that are often innovative, set an example or model for others to follow, or respond to a particular challenge faced by a community.

In Warrack's case, his involvement in the development of Project Protect, a public-private partnership that targets human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation by focusing on the money laundering common amongst perpetrators, earned him the award.

Since 2016, Project Protect has resulted in an exponential increase in the amount of suspicious activity being reported by banks to Canada's federal regulators, flagging potential human traffickers based on their financial transactions. A key aspect of the project is the training that is provided to banks to recognize the signs.

In addition to Canada, Warrack has spoken about Project Protect around the world. He has presented his methodology at the Vatican for its fight against anti-slavery

and delivered addresses in Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Dubai, St. Lucia, and numerous locations in the U.S.

It all started with a leap of blind faith at a 2015 conference, when a group of financial experts in the field of anti-money-laundering were asked to come up with a solution to fight human trafficking.

"I stood up and challenged everyone there in the knowledge that we could do something," remembers Warrack. "When I sat down, Bill Harrison of Canada's regulator FINTRAC (Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada) turned to me and said, 'we're on board'. That got the ball rolling."

These days Warrack has been specializing in blockchain technology, known by many as cryptocurrency, or Bitcoin. His consulting agency now works with various organizations to expose criminal activity in the much-misunderstood cryptocurrency world.

But he still plays a huge role in promoting Project Protect, as well as its sister organization Project Recovery, which helps provide support to survivors to get them back on solid ground financially.

With Feb. 24 designated as Human Trafficking Awareness Day, Warrack knows his role is just as important as ever.

"A large part of it (Project Protect) is awareness, in addition to actionable intelligence," he says. "Almost on a daily basis, that's what I do, sharing links on Facebook or LinkedIn, sharing articles about human trafficking that come up. To me the awareness piece is huge."

Warrack says it shocks him that so many people have very little idea what goes on when it comes to this shady underbelly of society. And with so many young people spending increased time online, the dangers are multiplied.

"In times of COVID, with children at home on computers all that time, who knows what they're up to on social media?" Warrack queries. "Social media can just suck them in. My interest has really evolved into online child exploitation. A large part of the work I do in the background involves that."

He warns of the ease at which anyone can fall prey to 'phishing scams' by answering seemingly innocuous surveys on Facebook, such as the make of your first car, the street where you live and your birthday.

"With all of these com-

panies and organizations all connected, you're giving away your information," he marvels. "You're putting yourself willingly at criminal risk."

Another offshoot of Project Protect is Project Chameleon, which focuses on elder fraud using some of the same methods developed by Warrack and his peers in the financial industry.

"Just this week there were a couple of warnings from the CRA (Canada Revenue Agency) about scams targeting grandparents," says Warrack. "I sit here in Niagara-on-the-Lake and look at our older community and I'm convinced that as we speak someone is being targeted in a naive way online, potentially getting sucked in for money."

Warrack will need to make room on his shelves for the Meritorious Service Cross when he receives his actual award. It will find prominent space beside his two Association of Certified Anti-Money Laundering Specialists (ACAMS) Professional of the Year Awards (2011 and 2017) as well as the Global Impact Award he received in October, 2021 from the TC Online Institute.

And there is no doubt this latest honour will indeed find prominence.

"Very few people receive it," Warrack says of the MSC. "It really is a special award, it's very different. The fellow recipients include a couple who founded a charity in Africa to supply sanitary products to women there (Sophia and Paul Grinvalds, AFRIPads) and another one who started an organization called 60 Million Girls (Wanda Bedard's Montreal-based public foundation dedicated to girls' education in developing countries). These are the kind of people that I would bow down to. Being in



Peter Warrack receives the Anti-Money Laundering Specialists (ACAMS) Professional of the Year Award. (Photos supplied)



Peter Warrack hopes to pick up his Meritorious Service Award soon.

the company of these people is almost insane."

The fifth person awarded the MSC this year in addition to Warrack, the Grinvalds and

Bedard, is Phyllis M. C. Webstad. Her name may sound familiar, as the woman who founded the Orange Shirt Society to bring awareness to the

history and effect of residential schools on Indigenous communities across Canada.

Peter Warrack is indeed in rarefied company.

