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 on Monday, he didn’t have the opportunity to make his first speech of the 44th 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. Canadians have already 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.

Continued on page 2

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.

"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-

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 do the shovelling, Michel Grise does the sculpting, creating a 12 snow people on a narrow lane in the Creekside Seniors Estates in St. Davids. (Penny Coles)
MP supports ‘peaceful protest’ but not disrespect

Councillor urges solutions instead of criticism

Continued from page 1

“I have never heard such noise, neither positive nor negative, about any budget,” said Bisback. “This was non-stop criticism, period.”

He refers to the increase in the budget delivered 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 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 a nothing new,” although some residents in rural areas are confused about who pays for it. Despite grants received to cover pandemic costs, the open-open, close-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. “The way it’s run is unprofessional, and contributes to the perception of council as unelected.”

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Continued from page 1

announcements

Brittany Szockyj-O’Neill
Sales Representative

Christian Bosley, President
Broker of Record
Bosley Real Estate Ltd.

is pleased to welcome

Brittany Szockyj-O’Neill

to our Niagara office

A life-time resident of Niagara, Brittany launched her real estate career here at Bosley Niagara, moved her practice to Toronto but has come back home rejoining our Niagara Team. Brittany’s innovative marketing, passion for excellence, and commitment to the best of real estate practices fits perfectly with Bosley Real Estate’s goal of ensuring that every customer experience is exceptional. Welcome home Brittany, we wish you all the very best as you continue your successful practice and, on your behalf, we invite your friends, clients, and associates to call for timely and market-focused advice to their real estate questions.

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

The councillor says he has heard very little evidence that 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, Baldinielli said “the frustration and disappointment which led to the protest in Ottawa in the first place, in many ways, mirrors 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.”

Baldinielli says he supports peaceful protest, but “at the same time, I absolutely condemn those disturbing actions we saw from some individuals apart from this protest. 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 hospitals and women’s shelters, were deeply troubling, and I strongly condemn them.”

“Our 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.”

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 beaviour 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.

Baldinielli is comfortable saying when he is united, a councillor “is stating 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 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 Marianne 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 the 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.”

When lenses are put to rest in fresh solution, the solution collects all the bacteria from the lenses. Reusing or “topping off” the solution allows bacteria to grow and fester on the lenses—a big no-no if you want to maintain healthy eyes and vision. Make sure you dispose of lens solution on a daily basis and replace your lens case every 3-4 months!

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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 on the open market, both the board of Willowbank, its current owner, and town councilors 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 of the village has changed since then, including the former elementary school property, which served children 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 “easily understood” during the last decade, and descriptive of how the board is making good in 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 classroom use, 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 skills of the various eras represented in the Queenston manor.

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, including an elevator and air conditioning system, among 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 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 amicable 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 BettyDisero 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 education developer, 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.”
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 as 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 reconnect 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, knowing council and staff support sustained 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, 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 information forthcoming about the appointment of an acting chief until the position is filled.

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 reopened, 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

Music Niagara’s Not So Late Show

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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 Pilitteri 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)
This is How We Got Here

**Mike Balsam 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 heart-warming. 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 great loss, “ he writes. “This is How We Got Here”

Barker is the outgoing director of Native Earth Performing Arts, and in light of playwright Barker’s own experiences, it’s not lost on any involved that the Indigenious community across the nation has been devasted 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, 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 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 recommend for ages 14-plus, with an approximate running time of 75 minutes with no intermission. Performances and tickets are available via https://www.shawfest.com.
New species created by different forces, slowly

The town has embarked on a campaign to ask 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, shops, the Shaw Festival, and the theatre—opening, 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, they are not. Some economic development initiative is an online business directory, “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 context for us, to get us in the mood to shop. Go to 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.

Many good news, as restaurateurs reopen, is that some of our local establishments have earned a place on the top 100 OpenTable list—a hat tip—of all restaurant reservations.

We know our local restaurateurs are great, and there are 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.

We can maybe even work on finding the love for all those who are angry, because with all that is going on around us, there is no time for anybody. In fact, if we’re not angry at some level of government for vaccinations mandates and all other restrictions that have been protecting us through the pandemic, we’re probably angry at the people who are.

Don’t call me, with the news we are seeing in Niagara-on-the-Lake. 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, when a time when life won’t be so stressful. We can help them get there.

And while we’re feeling the love, let’s try to figure out how to start taking all our bookings for seasonal workers again. We don’t have to give up and make our own signs for the window, although that is 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 but of someone’s anger than gratitude these days.

