Words of diversity, inclusivity, equality pack powerful message

Jamie Knight, co-chair of the town’s diversity, equity, and inclusion committee, and with support of the committee members, spoke to councillors about the remaining and importance of a rainbow crosswalk, and the council’s support to date.

Making his presentation Monday night, he said he spoke of “rainbows, Black history, and valentines.” He had “written some words” that so impressed and deeply touched Lord Mayor Betty Disero. She spoke of some of what is going on “in our community and country” that make his words especially appropriate on Valentine’s Day, including the celebration of non-profits in Ontario, and the annual Feb. 14 march to raise awareness of missing and murdered Indigenous women and children in Ontario.

“...I couldn’t believe I actually had the chance to live in history,” she says of the William and Susannah Steward (also known as Stewart) House. “History was my major at the University of Waterloo. And I actually focused a lot on the civil rights movement of the 20th century. When I learned about the house’s history, I signed the lease within a week.”

The heritage house is part of the Voice of Freedom Black History walking tour of Niagara-on-the-Lake. It’s one of 13 stops on the tour that includes Fort Mississauga and Queen’s Royal Park.

William Steward was an African American teamster and carpenter. He and his wife Susannah bought the lot on the corner of John and Butler Streets in 1834. By the middle of that decade, Niagara’s Black community was about 400 strong, and they owned about 10 percent of the lots in the town.

The Steward home was part of what became known as Niagara’s “coloured village,” a community of former Canadian slaves, Black Loyalists and African American refugees. The majority of the Black families lived south of William Street between Regent and Simcoe Streets.

The couple cleared the land, planted crops and built a small house. A barn was also constructed on the site, and most likely housed a cow that the Stewards kept, though there is some speculation that the barn may have already existed on the property when they acquired it.

Being a history major, Pilzecker threw herself into researching more of the history.

Penny Coles  The Local

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On Monday, a day dedicated to celebrating love, and continuing through the week, a meaningful initiative at Niagara College is dedicated to opening hearts to lives lost and impacted by violence.

Both campuses of Niagara College have joined Brock University in hosting the REDress Project, beginning Valentine’s Day, to raise awareness of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) and Two Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex and Asexual (2SLGBTQQIA+) people.

The REDress Project pays tribute to individuals lost to violence, as well as those who survived, and acknowledges the impacts that violence had on their families, friends and communities, says Lianne Gagnon, Niagara College director of student services.

“It’s only by shining a light and providing information that we can take the steps to expose the truth of the violence. That’s why we feel it’s so important to educate our students and staff about the violence perpetrated against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, in the hope of eliminating it,” said Gagnon. “As post-secondary providers in Niagara, we are proud to stand with our partners at Brock and take a lead role in informing our communities to end the violence and work towards a more diverse and inclusive future for all.”

Niagara College is hosting a week-long display of red dresses in prominent outdoor locations at its Daniel J. Patterson Campus in Niagara-on-the-Lake and its Welland Campus.

The dress displays are intended to be powerful visual reminders of the thousands of MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people who were victims of colonial violence over the past 40 years, and to help raise awareness of the REDress Project throughout the college community.

“Valentine’s Day is the perfect time to host the REDress Project because the victims and survivors that we honour are not just statistics; each one of them was a person who was loved,” said NC Indigenous student success leader Emily Schutt. “We are proud to join our partners at Brock in displaying the red dresses on our campuses, and hope that the initiative encourages everyone to take the time to learn more about the REDress Project and the MMIWG inquiry.”

The red dress displays, for which the REDress Project was named, originally began as an art installation by Métis artist Jamie Black in 2011 at the University of Winnipeg, and has since been replicated in communities across Canada.

Monday evening, Niagara Falls and Brock University’s Schmon Tower were illuminated in red in honour of the REDress Project.

A National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls was launched in September 2016. Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls was published in June 2019. The report contained 231 Calls for Justice, which also included a public campaign to expose what has been experienced by Indigenous people and a national task force to examine the unresolved cases. In 2021, the Government of Canada released its plan to address the tragedies experienced by MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA+ by committing $2.2 billion dollars to fund the goals outlined in the final report.

A National Action Plan was released in 2021 that focuses on ending the violence against MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

This will be the second year that the college is hosting the REDress project and red dress displays on its campuses.

Indigenous education at Niagara College launched a REDress Drive in early 2022 to collect donations of red dresses from the college community in support of the initiative.
of the home and its previous occupants. We could just live in the house and not know why it's here, and why it was important," she says. "I felt it was my duty to learn its history."

And she's also picked up a lot from tour guides who have brought people onto the prop-

erty in the six years that she has lived there.

According to Pilzecker's re-
search, William Steward was a
freed man in the U.S. before
the foundation had to be
set up to restore the original foun-
dation, all the utilities were
moved into the basement."

The restoration took sev-
eral years. Some original ar-
tech detail remained, but vandalism claimed some of those, including the original front door.

Once the restoration was completed, the question of what to do with it remained. Options included converting it into a small Black history museum or turning it into an interpretive centre.

Willa Morrison, long-
known as the guardian of Niag-
ara's Black history, was called in
to provide some insight. For a

time, bus tours would man Steward House a frequent stop, but it became evident that the large vehicles were disruptive to the neighbourhood.

As well, there were costs involved related to the Niagara Parks Commission that prohibited its continuation as an interpretive centre. And the museum option also turned out to be too expensive, as required staffing.

Merritt says at one point the Niagara Foundation con-
sidered severing part of the lot for sale to make one of those options more feasible, but that was not permitted. They also applied to the Ontario Heritage Foundation to inquire if they were interested in acquiring the property, but they didn't have the funds.

Reluctantly, it went on the market in 2009, and was pur-

chased by current owner Bruce Harvey, who at the time was involved with the Niagara Foundation.

Harvey and his wife Janis had previously renovated three other historic homes, either by

making the interiors more live-
able to today's standards or con-
structing additions for added space. They had worked with re-
nowned heritage architect Peter

Stokes on one of those projects.  
"There wasn't a lot of the original interior of the house, other than the fireplace," Harvey tells The Local. "There was no insulation. The restrooms have been added to that.

Building the first floor was more accurate.

Bruce and Janis did a great job of creating a livable

space that honours the Stew-

ard House's history. The dark

hardwood floors look suitably

rustic, and the kitchen features

Shaker-style cabinetry, though

those are framed by a gran-
tire countertops. A beautiful tin

ceiling caps off that room, and

Pilzecker also points to the an-

tique lighting fixtures which

enhance the historic feel of the

800 square foot residence.

The new narrow staircase
leads up to the small loft bed-
room, with a half bathroom on
the second floor. And there was

no attempt to make a new en-

trance into the basement from

the house that can only be accessed by bulkhead doors located next to the side entrance.

Pilzecker, a volunteer with NYOL Cat Rescue, currently

shares the Steward House with a

bunny named BunBun and three
cats. The question often comes

up about the possibility that such

an important, historic home

might be haunted, she says.

"I ended up working for a

week in Oakville, and my mom

stayed there to look after my cats," says Pilzecker. A couple of weeks later, I told her that when I was in my house, it felt like someone was trying to talk to me. She said your house is so haunted, and they're having a party!"

Subsequently, she connect-
ed with an Indigenous woman who

offered to assess the house for spirits.

"She came in and smudged the house," Pilzecker recalls. "She said I had about 13 ghosts upstairs, and that they told her they help me clean. She said they were buried out the back, and they were Christian. And she added that in the basement you can hear them singing freedom songs."

Pilzecker speculates that the Stewards may have harboured freedom seekers, though there is no documentation that she can find to support that spec-
culation. Despite the possible

presence of ghosts, Pilzecker

says the house actually gives off

a warm, loving feeling.

Besides the spirits there are

other challenges to renting the

Steward House, especially with

its historic plaque out front ex-

plaining its significance.

Though the bus tours long

ago stopped parking on the

street (confirmed, by the way,

by Rochelle Bush, who runs

Tubman Tours Canada out of

St. Catharines, who would love
to take her bus tours to the site),
Pilzecker often finds her soli-
tude interrupted by tourists and
curious newcomers to town.