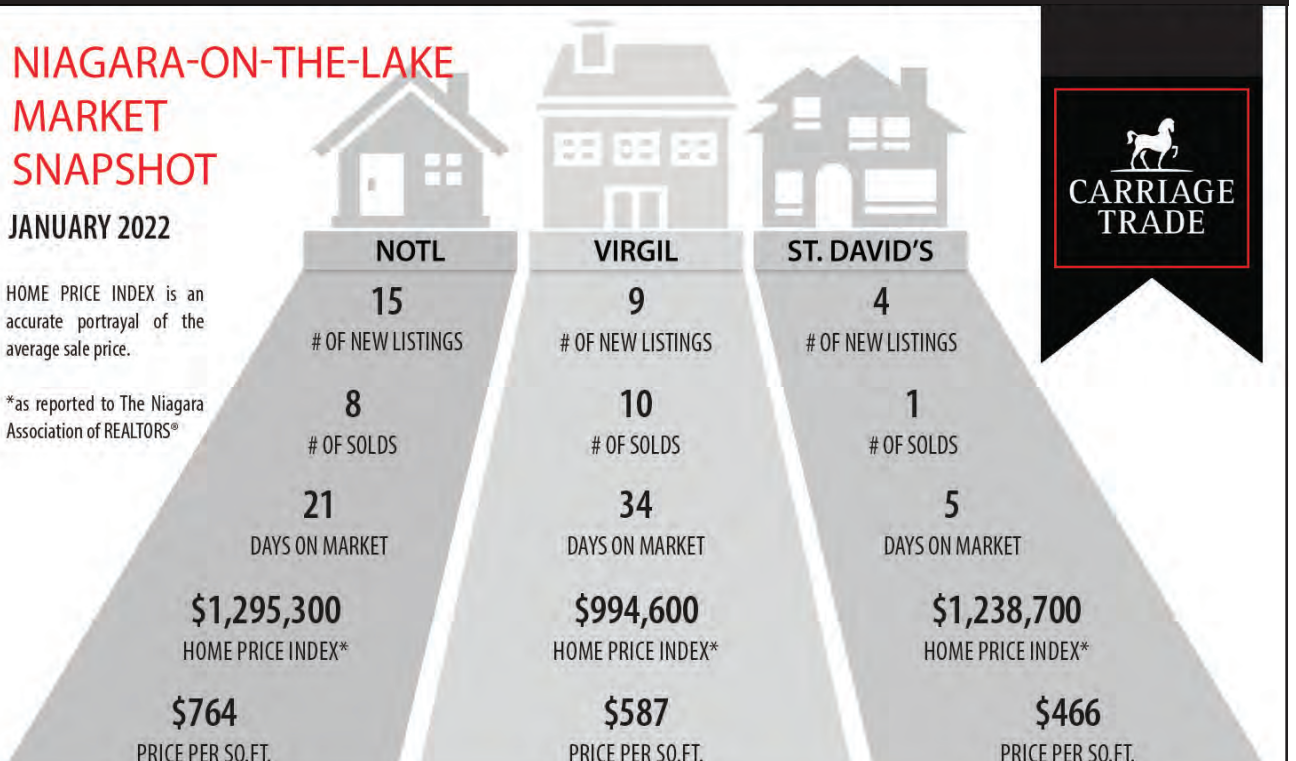
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# Rotary organizing second annual indoor garage sale

**Penny Milligan**  
Special to The Local

For the second time in two years, Niagara-on-the-Lake Rotary's Gigantic Garage Sale aims to turn one person's trash into a whole lot of other people's treasure.

This year's sale happens Saturday and Sunday, May 14 and 15 at the Cornerstone Church on Niagara Stone Road in Virgil.

If last time's sale is any indication, experienced sale-goers know to start to line up well before the 9 a.m. opening. Cries of "No, it's mine," are expected to be heard once again at this popular community sale, as buyers clammer for great deals on lovely items.

This year's sale will benefit children's charities, both locally and internationally.

In anticipation of a great buyer turnout, the Rotary Club is now looking for donations of your gently used items.

Sale organizer Carol Lipsett indicated that last time, things like decorative home items, paintings, and furniture were all real top sellers, but the group is looking for anything that you think might not



Sale organizer Carol Lipsett is surrounded by some of the items available at the NOTL Rotary Club's upcoming sale, and is happy to accept more donations at Cornerstone Church. (Photo supplied)

suit your current needs, but would appeal to someone else.

"Many people realized being at home more during our shutdowns that they have items in their houses they just don't use anymore," says Lipsett, "Now's the time to clean out, and at

the same time, help those very much in need."

The Rotary Club is holding special drop-off dates at the church between the hours of 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. on Feb. 12 and 26, March 13 and 26, and April 2, 9, 16 and 23.

Items too large for you

to move yourself? Just call 905-468-9987 and the Rotarians can help arrange a pickup.

Donation items include: home furniture and decor, artwork, china, area carpets, dishes, kitchen utensils, household appliances and electronics in

working order, sporting equipment, linens, kids' accessories and toys, and outdoor furniture.

Clothing and books will not be handled in this sale — please donate to Newark Neighbours and the public library.

Items unsold at the end

of the garage sale will be donated to local charities such as Newark Neighbours, Raft, Habitat for Humanity, Niagara Furniture Bank, Christian Benefit Shop and the Salvation Army.

For details please go to NOTL Rotary Gigantic Garage Sale.

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# Women's Institute celebrates 125 years

**Penny Coles**  
**The Local**

Next week, the Women's Institute will celebrate its 125th anniversary in Canada.

The town has proclaimed it Women's Institute Week, with Coun. Sandra O'Connor speaking during Monday's planning committee meeting of the important work the organization and its members do across the country, "giving so much to our education environment and contributing in so many ways to our community."

Margaret Byl, president of the national organization, and vice-president of the Virgil branch, says founder Adelaide Hunter Hoodless could not have imagined the impact of the movement that would follow when she first spoke to a group of about 100 women whom she had gathered together in Stoney Creek on Feb. 19, 1897.

Women of that time were not typically well-educated, especially those who lived and worked on family farms in rural areas, says Byl. Hoodless, who had tragically lost her 14-month old son, from what was believed to be from unpasteurized milk, set out to educate other women about food safety, and other

aspects of domestic science and household management that would help to keep their families safe.

Women's Institutes were the first group to represent the concerns of rural women in government, and became the principal voice of rural women in Canadian government.

Byl was introduced to the Virgil Women's Institute by her mother-in-law, Lena Byl, and became committed to the organization and its benefits to her community.

She is also a member of the St. Catharines branch, which was started to allow working women to attend evening meetings — the Virgil Branch meets in the afternoon.

Of course, for some time, most of the meetings have been by Zoom, as is the meeting to recognize the 125th anniversary of the organization, which people from all parts of Canada can join, says Byl, whether or not they are members.

Like most organizations, adds Byl, membership numbers have waxed and waned over the years. Today there are more than 5,000 members in 450 branches across Canada.

In the February newsletter

to members, Byl's message was that while there is much for them to celebrate, "we have much more work to do. COVID-19 may have put some restrictions on us, but in true WI fashion and resiliency, we move forward and adapt."

Education is still a priority, including current issues such as human trafficking and climate change — both will be tackled at a national level

and provincial level through Zoom meetings.

Other matters the federation addresses include women's health, and poverty, all of these concerns going "hand in hand" with its original goals.

