

The Niagara-on-the-Lake LOCAL



Queenston
mourns
friend,
neighbour
page 4

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notllocal.com FEBRUARY 11, 2021 Volume 3 · Issue 6



Furniture store, storage shed fire a challenge for firefighters

A fire at a two-storey furniture store at 1238 Townline Rd., as well as a single-storey, 500-foot chicken barn converted to storage units, burned for more than five hours, from Tuesday afternoon at about 2:30 p.m. and continuing into the evening. Fire Chief Nick Ruller said all five NOTL stations responded, with 55 to 60 firefighters, and aid from two Thorold pumper trucks. There were no hydrants in the rural area, and even with NOTL pumpers, the amount of material, including boats, racing cars, stock cars, and other vehicles, a shared roof space above the units, and heavy black smoke made the fire a challenge for firefighters and difficult to contain. There were several tenants on site, some trying to get into their sheds to salvage what was inside. Ruller said it was a challenge to keep them out at first, but nobody was hurt, although some of the firefighters were covered with ice by evening. The fire marshal will be called in, and an investigation conducted to determine cause of fire and the amount of damage, which will be high, said Ruller. (Mike Balsom)

Hirji thinking grey zone for Niagara reopening

Penny Coles
The Local

Although the province has decided Niagara could be ready to have its lockdown lifted as soon as next Tuesday, Feb. 16, there are concerns closer to home that it might be too much, too soon.

The province announced Monday it is taking a regional approach to reopening, moving back to colour-coded categories, with a new framework that includes some differences in restrictions.

The three areas that had their stay-at-home order lifted this week are moving into the least restrictive green zone. While there are predictions that Niagara might be headed to red, after hearing the provincial plan, Dr. Mustafa Hirji told The Local he would advise the region be placed in the grey-lockdown category.

The acting medical officer of health says the province has

promised consultation with regional public health units before lifting the stay-at-home order for the majority of Ontario regions next week, and Hirji fears anything less restrictive than grey would threaten the advances against the pandemic made in Niagara since the Dec. 26 lockdown.

Under the new restrictions, the grey zone would allow non-essential retailers to open for in-person shopping, with a capacity limited to 25 per cent, while pharmacies, grocery and convenience stores can remain open with 50 per cent of regular indoor capacity.

Under the former grey restrictions, indoor gatherings were limited to members of the same household, but Hirji said early this week he had no details about what to expect for Niagara. He was hoping to have those details later this week, to prepare

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Retailers confident about opening doors safely

Penny Coles
The Local

As some provincial restrictions are lifted, local retail businesses are preparing to reopen. Their plans are in place, they've been through the process before, and they're anxious to open their doors.

Having transitioned to creative ways to continue contact with the public, through online sales, curbside pickups and deliveries, they are ready for this, and

confident they can do it safely.

After all, they say, they've done it before.

The restrictions will be determined by Niagara's colour zone, which hadn't been determined earlier this week, but in all zones, non-essential retail stores are permitted to reopen, with 25 per cent capacity limits.

Shauna Dickson of Irish Design on Queen Street says she has managed to keep busy during this lockdown

— actually busier than usual — with online sales that are shipped around the world and close to home, as well as curbside pickups three days a week.

"We've always shipped around the world, and we're still doing that," she says, "but we've actually seen an increase in domestic sales. We have more online sales to Toronto and the U.S."

She believes "1,000 per cent" that businesses have learned from the situations they've faced during the two

lockdowns, and in many cases, that will continue to benefit them post-pandemic, including using social media.

"Our thought process at the beginning was to have some presence, and dreaming up new ways to get people shopping. People want to support us. They just need to know how."

That has kept her occupied as she seeks new ways of marketing, mostly using



Shauna Dickson is at Irish Design three days a week for customers who want to pick up online orders. (Photo supplied)

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Queen Street needs return of Shaw, tourists

Continued from page 1

Facebook and Instagram. A new initiative she created worked better than expected, a weekly Wednesday evening Insta Sales on Instagram.

“We see a lot of other businesses benefiting from Instagram. For us, it’s sur-

passed our website. People like the consistency of the Wednesday sales, and they also like to support local businesses.”

She also loves that customers reach out to the store to ask how she and her parents, Maureen and Paul Dickson, and other staff are doing.

“People are contact-

ing us to check on us. It’s so heart-warming. I knew the people of Niagara-on-the-Lake were lovely, but we’re really feeling the love now.”

Dickson says she had no idea what to expect opening after the first lockdown last June, but this time, she’s ready for it, as are customers.

The plexiglass is in place, arrows on the floor, shoppers are accustomed to wearing masks, and they understand capacity limits. “We know what to do, and they know what to do,” she says.

“We’re chomping at the bit for normal, bricks and mortar retail.”

The icing on the cake will be if the Shaw Festival can open. “There are other factors, but the Shaw definitely makes a difference,” she says.

“Every day during this pandemic brings a new learning curve. Just when you think you’ve got it figured out, something new happens. That’s what’s most stressful — the uncertainty of not knowing. But we’re going to get through it.”

Across Queen Street, Rick Jorgensen looks forward to implementing his cautious plan to fully reopen OLiV Tasting Room on Queen Street, after more than a month of just nine-hour weeks. For three hours, three days a week, he’s been filling orders curbside. Al-



Jaime Chevalier of Textures drops off hair products to client and friend Nicola Gillespie. (Photos supplied)

though his business is in a grey area as a food store, his retail space is small, and with few people on the street anyway, he decided to close his doors during the week, shift to pickups and deliveries, and transition to online sales.

He expects to move into a larger space, half of the former Starbucks, sharing it with Budapest Bakery. The main door will enter into a redesigned vestibule, with customers for OLiV going to the right, and the bakery to the left.

He hopes to be in the new location by May, where he will be able to expand his marketplace with a new line of food products, he says.

That, plus optimism that the end of the lockdown is in sight, and hope that this will be the last one, is allowing him to look forward to a bright future.

He points to the “relatively quick” recovery after the first lockdown, thanks to visitors from across the region, the GTA and even Quebec, as reason for optimism this season. There is no doubt the locals, as supportive as they are, can’t car-

ry the businesses on Queen Street — there just aren’t enough of them.

Although most businesses have survived a second lockdown, he is not the only one to warn it will be a different story if it happens a third time.

This one has to work, and when stores reopen, “we have a strategy to keep staff and customers safe. I’m very optimistic and confident in our ability to manage the transmission in our area. If everyone does that, we can have some semblance of normality. We managed the first wave because everyone was committed to following those measures. But people are becoming stir-crazy. They want to at least be able to walk around freely. As long as the town manages the public facilities, we’ll be okay, and we can enjoy some level of freedom,” he says.

“But we still need to be cautious. I don’t know how many businesses will survive a third level of shutdown. We really need to get this under control and keep it under control. We’ve reached the tipping point.”

Jaime Chevalier, owner of Textures Hair Salon, was out delivering hair colour to one of her clients this week, looking ahead to seeing some of them when permitted by the province. Salons may or may not be part of the reopening next week, depending on Niagara’s colour zone, which is expected to be red or grey.

She knows when permitted, she can do it safely.

Everything is in place, she has the one-use gowns and gloves, the sanitizer and masks, and she is accustomed to scheduling clients, having them wait in the car until there’s a chair for them inside, and spacing them two metres apart.

Chevalier is a people person, accustomed to chatting with clients all day long, and she misses that. Her dog Charlie also misses the salon full of people. He usually goes to work with her, and has been waiting at the door in the mornings, unable to understand why they aren’t going to work.

They’ll both be happy to get back to it, she says.

In the meantime, as she did during the first lockdown, Chevalier has been preparing bowls of colour for clients, and delivering it, along with all the other supplies they need.

It’s not a lot of help for the business financially, she says, “but it helps pay the gas and phone bill. They don’t go away.”

The main reason for doing it is “that it makes our clients feel better. They send me emails afterwards telling me how much it’s helped. At least we can do that for them.”

Chevalier is happy to be able to support them in that way, and she’s grateful to know it’s a two-way street.

“People reach out to me, asking if I’m okay, and if the staff are okay. They’re con-

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Rick Jorgensen of OLiV on Queen Street fills an order to deliver. (Photos supplied)

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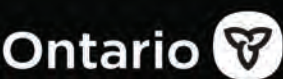
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Business owners grateful for local support

Continued from page 2

cerned for us. We all know this isn't good for anyone. We miss human contact."

Coming to the salon is also a social outing for some clients, she says. "They need it for their mental health."

Once she has a date to open, she'll begin calling the clients she thinks will need a visit to the salon the most, and then go through the waiting list of people who have been calling her.

"Everyone has been so kind and understanding. I'm very grateful for that. We're all in this together, and we have to stick together to get through it."

John Koldenhof has been operating his Maple Leaf Fudge store on Queen Street for 53 years. He continues to open his doors seven days a week, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., receives orders online and by phone, and makes appointments for people to pick them up, he says.

Although business has picked up a little leading up to Feb. 14, "it's nowhere near a normal year for Valentine's Day."

He's been able to keep three people working, with help from government subsidies, he says. "But we need the Shaw Festival. We need tourism. It's been difficult, but we've been doing this for 53 years, and we'll get through it. I've been out delivering orders around the region, and I've been keeping busy."

He already has all the protocols in place to reopen safely, with a limited number of people, and with a weather break, "hopefully we'll start to get back to normal. I can't wait."

Terri-Lynn Woodhouse, owner of One Earth, was out delivering orders this weekend, and also feeling pretty optimistic about the future.

"We are so grateful for



Cristina Cino and Kait Fleming of Swag are keeping customers happy, supplying them with products, and anxious for when they can safely reopen. (Photos supplied)

all of the support we have received from all of our customers. When we had to temporarily close our storefront, we wanted to make sure we could still reach our customer base to let them know we were still here, and they could order from us and stay home," she says.

"We were lucky that we already had an online presence, so we didn't have to set it up, but with everyone in the world now having a website, we had to be competitive."

The store offers fair trade, ethically-produced items such as soaps, sanitizers, and body care products.

During the recent shutdown, she says, "we began looking at product offerings and asked ourselves, 'what would people need, and enjoy, if they were in lockdown for an extended period of time?' We began offering more fair trade coffee, chocolate, tea, and soy candles, as well as our regular, all-natural fair trade soaps, body lotions, shampoos and gifts. We did our best to tailor our product offerings for the time and experience we were all going through."

The store offers curbside

pickup, "but most of our time is spent driving around the Niagara region doing porch dropoffs. From day one, way back to last March, we wanted people to stay home, so we immediately started free, same-day delivery in the Niagara region. We have to compete with Amazon, so timely deliveries are important."

Woodhouse says she has been "so in awe of the support we have received, not only from NOTL, but our surrounding communities. It's been amazing."

Online ordering and delivery has helped to keep their lights on, "and allowed us to keep our supply chains in the developing world and Canada healthy."

She was able to retain the equivalent of two and a half staff members, and expects to be hiring again when they move to their new location on Queen Street in the spring, with a bigger retail space and customer parking behind.

During the pandemic, she says, One Earth sanitizing lotion helped gain awareness of the business and its other products.

Now, as a small busi-

ness owner, she is "a little nervous" about reopening, not knowing what's around the corner. However, she adds, "our priority is keeping our community healthy. We have to trust in Public Health to make the right call, and then pass the baton to us to make sure we follow the guidelines and keep people safe. We feel our space is very safe."

Air purifiers were installed in the store last year, which fully clean the air every 15 minutes, and kill viruses, she adds.

"It will be great to see our customers again, in person, and to share a joke or two. All of us in NOTL have been through a lot this past year."

Face-to-face, masked and socially-distanced contact is better for everyone's

mental health, she says.

"This upcoming season is a time to celebrate that we are on the other side of this. We have all shared a collective experience that none of us saw coming. It will be a different year, I'm sure, but we have to make it a good one."