"I was told right away to put up a 'Private Residence' sign be-
cause people do try to enter the front door," Pilzecker laughs.

"Once, a person who didn't speak English walked right into the house. He kept saying 'Mum, Haus' and pointing to a bro-
chure, and then to me. When he realized what he had done, he ran out embarrassed."

She also installed privacy

curtains early on.

"Within the first week of moving in," she adds, "I was sitting on the couch one Satur-
day and I saw a couple outside. I heard one of them say 'the

blinds are open'. They walked right up and started peeking into the windows. I just waved at them as they pressed their

noses against the glass."

She says there is a tour guide

named Kevin from Buffalo's

Motherland Connections who

brings visitors as part of his Un-
derground Railroad tour.

"I haven't seen him since

COVID, but I would always let

them in the house," Pilzecker

says. "He always talked about

everything, and I always waved to him. And one day my house had just been cleaned, so I in

vited him in. He tells the sto-

ry of the Moses affair, and he

seems to be so knowledgeable."

Merritt, who has not visited

the property in some time, is

pleased to hear that someone

like Pilzecker, who appreciates

the property's significance,

is the current steward of the

Steward House.

"I was going over the min-
utes of our meetings from that
time, and we really agonized over the decision to sell it," Merritt says. "But it was the right thing at the time. With

the Voices of Freedom Park

now, and the fact that there's

become much more interest in

Niagara's Black history, maybe

it will survive as a historic land-
mark for generations to come."
Canadian flag in Queen’s Royal Park gets a nod

Penny Coles

The Local

Chautauqua resident Ross Robinson wants the ‘magnificent Canadian Maple Leaf flag’ to fly proudly in Queen’s Royal Park.

The flagpole is paid for, he told councillors Monday night, the town just needs to okay it.

Tom and Jim Caldwell of Caldwell Securities, two long-time, active proud and patriotic NOTLers, have committed to donating the funds to cover the cost of a flagpole — one of good quality, councillors were assured — with a Canadian flag and the installation of it in Queen’s Royal Park.

Robinson says he has done “much street-level research,” including in grocery stores, the Avondales, the Stagecoach and local pubs, which indicates support for his proposal.

The Canadian flag “punches well above its weight,” he said, and is simple, elegant and leaves no doubt about which country it represents.

There was no indication from the Niagara or Lake Ontario that this side is Canada, he said — the only flag seen from the water is the Union Jack at Fort George.

Robinson gave a little bit of a history lesson about the discussions and controversy about a new flag, that began in 1925, but it wasn’t until Feb. 15, 1965 that Prime Minister Lester Pearson dedicated the Canadian flag when it was raised for the first time on Parliament Hill during a public ceremony, with these words: “May the land over which this new flag flies remain united in freedom and justice…sensitive, tolerant, and compassionate towards all.”

The time has come, said Robinson, to “raise the proud Canadian flag in Queen’s Royal Park.”

Then, the tens of thousands of spectators will be watching, he said, and the Canadian flag will be flown in the presence of their pictures, he said, adding, “Why hasn’t it been done before?”

At this difficult time in NOTL history, he added, “we have a chance to show unity, not divisiveness.”

A motion made by Wendy Cherpota was approved by councillors, including that the staff decide on the exact location, where there be an agreement with the Caldwells that will make clear to future councils that only the Canadian flag be flown at that location, that it be installed before the summer games begin in Niagara, and that a report come back from staff on the subject, including the exact location.

Parks and recreation director Kevin Turcotte thanked Knight for his “excellent presentation,” with other councillors nodding in appreciation and some looking like they wanted to clap — Coun. John Wiens did applaud Knight’s words.

...
Time and time again, you are there when the YW and members of the Niagara community need your support. When we sought your help to make housing accessible through Oakdale Commons, your generosity and compassion were unwavering. With our deepest gratitude, the team members at the YW and the people it serves thank you for taking action in our continued battle to end homelessness.

Because of your support, 15 Home For Good units will provide the most vulnerable women in our community with a place to call home, 6 Emergency Family Shelter units will put roofs over children’s heads, and 3 Transitional Housing units will be home to families on their way towards independent housing.

This year, the YWCA Niagara Region completed a $7.4 million capital campaign to build Oakdale Commons, a long-term supportive housing building for women experiencing chronic homelessness in Niagara. Thank you, Mountainview Building Group, for your generous gift of $120,000, the final installment needed to complete our campaign.

Oakdale Commons is a testament to what Niagara is capable of when our community comes together for meaningful change. The difference this building has already made in 2021 is a small demonstration of the impact we will have on the community for years to come.

“We are so grateful to Mark Basciano and Mountainview Building Group for this wonderful gift. Mark and his team have shown great leadership through this gift ensuring that vulnerable women and their families have a safe place to heal and move forward with their lives. Our deepest thanks to the Mountainview team and our community for making this building a reality.”

- Elisabeth Zimmermann, Executive Director of the YWCA Niagara Region

AND A VERY SPECIAL THANK YOU TO YOU, THE NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE COMMUNITY

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Some of the Count, Alberta protesters have it right — what for them started out as a peaceful protest against a vaccination mandate morphed into something they could not have imagined. Many agreed to leave peacefully, after learning the protest had been infiltrated by extreme, armed elements with far more on their mind than a resolution to the vaccine mandate.

At this side of the country, reopening the border took a little more effort. Hundreds of police officers encircled the small crowd of protesters in Windsor this weekend. It took the police two days, after many of the protesters left under their own accord, and it was peaceful, although arrests were made and vehicles seized. By Monday, traffic was thankfully crossing the Ambassador Bridge.

But Tuesday, there was still little movement in Ottawa, which is much more complicated situation.

After two weeks of listening to demands for leadership from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to rid the streets of the block parties that have been going on — for many the inflatable hot tubs were the last straw — the situation was getting worse, with no sign of a solution, at least by Tuesday.

Trudeau is finally taking responsibility, and the ball is in his court, while we can only wait to see what he will do with the emergency measures he now has at hand. We should hear soon, and hopefully what ever the plan is, it works, and quickly.

Of course, this has become so politicized, it seems far more about all sides trying to score points, while the poor people of Ottawa seem to have been all but forgotten.

Not only are Ottawa Conservatives using every opportunity to criticize what isn’t happening — although two weeks ago they were saying themselves chatting up the protesters — premiers across the country are being harsh in their displeasure of what they see as Trudeau going too far. Easy for them — they don’t live in Ottawa.

But to Premier Doug Ford, it’s a different ball game. His voters are the ones who haven’t been getting up from the protest, and are also the people who protest, at least the ones who haven’t come up from Texas.

Ford is supporting the federal decision to invoke the emergency act to deal with the protest, and to provide whatever tools the police can use to bring an end to it.

Many of us remember Pierre Trudeau’s history-making moment after enacting what was then the War Measures Act, during the 1970 FLQ crisis — it is being much talked-about these days. When he was asked how far he would go in suspending civil liberties to stop the violence that was occurring, he replied, “just watch me,” and the words have defined a place in our history.

These are different times, different circumstances, and nobody is suggesting that level of suspending civil liberties — well, maybe the residents of Ottawa are, and the health care workers at nearby hospitals — but there is no doubt, Justin needs to find his moment.

The people who are protesting don’t trust any government, but most of us put our faith in our elected representatives to do their job. It’s time for it to be done.

The longer this goes on, the more it seems to pose a risk of ending in violence. The emergency act recently passed has limited scope, and must be used cautious ly, but hopefully can be effective in peacefully solving a problem that so far has escaped resolution.

We don’t like what we see happening in our own country. Dealing with a pandemic has been difficult for everybody, and Canadians have for the most part done a hero ic job, getting together and getting through it. We don’t want this to be what we remember of this time, or what we are remembered for.

Penny Coles
The Local

Tannin Driedger-Bradshaw
Special to The Local

The 1st Niagara-on-the-Lake Rangers Guiding Unit is a branch of the Girls Guides of Canada, with Rangers being the final step for youth members aged between 15 to 17.

This year our Rangers Guiding Unit has decided to partake in a service project that will be beneficial for the community.

This is our way of participating in helping our 1st Niagara-on-the-Lake Rangers Guiding Unit service project, as well as helping those in need.