Any concern of an individual branch of a safety issue in that area can result in a resolution, to ask government for change, and the local branch has done that

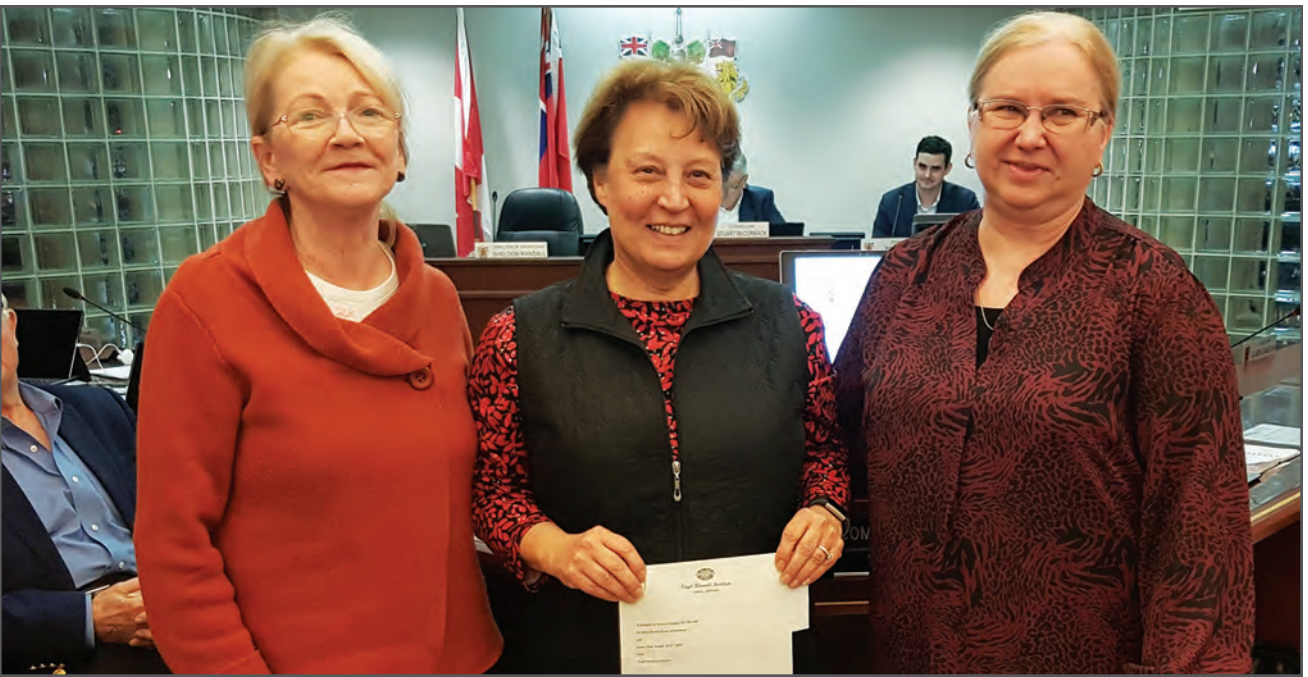
as well — Byl recalls calling for changes to protect people in nursing homes from violent residents, as the result of a death in a local long-term care home. Another issue they broached was Lyme disease, encouraging the government to make more accurate testing available in Canada, and to support more research on the disease.

Hoodless, with her vision of addressing safety issues

more than a century ago, "was a woman ahead of her time," says Byl.

The Virgil Branch is struggling, having lost some members — it's down to seven — and not all of those who remain are comfortable or able to join Zoom meetings. Pre-COVID, attendance of members was regular, but now, even as restrictions are

**Continued on page 15**



Sandra Edgeworth, president of the Virgil Women's Institute, and Margaret Byl, vice-president, present a cheque to Lord Mayor Betty Disero to support the Mary Snider Room and the NOTL Christmas Parade. This was in December, 2019, but despite COVID, the organization continues to find ways to give back to the community, even if it means making personal donations in the absence of fundraisers, says Byl. (File photo)

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# Grandmother describes living through COVID isolation

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

Margaret Byl, a mother and grandmother, is accustomed to tackling issues of family safety.

She is currently managing an issue more and more families are facing during the pandemic — a full house of family members in isolation.

Byl has been a long-standing member of the Virgil Women Institute, and is also president of the national Federation of Women's Institutes of Canada, the goal of which has been educating women about any and all issues which can be a threat to their family's safety, or "really, to anybody," she says.

COVID is the most current threat, and many families, two years into the pandemic, are still figuring out how to deal with it. Byl has become somewhat of an expert.

She has four grandsons living with her at the moment, three of them having tested positive for COVID. Their dad and pregnant mom live next door, and the boys are staying with their grandparents to protect the brother that they are expecting to arrive mid-February.

"We were isolating in a bubble of six," says Margaret, other than the boys going to school. Two are 13 year olds, one nine, the other six, all attending one of

the local schools, which, thanks to Niagara Public Health taking the extra initiative, unlike other areas around the province, notifies families if there is a COVID case in any of their kids' classrooms.

When one of Byl's grandsons began showing symptoms last week that could have been either a cold or flu, she used the rapid tests the school gave them.

"He said his brain hurt, but it was different from a headache. His legs and arms were sore, and he was tired," she says.

He tested positive, as did two of his three siblings. One of the two older boys has remained negative.

Margaret's husband Lane soon started feeling sick, and tested positive. By the second day, she was encouraging him to go to the hospital, but he said he was okay. The next day he couldn't deny that he needed help, and was admitted to the COVID ward of the St. Catharines site of the Niagara Health System. She was able to talk to him by phone, and he is getting better, after being treated with steroids. But she was surprised by how quickly mild symptoms turned into something more serious, she says, a warning to others not to put off that trip to the hospital too long.