Cristina Cino, owner of Swag Hair Salon in Virgil, like other businesses, has kept in touch with her clients through dropoffs of products, including custom-mixed hair colour touch-up kits, with all necessary supplies.

It doesn't bring in a lot of revenue, "but any little bit helps. We went down to zero revenue, but still have bills to pay."

She also wanted to look after her clients, and was

touched by those who have reached out to her, checking that she and other staff members were okay.

When Swag reopened in June after the first lockdown, with all safety protocols in place, including disposable equipment such as capes and gloves, she had a questionnaire ready for clients, and will do the same when permitted to open this time, depending on the colour zone Niagara enters.

She also expects to take temperatures of clients as they arrive, and says she finds that by knowing she is going "above and beyond" what is called for, "reopening will be easier and less stressful than it was the first time. We're ready to open when we're allowed to open."



Terri-Lynn Woodhouse promises next day delivery of One Earth products around the region.

Restaurants can apply for seasonal patios

Penny Coles
The Local

Patios opened last summer to expand their serving space can apply to allow their continued operation through the 2021 season.

The Municipal Heritage Committee will be consult-

ed regarding patios in the heritage district, CAO Mar-
nie Cluckie told councilors in her Monday update at the planning committee meeting. More details and a report to council outlining the process is expected soon.

"I would like to thank

patio owners and operators for working with us to provide opportunities for residents and visitors to dine safely outdoors this past season, and I look forward to seeing possibilities unfold with outdoor patios this year," Cluckie said in a town news release Tuesday.



John Koldenhof of Maple Leaf Fudge is delivering Valentine's Day gifts this week.

UPDATE...more details
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Red or Grey for Niagara?

Penny Coles
The Local

Lord Mayor Betty Disero says COVID cases in some Niagara municipalities, including Niagara-on-the-Lake, could justify a move to the grey lockdown zone.

She's basing that on the numbers of COVID-19 cases across the region last Friday, as explained in a regional update by Dr. Mustafa Hirji, acting chief medical officer of health for Niagara, for mayors and regional councillors.

Hirji showed politicians a map of the region, she said, indicating some municipalities qualify for the grey lockdown category, others in the less restrictive red zone. Niagara-on-the-Lake, beginning to recover from a long-term care home outbreak, looked especially bad.

The decision to be made when lifting the lockdown in Niagara, to her mind, should be based on whether there are

any municipalities still in grey by the end of the week.

"If the numbers indicate any areas in grey, then Niagara should be in grey," she says, noting the number of cases were going down earlier this week, but it will depend on how far they fall.

She shares some of Hirji's concern that cases could increase with a reopening, especially if Toronto, Peel and York residents decide to travel to Niagara as they did in the fall, and Niagara is in the red zone, "but we won't know that until the end of the week."

The one thing Niagara will have going for it when businesses reopen and the other three hotspots remain closed, is the weather, she adds, which could be a deterrent to visitors, at least for the next week until those three areas are also lifted out of the lockdown.

"It could be just what we need, at least for a week."

Disero said she hadn't

heard any more details about the lifting of restrictions than what was announced Monday, although one aspect of the new restrictions, and a benefit for small businesses, is that big box stores, allowed to stay open during the lockdown, which many felt was unfair to small businesses, also have to reduce their capacity to 25 per cent.

What she did hear from the province was a mixed message, that non-essential retailers could reopen, which is important for small businesses locally, but residents should "stay home, stay home, stay home."

While it may not seem fair to those anxious to see their families, "I don't see any other way to help businesses and the economy. Everyone's trying to figure out a way to keep businesses afloat, but at the same time, to keep numbers down, telling people don't go to visit friends and family in groups, don't party. Stay home."

Queenston community mourns good friend and neighbour

Penny Coles
The Local

Margaret Torrance, a much-loved and respected resident of Queenston, died Sept. 8, peacefully, in the Niagara Falls site of Niagara Health.

Out-of-town relatives had a funeral home include a lovely online obituary, but because it was not published locally, many who knew her were unaware of her passing, say her friends and neighbours.

Also, due to the pandemic, there has been no way to celebrate her life or her contributions to the village, where she and her husband built a home in 1974.

Dorie Barratt, another longtime villager, was closest to her, as a friend and neighbour.

The two women lived next door to each other for more than 30 years, and often waved through their windows. If Torrance was outside in her garden,

where she loved to putter, Barratt would join her for a chat.

"She was outside in her garden right up to the end," says Barratt, who spoke to her friend one day, and was surprised to hear the next day she was in the hospital.

"I was shocked. She woke up, had some pains, and called the woman who helped her out in the house sometimes," says Barratt. "The next day she was gone."

In that sense, she was fortunate, living a healthy and independent life right to the end, says Barratt.

"I still look out the window, and miss being able to wave to her."

At 96, Torrance "was young," quite fit and active, both mentally and physically. She lived very independently, and drove right up to the end, going out for whatever she needed. She had a gardener who came to help her with the

heavy work, and he had been there the day before she died, with Torrance outside, following him around and directing him as he worked, as she always did, says her friend.

Before the pandemic, she was still driving into town to Tai Chi classes twice a week, and her house was designed with the living quarters on the second floor. "She was going up and down her stairs umpteen times a day," says Barratt, so those activities likely helped keep her physically fit.

She was also a voracious reader of non-fiction, deeply interested in history, and delved into subjects thoroughly, never superficially, which was reflected in her conversation.

"She was a very unique personality."

Torrance loved people, and liked to be busy. "She'd get bored, decide to go for a walk,

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Toronto visitors a concern

Continued from page 1

for next week's anticipated lifting of the stay-at-home order.

Dr. David Williams, Ontario's chief medical officer of health, said Monday people should continue to limit close contact to immediate households, and stay at home except for essential reasons. That came with warnings that although "variants of concern" are so far present in a small number of areas, that could change.

Hirji says the "unfortunate number of people dying" in Niagara in recent weeks is a direct result of the large increase in the number of new infections in January, and is now coming down, but when there were large numbers of people contracting the coronavirus, with daily new cases in the high 20s and 30s, the region struggled to keep up with important contact tracing.

Although those numbers are beginning to decrease, they remain a concern, he says.

"I think we're not so much a hot spot now. Things are starting to get better," but he adds, with reopening, there is a possibility things could get worse.

Hirji is most concerned that according to the current provincial plan, Niagara will reopen a week before Toronto, Peel and York Regions, and during that time, residents of those regions, tired of the lockdown, will visit

Niagara and bring more cases of COVID-19 with them. "We saw that as early as March of last year," he says, and he fears we could see it again next week.

As Ontario moves back to colour-coded regions, the province says the plan includes an "emergency brake," which will allow it to move any region experiencing increased infections back to the grey-lockdown zone.

To acknowledge those who have died from COVID-19, and in sympathy for their families, Niagara-on-the-Lake has lowered its flag at the town hall, and many Niagara municipalities are following suit. NOTL made that decision last March, and doesn't intend to return it to full staff until the dying stops, says Lord Mayor Betty Disero.

Unlike the province, Hirji doesn't release the number of people dying on a daily basis in Niagara, but the total number from the beginning of the pandemic to early this week was nearing the 350 mark. By the beginning of December, 87 people in Niagara had died after being infected by the coronavirus since the start of the pandemic, and by the end of that month, the number of deaths was up 142.

During that time, as the number of community cases from household social gatherings increased among young people, likely causing the spread of infections and deaths of res-

idents in long-term care, the province delayed sending some of its limited vaccine supply to the region, as it prioritized long-term care homes in other areas of the province. Instead, Hirji says, the province should have looked at all regions and their long-term care homes as priorities, and shipped the vaccine accordingly.

The good news is all long-term care residents in Niagara have received their first vaccination dose, and by the end of this week, should have their second.

Hirji says when it's time for public health to move out into the community for vaccinations, locations have been identified, including in Niagara-on-the-Lake, but the region won't release the details until the dates have been set to deliver doses. With the number of staff available, once that begins, there will likely be one to three clinics scheduled every day, possibly one clinic every two weeks in some of the smaller municipalities, to allow for staff to visit all 12 municipalities, and more often in the larger urban areas. He hopes by late spring to early summer, vaccinations will also be available at local pharmacies and primary health care clinics, but none of those plans can be made until Ontario, and Niagara, begin to see the arrival of more vaccine.

The fewer community outbreaks there are at that time, the more staff will be available for vaccinations, he adds.

Update on solitary sailboat



Residents seeing a sailboat, anchored in the river since December with an inexperienced sailor on board, became worried Sunday when he drifted from a fairly safe place not far from the Navy Hall dock, down the river and past Ball's Beach. He's alone on the boat, and has not responded to efforts to bring him ashore for the winter. A local man who befriended him, both on the water and when he was briefly tied up at the Navy Hall dock, has continued to be in touch with him through VHF radio. He has no battery power to charge his phone. While the man looks physically well, his mental state seemed precarious, and there were fears for his safety due to possible danger from wind and ice. The Canadian and U.S. Coast Guard were also communicating with him, but couldn't do anything unless he asked for help. Although it was Niagara Regional Police who told him to leave the dock a few weeks ago, and not very nicely, according to his Good Samaritan friend on shore, the NRPS marine unit was able to get the boat to safety Monday, battling ice flows and -16 degree windchills. "I cannot give them enough thanks," said the man on shore, who has asked not to be named. "They did a great job, and did it in the dark." The sailboat is secure at the NOTL Sailing Club for now, protected from the weather. (Photo by Ron Simkus)

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How landscape lighting can improve your home

Submitted by
Kraun Electric

This historic home in Niagara-on-the-Lake is beautiful even without outdoor lighting. The house itself has been standing for more than 200 years and exudes the charm of its time. The added modern conveniences balance the house's history with the needs of today. It's not overly invasive or disruptive to add landscape lighting around your home, and the benefits of adding this modern touch are numerous. Kraun Electric recently completed an outdoor lighting project at this unique

Niagara-on-the-Lake home. The results are stunning.

Homeowner Rachael Werner could not be more pleased with the result. And she knows what she's talking about. As the Senior Vice President of Sales at Sotheby's International Realty Canada in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Rachael is an expert on what adds value to properties.

"The values in landscape lighting are priceless. Not only is the evening aesthetic gorgeous, but it creates a sense of space, whether for entertaining or utility. Landscape lighting increases your property's value as home buyers see this as a luxury investment."



NOTL home breathtakingly grand with expert illumination. (Photos supplied by Kraun Electric)



NOTL property uses exterior lighting to highlight landscaping and increase safety along a path.

There is no limit on how creative your outdoor lighting plan can be. It can help extend your outdoor living space, highlight your home's unique architectural elements, or show off your beautiful landscaping. You'll also gain from increased safety and security on your property.

Convenience is another significant benefit of a good outdoor lighting plan. With today's smart home technology,

you can control your lighting system from your phone or another electronic device. Rachael says, *"the smart tech of the lighting system takes the effort out of timing. The ability to operate the lighting from your phone is beyond convenient."*

Kraun Electric can help you design a smart lighting system that works for you, completely customized to your needs. We take the complexity out of setting up a smart home

system and leave you with just the enjoyment.

At Kraun Electric, we are committed to providing our customers with a great experience from start to finish. Our team is available to answer any questions or concerns you might have, and we explain everything along the way. We encourage you to check out our Google reviews to see what our customers are saying.

"Kraun Electric was a

dream to work with. From start to finish, they were professional, efficient and completed the job on time. I would highly recommend working with the lighting team at Kraun Electric." Rachael Werner, Kraun customer.

Contact Kraun Electric today to make an appointment for a consultation and free quote. We serve homes and businesses throughout the Hamilton and Niagara region.

Now is the time to plan your spring outdoor projects!

Kraun can help you extend your outdoor living space with some well-planned landscape lighting. We are here for all your electrical needs, including:

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Contact Kraun Electric today for your free consultation and quote.*



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* Note: although we are an essential service, there are some restrictions on what is allowed under the provincial lockdown order. Call for details.