For anyone interested in helping our 1st Niagra-on-the-Lake Ranger Guiding Unit service project, you have new unopened sanitary products, please drop the items off at 23 Annamarie Drive in Virgil in the collection box, until March 4.

View from the couch

Donald Combe
Special to The Local

I watched Don’t Look Up (Netflix 2021), a razor sharp satire that unmercifully exposes the extreme, armed elements that created the problems, but refuse to accept, because fairy tales have happy endings. We created the problems, but refuse to listen to truth.

Donald Combe is a retired English teacher who loves to go to movies. Until recently, he resumed going to theatres, opened sanitary products, which are essential for so many of our town members.

The United Way’s Period Promise organization, which is making access to menstrual products easier for everybody. This campaign appealed to our Ranger unit because the Period Promise drive by United Way is a great way to help those in our community to be able to receive menstrual products, and remain part of Queenston.

These are different circumstances, times, or what we are remembering of these times, or what we are remembered for.

Regina Robb
NOTL

Local LETTERS

Hopefully artists will be able to stay at Laura Secord

Responding to the various articles about the Willowbrook School’s sale of the old Queenston Lake School, which is being bought by an art property, a subject close to my heart.

I wanted to express my support in having the town of NOTL getting involved in the future development of this property. It has been a bright light in dark times for me and get to know the artists who are currently leasing space at the old Laura Secord School, Sharon Okan and Adam Markovic. They are both world-class working artists who relocated to NOTL during the pandemic, with a vision to create an active artists’ community.

The old school building is such a sentimental property and iconic to Queenston landscape. I hope the building can be revived as a thriving learning centre and does not get parcelled off for other developments, or worse, torn down. I’ve been involved with the arts for my entire life, and I’m thrilled and privileged to meet artists of their talents in my community. I want Shar on and Adam to stay and I want the property to be revitalized and occupied and remain part of Queenston.

Regina Robb
NOTL

Local voices: Rangers contributing to United Way’s Period Promise

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Rangers Guiding Unit is a branch of the Girl Guides of Canada, with Rangers being the final step for youth members aged between 15 to 17.

This year our Rangers Guiding Unit has decided to partake in a service project that will be beneficial to those in our community. We are hoping to earn our Rangers’ Service Project Award, an achievement that is designed to help use our skills, creativity, and feelings to make a positive contribution to our town.

The Service Project Award is a requirement to earn the Trillium Leadership Award, the highest award a Ranger can earn. A service project requires that a person or group has to better help a community. This is what we at the NOTL Rangers plan to do. We have decided to ask for donations of period products to send to the United Way’s Period Promise organization, which is making accessing menstrual products easier for everybody. This campaign appealed to our Ranger unit because the Period Promise drive by United Way is a great way to help those in our community to be able to receive menstrual products, which are essential for so many of our town members.

The United Way’s Period Promise organization is a requirement to earn the Trailblazer Lead Award is a requirement to better help a community. This is what we at the NOTL Rangers plan to do. We have decided to ask for donations of period products to send to the United Way’s Period Promise organization, which is making accessing menstrual products easier for everybody. This campaign appealed to our Ranger unit because the Period Promise drive by United Way is a great way to help those in our community to be able to receive menstrual products, which are essential for so many of our town members.

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I do believe in informed injection of any kind. However, the majority of nearly 31 million fully vaccinated Canadians have made on this issue, what is important and needs pointing out is that not once has public input or majority opinion been addressed by those in favour of this endorsement, except perhaps for the earlier committees of two sur-
veys, both of which are considered flawed, inconclusive and without credibility by many people.

Without a genuine demonstra-
tion of public support that every single person needs, the endorsement by a select few will amount to nothing more than a false statement of pub-
lic opinion, and as such will be seen by many as being quite meaningless. This is hardly a statement of comfort or inclu-
sion for anybody.

I empathize with those who are caring for family members who tested positive for COVID despite being vaccinated and boosted. My husband and I (both in our 70s) also cared for my
daughter’s three-year-old, two
year old and newborn baby when her family fell ill with the delta variant. However, I take exception to the broad characterization of the unvaccinated as stub-
born, refusing to listen to experts and being ignorant of facts. Many of the unvac-
cinated know are educated professional people who refuse to be intimidated by the rhetoric of fear manu-
gered by government sub-
sidized TV and newspaper outlets.

They, on the contrary, have spent hours researching and listening to renowned virologists, immunologists, and scientists and are not a band of ignor-
eists. They watched as scientists had given expert testimony before the Unit-
ed States Congress. Some of them have concerns about blindly following drug com-
panies, who in the past have been accused of cherry-pick-
ing the data they presented to the CDC and FDA. Some have reservations after re-
viewing the CDC’s VAERS (vaccine adverse event re-
sorting system), and are rightly disturbed that drug companies have immunity from any legal liability. Their biggest concern is the vili-
fying and maligning of any dissenting narrative to the mainstream doctrine of vac-
cination.

In reference to the mis-
appropriation of tax dollars and misuse of hospital beds, I think it is noteworthy that many hospitals are indeed reporting that the majority of virus-related hospitaliza-
tions are in the vaccinat-
ed. In some institutions as much as 21%, I realize that the vaccinated population is proportionately higher than the unvaccinated and so we would of course expect them to have a higher number of hospitalizations. But, the fact is that they are still in a bed, still using tax dollars and still stressing the health care sys-
tem.

Most experts agree that the vaccination variant is much more contagious than the original virus or the delta variant, but usually results in less severe infection. It is also proving to evade even the boosted.

We could go back and forth debating which viro-
logist or epidemiologist is to be believed, which peer review study published by the Lancet is more trust-
worthy, but I believe it would be a waste of time.

It is with great sadness that I have read many letters sent to newspaper editori-
als suggesting the unvac-
cinated be denied medical care. Should we refuse care to diabetics who refuse to modify their diet and exercise? Is it possible at all to live with the cold soup up to my chest in my jacket and without getting hypothermia. It's a strange affinity for this feeling. I don’t know if I'm right or if I’m wrong, but the cold soup up to my chest in my jacket and without getting hypothermia. It is a strange affinity for this feeling. I don’t know if I’m right or if I’m wrong, but the cold soup up to my chest in my jacket and without getting hypothermia. It is a strange affinity for this feeling. I don’t know if I’m right or if I’m wrong, but the cold soup up to my chest in my jacket and without getting hypothermia. It is a strange affinity for this feeling. I don’t know if I’m right or if I’m wrong, but the cold soup up to my chest in my jacket and without getting hypothermia.

The protectors will have you believe they are fighting for democracy. They are se-
riously mistaken. Democracy is a type of leadership perhaps best described by Churchill as “the worst form of govern-
ment except all the others.” Until we find a better form of government, I think most of us will happily stick with what we have. With democracies majorities determine who gov-
ers. The protectors don’t even come close to representing the majority of professional driv-
ers, let alone the massive ma-
Journey for over 30 years. The majority of nearly 31 million fully vaccinated Canadians.

I firmly believe all Cana-
dians should have the right to protest and be unvaccinat-
ed. I’m sure the majority of us don’t want to live in a country where we are forced to have an injection of any kind. However, I do believe in informed con-
sent/refusal, and if you choose to be unvaccinated that choice comes with consequences.

That’s exactly what we have in Canada – no one is being forced to be vaccinated. We all have a choice but, like all choices in life, there are consequences.

Civilization is a force of nature far more powerful than governments of any kind. It is the force that puts humans in the dominant role on our plan-
et. Civilization means depend-
ing on each other for survival. Democracy depends entirely on civilization while civiliza-
tion has endured eons of differ-
et governments. Civilization requires individuals to make reasonable sacrifices to con-
tinue to benefit from its fruits, such as food, shelter, health-
care, education and protection from those who would take those benefits from us. A sim-
ple example of a modern “rule” of civilized societies that trans-
scends all forms of government is a traffic signal. They have nothing to do with democracy. Most of us don’t enjoy stopping at red lights, but if we don’t stop, sooner or later, at best, we would be fined and lose driving privileges or, at worst, kill our-

selfs, family or others. Those are the consequences. That’s how civilization works.