He checked himself out of the hospital early Sunday morn-

ing, but she is checking his oxygen level often and watching over him carefully.

On Tuesday afternoon, she was also a little concerned about her youngest grandson, whose oxygen levels were fluctuating. She was waiting to hear from his doctor, not sure whether a trip to the hospital with him was going to be necessary.

Everyone in the family has been vaccinated, and Margaret, 66, is thankful she and Lane, 73, have had their booster shots as well.

Byl has continued to test negative, as has one of the boys, and of course they are all isolating. Fortunately they have a large home, with the two older boys staying downstairs — they're always together, she says, so there is no point separating them now — and the two younger upstairs, keeping their distance. There are enough washrooms that Margaret and her grandson who has continued to test negative can each have their own.

She wears a mask when they are nearby, as do they, they wash hands frequently, dishes are sanitized, and despite the extra work, she feels relieved, she says, knowing "it could be so much worse."

As she contemplates her life at the moment, worrying and complicated, but necessary for

the sake of her family, she says she watches what is happening in Ottawa and across the country with the truckers' convoys and the protests that have accompanied them.

"I feel sad," she says, "sometimes angry, but mostly sad, and frustrated. There are people who can't be vaccinated, and I feel sorry for them. But those who can and won't — sooner or later, they or someone close to them will get COVID, and go through what my family is going through."

She speaks of the vaccinations we've willingly had over the decades that have nearly eradicated diseases such as po-

lio and measles, and says, "we didn't protest. We did it for our families and for society. To those who can get the vaccine, please do so. For the health and safety of your families, and for everyone else."

Those who are not vaccinated are taking up hospital spaces, costing taxpayers money and stressing the health care system, she says. "They need to look at where they're getting their information from. They're being stubborn, refusing to listen to the experts, the right information. Instead they're getting it from Twitter or Facebook. Please, use some common sense. We have enough hospi-

talizations because of COVID, and there are people who are not getting the treatment they require because hospitals are full. There have been lives lost because of surgeries that had to be cancelled."

Also, she says to those who read her story, "please thank the frontline workers, nurses, doctors, grocery store clerks, everyone who is an essential worker. I don't know where we would be without them."

One of Lane's nurses is pregnant, but continues to treat COVID patients. "She is very caring," says Margaret. "They must all be exhausted, but they keep going. God bless them."

## Issues change, safety a priority

Continued from page 14

lifting, not all are comfortable with going out.

Without fundraising events, members were donating cash to keep up some of their commitments, such as the Santa Claus Parade, says Byl.

When it's possible to meet in person, she hopes to have a membership drive and get a few new members out. The local branch of the Women's

Institute, she adds, "is one of Virgil's best kept secrets. We're going to try to change that."

As evidenced by the topics they broach, the branches have changed with the times, keeping up with what is important to members of all ages, she says.

Also when it's time to meet again, the Canadian federation is calling for the planting of 125 trees to recognize the anniversary, and the women can talk about where they

want to plant their share to mark the occasion.

Meanwhile, social interaction remains key, especially during the pandemic, and the women are reaching out to each other, if not by Zoom, by phone or in person. "Those conversations, just hearing another person's voice, can be so important."

For more information about the organization visit <https://www.fwic.ca>, or locally, <https://fwio.on.ca>, or call 905-262-4006.

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# Icebreakers Comedy Festival going ahead

## April tickets selling quickly

**Penny Coles**  
**The Local**

Jeff Paul will return to his hometown for a 2022 Icebreakers Comedy Festival — just a little later than usual.

The shows typically coincide with the Queen Street Icewine Festival in January, but because of COVID restrictions all festivities were called off. The four shows are going ahead April 7 to 9, with close to the same lineup as was originally planned.

Paul, the festival founder and artistic director, MC's the two shows at Corks Wine Bar and Eatery Saturday night, with some of the festival's favourite comics from previous years performing. Both shows feature Adrienne Fish, Marito Lopez and Jarrett Campbell.

Paul traditionally appears at the Saturday night Meltdown, the late show of the festival held at Corks, with a performance that is likely to be a little more vulgar, no-holds-barred than the other shows.

The Catholic boy from St. Davids, a graduate from St. Michael Elementary and Niagara District Secondary School, says the schedule has been changed due to

COVID to finish earlier, with the Saturday Meltdown beginning at 9 p.m. While he might take his comedy “a step further” than the earlier show, for an audience that knows what to expect, he will be conscious that it might not be the same late-night crowd he usually attracts.

Joe Pillitteri opens the festival at Oast Home Brewers. Always a favourite, he swings from comedy locals identify with — he always does a great job of reading his audience — to some of his inspirational stories that demonstrate his love and support for the community.

Marc Sinodinos and Michael Moses will also take to the Oast stage for the opening show.

Paul says Oast is a great venue for comedy — laughter is contagious, he says, and the room at Oast is a perfect size.

The CBC Radio Gala on Friday, April 8 at Ravine Winery returns with live recordings for Laugh Out Loud, with its host Ali Hassan returning to MC a lineup of some of Canada's top comedians, including: Keith Pedro, Nick Beaton, Nour Hadidi, Dylan Gott, Dena Jackson and Rob Pue.

Paul says he really enjoys the trips back to Niagara, not only for the opportunity to perform but to catch up with friends and family. High school friends Maria Mavridas, Tim Balasiuk and Paul Harber are also involved in putting together the festival, which has become something locals anticipate to break up the winter.

Although tickets are selling quickly, with venues currently limited to 50 per cent capacity, Paul says if that restriction is lifted, “we can sell more tickets and get on with our lives.”

The 2020 festival was the biggest yet, he says, held over two weekends, but then COVID came along and festivities for 2021 were cancelled.