ECRA/ESA 7000148



EDITORIAL

Trying to make sense of what doesn't make sense

This has been a good news/bad news kind of week, one that leaves many of us shaking our heads.

Niagara can reopen, but families probably won't be able to see more of each other.

Numbers of new cases of people with COVID-19 in Niagara, and people dying from it, are going down, thankfully, but is it enough to be in the red zone? Do we want to be in the red zone? More businesses can open, which is important to the economy, with its soaring January unemployment rate of more than 200,000 people after the jump of 60,000 in December. Those are people with families, friends and neighbours, who are suffering.

But should we be going out? Most will say, heck, yes! And welcome all who want to come to shop in Niagara. Others say

stay home, and hope visitors will stay away in droves. Some are just confused by the message, with Premier Doug Ford saying Monday, as he announced a return to the colour-coded zone system and reopening of some businesses, "today, we're seeing some sunlight break through the clouds. My friends, the measures are working. Staying home is saving lives."

Presumably he's covering all bases, hoping none of his friends will be mad at him.

Then there are the fear tactics about the "variants of concern," which can spread rapidly. Some health officials are referring to them as possibly bringing on another, new pandemic, with cases spreading at a dizzying rate.

Ford also spoke of his six-point plan for dealing with variants, and Dr. Mustafa Hirji, our

acting medical officer of health, said Monday public health units across the province are being called on to help. While the province is looking at random positive tests to identify the variants of concern, to see where they're popping up, local public health officials are supposed to report anything suspicious in the cases they see.

That means watching for contact tracing results that show rapid transmission of the coronavirus, such as one person spreading it to others, family, friends or workplace, with symptoms showing up the next day, or much sooner than would be expected.

That is what Ford says he is protecting us from with his plan, which his government lists as: on-arrival testing of international travellers; enhanced screening and sequencing to identify the

new variants; maintaining public health measures to keep people safe; strengthening case and contact management to track the spread of new cases; enhanced protections for vulnerable populations; and leveraging the latest data to inform public health decisions.

Doesn't that make us all feel so much better?

All that, and the vaccine too, when we get it.

We're thankful for business owners who can't wait to open their doors and get their staff back to work. We also know that the message about continuing to stay home and stick to our households, while on the surface

seemingly wildly unfair and contradictory, makes sense in some weird way. As we interact with more people, either by going out more to shop or meeting with friends and family, we increase our risk of becoming infected and causing transmission to others, especially if we do see more cases of variants of concern.

And then, we're warned, the provincial "emergency brakes" will be applied, there will be a speedy shutdown, likely similar to what we're experiencing now, possibly one that businesses might not survive to reopen the next time.

Does anyone know the right

answer, or even the best answer to an impossible situation?

Please, if anyone sees sense in this, let me know. I'm not finding it. And please, how ever you decide to deal with what's coming this way, do your best to keep safe.

The town of NOTL decided last March to lower its town hall flag in recognition of those who have died in this pandemic, and in sympathy with their families. Lord Mayor Betty Disero says it will be raised again when the deaths stop. Let's all do what we can to see that flag raised again.

Penny Coles
The Local

The history and future of the made-in-Ontario vaccine



Wayne Gates, MPP
Niagara Falls riding
Special to The Local

Last week, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced Canada would be domestically producing vaccines — in 2022.

For his part, Premier Doug Ford, also the Premier of Canada's manufacturing hub, responded by telling the Prime Minister we have empty buildings he could have used for this facility, if he'd only asked. As we see Canada fall further and further behind fellow G7 nations in vaccination rates, neither of these commentaries provides us any more hope that a domestic vaccination production plan will play any role in ending the vaccination shortage crisis hitting both Niagara, and Canada as a whole. Every single day we fall behind the rest of the Western world in vaccination rates, is a day more lives are at risk.

If our province can compete with the rest of the world in manufacturing power, then we should have been able to at least investigate kick-starting emergency production here in Ontario. We have the knowledge, the skilled workforce and the supply chains to make this possible. Not only do we have the possibility to do it in the future, we've actually done it before.

I come from a manufacturing background. I remember not long ago when our province made things, instead of trying

to outbid others for them. I can remember a time in the 1970s when our country proudly owned a publicly-funded vaccine research and production facility led by the great teams at Connaught Laboratories.

Though Connaught still operates today, it does so in a scaled-down fashion under the direction of the owners of a private French company. There was a time when our publicly-owned domestic vaccine research labs scaled up efforts to produce massive amounts of vaccines against diphtheria, smallpox and polio. I believe that a domestic and public producer can once again focus on protecting our province's health, instead of profits. There was a time when publicly funded domestic vaccine producers took direction from public officials, and devoted their efforts to combatting the worst public health crises of the day. You would be hard-pressed to find any history of Connaught Laboratories which does not recognize their role in keeping our communities safe, while they were publicly owned.

Perhaps if we had the foresight 10 months ago, we could have ramped up domestic vaccine production to play some role in alleviating the vaccine shortage crisis before us today. It would be disingenuous to say the Premier could snap his fingers and create this solution now. Vaccine production facilities are complex operations that require time and expertise to run appropriately. However, there is no reason that we should not learn our lesson from this crisis.

Right now, and for the next few weeks, the powers of the

provincial government should be focused on getting us our fair share of vaccines, the same as my office is focused on ensuring Niagara gets its fair share of vaccines. However, when this crisis is over — and it will end — we must move to correct this historical error. Right now our region, with its large population of seniors, is waiting, without vaccines. Niagara should have vaccines right now, and when this crisis is over, we must not forget that this happened.

As we see COVID-19 begin to mutate, and other infectious diseases threaten us, we cannot afford to be caught off-guard again. We must begin the work now and rebuild our once brilliant, publicly-funded vaccination programs here in Ontario.

These initiatives will put people to work, and allow us to be ahead of any future diseases which threaten to upend our province. By funding preventative work, we can contribute to the global effort to protect the human species against these viruses, and ensure that should another virus threaten us, that we are prepared to fight it.

There was a time once when diseases like polio and diphtheria struck the same fear in communities as COVID-19 does today. A publicly-funded vaccine research laboratory helped marshal the ingenuity of our province's people, and their manufacturing ability to protect our neighbours.

We are now seeing the consequences of outsourcing vaccination research and production. Let us once again use our resources to act pre-emptively, instead of reactively.



Auchterlonie on Astrology

Bill Auchterlonie
Special to The Local

The full week of Auchterlonie on Astrology can be found on the Facebook page for The NOTL Local, and on the website, <https://www.auchterlonieonastrology.com>.

Thursday, Feb. 11: Today is the New Moon in Aquarius at 23 degrees Aquarius. With a record of six planets in Aquarius, this new Moon is as Aquarius as you can get. If you're still unsure about the Age of Aquarius agenda, or how this energy will influence you, now you will

find out. A new Moon is a new beginning, and a new Moon with six planets in Aquarius means a big Aquarius new beginning, whatever that means for you (according to where the new Moon falls in your natal chart). It was Feb. 11, 1847, that Thomas Alva Edison was born in Ohio. His inventions were many, and he bought as many as he found. His greatest invention was Edison General Electric, the Google of its day.

Feb. 12 to 15: On Feb. 12, Venus is conjunct Jupiter at 12 degrees Aquarius. The next day, Mercury retrograde is

conjunct Venus at 14 degrees Aquarius, and on Feb. 15, Mercury Rx is conjunct Jupiter at 13 degrees Aquarius. Triple conjunctions are rare, and the triple conjunction between Venus, Jupiter and Mercury in Aquarius is one to look forward to. As a rule, Venus-Jupiter conjunctions are one of those few five-star transits all astrologers agree on. Mercury retrograde will only make the conjunction even more potent, and give it even more meaning and depth. If you have planets or angles between 12 to 14 degrees in Aquarius, or in the other fixed signs, Taurus, Leo, and Scorpio, this triple conjunction will speak to you directly. Both Abraham Lincoln and Charles Darwin were born Feb. 12, 1809. English rocker Peter Gabriel was born Feb. 13, 1950. Happy birthday and happy Valentine's Day to Carl Bernstein, famous for breaking the Watergate break-in, born this day in 1944. And the man who brought the The Simpsons to life, Matt Groening, was born Feb. 15, 1954.

Until next week, shine on.

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The Niagara-on-the-Lake

LOCAL

The trusted voice of our community

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View from the couch

Donald Combe
Special to The Local

The Dig, Netflix 2021, is an adaptation of a true story, filmed in the best tradition of English story-telling. The

ending is not entirely happy, but correct. Ralph Fiennes, as a local, self-taught archaeologist-excavator is, as ever, superb. I would call this an elegant film.

Donald Combe is a retired

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.

Ensure your home office is set up safely



Last year presented many challenges, including many people transitioning to working from home on either a temporary or permanent basis, and 2021 so far has forced even more of us to transition to at-home workspaces.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Fire & Emergency Services wants to remind everyone to consider the fire safety issues that inadvertently come with setting up a temporary workspace. You should consider ensuring you have proper electrical connections for all additional devices. Overloading an electrical outlet with multiple devices can cause an electrical system failure that could result in a fire.

When multiple devices are required, consider using an-

other electrical plug or a power bar with surge protection. We strongly discourage using three-inch 1 or 6 in 1 plug adapters and expanders, as these devices typically have no protection against power surges, or over-current.

Workspaces should be set up near electrical outlets; however, if your workspace doesn't have an outlet nearby, and an extension cord must be used, be sure to unplug the cord when you are finished work for the day. Extension cords are intended as a temporary measure only, and should not be routed under carpets or rugs. This can cause a cord to overheat, and may ignite nearby combustible items.

You should consider only purchasing certified extension cords or power bars when required. The quality of extension cords purchased online or at discount retail stores cannot be verified. These products may have an enticing price point, but they are often manufactured overseas and do not always meet the rigorous testing

requirements that devices are required to meet when sold or used in Canada.

Charging electronic devices such as cell phones, tablets, and laptops can also present a fire hazard if not done on a proper surface. These devices require airflow to keep the batteries from overheating while they charge. These devices should only be charged on a hard, flat surface. Charging one of these devices on a couch or bed presents the risk of a fire. When heat is unable to dissipate from the device, it begins to retain heat. As the device heats up, it will start to transfer that heat to the combustible items it is on, such as a couch cushion or bedding materials. If the device and combustible items reach a high enough temperature, they have the potential to ignite.

In 2020, there was a significant increase in fire fatalities in Ontario. As of May 2020, fire fatalities were up 65 per cent, compared to 2019. With so many people practicing social distancing and transitioning to working from home, it is important to make sure you keep your families protected.

After you set up your workspace and ensured you were connected, and had all the access you require, did you consider checking your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms? Testing these devices, changing the batteries, and making sure your devices are not expired only takes a couple of minutes. When you are in a virtual meeting, possibly with headphones on or are concentrating on your work, perhaps in a room with a closed door, having working devices that can be heard from all areas of your home is extremely important. Don't forget, you should also have a plan to safely escape your home in an emer-

gency. In an emergency situation, every second counts.

With so much focus on switching to working remotely, the idea of a fire-safe workspace is likely not being considered. Thinking twice about your

workspace set-up and having working alarms will ensure your family stays safe, as we all look forward to getting back to "normal."

If you have any questions, you can contact us by email at

firedepartment@notl.com or by phone at 905-468-3266.

Stay safe, and stay healthy.
Brad Disher
Fire Prevention & Public
Education Officer
NOTL Fire & Emergency Services

LETTERS

Taxpayer offers comment on 2021 budget

I've read all the budget reporting done in the three local papers, and note that the articles simply reported what reporters were told by the Lord Mayor and a few councillors, or just scribed what they heard on the Livestream.

But there is so much trouble with Niagara-on-the-Lake's financial outlook that reporters need to do more than just scribe. However, nowhere did I read any analysis or even questioning the strategy associated with crafting the 2021 budget. So I offer this observation.