Once protectors chose to block transportation routes that prevent people from earn-
ing a living, sourcing food and be-

dicating and even sleep, they left the realm of democracy and took on one of the most enduring forces in human his-
tory — civilization. Civilization is survival. Democracy won't help protectors fight survival. It is not optional. We all know in a few weeks the trucks will be gone, the media will move on to more important stories, and the vast majority of Cana-
dians will have forgotten this leaderless, hypocritical, unfo-
cased protest. Civilization wins again.

Michael Peirce, NOTL

If you have a letter to the editor you’d like to see published, please send it to penny@notllocal.com. Please try to keep it to 250 words or less, but we don’t publish anonymous letters. And please stick to the issue at hand, rather than attacking those involved. The deadline is Monday at noon.
Doug will be missed — especially his laugh

Penny Coles
The Local

Doug Garrett, renowned among family and friends for his story-telling prowess, has died at the age of 94. He leaves behind a large number of family and friends, who miss him most of all for the twinkle in his eye, and his large, infectious laugh, which delighted all who knew him. "His laugh filled a room with so much joy. He had an awfully big laugh for just a little fellow," says his daughter Kelly Atack.

Doug died at home last Thursday, Feb 10, with his granddaughter Dahlia by his side. Kelly's 28-year-old daugh- ter was close to her papa, and was travelling back and forth from Toronto to spend time with him and help out whenever she could. "It was really hard for her, but I think she knew it would have been harder for me. I wouldn't have handled it as well," says Kelly.

Doug was born and raised in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and as the fourth generation of a family who were United Empire Loyalists, he loved the town and never wanted to live anywhere else. "He wanted to die in his home, at home, and he did," says Kelly.

Doug was traveling back and forth from Toronto to spend time with his wife, Dorothy, and was visiting her. "It was really hard for her, but I think he knew it was time," says Kelly. "It was really hard for me, too. It hurt and gave it up."

The bulk of his work-life was spent on the golf course. Doug died at home last Thursday, Feb 10, with his granddaughter Dahlia by his side. Kelly's 28-year-old daughter was close to her papa, and was travelling back and forth from Toronto to spend time with him and help out whenever she could. "It was really hard for her, but I think she knew it would have been harder for me. I wouldn't have handled it as well," says Kelly.

Doug was also known for his love of sports. He played hockey in his youth, reaching the Senior B level before getting hurt and giving it up. His real love was golf. He was a very talented golfer, and as a teen, dreamed of being a professional player, Kelly says. But his father died when he was just 17, and he had to go to work to help his mother support the family. He worked for a butcher for a time, delivered milk with a horse-drawn wagon, and took a few other jobs — anything he could find that would allow him to help out at home. The bulk of his working life, though, almost three decades, was with the LCBO, where he retired as a store manager in St. Catharines. He married his first wife, Dorothy, as a young man, and they had two sons, David and Paul. Dorothy died of cancer tragically, at the age of 42, and Doug was fortunate to later find happiness with Christine, who he met while working at the LCBO. She worked at a cafe nearby where he would stop in, they became friends, then developed a relationship, and eventually married, says Kelly.

Doug was still living on Shawnee Drive when Christine, suffering from Alzhei- mer's, was moved into Up- per Canada Lodge. "Going to see her was an important part of his routine, and that contin- ued after Kelly and Nick built a beautiful, self-contained apart- ment onto their Queenston home for Doug, Christine, now in the final stages of Alzheimer's, didn't know who Doug was or that he was visiting, but he would say he knew who she was and wanted to be there with her. The visits continued until the week he died, Kelly says. "She was the love of his life," she adds, recalling the days her mother would get "all dolled up" and her parents would go to the ceremony. "He was a very gentle man, and his large, infectious laugh touched me with sadness, and wonderful memo- ries. When I arrived in Canada in 1987, I was young and keen to get into the game of golf. What a lucky day it was that I met 'wee Dougie,' and along with fellow Irish friend Brian McClellan, we were welcomed with open arms at the club."

Doug was always well-re- ceived, and members loved to have him sit with him, have a beer, and regale them with his golf stories. "He was great fun, knew the etiquette of golf, and how to interact with others, always with a smile. He was a very spe- cial man. When he came into the club, everyone wanted him to sit at their table and tell a sto- ry. He was the kind of person, as soon as you saw him, your eyes would light up. People had such huge respect for him. It was always nice to see him."

Doug Garrett was a left-hand- ed golfer, "had such a sweet swing. Nice tempo, nice follow-through, and always right down the middle. He was a very good golfer, that's for sure."

And he was always a gentle- man, kind and patient to those who asked him. He was always ready to sit at their table and tell a story. Doug was always well-received, and members loved to have him sit with him, have a beer, and regale them with his golf stories. "He was great fun, knew the etiquette of golf, and how to interact with others, always with a smile. He was a very special man. When he came into the club, everyone wanted him to sit at their table and tell a story. He was the kind of person, as soon as you saw him, your eyes would light up. People had such huge respect for him. It was always nice to see him."

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Doug Garrett will be missed — especially his laugh
Doug Garrett, in 2019, recalled his golfing days during the Sports Wall of Fame induction ceremony. (File photo)

At 92, Doug Garrett was out on Queen Street distributing poppies leading up to Remembrance Day 2019. (File photo)

Induction into Sports Wall of Fame a highlight

Doug, it seems, was the biggest influence on me when I was younger, and he was always helping out juniors with their games, even donating his old clubs to some of the younger left-handed members.

I will always remember Doug for his very distinct laugh. I would hear him before seeing him most days at the club, and he was always a positive and happy figure that we will dearly miss around the NOTL Golf Club.

Doug was also involved in the community as a volunteer. He was a firefighter for two decades, and a strong supporter and campaigner for the Heart and Stroke Foundation. He was also a member of the Masons, and was head master for a time.

But perhaps his biggest contribution was as a member of the local branch of the Royal Canadian Legion. He played a role in the annual Remembrance Day as Sergeant-at-Arms for almost 65 years, but when the year came his knees prevented him from laying the wreaths during the service, he said was handling that role over with pride.

As Sergeant-at-Arms, his duty was to maintain order during meetings and be responsible for the colours and flags. Although he was one of the oldest active veterans, he never saw action — he signed up for the 44th Field Artillery Regiment in St. Catharines but the war ended before he was sent overseas. He did however serve five years in the reserves.

For decades, he continued to distribute poppies in the days leading up to Remembrance Day, taking up his usual spot on Queen Street, no matter what the weather.

The moment the veteran stepped up to the Cenotaph with his poppy box, he was besonged by people who would stuff bills in the box in exchange for a poppy, thanking him for his service. His age and his demeanour — or maybe the smile and the twinkle in his eye — seemed to draw respect, and when talking to The Local, he became a little tearful that people were so appreciative of his efforts.

In his later years as a member he was concerned for the future of the branch, with the difficulty of getting volunteers to help out at the events and fund raisers — it always seemed to be the older members doing the work, he said.

"I'm not sure what's going to happen when we're not around," he told The Local the last year he was out distributing poppies, "and you know that's going to happen."

Although he couldn't do his usual job of laying wreaths, he was at the Cenotaph to raise the flag and lower it in the last Queen Street Remembrance Day ceremony before COVID, and said when he attended the annual services, he stood with pride and thought not only about those who didn't come home, but about those who did, injured, and also increasingly about the local veterans who had died in recent years, and were missed — to him and other Legion members, he added, every day is Remembrance Day.

In NOTL, there will be many people who will remember Doug Garrett, and many days when he will be missed.

Doug Garrett was a veteran from Canada, there was no way we could put our hands in our pockets when he stepped up to the Cenotaph — to him and other Legion veterans who had died in the war, he said.

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In NOTL, there will be many people who will remember Doug Garrett, and many days when he will be missed.
Mike Balsom Special to The Local

The outpouring of community love and support for her family in the wake of the sudden loss of her husband Shane Sherlock has left Stephanie with mixed emotions. She was only after the Town has received settlement from the bank. Please allow 5 working days for payment processing.