“Now we're back to square one, and it's been tough.” Some sponsorship has been lost, although he mentions one in particular that has hung on. Rich Kunkel of Sweatsedo has become a friend and strong supporter of the festival, says Paul — in 2020, he gave each of the performers one of the velour jogging suits Kunkel's Sweatsedo is famous for. Paul himself has one in every colour, and often appears on stage in the attire that's made for comfort “I wouldn't travel on a plane

wearing anything else,” he adds, “although they do stand out a bit.”

One of these days, he jokes, he's going to organize a show and suggest all the comics on stage wear them.

Come April, he expects a great audience of people who are ready for a laugh, including many who bought tickets for the January shows and held on to them rather than accept a refund. And expect COVID to be a common theme, he adds, “since that's our life now, and everyone can relate to it.”

He recalls in 2020 comics were being asked not to

mention COVID, “but it was the biggest thing going on in the world. Manikins were being placed in the crowd as space fillers, and when I started shows I had to remind everybody of the restrictions.”

All the protocols will continue to be followed, and all the venues will be asking for proof of vaccinations.

“I feel like it's a good thing we're doing, getting some laughs, spreading some joy. This is a fun thing that's been going for years — that's what any comedian wants.”

In addition to doing what

he obviously loves, with regular performances in Toronto clubs, and a comedy festival in Parry Sound, near the Paul family cottage, he is still enjoying his day job — one that he feels fortunate to have had after graduating from a broadcasting program at Fanshawe College in London. He works as a program co-ordinator for CTV weekdays, and learned during the pandemic he can do it from home, and fit in daily walks with his dog. But while it's a great job, he lives for the moment he can step on to the stage to make people laugh.



Jeff Paul appearing on Roast Battle, a CTV television comedy series. (Photo supplied)

# Using GIS to Study Local Economic Development

**Kim Wade**  
**Special to The Local**

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum welcomes Niagara resident Jessica Linzel (MA History, Brock University) as she presents a virtual lecture on Using GIS to Study Local Economic Development.

It is her master's thesis project, and will be presented virtually Feb. 16.

Linzel uses the Geo-

graphic Information System (GIS) to examine economic development in the Niagara Region between the end of the American Revolution and the beginning of the War of 1812.

GIS, Linzel explains, “is a computer system that creates, manages, analyzes, and maps all types of geographic data. GIS software is not typically used by historians, but rather by people in fields like envi-

ronmental science, urban planning, etc.”

Since Linzel was interested in a specific area of geography, and a specific time in history, she used something called historical GIS to research her thesis. “Historical geographic information systems (HGIS) aid historians in their analyses, by demanding a closer look at the land itself, guiding them towards a deeper understanding of the ways in which

geography impacted their particular research topic.”

The accounts of local farmers and millers, particularly those of Daniel Servos, served as a historical foundation to her research, using GIS to map this “spatial history.”

She was pleased with the results, she says. “By mapping the historical data and analyzing it alongside geographical features in the

Niagara region, GIS technologies brought a fresh perspective to a familiar topic.”

Linzel's research was partially funded by a scholarship set up by two of museum members, David Murray and Elizabeth Surtees, through the Niagara Historical Society scholarship. Although, she was the recipient, this is the first time she has worked directly with the museum.

“I have lived in Niagara my whole life, and have walked, hiked, biked and kayaked much of the region,” she says of her inspiration for the project.

“I am consistently amazed by the beauty we have here. In 2016, I worked as a summer student at Nelles Manor Museum while in school (at Brock) getting my history degree, which is where I really began learning more about local history specifically. When I decided to pursue a master's in history at Brock, it made sense for me to pick a local topic, since I had some foundational knowledge at that point, and was increasingly intrigued by the stories of individuals who lived and worked on the same soil that I walk ev-

ery day,” says Linzel.

“I had never used GIS before though, until I began my MA in 2018. I was encouraged by my thesis supervisor, Dr. Daniel Samson, to try approaching my thesis topic (economic development in Niagara) from a geography perspective, using GIS technology to aid my research.”

The digital humanities are a somewhat newer field, she explains. “The field of spatial history emerged out of late 20th century advances in computer technology. As you can imagine, history and digital tech are not the most compatible subjects so learning GIS software was a huge learning curve for me — honestly it still is — but I realized it offers so much potential. And even after graduating, I have continued using it in my current work.”

Linzel is currently the community engagement manager at The Brown Homestead.

Her virtual lecture will begin at 11 a.m. Feb. 16, followed by a question and answer period. Registration is required at [www.notlmuseum.ca](http://www.notlmuseum.ca). For more information, please email [aklassen@nhsn.ca](mailto:aklassen@nhsn.ca)



Jessica Linzel introduces her research into early Niagara economic development using GIS, including local spots such as the Chrysler Farm. (Photo supplied by the NOTL Museum)



# 'Ripples of friendship' have far-reaching benefits

**Jane Andres**  
Special to The Local

Thump, thump, thump. The noise was a bad omen on a beautiful Sunday afternoon as Kathy Kerr pulled over on a rural stretch of gravel road in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Her tire hopelessly flattened and without a cell phone, she pondered her limited options. Two men on bicycles noticed her predicament and rode up to offer assistance.

Kathy recognized their distinctive accents from St. Vincent. She knew the island well, as she had visited 10 times over the years. An animated conversation with the men followed, as they eagerly shared experiences, family life, and favourite activities back on the island.

Two hours flew by before they remembered to get to the task at hand.

As he went to get the spare tire from the trunk, one of the men stepped back startled when he noticed the name Kerr on the license plate.

He exclaimed that in the early 1970s, he had met a man called Gordon Kerr up in the mountains of his rural St. Vincent hometown.

Equally surprised, Kathy replied that he was her father.