Having sat through the approximately five hours of budget review, and having had many years of experience developing, presenting and managing both budgets and financial positions significantly higher than the about \$13 million NOTL operating budget, it struck me that there is something off with the financial position of NOTL. Here are three examples:

1. There is a significant amount of \$\$ moving out of reserves. This puts contingencies at risk, and all the \$\$ will need to be returned next year or the year after.
2. NOTL continues to fund the Chamber of Commerce. The chamber is an entity that should be, and in other municipalities, is self-sufficient, and therefore should not be a drain on the tax levy and ratepayers. The chamber's mission is to support NOTL businesses. These businesses do not even pay a commercial levy. So in practice, ratepayers pay for tourist infrastructure, business infrastructure and tourist events associated with the Chamber, but receive no direct financial benefit in return.
3. Revenue from parking fees is used as a slush fund to pay for such things as the

heritage property tax rebate (HPTR). In this particular situation (noted because it has received recent attention), the reasoning given by council and special interests is that tourists pay for parking, so the HPTR rebate is not coming out of the tax levy and ratepayer \$\$\$. However, there is no financial consideration that costs associated with the parking revenue, e.g. paving and maintaining town roads that allow street parking, parking bylaw enforcement, maintaining parking lots and clearing snow, maintaining meters, purchasing and maintaining town vehicles, etc., are part of the operating budget and therefore subject to the tax levy. So the town counts the revenue but not all the associated costs to arrive at a true net position. But regardless, there is something seemingly unfair with using a NOTL asset to fund a benefit to a select few at the expense of the whole.

The councillors' participation and level of engagement in the meeting was good. However, there were so many low-value questions and challenges on specific budget items that the meeting turned into a budget debate, in some cases rehashing discussions from the audit committee. For example, some of the question/challenges included: barn door rollers failing and requiring door replacement; questioning 2021 salary increase rates that were set four years ago and cannot be adjusted; and questioning why staff use SUVs rather than compact cars, to list just a few. If this meeting was a true budget review, then the questions should be value, and comparative analysis focused.

For example the better

questions to ask would be:

1. NOTL taxes have increased by 15.72 per cent over the last three years. What plans are in place to manage future increases?
2. How does the new CAO intend on implementing best practices to help reduce the budget?
3. What has staff management done in the past year to improve productivity?
4. How does NOTL compare to neighbouring municipalities with regard to services provided vs. costs to provide services? E.g. Does NOTL have more or fewer roads to maintain? Does NOTL have a higher or lower staff to population ratio? Are NOTL salaries in line with or higher than other similar municipalities?
5. How do NOTL revenue streams compare to other like municipalities?
6. If NOTL council reversed its discussion and implemented a municipal accommodation tax, what would the impact be on the tax levy?

Finally, if staff stopped asking for large budget increases year-over-year, and council acted more fiscally responsible month-to-month, these meetings would last less than five hours, be more productive and in line with budget reviews, rather than budget debates.

For additional analysis and commentary on the 2021 budget go to Facebook page FocusNOTL. FocusNOTL welcomes your feedback. Email us at NOTLELECTION2018@COGECO.CA.

Especially, as we work toward having a fiscally responsible council next year.

Don Keith
NOTL



To prevent a fire, only recharge your electronic devices on a hard surface. (Photo supplied)

LETTERS

Thank you Bank of Montreal for looking after seniors

I have to give the Bank of Montreal on Queen Street, corner of Victoria Street, a five-star effort to help seniors and the handicapped to access their banks.

There is a new ramp for wheelchairs, and railings for handicapped walk-in; electric door switches, and chairs at the wickets.

The bank really cares for its

clients.

I would like this published to give them credit.

Joe Accardo
NOTL



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MP wants tourism recovery addressed by federal government



MP Tony Baldinelli
Special to The Local

Now a year into COVID-19, Canadians continue to suffer under the weight and frustrations of this deadly pandemic.

Vaccine supplies remain frozen and delayed; rapid testing devices are still not readily accessible to our front-line workers or to the general public; and there has yet to be a plan put in place to support an economic recovery.

For us in Niagara, this is vital, as we need to support our hardest hit sectors, including those in travel and tourism, such as our restaurants, win-

eries, theatres, attractions, hotels and accommodations, to name a few.

COVID-19 has wreaked havoc on our Canadian economy. Businesses are being forced to temporarily or permanently close, through no fault of their own, and as a result, many hard-working Canadians are losing their jobs.

Last month alone, our country lost 213,000 jobs. As a result, Canada's unemployment rate has skyrocketed up to 9.4 per cent. Within the travel and tourism sectors, these numbers are even more troubling, as the unemployment rate rose from 14.7 per cent to 18.6 per cent, the highest it has been since July 2020.

Since the start of the pandemic, Canada's Conservatives have been calling on the Trudeau government to deliv-

er and improve upon multiple emergency financial support programs that are focused on assisting small and medium sized businesses.

Thankfully, the government has listened to many of our suggestions, and improvements to their own programs, such as the Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS), the Canadian Emergency Rent Subsidy (CERS), and the Canadian Emergency Business Account (CEBA), have been made.

Although these business-focused programs are helpful, they are very broad, and not sector specific. Our federal government must remember that every sector and each industry is unique, and they cannot be treated with a one-size-fits-all policy approach. There are many businesses who still continue to fall

through the cracks in different sectors because they don't meet certain eligibility criteria, and these same businesses are being forgotten and left behind by the Trudeau government.

Furthermore, these business support programs are designed to be simply lifelines, as opposed to being instruments of economic growth and recovery. With businesses at risk in our communities of Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Falls and Fort Erie, the federal Liberal government must present a budget — their first budget in two years — that will bring our economy back to life.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has left Canada with the lowest vaccination rate, the biggest deficit, and one of the highest unemployment rates in the G7.

This isn't how it should

be. To recover from the biggest economic crisis since the Great Depression, we need to get Canadians back to work in every sector.

My Conservative colleagues and I continue to press the government on its plans moving forward in order to secure vaccines, to secure Canadian jobs, and to secure our future.

Last week, I made a virtual statement in the House of Commons about this. If you want to watch the video, please visit my website, www.tonybaldinellimp.ca or check out my Facebook page.

Canadians need a federal economic recovery plan, and this plan is long overdue.

For the interests of our communities, this federal economic recovery plan must absolutely include details and support measures specifically

tailored for our nationwide travel and tourism industry.

We must remember, the Canadian travel and tourism industry was hit first, it was hit hardest, and it will take the longest to recover from COVID-19.

Canada needs leadership from our prime minister. We need competence from our federal government. Right now, we're not getting either. We need them to succeed. Our health and financial well-being as Canadians depend on it.

As your Member of Parliament proudly representing the communities of Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Falls, and Fort Erie, I will continue demanding better from our federal government; better from our prime minister; and better for you, so we can get our lives back to normal as quickly as possible.

Escarpment hike leads to trip down memory lane



Owen Bjorgan
Special to The Local

Hiking through a frozen and snow-cloaked landscape this weekend had me hitting trails I haven't in years. I crossed over a small wooden bridge,

its white planks sealed to the hard earth. It creaked above the creek, and a powerful visual washed over me.

It was on this little bridge, in my early teenage years, where I took a photo with my really close high school friend who is no longer with us. Come to think of it, that photo was also taken on a winter's day, with similar weather conditions. He passed away this summer after

a long fight with cancer.

Overall, the feeling that overcame me on that bridge was benevolent and satisfying. I felt like I got to say hello to an old friend of mine.

In a past article for The Local, I opened the discussion on forests and the outdoors in general being "haunted." That is, if you are open to such an idea to begin with. We're not talking about haunted in the scary Hol-

lywood sense, but rather, wondering if certain energies linger in our forests over time.

This inspired me to teleport down to the Amazon for this article. It's a big jump from -10 degrees and icy, but let's imagine it for a second.

It was here in 2013 and 2016 that I was exposed to a collision of scientific knowledge and spiritually-charged stories. I wanted to share a couple of them in this article with you.

I'm talking with our native guide, Moses, as the rain pitter patters on our tin roof. He's our trusted expert, taking a small group of us deep into the Peruvian rainforest. I was travelling with my mother after graduating from my studies at the University of Guelph. Pretty awesome trip to celebrate, right?

We're a few days deep into the impossibly green rainforest. Night falls upon our rickety hiking cabin, where the insects and frogs sing a technical, inundating chorus. Moses, like many Quechua natives in this area of the Amazon, has an immense respect for what they called the Jungle Spirit.

It's said to be an entity that exists almost exclusively in the

deeper parts of the jungle. I understand that the deeper you go into untouched rainforest, the more likely the Jungle Spirit is present. I found this fascinating, as there seemed to be some sort of correlation between unspoiled places, which are usually more biodiverse, and the harboured presence of the Jungle Spirit.

Plenty of Quechua natives continue to tell stories from these parts of the jungle, with memories of the deceitful, clever trickster that roamed out there.

Moses explains how he was a really young boy when something happened he will never forget. He was a playful kid, always down on the river banks with his best friend, he said. As curious kids do, the two of them felt gravitated to the deeper forests, which grow up the hill. In this area of Peru, if you step off the road or away from the river bank, it could be dozens of kilometres to any sort of civilization.

Our guide calmly explains he and his friend were going further up into the Amazonian heart. The trees were getting much larger, and they quietly began to admit they were lost. They started to fear the possibility of snake bites, or a jaguar

encounter. Both of these are actually relevant concerns when trekking in such areas of the world, especially at night. Now it's starting to get dark, and when it turns dark in the jungle, it happens with ruthless quickness.

Somehow, although the boys entered the forest together, they were suddenly separated. At night, in the Amazon. Moses was thinking his parents and the village would have surely been on some sort of rescue mission by this point.

Confused and terrified, he took shelter up against an ancient ceiba tree, also known as the kapok tree. These jungle monoliths are the kind that inspired artwork for the *Jungle Book*. Many of my Quechua guides, including Moses, spoke of how it is spiritual and protective in the forest. He felt the tree protecting him as he settled into its roots, even though he was physically as vulnerable as ever, lost in the dark rain. Moses decided to wait it out until dawn, and once he settled in, a strange visitor paid him a visit in the night.

He heard the footsteps coming, most certainly a human gait.

Continued on page 11

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Last weekend's hike was in the snow, but led to memories of hiking through the Amazon. (Owen Bjorgan)

Residents promised input on firehall decision

Penny Coles
The Local

Jim Armstrong, president of the Queenston Residents Association, is grateful village concerns about the possible closure of the Queenston Firehall were noted and addressed at last week's council meeting.

He had written a letter outlining some residents' concerns about an approval in principle at a December planning committee meeting to consolidate the St. Davids and Queenston firehalls, and during last week's meeting, Fire Chief Nick Ruller responded, saying the process is just getting underway, and residents will be given ample opportunity to have their say.

As a follow-up to the review of the Town's master fire plan, councillors at a December planning meeting asked the fire chief to limit future investment in those stations to critical components only, and improvements related to

health and safety.

They are also asking the fire chief to report back to council once a suitable property for a consolidated fire station has been found, and to work on a funding strategy for the new station. In addition to those staff recommendations, councillors agreed with a request to investigate the viability and cost associated with combining the stations through an expansion and renovations to the St. Davids site.

The discussion of combining the two stations goes back about 40 years, but with the deteriorating state of the buildings, council acknowledged in 2018 they would make a decision about replacements, and asked staff to look at an analysis and viability of both stations.

The consultant who recently reported on a review of the 10-year fire department master plan suggested both a new fire hall and a new location, combining the two stations. He said

it would be better for staff morale to consolidate the two groups of firefighters in one new location, and very different from moving one group to another, existing station.

Armstrong said he made a list of the issues that are important to Queenston,

supporting two aging facilities, and the potential savings with amalgamation of services, "on the other hand, there is the major issue of response time, which is clearly considered of great importance to the preservation of life and property," said Armstrong.