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

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

Maybe in some small way that will make up for those who are instead saying, “We give the protesters, the extremists, the anarchists, who are dancing on top of their trucks, taking selfies in the streets, bringing their kids to play in bounce castles and generally creating a circus carnival where people...”

New species created by different forces, slowly

The Niagara River in Australia is one of the world’s oldest extant examples of allopatric speciation, given that human land use and environmental change has continually separated a population of plants or animals and caused them to evolve more independently. A sympatric speciation event unfolds when a population of an organism lives in the same geographic 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 of 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 created a new species on the biodiversity block.

Through filming my Hidden Corners documentary series, I’ve been fortunate to have visited rivers and mountain ranges 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 a role for so long.

How long is a long time?

Take tree kangaroos in the tropics of Australia. First, all of 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 mysterious slow life in the treetops of Australia. First of that river, or on the peak of that mountain, knowing how such charismatic but ancient features have played a role for so long.

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The Daintree River in Australia has been dividing species for over 120 million years. This textbook and proofof concept example of species diversification was right before me, and looking upstream into the mazy, rugged valleys, I felt this archaic connection to such a special place was established and timeless.

In comparison, the Niagara River in Canada is certainly much younger 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 any population to reach and interbreed, the ancestor species inevitably split and became two separate species, according to the physical barrier of genes.

The Daintree River does for other mammals, frogs, insects, plants, and living organisms to this day.

Then there are the countless incisions into the eastern slopes of the Andes mountains in Peru, in Ecuador, where the Amazon rainforest uniquely fills these valleys with its relentless vegetation and incomparable biodiversity.

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The Daintree River in Australia has been dividing species for over 120 million years. This textbook and proof of concept example of species diversification was right before me, and looking upstream into the mazy, rugged valleys, I felt this archaic connection to such a special place was established and timeless.

In comparison, the Niagara River in Canada is certainly much younger 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 any population to reach and interbreed, the ancestor species inevitably split and became two separate species, according to the physical barrier of genes.

The Daintree River does for other mammals, frogs, insects, plants, and living organisms to this day.

Then there are the countless incisions into the eastern slopes of the Andes mountains in Peru, in Ecuador, where the Amazon rainforest uniquely fills these valleys with its relentless vegetation and incomparable biodiversity.
To Lord Mayor Betty Dis- sers and Niagara-on-the-Lake Town Council, OUTniagar- ra, a non-profit organization that unites, supports and cele- brates 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 community and many other interested parties for endorsing the installation of the rainbow crosswalk, and encourage town council and the heritage committee to do the same. The proposed proj- ect, like the rainbow flag the town raises in June to recog- nize Pride Month, is a visible affirmation and recognition of the multi-generational lives and histories made by Niagara’s 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. A rainbow crosswalk and potential rainbow benches in NOTL’s heritage district would sig- nify strong support for com- munities that historically have been unrecognized, under-repre- sented, underserved, and un- der-appreciated. Heritage dis- tricts in other Ontario towns both big (Hamilton, Milton) and small (Brantford, Kincar- dine/Owen Sound, Midland), have already added rainbow crosswalks to support and recognize sexual and gen- der diverse communities.

In a Community Strengths and Needs Assessment survey facilitated by Wisdom2Ac- tions for OUTniagara, and funded by a generous federal grant, several respondents of the 2SLGBTQIA+ commu- nity specifically mentioned the positive impacts of a rain- bow crosswalk, and concerns such as vandalism:

• “I think visual displays of support make me feel best. Things like the signs on a truck or the painted sidewalk that was in downtown St. Cath- arines. They make me feel good when I see them.”
• “I love the Pride Cross- walk. Seeing it and walking on it makes me more emo- tionally than I thought it would. It seems like a small thing, but more murals and pride flag vinyls could make a differ- ence as well.”
• “The crosswalk was a good start/symbol. Governmental support is good, but there could be more repre- sentation.”
• “Keep opening businesses, make park benches and crosswalks. Put it everywhere so that it can’t be ignored. I think the city should belong to this group aren’t bad people, or wrong for existing.”

The community needs to know that we are here and we aren’t going anywhere, no matter how much they van- dalize a rainbow crosswalk.

• “The slow response to the vandalized crosswalk was really disheartening and it makes youth who belong to this group aren’t bad people, or wrong for existing.”