Her father taught computer science at Humber College in the late 1960s and 1970s, but he also taught a night course in sailing. Upon completion of the course, students had the option of putting their skills to use, sailing in the Caribbean. Gordon Kerr's favourite island to visit was St. Vincent and he came to know the island intimately over the course of his many visits.

One day while visiting a rural mountain village, he saw a little boy tied to a tree via a long tether. His family was at a loss how to care for him, unable to communicate.

Gordon Kerr realized that the child was hearing impaired and was determined to find a solution. Upon his return to Canada he contacted an audiologist. Friends and colleagues partnered to provide the gift of hearing for the child. When he saw the incredible difference it made in the life of this young boy and his family, Kerr found his life taking off on a new trajectory.

As his awareness grew of the challenges faced by



Gordon Kerr meeting the young boy after he was fitted for his hearing aid, adjusting to a new life of playing with friends and attending school. (Photo supplied)

people who are deaf or hard of hearing in the Caribbean, so did his commitment to gather support back in Canada. The Rotary Club and specialists at the Hospital for Sick Children got involved, expanding his vision.

The president of Hum-

ber College took a great interest and offered scholarships, helping to subsidize post secondary education at Humber for 10 to 12 students from the island. The students stayed with local families, a life-changing experience for all involved.

Growing up in a home that hosted and welcomed the St. Vincent students impacted Kathy and her siblings as their extended family grew over the years.

Her chance meeting years later due to a flat tire introduced Kathy to another perspective — how many people of St. Vincent rely on employment with migrant farm work programs to provide for their families back home.

It's a fascinating story that has parallels in our community today, of friendships that are making a significant difference in the lives of not only our Caribbean and Mexican neighbours but ours as well.

In 2017, local communi-

ty member Tracey Dau volunteered to drive men on a neighbouring farm to the Peach Pickers Picnic. The friendships that have since grown between her family and their Jamaican neighbours have enriched all of their lives.

This past year Tracey became aware that one of the men was struggling with his ability to hear. She arranged for an appointment at the Family Hearing Clinic in St. Catharines, where specialist Melissa Mitreski confirmed he had experienced significant hearing loss.

Despite the fact that Kevin was transferring to a farm in Simcoe the following day, Tracey was committed. She travelled nearly two hours to Simcoe, driving him to Mitreski's Hamilton clinic for three separate follow-up appointments. A few days before he returned home, Kevin received the final adjustments to a pair of hearing aids, thanks to the generosity of Melissa

and the team at the Family Hearing Clinic.

He asked Tracey multiple times why they would go to such great lengths to help him. He and his wife were deeply touched at the kindness of those who had enabled him to hear his children's voice over the phone for the first time.

Kathy Kerr is not presently living in Niagara on the Lake but it occupies a huge space in her heart.

The unexpected connection with the men from St. Vincent will be forever etched into her memory. Kathy is convinced that although we might never know where a friendly conversation and a genuine interest will take us, the ripples can extend far beyond our imagination.

Hearing is a gift.

Hearing with the desire to understand transforms into trust, completing the word heart, a dynamic combination for a caring community.



Melissa Mitreski sees Kevin for the last time, adjusting his hearing aids before he heads home at the end of the season. (Photo supplied)

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# LocalSPORTS

## Predators win on the road, lose at home

**Mike Balsom**  
Special to The Local

In their return to the ice after a 46-day break, the Niagara Predators picked up two of a possible four points this weekend.

The 7-5 win on the road Sunday in Windsor was their fourth victory over the Aces, but the 5-4 loss Friday night at home to the Durham Roadrunners was a decision that stung for owner, general manager and coach Robert Turnbull.

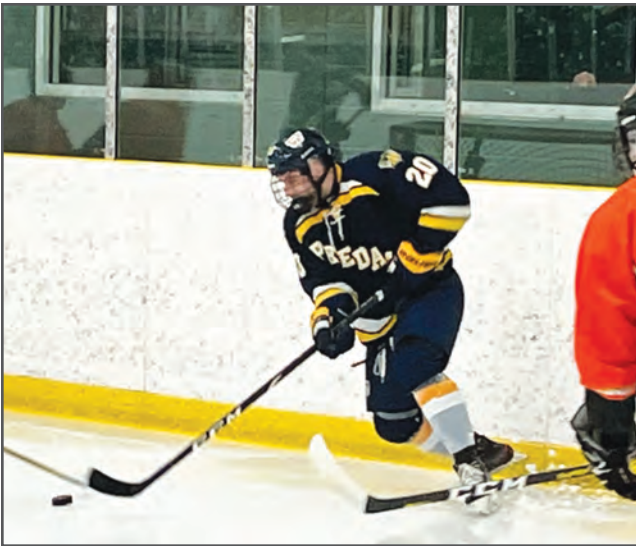
Niagara skated well with Durham for most of the game, dishing out as many hard hits as they took, but just couldn't put together

enough TNT to knock the Roadrunners off their game.

The loss is disappointing, Turnbull said Friday night. "We had a lot of time off, we got three practices in this week, we got two extra skates in, and then we come out and lose. We have a lot of work to do. I'm not displeased, they played well, came out strong, but they couldn't keep it up for 60 minutes."

Niagara's Noah Caperchione opened the scoring at 3:23 of the first period, assisted by Mario Zitella and Dante Massi. But Jaden Smith and Giulian Pronesti replied for Durham later in that frame.

In the second, with Pred-



Alexander Page made his debut with the Predators last weekend.