Firefighters have been an integral part of our community for decades and have willingly assisted in many community events, including a great many at the firehall," his letter said.

He told The Local the village has huge respect for their firefighters, and whatever the outcome of the firehall location, he believes the commitment of firefighters to supporting their village would not change.

The firehall is the only accessible public building in the village, and has been used by firefighters and the community for local events for that reason, he adds.

There was a time when there was a consideration of making the library building accessible, said Armstrong.

It has also been used for community events, but has a large staircase to enter the main floor of the building, and small washrooms downstairs. An outdoor lift was discussed for the entrance, which was costly, but even more expensive was making

the washrooms accessible, so that idea was dropped.

In his letter, he urged that the process to reach decisions concerning the consolidation proposal, and that of a new firehall, "include extensive community input when in-person meetings are once again possible. Our firefighters are a vital part of our community. They deserve our respect and support to ensure they can continue the level of service they are proud to provide."

Asked by Coun. Sandra O'Connor whether any public consultation has occurred, the fire chief said the process is in the "very early stages," and public input will be part of it going forward.

Hearing Ruller's response, Armstrong said the QRA "is very pleased to learn that the communities affected by the proposed firehall amalgamation will be part of the consultative process. These services, and the volunteers that provide them, are a valued and integral part of our communities."

“ Our firefighters are a vital part of our community. ”

Jim Armstrong

and asked for input from members of the QRA.

"The letter to the town was a way of putting up my hand," making council aware that residents have concerns and want to be involved in future discussions," he told The Local.

While those in the village recognize the economic issues involved with

While cost is important, safety is the more important consideration, and any move away from the village will reduce response time, he said.

He also reminded council that moving the station away from the village could affect both the availability and cost of fire insurance.

"The Queenston Vol-



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Black history, anti-slavery act began with town founder

Shawna Butts
Special to The Local

From 1782 to 1803, there were about 30 Africans enslaved in Niagara-on-the-Lake, but the stories we have of those who were enslaved in our community are few.

Through research, especially the work done by Natasha Henry, the president of the Ontario Black History Society, we have been able to find accounts that help us learn what life was like, in some capacity, for those who were enslaved in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The earliest Black inhabitants in town were those enslaved by the United Empire Loyalists who settled in our community in the early 1780s. During this period enslaved Africans in the province were considered chattel, and did not have any rights.

Chloe Cooley was a Black woman who was enslaved by United Empire Loyalist Adam Vrooman. She likely worked as a domestic in Vrooman's household in Queenston. As a domestic, her forced labour would have included caring for Vrooman's five children,

along with a range of household and farming chores.

Chloe was known to protest her bondage by behaving in "an unruly manner," refusing work, stealing property, and running away. Her most noted resistance occurred on March 14, 1793, when Vrooman decided to sell Chloe in New York State. During this period, whispers of abolition began circulating amongst slaveholders and enslaved Blacks. Chloe resisted by screaming and struggling against Vrooman. Her imminent sale meant that she was now being forced further into slavery, instead of facing the possibility of freedom in Upper Canada.

Her struggles were witnessed by Peter Martin, a Black Loyalist, and William Grisley, who reported this incident to Lt. Gov. John Graves Simcoe. While we do not know what happened to Chloe once she was sold, her resistance was used to help push forth legislation that would lead to the Act to Limit Slavery in Upper Canada.

The 1793 anti-slavery legislation created an unusual dynamic in Upper Canada. In Niagara, those still recognized as slaves lived side by

side with those legally free under that same act. Among them were Black Loyalists, who were either born free or who earned their freedom through service to the British Crown. This was the case with Peter Martin.

Peter Martin and his brother, Richard, were born into slavery and enslaved by the man who is considered to be the founder of NOTL, John Butler. At the start of the American Revolution, the Martin brothers were sold by Butler at a public venue, but they managed to escape. They later joined up with John Butler and his corps of Rangers.

For their service, they received their freedom, and were entitled to land in Upper Canada. While the Martin brothers were entitled to land grants, Butler actually attempted to claim their land grants for himself, albeit unsuccessfully.

Even though Peter was free, he was still chained economically to the Butler family. He chose to continue to work for them in an effort to remain close to his son, George, and three-year-old daughter, Jane, who were enslaved by them.

To free his children, Peter petitioned the government in 1797 to obtain the land grant of his now deceased brother. The government granted his request, which allowed Peter to sell the land to purchase his son's freedom from Thomas Butler (John Butler was now deceased). It is unknown if Martin was able to purchase his daughter's freedom from the Butlers, or if she was later set free. By 1834, if still enslaved, Jane would have been emancipated when slavery was officially abolished in the British Empire.

The 1793 anti-slavery legislation did not immediately free those who were enslaved in the province. Instead it set conditions for the gradual abolition of slavery. The reason emancipation did not occur outright was because many of those in the government were slave owners, or were mem-

bers of slave-owning families.

Perhaps realizing he would not be freed outright, Henry Lewis became a fugitive slave when he fled his enslavement in Newark (today NOTL) for New York.

Years later, in 1798, Henry wrote to his former enslaver, provincial secretary and registrar William Jarvis, requesting to buy his freedom. In Henry's letter he states his desire to be a free man, to support himself and to "enjoy all the benefits which may result from being free in a country where a Black man is defended by the laws as much as a white man . . ."

Henry also goes on to explain he fled because William's wife, Hannah, made life unbearable, and he left because no man should have to suffer the way she made him suffer. The confession Henry makes helps us understand,

to some degree, the mistreatment those enslaved by the Jarvises may have undergone.

After Henry outlined his payment method, William eventually granted his request.

When the Act to Limit Slavery received Royal Assent on July 9, 1793, Lt. Gov. John Graves Simcoe and the government of Upper Canada, put the colony on a path toward freeing the hundreds of Black men, women and children who were enslaved in the colony, and set the stage for the beginnings of the Underground Railroad. From the 1830s onward, many freedom seekers and free Blacks added to the Black population in NOTL.

Shawna Butts is the assistant curator and education programmer for the NOTL Museum.

Fort played significant role in local Black history

Friends of Fort George
Special to The Local

Fort Mississauga and its location play an important role in Niagara's early history, including Black history.

Once a fishing area for the Neutral Iroquoians, the land was acquired by the British and was the site of the first lighthouse in Upper Canada, which was maintained by Dominic and Mary Henry. The fort saw action during the Battle of Fort George in May, 1813. When the British recaptured the Niagara Frontier that December, they chose to replace Fort George, which had been left in ruins, with a new fortification at Mississauga Point, as the location held a commanding view of Lake Ontario and the Niagara River, as a counterpoise to Fort Niagara.

The central tower was built in part from the remains of the lighthouse, which was dismantled by the British, as well as bricks salvaged from

the town after it was burned by retreating American forces in December, 1813.

Fort Mississauga was also built in part by the Coloured Corps, or Black Corps, which was raised in the defence of Upper Canada, and was made up of freed slaves. They were active in the British defence at the Battle of Queenston Heights, and fought alongside their British counterparts at the Battle of Fort George in May, 1813. After the British captured Fort Niagara on Dec. 19, 1813, the Coloured Corps was attached to the Royal Engineers to help repair the fortifications at the mouth of the Niagara River.

Toward the spring of 1814, the company was ordered to construct a new fort on the Canadian shore, named Fort Mississauga. With the American Navy now controlling Lake Ontario, this work was crucial to the security of British forces in the Niagara Peninsula.


Over the succeeding de-

cades, Fort Mississauga was garrisoned on a limited and sporadic basis. By 1858, Fort Mississauga had been officially abandoned by the British Army. Volunteer Canadian militia companies reoccupied the fort during heightened periods of tension, including the American Civil War and the Fenian Raids. The fort once again fell into ruins until it was used as part of Camp Niagara during both World Wars.

Today, all that remains of the once-impressive fortification is the original central tower, the sally ports and the unique star-shaped earthworks.

The Friends of Fort George is a non-profit, charitable organization that works with Parks Canada for the protection, preservation, interpretation of Niagara's National Historic Sites. For more information or to become a member, visit our website at www.friendsoffortgeorge.ca.

PET OBITUARY



AUCHTERLONIE—Brooke, our beloved German Shepherd died suddenly at our home on February 6th. She was a sweet, smart, beautiful dog, who adored running with her friends in the Commons. And of course, pursuing every squirrel with unflinching concentration. We will miss her terribly, but we are comforted that she found happiness after barely surviving a very abusive beginning. RIP Brooke and thank you for letting us rescue you. You taught us well.

Heather Hall and Bill Auchterlonie

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Fort Mississauga was built in part by the Black Corps, made up of freed slaves. (Tony Chisholm)

Dog groomer happy to be seeing her clients again

Penny Coles
The Local

Thanks to the perseverance of Ontario cities asking the province to clarify rules around pet grooming services, Liz Chorney and other groomers in Niagara-on-the-Lake are now allowed to open.

Shut down since Dec. 26, provincial pandemic legislation has been unclear in some restrictions about which businesses must close, including pet grooming.

Last week, several mayors, including Toronto's John Tory, and the mayors of Mississauga and Hamilton, pushed the province for clarity, noting Ontario municipalities were interpreting the regulations differently. In response, the province amended the legislation to clearly indicate pet groomers could operate, but providing treatment that has to be strictly necessary to avoid imminent veterinarian care.

The way the original legislation concerning the current lockdown was written for the December lockdown, some municipalities interpreted that to mean the service had to be provided by a veterinarian, and others said dog groomers could remain open, only treating animals that required it for health reasons.

After more than a month of being shut down, with no income, and concerned for her clients, Chorney, owner of the Grooming Boutique in Virgil, is pleased and relieved with the decision.

Initially, she had some difficulty with guidelines added by the town.

In a statement regarding the opening of pet groomers last week, the town said, in order to assist with complaints against individual businesses, it was "requesting" pet groomers take a photo of pets prior to grooming.

Also, in addition to keeping a record of the times of appointments, the name and contact information of the pet owner was also requested, as well as the vehicle, including colour, make and model, used for dropoff and pickup.

But on Sunday, she says, she was assured by the town that their statement was just a recommendation, not a requirement, as a protection that would help a business owner.

CAO Marnie Cluckie confirmed at Monday's planning committee meeting that it was a suggestion to aid bylaws officers as they investigate complaints. "It is not a requirement," she clarified.

Chorney describes dogs that are the most matted as being the most at risk, espe-

cially when dogs are outside, and get wet and muddy, leading to skin and bacterial infections.

Her phone "went crazy as soon as the announcement was made," she says, but her plan is to prioritize seeing the dogs most in need of care, including those already suffering from skin issues, who

require a certain kind of bath on a regular basis, as well as those breeds the most at risk from skin infections caused by matting. "We know who needs most to be seen."

The recent weeks of waiting for clarification of the provincial legislation has always been about pets with health and wellness issues, she says.

"That's what we were pushing for."

During that time, vets were overwhelmed dealing with medical appointments, desperate clients were seeing groomers in Niagara Falls, a municipality that allowed those businesses to be open, "and we were at the mercy of people who were interpreting

the regulations."

It was a "helpless feeling," knowing she could operate safely, and, as a small independent business operator, having to put her business on hold, with no revenue coming in, "waiting for the bureaucrats to help out. Now, I'm just happy to start seeing some dogs."

Rich experiences in forests everywhere

Continued from page 8

next morning by the family, in separate locations.

After Peru, I flew by myself into Ecuador's share of the Amazon, a rainforest that essentially touches nine countries.

I find myself hiking behind Urko and his nephew. Urko is a Quechua shaman guiding me into a valley with old growth rainforest and caves. I'm being taken to a special place where the ayahwasca vine grows, so we can enjoy the powerful, respected tea in the depths of the jungle.

Upon our first major creek crossing, the two men knelt by the bank. They scooped the cold, attractively clear water into their mouths, and then proceeded to spit it out like a fine mist into the air. A machete and carved wooden bowls hang off each of their nearly naked bodies. I watched the water droplets float away and dissolve into the floral, beautiful air.