The donations of food have been especially helpful through the last week and a half, as she finds herself exhausted each day due to the combination of emotions and all the phone calls of support that she has been receiving. The couple were together for 26 years. They met when Stephanie was 18 years old, attending Niagara District Secondary School. Though Shane was eight years older than her, she says she had often run into him in various social settings, and was drawn in by his charm and his cool factor.

“We both went to Parliament Oak and Niagara District, but not at the same time,” she says. “He was living out west but came back home for a visit when I met him. When he went back I was heart-broken, but six months later he came back to Niagara and we’ve been together ever since.”

Within a year Stephanie was pregnant with Chloe, and the two discussed how they wanted to raise her. They were committed to being parents who always put their kids first, providing them with any and all opportunities they wanted and needed. From the earliest days as a family unit Shane threw himself into his role as a father. When Chloe and then Paige attended Niagara Nursery School in the days when it was a cooperative, it was Shane who took part in the required pa- rental duty days, partly due to Shane’s incredible energy. He was well-known for his charm and his cool factor.

As the family grew, the couple became official ambassadors of Old Town Tribe-Sherlocks became unofficial ambassadors of Old Town Niagara-on-the-Lake. Shane would often be seen riding his bicycle along with the kids, accompanying them to Ball’s Beach, Queen’s Royal Park and other locations throughout town.

In fact, when this newspaper launched in January, its very first edition featured a large front-page photo of Shane walking Rufus in front of the gazebo at Queen’s Royal Park, trailed closely by Ty and Marty.

“I was so happy that people knew him, and that people were still thinking of us,” Waller says. “It’s been hard. Ty has this amazing group of friends that he’s made over the years, through hockey, or Niagara Nursery School, and there’s a massive list of them. They all just got together and did this. It’s mind-blowing to me. I’m shocked and humbled.”
Together 26 years, couple ‘rarely spent a day apart’

Shane Sherlock and Stephanie Buchanan-Olsen were a couple who rarely spent a day apart. Over 26 years together, they were committed to each other and their family. Shane worked hard, but family was a priority, and he spent as much time with his kids as he could. Whether it was dance class, soccer, swim team or hockey, he and Stephanie made sure if their kids wanted to be involved, they had the chance. Shane's health had declined in recent years, but he continued to work, never forgetting to throw himself into whatever family activity was happening when he got home.

Shane Sherlock made sure his kids were active, and outdoors a lot, including sledding at Fort George with Marty and Ty. Shane Sherlock worked hard, but family was a priority, and he spent as much time with his kids as he could, including watching his son Ty play hockey.

Stephanie is the kindest person, ready to help anybody. She isn't as surprised about the response to the GoFundMe campaign as Buchanan-Olsen tells The Local. “I don’t think a season has gone by that I haven’t caught up with them. I always see them together at Simcoe Park, Virgil Sports Park, at the arena. And Shane has always been the kindest person, ready to help anybody.”

Shane Sherlock stepped up to coach, even though he was involved at St. Mark’s Church, working with his uncle to help maintain the grounds, and with the arena. And Shane has always been the kindest person, ready to help anybody.

Shane Sherlock worked hard to provide for his kids, taking on every job that came his way, and accepting overtime opportunities when they arose. Stephanie says of the couple, “That should be the town’s slogan.”

Shane Sherlock was involved at St. Mark’s Church, working with his uncle to help maintain the town, and the graveyard. In recent years he had discovered more about his family’s heritage in NOTL. — the Sherlock name goes back over 200 years in the town. Stephanie says that Shane, in fact, was the second last baby born at the old hospital on Queen Street. A welder by trade, Shane worked hard to provide for his kids, taking on every job that came his way, and accepting overtime opportunities when they arose. Stephanie agrees that no matter how long his work day was, he would always throw himself into whatever family activity was happening when he got home.

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Hirji fears reopening too aggressive, too soon

Penny Coles
The Local

The lifting of provincial restrictions that comes this week is premature, and too aggressive, says Niagara’s acting chief medical officer. Dr. Mustafa Hirji spoke to reporters Monday, after Premier Doug Ford’s announcement of lifting of indoor capacity limits at restaurants, gyms and other places beginning Thursday, a week early. Ford is ending the COVID-19 vaccine passport system beginning March 1. However, the mask mandate will remain in place.

Further lifting of restrictions expected March 14 will also be fast-tracked to take effect March 1.

The positivity rate of infections is decreasing across the province, said Hirji, and downward trends, such as tests to waste water, look optimistic, but the reduced availability of PCR testing makes it difficult to know how accurate that information is. The number of new infections could be close to 30,000 a day, he suggests.

Although hospital admissions due to COVID are declining, they are not going down as quickly as he’d like to see, and are still higher than in the first two waves. “Hospitals remain quite stretched,” Hirji says. “It’s still a relatively precarious situation.”

Vaccinations are also falling off, and the provincial opening sooner than expected sends a mixed message about the importance of vaccinations that could put people at greater risk, he added.

“On the one hand, the province is saying it’s fine to go into high-risk settings without vaccinations, and on the other hand, they’re saying everybody needs to keep getting vaccinated.”

Hirji suggested that while proof of vaccination is being eliminated in many situations, for those places of employment where it is still necessary, third doses, which increase protection against infection significantly, should be required.

“If the province is really hell-bent on getting rid of it, at least let’s incorporate booster doses into proof of vaccination,” so that three doses are necessary to be considered fully vaccinated. Hirji said although he could prolong some of the measures in the Niagara Region, he believes it’s up to the province to set those broad, relaxed layer of restrictions.

He was asked pretty much the same questions and gave similar responses when interviewed Tuesday on CP24. He also spoke of the lifting of requirements for PCR testing for travel, vaccinated Canadians, saying rapid tests are a good alternative, with a quick turn-around time.

Town provides update on provincial restrictions

Local Staff

A “cautious and gradual easing of public health measures” is starting sooner than expected, with the next phase of measures being eased beginning Thursday, Feb. 17, said a town news release Monday.

“With positivity rates decreasing and new admissions to hospital and ICU declining, it is assumed that the omicron peak is behind us. Therefore, the province feels it is safe to move into the next phase of its reopening plan.”

“It is reassuring to see improvements in key indicators,” said Lord Mayor Betty Disero. “Thank you to all residents who did and continue to do their part in minimizing spread. Due to these committed efforts by all, we are moving to the next phase in reopening earlier than expected.”

The changes in provincial regulations that begin Thursday will include increasing social gathering limits to 50 people indoors and 100 people outdoors, and increasing organized public event limits to 50 people indoors, with no limit outdoors.

Gone are capacity limits in the some indoor public settings where proof of vaccination is required, including restaurants and bars, and non-spectator areas of sports and recreational fitness facilities, including gyms, cinemas and meeting and event spaces.

Seating capacity at sports arenas, concerts and theatres remains at 50 per cent.

Capacity limits for indoor weddings, funerals or religious services, rites, or ceremonies is restricted to the number of people who can maintain two metres physical distance. Capacity limits are removed if the location opts in to use proof of vaccination or if the service, rite, or ceremony occurs outdoors.

Capacity limits in other indoor public settings, such as grocery stores, pharmacies, retail and shopping malls, will be maintained at, or increased to, the number of people who can maintain two metres physical distance.

In addition, as of 8 a.m. on Friday, Feb. 18, Ontario is expanding booster dose eligibility to youth aged 12 to 17. Appointments can be booked through the provincial booking system, as well as at select pharmacies administering the Pfizer vaccine. Appointments will be booked for approximately six months after a second dose.

Visit covid-19.ontario.ca for the most up-to-date information from the province.

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Barn roof collapses, help needed to replace it

Dinah McGibbon can’t remember a time when she didn’t love horses. Her parents established Niagara Riding Stables on Warner Road in 1962, and growing up, she was always surrounded by horses, and learned how to ride at an early age.

She took over the business after her dad’s death, and it, and her horses, have become her life, and her passion.

On the morning of Feb. 4, she woke up and looked out the window at a sight she never expected to see — after a second unusually heavy snowfall, there was ice that had accumulated on the roof of her 100-year-old barn, a portion of the roof had collapsed.

“I’ve never gotten dressed so quickly,” she says. “I couldn’t believe my eyes.”