Predator Brenden Morin scores the tying goal at the home game in Virgil. (Photos by Mike Balsom)

### Meet the Predators

Name:  
**Georgy Kholmovsky**  
Jersey number: 13

Age: 17  
Birthdate:  
**March 4, 2004**

Hometown:  
**Saint-Petersburg, Russia**

Nickname:  
**Mister G**

Favourite hockey player:  
**Connor McDavid**

Favourite 'hype' song:  
**21 Metro Boomin', Savage & Offset: Ric Flair Mic Drop**

Your hockey strength:  
**Hockey IQ**

Other sports you play:  
**Football**

Favourite "cheat" meal:  
**Spaghetti Bolognese**

Secret talent:  
**Dancing**



ators newcomer Alexander Andrews in the sin bin, Isaac Smith put the Roadrunners up 3-1. Andrews assisted just over two minutes later, along with Gino Carter Squire, on Massi's 13th goal of the season, closing the gap to a single, but Durham's Kyle Shepherd made it 4-2 before the second intermission.

The Predators roared back in the third, with Andrews scoring his first goal as a Predator, assisted by Pontus Madsen and Reese Bisci. At one point in the third Predators goalie David White lost his stick with the Roadrunners pressuring in the Niagara zone. He managed to fend off shot after shot as the rest of the team checked closely for almost two minutes before a stoppage in play.

With just over six minutes left in the game, Niagara defenceman Brenden Morin rushed the Durham net, set up by a pass from Massi, and was taken down just as he slipped the tying goal past goalie Zach Smirniw.

Play ran end to end for the next five minutes, until Turnbull called a timeout to give his players a breather with just 1:36 left in the game. Only 12 seconds later a turnover in the Niagara end resulted in Kyle Smith firing a shot past White that found the upper left corner of the net for Durham's 5-4 win.

The Predators were with-

out their top scorer Jesper Eriksson, who was off in Austria for a tryout with a professional team in the Alps Hockey League. Fellow Swede Emil Eriksson has not yet returned following the holiday break, and speedy centre Zitella went down with a shoulder injury in the first period. Defenders Joshua Davidson and Nathan Fehr also sat out Friday.

"They're very disciplined, they play well positionally, they're a really good hockey team," Turnbull said about Durham. "We can't play them with only 10 forwards. I can't ask these guys to play the way they need to play if they're getting too much ice."

Three players made their Predators debut Friday night. The loss was White's first time between the pipes for Niagara, and he kicked away 35 of 40 shots in the contest. It was the first game for Alexander Page of Niagara Falls, who last played for the defunct Niagara Whalers, while Alexander Andrews, picked up last week in a trade with Tottenham, notched his first goal and assist for Niagara.

Friday's result moved Durham into a virtual tie with North York for first place in the Greater Metro Junior A Hockey League's South Division. The St. George Ravens are in second place, with Niagara three points behind them in third.

Zitella sat out Sunday's game in Windsor, as did Alessandro Massi and Georgy Kholmovsky, leaving the team to face Windsor with only eight forwards and six defenders. Windsor, however, had only 13 players active Sunday, including two goalies.

Caperchione again got the ball rolling with an early first period goal, but Windsor bounced back with three in the first 20 minutes. Goals by Carter Squire, Page and Madsen had the game tied at 4-4 by the end of the second. Bisci, Insulander and forward Jason Humphries added a goal each in the third to cement the victory. Iain Riordan picked up the win in net.

The Predators have a rare Friday night road game in Streetsville this week, and close out the weekend with a visit to the Plattsville Lakers Sunday afternoon.

Play-by-play announcer Michael Frena will not be taking the trip with the team. Sunday's game should be available through Plattsville's streaming feed via gmhl.tv at 3:30 p.m.

### Jesper Eriksson Making a Splash in Austria

Popular and prolific Swedish forward Jesper Eriksson signed a two-game try-out contract with professional team VEU Feldkirch in the Alps Hockey League, which has teams in Austria

and Italy. Former Predators general manager Johan Eriksson made the connection for Jesper (no relation) via his new role as director of hockey operations at Marych Sports Agency. Jesper wowed the crowd in his first game last week, scoring the tying goal to force overtime. VEU Feldkirch went on to win 2-1 in the extra frame over HC Merano.

"As much as I would love for him to stay," Turnbull told The Local, "it's a great opportunity for him. He scored in his first game and they put him on the first line (Friday night)."

### Predators in Top 10 in GMHL Power Rankings

The Greater Metro Junior A Hockey League released its team power rankings on Feb. 2. The Niagara Predators were ranked sixth in the 26-team league, which comprises three divisions. The North Division's Temiscaming Titans, with a record of 24-1-0 and a goal differential of 109, hold down the top spot in the rankings. They're followed by the West Division's undefeated High Prairie Red Wings and the North York Renegades, tied for the lead in the South Division with a 22-4-0 record. Durham and St. George round out the four South Division teams in the top 10, with the North also laying claim to four spots in the rankings.

## LocalHAPPENINGS

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1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14					15						16			
17					18						19			
20				21					22	23				
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51							52				53	54	55	
56					57	58					59			
60					61						62			
63					64						65			