"We are paying our respect to the Jungle Spirit before proceeding into its territory," they explained. They blew the water out as a form of requesting safe passage for the rest of the journey. I participated in the same ritual, and then we quietly slogged across the creek and its slippery, silvery rocks. The other side was the ancient tract of jungle, teeming with life and secrets.

"Sometimes, you can smell the Jungle Spirit. It smells horrible," said Urko. "One time, I was hiking in the jungle when we all noticed a terrible odour. It smelled like something died, and we felt the Jungle Spirit run by us." He insisted there were no animal bodies in the area. Apparently, the smell was so atrocious with the Jungle Spirit's visit, that the one woman began to vomit profusely on the spot.

Urko said the Jungle Spirit didn't take kindly to unwanted

invasions of the old rainforest, especially by those who are too naive to respect it.

Even if you can't find yourself believing in the stories of Jungle Spirit, you better believe that the Amazon doesn't need spirits or stories to swallow a man whole.

"If you are rude to the jungle, the jungle will be far more rude to you in return," Urko told me.

In an area where there are more species of plants, insects, and amphibians than anywhere else on the planet, there lies a special something that will likely never be qualified or quantified by science.

On an area of the Niagara Escarpment during a wintery lockdown, a friendly memory lives as a feeling amidst the trees. Like biodiversity, the rich and important experiences the forest can provide to us is forever being discovered.

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Grace United hoping for parking solution

Penny Coles
The Local

The origin of Grace United Church's parking situation can be traced back a long time.

To 1870, to be exact, when the church, located on Victoria Street in the centre of the Old Town, was constructed.

Since then, the town has grown up around it, with no property beside the church or behind it for parking.

Church trustee David Gilchrist asked council recently for some help with the situation in December, going over some of the history of parking issues, and is hoping for a solution soon.

Currently, the church has installed three signs reserving parking spaces for the church, and a fourth for the minister, feeling a decision was made years ago that the spaces were theirs. Instead, the town has asked that the signs be bagged until council has dealt with the issue.

Parking really wasn't a problem until 10 years ago, Gilchrist told council in December.

For new people coming to town, staff at local businesses, the hotel, store and condominium construction workers, and even the immediate residents of nearby apartments, four unsigned spaces intended for Grace United Church have become free parking. They arrive early in the morning, and park all day.

Being occupied by visitors to the town is an exception to the rule, because they are taken early and occupied for long periods of the day, he said.

"We even have people parking overnight and throughout the weekend."

Although the church has shared these four spaces over the last six decades quite willingly, they have ultimately lost the use for which they were initially created for, he said.

"As you are very well aware, the town has changed drastically since that period," and with the changes have come the current problems facing the church, he told council.

Long-time church member Gail Martin, chair of the finance committee and responsible for cheque-signing to pay the church's bills, is finding it increasingly difficult to get to the church, where she works about two afternoons a week. She has multiple sclerosis, and after a bad fall in May, 2019, when she broke her femur, she spent months in a wheelchair and at Pleasant Manor to convalesce after surgery. "I didn't know if I'd be able to walk again," she says. Now she walks with a cane, but very carefully, sometimes using a walker instead.

And at 72, she adds, "I'm one of the younger ones."

Even a spot well-marked in front of a wheelchair ramp



Vehicles are often parked blocking the wheelchair ramp to the Victoria Street sidewalk in front of Grace United Church, making it difficult for parishioners to get to the church. (Photos by David Gilchrist)

is often taken when she gets to the church, she says.

She recently arrived, had difficulty finding a place to park, and then couldn't get up on the sidewalk. So she made her way to the ramp, which was partially blocked by a pick-up truck covering the X painted on the road by the ramp.

It was icy and slippery, she says, and with her cane in one hand and holding on to the truck with the other, she pulled herself up the ramp to the sidewalk, "and hurt myself doing it."

As she sat in the church doing her work, she had to fight back tears, worrying about how she was going to get down the icy ramp and back to her car. She did it the same way in reverse, very carefully, clinging to the back of the truck.

Since there are no Sunday church services during the pandemic, she says, they are videoed Thursday evenings. Her husband John has been asked to sing during the recording of next week's service, but she is already worried about getting him into the building. At 86, he suffers from spinal stenosis, and uses a walker.

She has to pull over, help him out of the car, get his walker out, help him into the church, find a place to park and then get up the ramp with her cane and into the church herself.

When Gilchrist spoke to council, he talked about Martin, her husband, and other seniors with walkers or in wheelchairs, and the difficulty they have parking and getting up the ramp.

They have difficulty attending services, meetings, functions and choir practices. Conducting a funeral or

a wedding is extremely difficult, he told council. The church secretary can't park. Neither can the custodian, the choir director, the treasurers, or sometimes, the minister. Those who come to the church to look after the grounds, for snow removal, or to do maintenance on the historic building, have nowhere to park.

He also spoke of the senior members of the church, including Mary Snider and David Greaves, who remember asking for solutions in the past, and have some documentation to back up their requests.

When parking on Victoria Street became one-side only, the church was allowed to create a cut-out, or indentation, from the curb in front of the church, to create four parking spaces, Gilchrist told councillors.

"This consists of two park-

ing spaces on either side of a concrete ramp to the street for wheelchair access. Our few remaining senior members of both the congregation and this community are adamant that this was done with town council's blessing and authority."

This summer, Snider, at 97 still the trustee chair, sat at her kitchen table with Greaves, pouring over many documents, locating two they felt were relevant, Gilchrist told council.

One was a letter written in 1960, about a request for a retaining wall on the boulevard, and the other, a receipt dated July, 1960, for \$100 from the church for curb construction. The original request for a retaining wall of some kind was changed to the construction of the curb after a review by the town's works department, he said.

In 2010, he said, the church secretary, frustrated



The town has asked the church to bag the signs for three parking spaces until they can have a look at the issue and make a decision on the best solution.

by her inability to park in front of the church, approached the town about signs designating the parking spaces for use by the church.

The response from staff spoke of a traffic study underway to look at maximizing parking spaces for the public, and said they would work with the church on the lack of parking upon completion of the parking analysis. At the time staff thanked them for their patience, said Gilchrist.

"Well, we're all 10 years older, and our congregation feels we have been quite patient," he told council.

Since that 2010 request, "we are unaware of any attempts from town staff to develop permanent options. The primary problem we see now is that these spaces were somehow incorporated into the public parking supply, when they should not have been. We feel that they should nev-

er have been included in any town parking study in the first place," said Gilchrist. "This policy has created the problem we are now faced with."

The church has tried several measures, involving red cones, marked with no parking or reserved parking, when they were needed for church use. "These are ignored, thrown onto the boulevard, stolen or driven over."

Council agreed in December to ask staff to look at the problem and report back, in February, with some options to solve the church's problems.

After hearing about Martin's experience, and dealing with a parking situation that occurs daily, he is hoping for a speedy and satisfactory resolution, and permission for the opportunity to allow the signs to do the job for which they were intended — save just four spaces for the church.



Gail Martin struggles to find parking and get into the church at least twice a week.

Entrepreneur protecting environment with new products

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

For Niagara-on-the-Lake business owner Al Huberts and his business partner and daughter Courtney, solving the world's plastics problem is front and centre in their mission. Through the York Road offices of Nature's Aid, they are tackling that problem head on.

Huberts and his wife Louise moved to NOTL just over four years ago, starting Nature's Aid at the same time. The organization offers skin and beauty care products containing all-natural ingredients, as well as products for pets and horses.

Since its inception, Nature's Aid has had its eye on being environmentally friendly. Ten months ago they jumped into the burgeoning world of shampoo and conditioner bars, taking their commitment to the environment to the next level.

Not to be confused with soap, these are bars of real shampoo and conditioner, made with natural ingredients that are gentle on hair and contain no artificial colours or fragrances. And they eliminate the shampoo bottle altogether.

According to many, including the UK-based Ellen MacArthur Foundation, it's not enough to recycle and launch clean-up efforts to reduce the amount of plastics that are wreaking environmental havoc around the world. A recent report from that foundation in partnership with the World Economic Forum states that by 2050, plastic in the oceans will outweigh fish. They advocate for a move toward a circular economy

for plastics, keeping it out of landfills.

The hair and beauty care industry is one of those contributing to the global glut of plastics. Recent months have seen a number of companies in these industries begin to eschew the man-made material in favour of more sustainable options. Among the options that are beginning to catch on is the concept of the shampoo bars.

According to Huberts, since the launch of the new product last year, Nature's Aid has become the number one seller of shampoo and conditioner bars in Canada. "It's not a big deal (yet)," he says, "as most people doing it are small little home-based businesses, and a few others that try to do what we do. But we sold 84,000 bars in our first nine months." As Huberts points out, that also means 84,000 plastic bottles were potentially kept out of landfills.

The York Road location is the home of the Nature's Aid offices and distribution centre. Production is contracted out, with the liquid products being made in Toronto and their bath bombs produced in Aurora. The shampoo bars, however, are produced by another NOTL business, NEOB.

"We don't want to manufacture," says Huberts. "But I want to have tight relationships with our manufacturers, so Robert (Achal, NEOB owner and product developer) and I are working on some things together. He is very, very knowledgeable, and he understands retail."

On the retail side of things, though they do sell products via their website, Nature's Aid focuses on getting its products into stores

across the country. "The core of the business in Canada is health food and health and wellness stores," Huberts explains. "Where we don't have those channels, we move into the drugstore channel. So in Niagara-on-the-Lake, for example, we have Simpson's and Stone Road Pharmacy." Huberts estimates that there's not a health food or health and wellness store in Canada that isn't selling their products.

Like many newcomers to NOTL, the move here for Al and Louise is part of their retirement plan. The business is a vehicle through which Al can collaborate with their daughter Courtney, who holds an MBA from Imperial College in London, England. The original idea was to get Nature's Aid started together, and then hand the reins to her to take over.

Courtney, however, is currently living in Ireland with her husband and their three children (who grace the cover of their 2021 catalogue), and is handling the production and other aspects of the business from there, while Al manages the York Road operations. But the Huberts patriarch is quick to confirm how valuable his daughter's input is in the day-to-day decision-making.

Nature's Aid is just the latest in a long line of ventures for the British Columbia-born Huberts. After rising through the ranks to become a regional manager for Tip Top Tailors in his early 20s, his first foray into his own business was in the fashion industry. He moved from clothing to men's accessories and, most successfully, a line of licensed cartoon-themed ties that became very popular

in the 1990s.

From there, it was on to designing decorative tins containing jigsaw puzzles and selling them to Scotiabank and Chrysler, followed later by a line of activity books that taught children about Canadian history, and the rules of hockey and soccer. He has also recently developed a board game that simulates the process of building a new home.

When asked if he is a serial entrepreneur, he says, "my biggest problem as a business person is that I get bored really easily, and I like projects. The fashion business was perfect for me, because you do have to create a new collection every six months."

Huberts credits his sister-in-law for providing the seed for the Nature's Aid business. She began making products for horses, and had expanded her offerings to a skin gel for humans, but it never really advanced much beyond a home-based business. Knowing how well the skin gel actually worked, when it was time for him to start a new venture he took over her business and immediately began applying his restless nature to developing an expanded product line, today numbering almost 30 different items.

This year the company is introducing a number of new products, including a moisturizing hand sanitizer made with medical grade ethanol and a new all-natural gel for aches and pains. As well, two new shampoo and conditioner combo bars have been developed, geared toward a specific outdoors lifestyle consumer.

"They're two new scents," explains Huberts. "One is



Al Huberts displays two of the first Nature's Aid products he created, at his York Road warehouse. (Mike Balsom)

cedar and eucalyptus, obviously male-oriented, and the other is unscented. Real hunters need unscented for them and their dogs, and campers and hikers need a good scent to keep animals away. The real target is the outdoors stores."