She rushed to the barn, falling in the snow on the way. She was feeling devastation about the damage, anxious about what she might find, and fearful for her horses.

Only two were in the barn, and thankfully, because she was feeling devastated about the damage, anxious about what she might find, and fearful for her horses.

With her property nestled into the escarpment and surrounded by vineyards, McGibbon has a great location for offering trail rides, and from the testimonials she receives it’s obvious she provides an experience that is much appreciated and valued. “I’ve heard it called ‘a piece of paradise’.”

Some stables get rid of their horses in the fall, one nearly 30 years old, with some health issues, whom she laughingly calls “the love of my life. I kept him going for as long as I could — it was really hard saying goodbye.”

A second horse, a mare, developed kidney disease, won downhill very quickly. “It’s been a rough year,” she says. She would like to build her stable back up to 10 horses, but with COVID more people are buying horses for outdoor activities, and it’s difficult to find the right kind of horse to fit in with the business. Those who are suitable and for sale have become very expensive, she adds, so she may have to wait a little longer to make those purchases.

McGibbon advertises her business for all seasons, but the number of bookings she takes in the winter is very dependent on the weather — she won’t take horses out when trails are icy, or there is too much snow, but there are some days when the weather is perfect for a trail ride. Last Sunday, a beautiful sunny day, there was a lot of snow, with ice below it in spots, and she had cancelled bookings.

Insurance won’t cover the damage caused to the roof, and McGibbon is in a difficult financial position, unable to cover the cost, estimated at $40,000.

It’s important to her that people understand her horses are in no danger. Most are outdoors, where they love to be, wearing blankets against the cold. On Sunday, Duncan and Cino were just inside the doors of the barn, staying close to their feeding pails. But McGibbon is stressed about what she has ahead of her. She’s not thrilled about going public with her problem, but can’t begin to cover the cost without donations, and is appreciative of any help she is offered.

She feels an urgent need to see the roof fixed, sooner rather than later, before more snow or rain turns the barn floor into a pool of mud.

Soon after hearing of the roof collapse, Julie Whitehead, McGibbon’s long-time friend who has been riding at Niagara Riding Stables for more than 40 years now, started a GoFundMe page to help cover the repair cost.

“I want to help fund-raise to help repair the barn roof so that Dinah can continue to provide the necessary shelter for her horses,” she said on the online fundraising page. “I know how much the farm means to Dinah, and to many others who have visited over the years. Being able to fix the roof and damage done will mean the world to Dinah and her horses. Please consider donating whatever you’re able to. No amount is too small.”

A recent post on Facebook by Pat Darte, who understands the complexities of running a stable and caring for horses, was to help with donations to the GoFundMe page. Instead it turned into a long conversation about that donation site and issues connected to the Ottawa protest. It quickly became focused on the protest, rather than McGibbon’s roof, and hasn’t received a lot of attention since.

“I guess I’ve been in such a little bubble, I had no idea what they were talking about. Apparently the topic of GoFundMe has become quite political. Because of that there are several options offered to anyone who wants to donate.”

To help, you can make a donation in one of four ways, says McGibbon.

1. Donate online at https://www.niagaranriding.com by clicking on the PLEASE DONATE NOW button.
2. Send an eTransfer from your bank to info@niagarariding.com.
3. Send a check directly to Niagara Riding Stables at 471 Warner Road RR4, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario L0S 1J0.

Penny Coles
The Local

Dinah McGibbon was able to take a photo of the top of the roof to show the extensive damage caused by snow and ice. It needs to be repaired soon, before snow and rain in the coming days flood the floor of the barn. (Dinah McGibbon)
A Niagara Pumphouse "flash sale" will feature recent art donations from local, national and international artists, and specially curated gift baskets featuring locally-sourced and specialized donations.

This three-day, online sale fundraising Flash Sale, Feb. 25 to 27, will also include unsold works from the arts centre’s annual holiday sale.

"These "overlooked treasures" are being offered at even "more attractive prices," according to the centre’s marketing coordinator Aimee Medina. "The Fundraising Flash Sale features paintings, photography, mixed-media, and sculptures donated by artists, estates, patrons, and members," she explains. "We wouldn't be able to hold this event without the generous contribution of the community. We truly appreciate the incredible support of our donors, board of directors and volunteers," says Rima Boles, arts centre director.

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In addition to donations of works by Victor Klaus and Erin Whitten Crysdale, the Centre has several works by Raymond Martin who, according to Medina, "was born in Toronto and moved to the Niagara Region in the late 80s. He was a popular instructor at the Pumphouse." The curated gift baskets, she adds, "are themed, such as Tea-time, Family fun, and Picnic, thoughtfully put together by the team. They all will be meant to be enjoyed by the buyer, or as gifts for any occasion."

As a not-for-profit community-based organization, the Pumphouse relies on the generosity and support of its members, the artists and the community to fulfill their mission "to engage, enrich and celebrate our diverse and growing population through the visual arts."

"The community is invited to help raise funds for programs that connect and engage the children and youth of our community to visual arts. This is a great opportunity for individuals to start or build their collection or purchase gifts while supporting a great cause," says Boles.

The sale can be previewed starting Feb 21 at the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre website fundraiser page, found at niagarapumphouse.ca/events. The online sale goes live on Feb. 25 at 7 p.m., closing on Feb. 27 at 7 p.m. All items are sold on a first-come, first-serve basis. All proceeds from the online shopping event will go specifically to support children and youth programs.

The Friends of Fort George will be offering an online children's program beginning Thursday, Feb. 17 at 6:30 p.m. Executive director Amanda Gamble is putting out a call to kids to put on their favourite jammies, grab some stuffies, and prepare to listen to a special bedtime story.

The 30-minute program will include a game, special activities to do at home and reading a book called Drummer Hoff. The cost is $10. Tickets can be purchased online for the event, Thursday, Feb 17, 6:30 p.m. to 7 p.m.: https://friendsoffortgeorge.square.site.

Reading Drummer Hoff is included in a 30-minute online Friends of Fort George program. (Photo supplied)
Religious tract spreads misinformation about COVID

Penny Coles
The Local

When Cynthia Rand opened her rural mailbox last week and discovered a religious tract that attacks vaccinations, and just about everything else associated with the COVID pandemic, she was concerned.

"It wasn’t distributed through Canada Post — someone has driven the rural roads to deliver them by hand," she says. There were two and a half double-sided pages of closely packed, really tiny type that made it difficult to read, but she took the time to read through them. "There are most certainly untrue items, and inaccuracies," she says.

She and her husband Peter both have a science background — Peter is a retired professor of biophysics, and Cynthia’s career was as a scientific assistant. She began by pointing out a portion attacking the mRNA vaccinations that this tract says changes our DNA, an argument we’ve heard before, but this time, it says it’s being done "with the goal of making us trans-human…"

The mRNA in vaccinations has not affected the DNA, she points out — many of the experts we trust have stressed that. "It has acted as an intermediary as a defence against the virus."

Another piece of popular misinformation it contains: "Surely by now you can see all 190 nations in coordinated lock step aggressively taking draconian actions against what appears to be no worse than the yearly flu."

"Statistics of deaths, hospitalizations, hospital procedure cancellations, would negate that last part," Cynthia continues. "I thought I could quote, and refute, other parts of this propaganda; it is muddled nonsense, and I thought it must be counteracted," she says, which is why she reached out to The Local.

"It is a detailed description of plans to control or eliminate populations. Those who would profit from results of these plans are not specifically named; pharmaceutical investors are implied," she says. "It is clever. Well-read, educated people, get overwhelmed by the density of its accusations. People not used to examining information flowing at them from all the social media, accept this noxious flow as facts, are angry and feel important. Hence a recourse to powerful trucks."

There is more, some of it very unsettling, including laying out a course it compares to the Holocaust, with those who survive being put in COVID camps, to be re-educated and lose control of their property, never to return.

"There is far, far more, but Cynthia fears repeating it is akin to spreading misinformation and giving it a legitimacy it doesn’t deserve. It should be counteracted, but I don’t know how to do that with publicizing it?"