What the 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 makes youth who belong to this group aren’t bad people, or wrong for existing.”

The proposed installation of a rainbow crosswalk falls well within the intent of the Coalition of Inclusive Mu- nicipalities 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 con- sider the possibility for instal- lations such as the Progress Pride crosswalk and bench, it does advocate for well-de- signed and “special and invit- ing individuality” reflecting the town and district.

As a major tourist desti- nation, the positive goodwill and economic impact of in- stalling a rainbow crosswalk cannot be underestimated. Imagine visiting from a coun- try where 2SLGBTQIA+ people are imprisoned (or worse) because of their sexu- ality under severe harassment, and seeing a welcoming flag, crosswalk or bench. Some members of the heri- tage committee have expressed concern that the colours of the proposed rainbow crosswalk are not “trending” and urged that they be toned down. OUTniagara strongly objects to this proposal. When Amer- ican 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, be- cause that’s what a flag is about, you know, it’s a way of proclaiming your visibility or saying, ‘This is who I am!’” Sublicur the colours suggests adhering to a historical colour palette is more important than support- ing an internationally recog- nized 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 Ni- agara-on-the-Lake. It would display critical support, espe- cially for youth who are find- ing their way in sometimes hostile and oppressive worlds.

Statistics around self-harm and suicide, particularly in trans and non-binary com- munities, speak for them- selves. Ongoing evidence of harmful speech and physical violence against members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ commu- nity, 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+ communi- ties, and that explicit strat- egies for positive action be developed around important issues like trans health care, transportation, housing, and discrimination. OUTniagara is available to act as a consultant for many much-needed discussions.

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

To date, the residents of NOTL have had scant oppor- tunity 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. The consideration should be given to an entrance to the town, ie 55 Niagara Stone Road, 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. Among others, am strongly op- posed to it being located in close proximity to the Centenap.

Jean O’Malley
NOTL

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OUTniagara calls for crosswalk in heritage district

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Hunting seems senseless

Thanks to Shirley Mad- sen for her enlightening ar- ticle (Town needs to review its hunting boundaries, The Local, Feb 2).

I first saw the pile of peaches on this same prop- erty a few years ago. My hus- band, a reformed, guilt- ridden former hunter told me what it was for. I was horrorified by what this would cause… Hunting seems senseless, cruel and unnecessary, in or out of town. I simply cannot imag- ine the need to destroy these beautiful creatures.

Beth Macdonald
NOTL

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Lest We Forget should not be associated with protest

I am responding to the letter by Janet Hempill (Lo- cal 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 ob- viously 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 re- alize that if they are not vacci- nated they are not getting into the U.S. anyway; regardless of what our governments do.

Doug Johnson
NOTL

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Letters! We want letters!

If you have a letter to the editor, 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.
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 appreciative 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 Silver smith’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 Dodgington, 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,” Dodgington 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 connection we have with customers at the brewery being able to responsibly enjoy locally made craft beer in a safe and social setting.”

Continued on page 9
Ironwood Cider House can finally show off

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

Over the past year, Ironwood Cider House has been working to safely host in-person events such as virtual trivia night, 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 received its occupancy clearance for both the construction and production facilities.

"Our business is about selling positive experiences to people," Liu says. "That's why we have our gallery, it's exciting to be out socializing with about 12 pieces all from local artists. We want to create an experience for people."

Rising materials costs will have a positive impact on their product line. With construction now flooding back to his facility, Liu says will help them handle 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 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 landlord 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.

"And we're hoping to start planning for a grand opening event sometime in the fall that will involve the community."
‘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 returned 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.
Peter Warrack is indeed in the public eye, as he recently received the Meritorious Service Cross (MSC) from Governor General Mary Simon’s office. “You're putting yourself willingly at criminal risk,” Warrack says. “And with so many young people spending increased time online, the dangers are multiplied.”

“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 we need to do something to bring awareness to the public with his knowledge.”

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

Peter Warrack hopes to pick up his Meritorious Service Award soon.
Shop Safe, Shop Local

Shopnotl.ca

ShopNOTL is a comprehensive, searchable online business directory showcasing Niagara-on-the-Lake’s superb and diverse business community.

This new website acts as a one-stop-shop for residents and visitors looking for local services or places to shop, dine, stay, and explore.

Scroll listings, search specific businesses, or peruse by category, then simply click and enjoy!

Visit shopnotl.ca and start shopping today!