Huberts is looking toward 2021 with hopes that the shampoo and condition-

er bars continue to catch on, contributing in their way to a less polluted environment. And though he's clearly staving off his boredom by constantly developing ideas for new products, he's looking ahead further, to a day when he can finally hand the entire business over to Courtney and move on to his next entrepreneurial venture.



Courtney Huberts and her father Al Huberts are working together, but apart, on Nature's Aid. (Photo supplied)

There's snow place like school!



Crossroads Public School students were kept busy as they returned to school after a long Christmas break. (Photos supplied)

Students offer their hearts



Students from St. Michael Catholic Elementary School returned to the classroom this week, and got busy preparing for Valentine's Day. Sophia Treanor (top left) offers her heart, Georgia Grebenc finishes her heart map (lower right), and Ariana LeBrasseur and Lucy MacSween create their valentines. (Photos supplied)

LOCAL SPORTS

St. Davids girl heading to U.S. for volleyball

Bernie Puchalski
Special to The Local

Shake the Melnick family tree and out falls a bevy of high-calibre volleyball players.

Found in the highest branches is mother, Dale Ann Melnick, who won two South-eastern Conference championships as a scholarship player at the University of Georgia, and followed it up with three Ontario University Athletic crowns at York University.

The first to follow Dale Ann, who coached with the junior national team for six years and was head coach of Canada's Youth team that won a silver medal at NORCECA 2018 to qualify for worlds for the first time in 30 years, was oldest son Dallas. He was rookie of the year with the Atlantic Collegiate Athletic Association champion St. Thomas Tommies, and features a spin serve clocked in excess of 100 km/h.

Youngest son Parker has just started on his travel volleyball journey, but 17-year-old daughter Grace has already risen to incredible heights. The Grade 12 student at A.N. Myer recently spent September to December in Richmond, B.C. training with Volleyball Canada's National Excellence Program, and this fall will head to University of North Carolina Wilmington to play NCAA Division 1 volleyball.

The Melnick family live off Tanbark Road in St. Davids, in a house they built six years ago, having moved just down the road to the village from Niagara Falls.

When the kids were younger, they pretty much grew up at the St. Davids pool, says Dale Ann. Parker played baseball in Virgil and loved every bit of the community, she says, and they all love spending their days cycling throughout St. Davids and into Queenston, enjoying the last few miles of Laura Secord and Sir Isaac Brock's charge.

Grace attended LaMarsh French Elementary School in Niagara Falls, and then went on to A.N. Myer Secondary School for its immersion program.

Mom is extremely proud of all of her kids, especially her daughter.

"To see my daughter earn that Volleyball Canada jacket was simply awesome," Dale Ann said. "It far outweighs anything I have done, for sure."

Despite her roots as a player and coach, the former head coach of the Brock women's team never pushed her kids into the sport.

"We all started playing at 14U (14 and under) because my mom wanted us to experience other sports on our own," Grace said. "She didn't want to force us into playing volleyball. She wanted to ensure that it was something that we really wanted to do. We all fell in love with it and now we are all playing."

The 6-foot-1 middle started playing club volleyball with the Niagara Rapids 14 and under team.

"It was a great introduction to volleyball, but I realized I wanted to take my skills to the next level, so I switched to the Defensa Volleyball Club (in

Burlington) the next year."

The following summer she was invited to the Team Ontario high performance camp.

"That was my first time there and I realized I really wanted to be a part of Team Ontario."

The following year, she made both the Team Ontario volleyball and beach volleyball squads, making the beach squad as an under-ager.

"That was really exciting, because I got to compete the whole summer for Team Ontario, and I got to go to the Canada Cup in Halifax with the indoor team and we won a silver medal."

Training with Volleyball Canada's National Excellence Program was the next step in Grace's progression.

"It was so amazing, and I am so grateful that I was able to be there and just compete with some of the best players across the country and train with the national team coaches," she said. "I learned a lot, and I improved so much technically and tactically. I loved every minute of being out there."

While in B.C., she signed her letter of intent with UNCW on Nov. 11.

"My homestay (billet) had a banner, and kind of a little party set up for me, which was really great," Grace said. "It would have been nice to have my family there, but I had their support over Facetime."

It was an emotional moment when she signed on the dotted line.

"There was lots of excitement going through my head, because I have been thinking about this day since Grade 9 when I decided I wanted to go to the U.S. It was crazy to think that the day had finally come, and I was officially signed to a school," she said. "It was almost like a lot of weight taken off my shoulders too, because my decision was written on paper and it was happening for real."

She started the recruiting process by looking at about 20 schools in Canada and the U.S. before whittling it down to a short list that included University of North Carolina Wil-



Grace Melnick heads to UNCW this summer to play NCAA division 1 volleyball. (Photo supplied)

ington, Louisiana Tech, Campbell, Arkansas and Dalhousie.

Unfortunately, the pandemic meant she was unable to visit any of the schools in person, and had to learn about the schools and programs through virtual visits.

University of North Carolina Wilmington quickly became the frontrunner.

"I just kind of felt it in my gut that UNCW was the best school for me location-wise, because it is right on the beach and it's a little bit closer to home than all the other schools. I am able to play beach and indoor there too, which is a dream come true. I was thinking about just going beach, but then I realized I wanted to play indoor more. The fact that I get to play both is really exciting for me."

She will likely be heading to North Carolina in late July or early August.

"I am definitely hoping things will clear up a little by then. I am aware that the (COVID) cases are a little higher over there, but I know my coach is doing everything she can to make sure the team is staying safe. I am sure I will be OK."

The future exercise science major, who is thinking about becoming a physiotherapist or chiropractor, has set above-the-net goals for herself.

"I am hoping to go there and be an impact player for the team. I am going to go in the best possible shape that I can, continue to learn, and fight to get a spot on the court."

She can't wait to get started. "It's getting that D1 experience, and the competitive culture by competing against some of the best teams."

UNCW head coach Dottie Hampton was thrilled to land her.

"Grace is a double threat, where she is a high level indoor and beach player from Canada," she said. "She will bring those talents to both the VolleyHawks and SandyHawks programs here at UNCW. Her versatility on the court and the sand makes her valuable to our program."

Bernie Puchalski is an award-winning journalist who worked for Niagara dailies for more than 27 years, as a news reporter, sports reporter and sports editor. Through BP Sports Niagara, he now provides people-focused, grassroots coverage of local sports.

LOCAL HAPPENINGS

THE MANDALORIAN TRIVIA –
SPECIAL EDITION

February 12 @ 7:30 p.m. - 8 p.m.

Join us and test your knowledge on THE MANDALORIAN! Gather the gang and get competitive! Join us for a virtual trivia night from the comfort of your couch. Play on your phone, computer or tablet, no app needed just a web browser. Log On To: CROWD.LIVE Enter This Code: HEXRM

TD NIAGARA JAZZ FESTIVAL

February 14 @ 7 - 8:30 p.m.

Twilight Jazz Series

Natalie Cole Tribute featuring

Khea Emmanuel Trio

Livestreamed online - dinner and show or show only

niagarajazzfestival.com

PLACE YOUR COMING EVENT
COMMUNITY SOCIAL HERE

With or without a border, colour graphics optional. Include your Logo! Prices starting at \$20.

Deadline: Monday 3 p.m.

Call Karen 905-641-5335

or email: classified@notllocal.com

LOCAL WORSHIP

CORNERSTONE
COMMUNITY CHURCH

Sunday, February 14th

10 a.m. Worship Gathering
(Online Only)

Speaker:
Jeff Martens

Message:
Philippians 2:1-11

Please be advised that with the current state of COVID-19, your safety is of utmost importance to us. We will now be live streaming our service at 10:00 a.m. on Sundays.

www.ccchurch.ca



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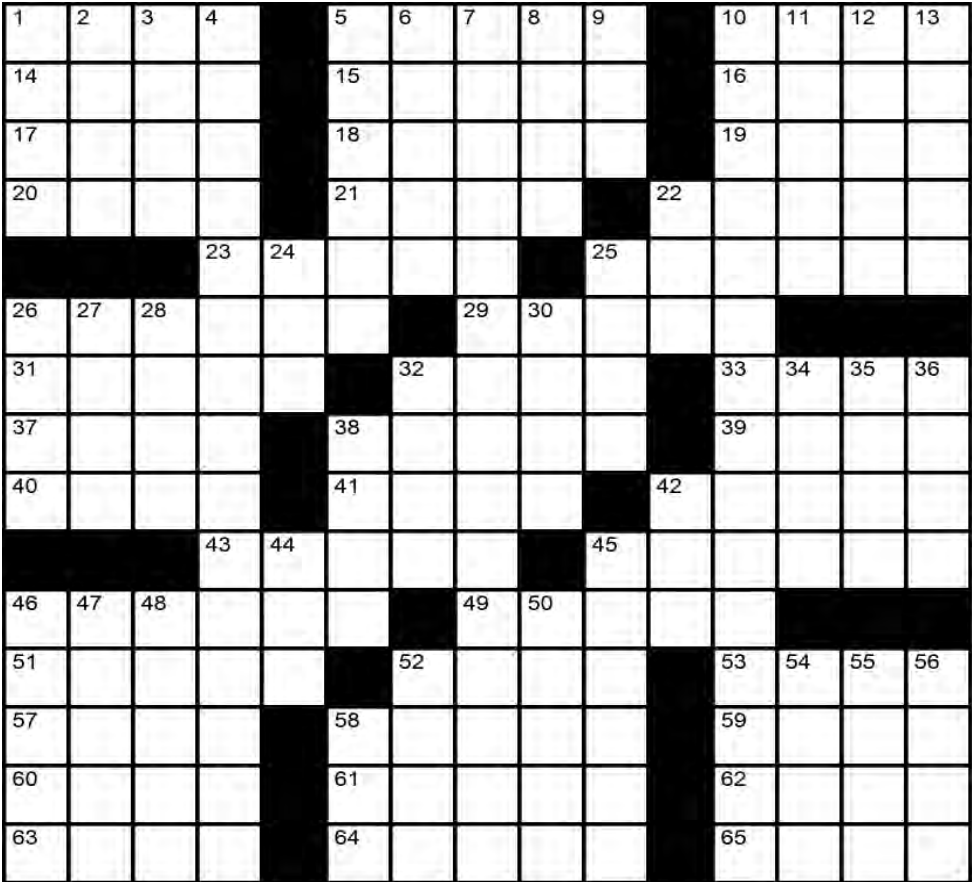