Although she admits to getting angry at such misinformation, and can be aggressive in wanting to pursue it and do something about it, Peter, she says, is more laid back. "This, however, disturbed him as well. He started to read the tract, and gave up, tossing it aside. "There is no value in it, and I think there is danger in it. You can’t counter these arguments even if you wanted to. There is a gap that can’t be crossed. There is no point in discussion — the differences are irreconcilable."

Social media makes it so easy to draw people in, and spread misinformation so quickly, he added, "it’s a major problem in the world today. The speed with which misinformation can be transmitted is pretty unprecedented. Any group that has something they want to propagate any idea, can find enough people to support it, and to make a lot of noise about it, until it becomes quite a force."

Peter says he can’t imagine what people would be looking for that would compel them to read the tract. "I’d be surprised if many did read it, and if they did, it would be interesting to know what they took from it, and what their interest is."

"The best way of countering this propaganda, says Cynthia, “is to ask people who receive it to read it, carefully, like the small print of a contract, until they can take no more, and then burn it.”
Local author writes about importance of monarchy

Penny Coles
The Local

After a distinguished career in academia, and with a list of scholarly and authoritative tomes on Canadian politics, the constitution and federalism to his credit, David Smith says he might just have written his last book. An important one.

His most recent, co-authored with two other experts on Canada’s constitution and the role of the monarchy, has just recently been released, and is being positively reviewed.

Canadian Deep Crown, Smith says, explains how a constitutional monarchy functions, and how it has shaped, and continues to shape Canada’s system of government.

Its role in our history, and in our government today, is not something that is widely understood by Canadians, he says.

Despite having worked with co-authors Christopher McCreery, the private secretary to the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, and Jonathan Shanks, senior counsel at the Privy Council Office Legal Services Sector of the Department of Justice Canada, Smith says he doesn’t remember much talk about the Crown at all during his school days, “except that it did exist, and that we were a colony of Great Britain. People don’t think that way any more.”

He says when we talk about the Crown, it is typically about the pomp and circumstance — but more about the pomp, and little about the circumstance, yet “it’s remarkable how well the system works. Canadians need to be more appreciative of the success of the constitutional system in our country”.

Canadian Deep Crown, Smith says, is important in that it will help Canadians have a better understanding of the constitutional system and its success.

He and the co-authors “thought it would be helpful to explain the breadth and depth of the powers of the Crown in Canada, as a symbol, but one that has a lot of influence. The tendency is to undervalue that.”

Smith was born in Nova Scotia, of British heritage, and has lived in different locations across the country, including B.C., Saskatchewan, and Ontario.

His wife was a judge in the court of appeal in Saskatchewan, while he was a professor at the university.

He has been called “one of the treasures of Canadian political science,” and is now a political studies professor emeritus of the University of Saskatchewan, where he taught political science from 1964 to 2004, and is a previous president of the Canadian Political Science Association.

He is also an adjunct faculty member in the department of politics and public administration and a member of the Yeates School of Graduate Studies at Ryerson University.

And his wife are enjoying retirement years in Niagara-on-the-Lake, family both close and by scattered across Canada.

Their conversation was around the court of appeal in Saskatchewan, while he was a professor at the university.

The book, “The Crown in Canada,” published by University of Toronto Press, which says about the book, “The Crown in Canada has had a profound influence in shaping a country and a constitution that embraces the promotion of political moderation, societal accommodation, adaptable constitutional structures, and pluralistic governing practices. While none of these features themselves originated through legislative or constitutional action, David E. Smith, Christopher McCreery, and Jonathan Shanks propose that all reflect the presence and actions of the Crown.”

It is available from Amazon, at Indigo Books, and where academic books are sold, says Smith.

Reviews that have been published recently call it “an excellent book that should be read by anyone interested in the monarchy in Canada. It is the most comprehensive and authoritative source available on the subject, offering a wide-ranging and in-depth analysis of the crucial role played by the Crown in Canada.” (Andrew Heard, Professor of Political Science, Simon Fraser University)

Serge Joyal, former member of the Senate of Canada, says on the eve of the Queen’s jubilee, the publication of a book by three knowledgeable authors underscores the exceptional character of her long reign.

In exploring three core themes — myth, law, and personality — the authors explain how the Crown retains its enduring importance in our constitutional order. Readers will learn the ways by which the Crown continues to serve and remains relevant in contemporary Canada."

NOTL author David E. Smith (Photo supplied)

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Special to The Local

The local air search and rescue team has accomplished another first in their 45-year history as part of the national organization, training in the use of drones.

In 1982, members of CASARA Niagara (Civil Air Search and Rescue Association) were involved with Canadian Forces conducting tests of the satellite program for search and rescue operations used worldwide.

The Niagara organization was recently again at the forefront of search and rescue history by conducting exercises for Canadian Forces observers in the use of drones as a search vehicle in cold weather.

Major Claude Courcelles, the Canadian Forces national CASARA liaison officer, gave the morning briefing to combined air and ground crew of search and rescue members from Niagara and London.

“You are making history today, by attempting to prove the capabilities of your skills with the added assistance of remotely piloted aircraft systems (drones) in order to locate a person in dense forest.”

Canadian Forces Major Claude Courcelles provided a morning briefing to Search And Rescue volunteers of CASARA Niagara and London at Niagara District Airport. (Randy Klaassen)

Niagara member Gord Tessier has been at the forefront of drone use for search and rescue operations in Canada, as a drone pilot and instructor. In the past year he has been travelling across Ontario and Quebec instructing new search and rescue drone pilots.

“The skills are varied, in that not only do pilots fly, they also follow complex search patterns, all the while searching video monitors for the person or object they are searching for,” said Tessier.

Using electronic homing receivers, two separate ground crews worked together to narrow down the area of the search, whereas another drone pilot had crashed, and ground crews had to rely upon their own skills to do the searching. With temperatures in the minus 10 range, time was of the essence to find the cold, and likely, injured pilot.

While flying the drone, a team effort said Tessier.

“It’s always about researching and the latest technology being used to filter the data produced by drones to detect persons in distress,” said Courcelles.

As a non-profit registered charity, CASARA volunteer teams in London and Niagara depend on donations for equipment and operations. For more information, see the website for Niagara at www.casaraniagara.ca, or for London at https://casaralondon.ca.

Drone pilot Gord Tessier and an assistant fly one drone, while the other is at base for a battery change. Meanwhile crew members watch a video monitor of what the drone sees — a pilot who crashed, waiting to be rescued. (Alex Cuberovic)
Council agrees on solution to 15-year-old problem

**Alternative school closed by court decision**

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

Monday morning, the classrooms that have been filled with students attending an alternative school in the former Virgil building were empty.

Redekop, owner of the Four Mile Creek Road building and landlord to the school, said he visited the property Monday morning and found no one there.

At the Niagara Alternative Learning Alliance, which was renting space from Redekop, was shut down by an injunction order against the school, based on provincial legislation that allows a school to be closed to be if it is “an imminently threat to the health, safety or welfare of any children.”

The Ministry of Education had launched the complaint and sought an injunction to stop the school from opening. The school was being run by Mon-ica Mc-Court and Lori Dav- idon, along with parent volunteers, with up to 40 students aged 14 to 15, from Grade 9 to Grade 11.

The women running the program described it as a learning pod providing support to students, such as Justice Meredith Donohue, hearing the case, disagreed, although she noted that the women were “sincere and well-meaning in their personal desire to foster the health and well-being of their children.”

On Wednesday, Jan. 26, Donohue said that when an inspection from the prov-ince went to the school, there were 11 children in one classroom, and 18 in another.

The program being of-fered is not a private school under the education act, or a licensed day care centre under the child care and early years act, she said. The program is being operated under a licence issued by the province in order to provide care in a licensed day care centre, she said.

The operators, the justices noted, objected to the order because they said “no investiga-tion took place.”

When the women didn’t comply, the ministry filed the application for an injunction, resulting in Fri-day’s hearing.

In describing her analy-sis of the situation and her findings in the case, Donohue men-cioned the number of mea-sures taken by the prov-ince since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic “sought for public safety and to maintain the capability of our public health system to deal with the increased demand on their resources. We have seen the govern-ment take steps to lighten or tighten the measures in consultation with public health as the pandemic has not waned and waxed in the last two years.”