Enter the ShopNOTL, LoveLocal Contest for a chance to win $250 toward NOTL businesses of your choosing.

Simply tell us what you love most about shopping in NOTL or your favourite NOTL business and your name will be entered into one of two draws.

Contest ends February 18.
Visit notl.com/lovelocal for contest details or call 905-468-3266.
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 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 1 p.m. on Feb. 12 and 26, March 13 and 26, and April 2, 9, 16 and 23.

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.

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)
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-on-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 to members 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
Grandmother describes living through COVID isolation

Penny Coles
The Local

Margaret Byl, a mother and grandmother, is accustomed to tackling issues related to 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’s 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, the other two of her three siblings. One of the two older boys has remained negative.

Margaret’s husband Lane, 73, is still mixing things up! He checked himself out of the hospital early Sunday morning, but she is checking his oxygen levels 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 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 see another person’s voice, can be talking about the organization visit https://ewis.on.ca, or call 905-262-4006.

Continued from page 14

Margaret’s husband Lane soon started feeling sick, and tested positive. Byl 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 hospital. She was able to talk to him by phone, and he is getting better, after being treated with steroids. 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 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 always trying to change things up."

As evidenced by the top- ics 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.

Margaret says to those who don’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.

In Ottawa and across the country, almost 3,000 are taking up hospital spaces. There have been lives lost, and there are people who can’t get 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 am sure there are people who would be without them.”

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

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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 Festi-
val — just a little later than usual.

The shows typically co-
icide with the Queen Street
Icewine Festival in January, but because of COVID re-
strictions all festivities were
called off. The four shows
are going ahead April 7 to 9,
which was originally planned.

Paul, the festival founder
and artistic director, MC’s
the two shows at Corks
Wine Bar and Eatery Satu-
day night, with some of the
festival’s favourite comics
from previous years per-
foming. Both shows feature
Adrienne Fish, Marito
Perrez and Jarrett Campbell.

Paul traditionally ap-
pears in the late night show,
and says he likes the lateness
of the performance.

“Currently, we’re going to have a virtual lecture on Using
GIS, Linzel explains, to her research, using
GIS technology to map this “spatial
history.”

She was pleased with the
results, she says. “By map-
ing the historical data and
analyzing it alongside geo-
graphical features in the
region, GIS technologies
brought a fresh perspective
to a familiar topic.”

Linzel’s research was
partially funded by a schol-
arity set up by two
museum members, David
Murray and Elizabeth Sur-
tees, through the Niagara
Historical Society, schol-
arship. Although, she
was the recipient, this is the first
time she has worked direct-
ly with the museum.

“I have lived in Niaga-
ra my whole life, and have
walked, biked, hiked and
kayaked much of the re-
gion,” she says of her inspi-
ration for the project.

“I was constantly amazed by the beauty we
have here. In 2016, I worked as a
summer student at Nelles Manor Museum
on a project that has hung on. Rich
wine Winery returns with
demand. “I had never used GIS
before though, until I be-
came something locals
are going to accept. And
expect COVID to be a com-
mon theme, he adds, “since
that’s our life now, and
everyone can relate to it.”

In addition to doing what
he obviously loves, with reg-
ular performances in To-
ronto clubs, and a comedy
festival in Parry Sound, near
the Paul family cottage, he is
still enjoying his day job —
that he feels fortunate
to have had after graduating
from a broadcasting pro-
gram 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 peo-
ple laugh.

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

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 Eco-
nomic Development.

It is her master’s thesis
project, and will be present-
evally 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 geo-
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 interest-
ed in a specific area of geo-
raphy, and a specific time
in history, she used something
called historical GIS to
research her thesis. “Histori-
cal geographic information
systems (HGIS) aid histori-
ans in their analyses, by de-
m advertising a closer look at
the land itself, guiding them
towards a deeper understand-
ing of the ways in which
graphy impacted their
particular research topic.”

The accounts of lo-
cal farmers and mill-
ers, 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 map-
ing the historical data and
analyzing it alongside geo-
graphical features in the
Niagara region, GIS tech-
nologies brought a fresh
perspective to a familiar

Every day,” says Linzel.

“I had never used GIS
before though, until I be-

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

Paul — in 2020, he gave each
supporter of the festival, says
Paul — he will be conscious that
earlier show, for an audience
“a step further” than the

expect to perform but to catch
the late-night crowd, he usually
attracts.

“Although tickets are sell-
ing quickly, with venues cur-
tently limited to 50 per cent
capacity, Paul says if that re-
striction 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 can-
celled.