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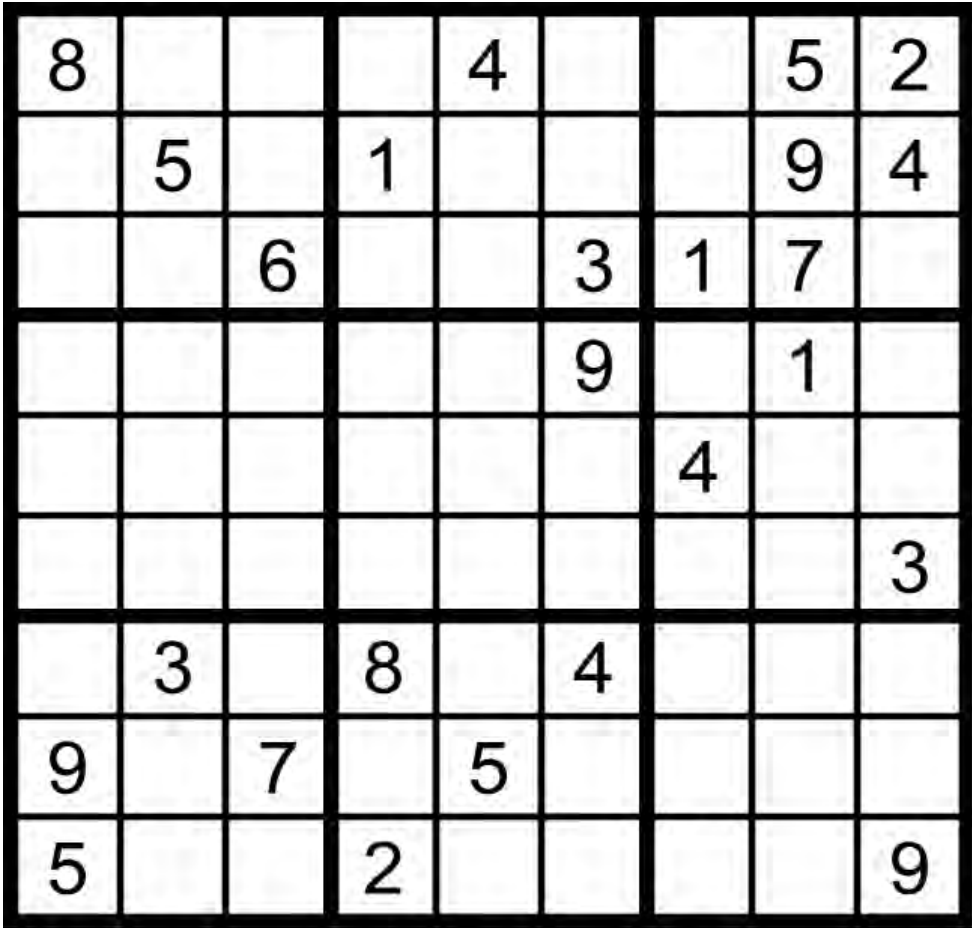
CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU



- Across:**

 - 1 Depositors' protective grp.
 - 5 Fruitcake
 - 10 Jane Austen matchmaker
 - 14 Bind
 - 15 Uma Thurman's ex --- Hawke
 - 16 Give temporarily
 - 17 Arabian chieftain
 - 18 Lightweight cord
 - 19 Breathtaking organ
 - 20 Against
 - 21 Large bundle
 - 22 Lamp scamp?
 - 23 Bit of broken pottery
 - 25 To do with mail
 - 26 Strainer
 - 29 Whisky distiller --- Walker
 - 31 Appears ominously
 - 32 --- Chanel
 - 33 Actor and rapper Mike ---
 - 37 Wheat flour in India
 - 38 For example, brogues
 - 39 Harvest
 - 40 Hits lightly
 - 41 High-efficiency lights, briefly
 - 42 Enigmatic quotemaker Yogi ---
 - 43 Corpse
 - 45 Luxury accommodations
- Down:**

 - 1 Type of market
 - 2 What Rhett didn't give
 - 3 Brenda Lee's "--- True?"
 - 4 Yuletide
 - 5 Home beverage center
 - 6 Fighting an enemy
 - 7 Old acquaintance
 - 8 His last word was "Rosebud"
 - 9 Unity
 - 10 Large landmass north of the Canadian mainland
 - 11 Launch
 - 12 Passion
 - 13 Theatrical backer
- 22 Smallest Indian state
 - 24 "--- So Fine" (old Chiffons number)
 - 25 Advantages
 - 26 Fuss
 - 27 Scintilla
 - 28 Former Mississippi senator Trent ---
 - 30 Summer refreshments
 - 32 Top cook
 - 34 Cheeky
 - 35 Shave
 - 36 Health farms
 - 38 Thin potter's clay
 - 42 Top and bottom of a hamburger
 - 44 Senator --- Cruz
 - 45 Noiseless
 - 46 Colorado resort
 - 47 Stockpile
 - 48 Dismiss
 - 50 Pond problem
 - 52 S N L comic --- Fey
 - 54 Double-reed woodwind instrument
 - 55 Obtains
 - 56 Search
 - 58 Cold War U S A F arm



OBITUARY



MOREAU, DIANE J. N. [1945 - 2021]—Diane Jeannine Neilson Moreau (Hemmings) passed away peacefully on February 3, 2021, aged 75 years. Diane was born on September 2, 1945 in Montreal, the daughter of J.H.J. Guy Moreau [1901-1966] and D.L. Winnifred Neilson [1909-1969]. She received her R.N. in 1966, her B.N. in 1970 and her M.Sc.N. in 1975 at McGill University.

She was the first psychiatric nurse to publish her research with her colleague doctors at medical conventions around the world; and she was a psychiatric nursing consultant with several medical institutions and on the teaching staff at various universities in three countries. With this experience, Diane moved to more academic aspirations leading to an M.Sc. at Wichita State University in 1996 and a Ph.D. in communications and rhetoric at University of Cardiff, Wales in 2006. In later years, Diane taught at Brock University in three faculties.

Diane is survived by David, her husband of 48 years, her son James and his wife Anne, their children Asher and Morgan in Winnetka, Illinois, her daughter Katherine in Austin, Texas, and her brother Guy in Pointe-Claire, Quebec.

As the family migrated from her base in Canada, Diane lived and worked in all four corners and middle of the USA; in the beautiful surroundings of Worcester, the Cotswolds, South Wales and Canary Wharf in Britain; and finally telling the family in 2008, "I'm now going to live in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Where are you going?" She visited diverse foreign parts around the globe, by destination cruises, conference attendance and train trips. She used her French and Spanish to get by in many places. And her deep academic passion for political rhetoric made her a news junky. Much of this came from her doctoral studies, her time in Washington D.C. as a Capitol Hill lobbyist and a docent at the Library of Congress, and delivery of linguistics course material to her university students. In her retirement years, Diane chaired both the highly successful Niagara-on-the-Lake Communities in Bloom Committee and the Horticultural Society during a reorganization. She enjoyed participating in a Current Affairs group, a "knitting" group and a book club. Diane's volunteer ethic was exemplary; her well-tempered style of engagement and her intelligent recommendations for preferred objectives were well received.

Forever troubled by the early loss of her parents, Diane became a friend to many along the way and in Niagara-on the-Lake. Her sensible approaches, her insightful suggestions and her incisive decision-making will be missed. She clung to life with determination and courage to the end, continuing to keep up her social calendar with friends. Exceptional care by Drs. Conen, Phillips, Ishkanian and Hasany, as well as nurse practitioner McKelvey, at the Walker Cancer Centre, and by St. Elizabeth nurse Perry will always be remembered by our family.

A private burial has already taken place at the Niagara Lakeshore Cemetery. There will be a celebration of Diane's life at some later date. Donations in her name would be gratefully received by the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum, of which she was Life Member. Arrangements in the care of Morgan Funeral Home, Niagara-on-the-Lake. Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com



PUZZLE ANSWERS

Sudoku solution from February 4, 2021

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

Across: 1 F D I C, 5 Wacko, 10 Emma, 14 Lash, 15 Ethan, 16 Loan, 17 Emil, 18 Twine, 21 Bale, 22 Genie, 23 Shad, 25 Postal, 26 Filter, 29 Hiram, 31 Looms, 32 Coco, 33 Epps, 37 Atta, 38 Shoes, 39 Reap, 40 Pats, 41 L-E-DS, 42 Berra, 43 Stiff, 45 Suites, 46 Asleep, 49 Rains, 51 Stead, 52 Till, 53 Logs, 57 Pots, 58 Siege, 59 A bee, 60 Ergo, 61 Annan, 62 Note, 63 Neon, 64 Cadet, 65 Desk.

Down: 1 Flea, 2 Damm, 3 Is it, 4 Christmas season, 5 Wet bar, 6 At war, 7 Childhood friend, 8 Kane, 9 One, 10 Ellesmere Island, 11 Mount, 12 Mania, 13 Angel, 22 Goa, 24 He's, 25 Pros, 26 Flap, 27 lota, 28 Lott, 30 Ices, 32 Cher, 34 Part, 35 Pare, 36 Spas, 38 Slip, 42 Bun, 44 Ted, 45 Silent, 46 Aspen, 47 Store, 48 Let go, 50 Algae, 52 Tina, 54 Oboe, 55 Gets, 56 Seek, 58 S A C.

**Stop the
Spread
COVID-19**
can be deadly.
Stay home.
Stay strong.
Save lives.



Margaret Torrance, in a photo taken on her 96th birthday, always had a book in her hand, friends say, and loved to send books home with her visitors for them to read. (Photo supplied)

Love of history, community evident in villager's life

Continued from page 4

and it wouldn't be long before she'd be in someone's driveway, talking, or she'd be hanging over her balcony talking to someone walking by. She was forever bringing over articles she read that she thought I'd be interested in. She read all kinds of newspapers, and she liked to talk about what she read."

Torrance and her husband Bob had travelled a great deal before his death in 2006, both of them keeping journals, Margaret right up until the end.

"She had great stories about the places they'd been, many places that not many people get to visit."

And then, suddenly she was gone, with some villagers still expressing surprise when they hear of her passing, says Barratt.

"Even though Margaret was 96, everyone was shocked to hear she had died. I heard from an old friend who didn't know she was gone until just a few weeks ago."

Before the pandemic, there were several annual events in the village, and Torrance was active in all of them. She helped bake tourtières for the annual sale leading up to Christmas. In the early days of the annual village art sale, a lover of art, she would help hang pictures, and in later years was always on hand to help out. And she'd never missed an annual plant and garden sale, says Barratt. "Right up until everything was cancelled, she was at every function. And she was always doing something for somebody."

One of Torrance's many significant historical accomplishments was her success in the reprinting of *The Journal of John Norton*, says Jim Armstrong, president of the Queenston Residents Association.

As many events were organized to recognize the anniversary of the War of 1812,

Torrance, who had been trying to have the historic figure recognized for his significance in the war since she first read a review of his journal, became committed to having the publisher, the Champlain Society, reprint it to make it more accessible to the public, explains Armstrong.

Torrance had been a member of the QRA from its earliest days, and was dedicated to the community in many ways, including its history. She was especially interested in the contribution of Indigenous people, he says, describing her as "involved, incisive and observant in her thinking."

Norton had a Scottish mother and a Cherokee father, had been adopted by the Mohawks, and led the Native allies into many significant War of 1812 battles.

Torrance was especially interested in his first-hand account of those events, says Armstrong.

She had learned about them when she and her husband Bob visited a manor home in Scotland, and she came across a document from his journal.

When first approached, the Champlain Society said, "maybe, we'll see," recounts Armstrong. "Then they said they'd do a softcover, and finally agreed to a hardcover, as a result of Margaret pursuing it."

He recalls a saying she would often use when faced with a challenge, "'and the way shall open.' She believed if you keep with it, focusing on things of value and working on them, a way will open to make them happen, and they usually did."

The reprinted version was for sale in the Fort George Gift Shop, at the NOTL Museum and the Laura Secord Homestead in Queenston, and sold out quickly, but as a result became more accessible to those interested in it for research

purposes.

"This was one of the achievements that was quite singular for her," he says, "and it's something the Champlain Society just doesn't do."

They included an acknowledgement of her efforts in the front of the journal, but not to the extent he felt she deserved, adds Armstrong. "It was something, but it could have been so much more."

Torrance was also very involved in an effort, around that same time, to have the Niagara Parks Commission purchase and move John Norton's cabin, which was on the private property of historian Jon Juppien in St. Catharines, which was for sale. She and others were hoping it could be moved to the Laura Secord Homestead site, to ensure it would be preserved, and possibly used as a museum to Indigenous people. The idea was investigated and then dropped, and although it wasn't successfully relocated, the St. Catharines property was eventually sold to the John Brown Heritage Foundation, where the cabin is being preserved.

It wasn't just historical events that kept her active in her community, says Armstrong. She could be counted on to help out whenever there was a need, and she rarely, if ever, missed one of the QRA meetings, he says.

An extensive book collection amassed during the travels of Margaret and Bob has been donated to the Queenston Library.

Upon her death in September, her family suggested those interested in making a donation in her memory choose an arts or social justice organization that champions Canada's Indigenous peoples.

Her online obituary can be found at <https://memorials.passfieldmortuary.ca/torrance-georgena/4459793/index.php>