- Across:
- 1 Scorch

5 Constructor

10 Antarctic sea

14 Trusted assistant

15 Handy

16 Very dark

17 Please answer

18 Civil wrongs

19 On-screen Bean

20 Tire inflation measure

21 Close

22 Ready to entertain

24 Brace

26 Circumspect

27 Closer

29 Prickly seed vessel

30 Musical collections

31 Type of lamp

32 Campus house, maybe

36 Troubles

37 Inordinate

39 Make over

40 Sediment

41 Short dog with a flat muzzle

42 Taken in

44 Surrender

45 Not alee
- 46 Close to the coast

50 Held fast

51 People found in the Horn of Africa

52 Puts on

53 Global currency body

56 Fine

57 Yellow-green color

59 Hard up

60 Sack

61 Enthuses wildly

62 Toothpaste container

63 Minnesota ---, pool player

64 Moves back and forth

65 Aide (Abbr.)
- Down:
- 1 Complain

2 Convicted spy Alger ---

3 Recommended

4 Agent

5 Convent heads

6 Entangled

7 "Slaughterhouse Five" author --- Vonnegut

8 Time in Boston

9 Ability

10 Vertical pipe
- 11 Upright

12 Edible ray

13 Ecclesiastical council

21 Appear

23 Average golf score

25 Tie up

26 Recognized leader

27 Pin down

28 Fashion magazine

29 Emblem

32 Scowl

33 Spiritual

34 Yemeni port

35 Sweeney ---

38 Uncovered

43 Literary work

44 Mountain pass

46 Has gone

47 Cell maker

48 Well turned out

49 Ira ---, Iwo Jima flagraiser

50 Small flock

52 Prima donna

54 Rabbles

55 Abrade

58 Statute

59 Harper Valley org.

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

OBITUARY



**HOMER, MARION**—Passed away peacefully in her sleep after a brief illness, on Wednesday, February 2, 2022, a day after her 99th birthday. Beloved wife of the late Bob Homer. Cherished mother of Lynda Mikkor (Rein), Jack Homer (Linda), Glenda Morris (Jamie) and Brenda Homer McMillan (Tom). Proud grandmother of Colleen Bogucki (Richard), Christine Masterson (Stephen), Alison Mikkor-Kedhar (Sanjay), Abby Wadley (Kurtis), Rob Altoft (Jennie) and Colin Morris (James). Great-grandmother of Liam, Morgan, Taylor, Owen, Annika, Inaya, Max, Ada, Kate, Ben and Ellie. A heartfelt thanks to Margaret and Korny Penner for years of friendship and support. For the care provided by Dr. Jayawardene "Dr. J" and the staff at the Royal Henley. Private family arrangements in care of MORGAN FUNERAL HOME, 415 Regent St., Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at [www.morganfuneral.com](http://www.morganfuneral.com)



SUDOKU ANSWER

Sudoku solution from  
February 2, 2022

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

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**905.934.1040**  
Deadline is Tuesdays at 1 p.m.

PUZZLE ANSWERS

**Across:** 1 Char, 5 Maker, 10 Ross, 14 Aide, 15 Of use, 16 Inky, 17 R S V P, 18 Torts, 19 Sean, 20 P s i, 21 Shut, 22 Open to, 24 Steel, 26 Guarded, 27 Neerer, 29 Bunn, 30 Albums, 31 Arc, 32 Frat, 36 Ills, 37 Undue, 39 Redo, 40 Lees, 41 Pug, 42 Fooled, 44 Cede, 45 Upwind, 46 Inshore, 50 Clung, 51 Somali, 52 Dons, 53 I M F, 56 Okay, 57 Olive, 59 Poor, 60 Fire, 61 Ravess, 62 Tube, 63 Fats, 64 Sways, 65 Asst.

**Down:** 1 Carp, 2 Hiss, 3 Advisable, 4 Rep, 5 Mother superiors, 6 Afoul, 7 Kurt, 8 E S T, 9 Resourcefulness, 10 Riser, 11 On end, 12 Skate, 13 Synod, 21 Seem, 23 Par, 25 Truss, 26 Guru, 27 Nail, 28 Elle, 29 Badge, 32 Frown, 33 Religious, 34 Aden, 35 Todd, 38 Nude, 43 Opus, 44 Col, 46 Is off, 47 Noka, 48 Smart, 49 Hayes, 50 Covey, 52 Diva, 54 Mobs, 55 Fret, 58 Law, 59 P-T A.

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# ‘Playing’ in the snow good for mental health

Continued from page 1

Tung is creative, while Grise is practical — he shovelled the snow on the side of the plowed road to widen it, and Tung got to work creating a bevy of snowmen, snowwomen, and even some little ones.

The project began after the first snowfall more than a week ago, and has grown to include 12 snowpeople, including three for a neighbour a couple of doors down.

It was another neighbour, Trixie, who called The Local to report on Tung’s creativity — she was thrilled to have such a cheerful view out her front window, and amazed at what he accomplished.

Asked why he set himself such a time-consuming task, Tung said, “why not? We have lots of snow. Why not play with it, have some fun, and do something useful?”

“The snow was piling up in the narrow roadway,” says Grise. “This was a good way

to clear the road.”

And in doing so, Tung has been sculpting the snowbanks into something that lifts the spirits of his neighbours, he explained.

Tung is from Malaysia, a country that is hot and humid, and known for its rainforests and beaches. Snow was pretty much an alien concept to him until he came to Canada in 2004, but he likes the cold, Canadian winters.

He and Grise moved to Creekside in 2020, just as the

pandemic was beginning, Tung semi-retiring from his practice as a clinical registered psychotherapist, and Grise is a retired security officer with the Corps of Commissioners.

“I listen to a lot of people’s problems,” says Tung. “This,” he says, gesturing to his family of snow people, “is all about having fun, and relaxing. It keeps you feeling young and positive. And I like to create something.”

He has been using bits and pieces of whatever he can

find to decorate them — he’s braided the strings of an onion bag to make a smiley face, used bits of black rubber for eyes, and turned plastic bags into scarves and bowties.

Trixie next door donated Christmas ornaments for buttons on some of the sculptures, while the underside of beer bottles buried in the snow bellies become the buttons on others — he is creative with whatever he can find.

“I’m already thinking of

what I can collect for next year,” he says.

Tung runs a mental health support group, with a goal of “balancing your life spirits,” physically and mentally, he says, and recommends “communing with nature, and communing with your inner child.”

He’s setting an example with his own actions, and lifting the spirits of his Creekside neighbours as they stop to chat.

“We can’t change our environment,” he says. “Why not try to enjoy it?”



Petrus Tung and his neighbour Anne Howe in Creekside Seniors Estate, with the snowmen he sculpted for her behind them.



These are just some of the 12 snowmen Petrus Tung has made since the first heavy snowfall. (Photos supplied)

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