Now we’re back to square one, and it’s been
tough.” Some sponsorship
has been lost, although he
mentions one in particu-
lar 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
colour jogging suits Kunk-
el’s Sweatsedo is famous
tor. Paul himself has one in
every colour, and often ap-
pears 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 com-
mon theme, he adds, “since
that’s our life now, and
everyone can relate to it.”
He recalls in 2020 com-
ics were being asked not to
mention COVID, “but it
was the biggest thing going
on in the world. Mammals
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
every day,” says Linzel.

“I had never used GIS
before though, until I be-
gan my MA in 2018. I was
encouraged by my thesis
supervisor, Dr Daniel Sam-
on, to try approaching my
thesis topic (economic
development in Niagara)
from a geography perspec-
tive, 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 advanc-
es in computer technol-
you can imagine, history and digital tech
are not the most compatible
fields. But GIS software was a huge learn-
ing curve for me — honest-
y 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 Foundation.

Her virtual lecture will
begin at 11 a.m. Feb 16,
followed by a question and
answer period. Registra-
tion is required at www.
nolmuseum.ca. For more
information, please email
aklassen@nhsm.ca
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 flatted 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.

As his awareness grew, the challenges faced by people who are deaf or hard of hearing in the Caribbean intensified 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 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 community 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.

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‘Ripples of friendship’ have far-reaching benefits

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. After 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.

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Hearing is a gift.

Hearing with the desire to understand transforms into trust, completing the word heart, a dynamic combination for a caring community.
Durham for most of the game. Turnbull 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 in the second to tie it up.

In the third, Durham’s Alexander Page made his debut with the Predators last weekend. Page was a former Niagara Jr. IceDogs player before being traded to a professional team in the Alps Hockey League. Fellow Swede Eriksson has not yet returned following the holiday break, and speedy centre Zitella went down with a shoulder injury in the first period. Defenders Joshudaus, David and Nathan Fehr also sat out Friday.

“Some are councillors and others are friends. It’s a great opportunity for him. He told The Local, “it’s a great opportunity for him. He could prove himself and show that he can play in the NHL.”

Pierson added, “It’s great for the Niagara Jr. IceDogs as well. Eriksson is a player that can play in the NHL.”

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 gmlh.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) with 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.

“Jesper is a player that can play in the NHL.”

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 Temiscamingi 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 Divisions 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.
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 Mikkor. 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

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

Deadline is Tuesdays at 1 p.m.

PUZZLE ANSWERS

Sudoku solution from
February 2, 2022

ACROSS:
1. Scorch
2. 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
25. Circumspect
27. Closer
29. Pedal seed vessel
30. Musical collections
31. Type of lamp
32. Campus house, maybe
36. Troubles
37. Inordinate
38. Make over
39. Sediment
40. Burr
41. Short dog with a flat muzzle
42. Taken in
44. Sudder
45. Not alas
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. Conspired spy Alger ---
3. Recommended
4. Agent
5. Convent heads
6. Enlarged
7. “Staubenhouse Five” author --- Vonnegut
8. Time in Boston
9. Ability
10. Vertical pipe
11. Upright
12. Edible ray
13. Ecclesiastical council
14. Appear
21. Average golf score
25. Tie up
28. Recognized leader
27. Pin down
28. Fashion magazine
29. Emblem
32. Scowl
33. Spiritual
34. Yemeni port
35. Sweeney ---
36. Uncovered
37. Literary work
38. Mountain pass
39. Has gone
40. Cell maker
42. Well turned out
43. Two, Irma flagrator
44. Small flock
45. Prima donna
46. Rabbles
47. Cell maker
48. Fooled
49. Cede
50. Neighbor up
51. Somali
52. Dons
53. I M F
54. Starch up
55. I M F

HELP WANTED

To place a Help Wanted advertisement please contact: Classifieds@notllocal.com, 905.934.1040

TUE - SAT: 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.
SUN: 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

classified@notllocal.com

Suduko solution from February 2, 2022

SUDOKU ANSWER

GARDENER (APRIL – NOVEMBER)

A 2-acre heritage property. Working under direction of a sr. gardener, job will include help with gardening and property maintenance. Best suits someone who has some experience and/or training. Students and self-employed individuals welcome. Will consider flexibility in days/hours.

For information email: 1816Gardens@gmail.com

NOTICES

Puzzle answers
‘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?"