The measures are in place to protect vulnerable people, including children, she said. The issue of the school is not following those restrictions came to light when they freely ad-mitted, on social media and to the media, that neither the children nor the adults were wearing masks, and that some of the children, when attending public school, had been segregat-ed, discriminated against, the next day. In addi-tion, there was a mental health issues. Da-vidon also posted photos of her school, its interior, without any masks or physically distancing.

During the hearing, the women said the children and educators that were unmasked all have “mask ex-aminations.”

Donohue said that “there was nothing going on at the school” when he was there Monday morning, but he hadn’t been told anything “officially” about McCourt’s intentions going forward.

When he agreed to the terms of the stay order, he was described to him as a “home-schooling with a sub rosa methodology.”

The court held, “The recommendation representing the school ‘are aware of the laws and regulations but persist to serve their own agenda.’”

The injunction is con-sidered an interim order to be maintained until there is a final decision or further order of the court.

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McCourt told the Lo-cal in an email Monday that Davidson no longer represents the school or its community, although she was posting on Facebook as one of the opera-tors of the school as of Jan. 16. She referred to a document referred to Mc-Court and Davidson as “the two respondents” who have spearheaded the program as a collective with other parents.

The women to Davidson saying she has her own opinions and separate from the school.

The ministry has exemptions to legislation that could have allowed the school to operate, but it has such as if it was operating outside of regular school hours, if it is licensed as a private school “is a day care for no more than five children, but those ex-aminations don’t apply to the Virgil school founded by McCourt, who says she is the sole owner of the cor-poration formed to operate the school.”

Donohue said she had no evidence to support or demonstra-te, but when then circumstances,” said the women involved seemed well-intentioned. Nothing was ever told to him about their activities.

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The work to create a kinder world never ends. There is no limit on the amount of goodness you can put into the world! Join the annual Random Acts of Kindness Day (RAK DAY) celebration on Thursday, Feb. 17, and help #MakeKindnessTheNorm. The website offers resources, activities, and kindness challenges to help spread kindness all week long. Visit www.randomactsofkindness.org to download your free participant guide that contains everything you need to plan a fun week. Let’s make 2022 the biggest RAK Week and RAK Day yet.

by Taleah Bucci, II

Q. What do you want to be when you grow up?
A. I would like to be a firefighter. I know a lot about fire and my body is fireproof.

Q. What is your favourite thing about Niagara-on-the-Lake?
A. The scenery. I love seeing how it changes through the seasons, and I never leave home without my camera.

Q. How did you keep yourself busy during COVID lockdowns?
A. I made friendship bracelets, arranged flower bouquets, went figure skating, learnt how to play the recorder, took online singing lessons, played with my stuffy friends, and built puzzles.

Q. How would you change the world if you could?
A. I would stop global warming (with the ability to breathe fire, I’m hot enough already).

Q. What is your ideal day in Niagara-on-the-Lake?
A. I’d begin the day playing outside in one of the parks. Then I’d fly along the shoreline of the lake and collect pebbles and sea glass. I’d finish the day with a picnic.

by Maanak Gandhi-Malhotra

Q. Why was the tortilla sad?
A. I don’t know. He didn’t want to TACO-bout it!

Crossword: ANIMAL GROUPS

Down:
1. A group of hummingbirds
2. A group of butterflies
3. A group of penguins
4. A group of terriers
5. A group of bats
6. A group of giraffes

Across:
1. A group of caterpillars
2. A group of kangaroos
3. A group of zebras
4. A group of fish
5. A group of elk
6. A group of lions

Some insects survive the winter by producing their own version of “antifreeze.” Scientists call these produced chemicals “cryoprotectants” which make the insects less likely to freeze in cold weather.
Minor soccer planning season of ‘normal game activity’

Soccer club president Carrie Plaskett is hoping this soccer season will unfold as planned, but will be prepared for alternatives if it doesn’t. (Photo supplied)

Mike Balsom
Special To The Local

Registration for soccer in Niagara-on-the-Lake opened last week, with the NOTL Soccer Club planning for a full return to normal game activity for the first time since 2019.

‘It’s pretty exciting,’ new club president Carrie Plaskett says. ‘We’re moving forward, making this basically a normal season. We’re planning to make this look like what it looked like before all of our lives changed. And if it has to change, we’ll be prepared to make modifications if needed, because of our success last year.’

After a 2020 that saw soccer fields remain vacant, the game returned to NOTL in a condensed and altered version in 2021.

Before hitting the fields last season, the club’s board of directors worked hard to plan for the return, responding to many different changes in COVID restrictions over the months before summer began. Just as they had nailed down what it would look like, restrictions changed. But as outdoor activities for kids were not only being allowed but being encouraged by the province, the club decided to offer a summer season that focused even more on skills development, rather than house league competition.

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As well, equipment orders were modified last summer, with each player receiving a club T-shirt and socks rather than a full uniform. That allowed the club to remain flush financially, as did the contributions from local business owners, who continued to generously support the sport through sponsorship.

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Plaskett says she’s in for the long haul when it comes to her involvement with the club. She wouldn’t have taken on the president’s role if she wasn’t. And she was impressed with the way things came together for 2021.

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At press time, about 85 kids have already been registered for age divisions from Tinkers (U2/U3) up to U15, with a plan to hit the pitch the week after Victoria Day. Most house league divisions play out of the Virgil sports park, and the season wraps up the week before Labour Day.

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To register and to sign up as a parent volunteer, visit notlsoccer.ca.

Charlotte Mannella (above) practises her kicks, Sophie Mannella, 13, does a spin hook kick (above, centre), and Samuel, 5, shows off his jump kick (right). They are training with Master Badri Ricin St. Davids. (Photos supplied)

Soccer club planning season of ‘normal game activity’

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Strengthening mind and body

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For the second straight weekend the Niagara Predators followed up a Friday night loss with a Sunday afternoon win in Greater Metro Junior A Hockey League (GMHL) action last week.

In a rare Friday night game on the road in Mississauga, the Predators found their first shut-out of the season at the hands of the Streetsville Flyers. Though Niagara outshot the Flyers 40-23, they just could not solve goalie Tayte Pyrek in the home team’s net.

“It was a very tough loss,” head coach and owner Robert Turnbull said. “Turnbull told The Local. ‘I have to tip my hat to their goalie. He played really well. We had several opportunities to score, but it just didn’t happen.’”

The scoreboard remained blank throughout the first period, but only 48 seconds into the second Flyers forward Nick Giamou got the credit for a goal that started with a scramble around the net, bounced off two players out front and caromed off a skate and past Niagara goalie Morgan Penwell, who was making his season debut, but for the Predators. Giamou also assisted on Cole Wigle’s empty net goal with 1:21 remaining to make it a 2-0 game.

“Penwell played exceptionally well also,” Turnbull said. “It was an unbelievable game. I told them ‘if you leave the trash angry because you lost, that’s okay. But don’t leave thinking you lost because you didn’t work hard. You should hold your heads high on your way out. It was an awesome goal-tending battle.”

The Predators had some power play chances in the third, knocking the puck off the crossbar and the post a few times, while Pyrek continued his phenomenal play, stopping a number of other chances. For the second weekend, Niagara was short-staffed, with forwards Mario Zitella, Georgy Khlokovsky, Dante Massi and Alessandro Massi as well as defenceman Logan Baillie all out sitting.

As one of the lineup was Swedish forward Emil Eriksson, Turnbull passed on the news that the speedy winger has opted out not to return to Canada to finish the season, which wraps up on March 6. Instead, he will be playing professionally in Äseda, Sweden in Alltrane Division 3.

As well, fellow Swede Jesper Eriksson (no relation), who left the team the previous weekend for a tryout with a team in Austria, has left the Predators permanently. The Preds leading scorer this season with 56 points (tied with Dante Massi), will be moving on to a Swedish pro team in the Hockeyettan league.

The short bench meant Niagara could only cycle two forward lines throughout the game, leaving some players in the unusual situation of actually wanting to come off the ice at times. Turnbull credited Gino Carriere Squire, Dawson Walker and Reese Bisci as unsung heroes in Friday’s game.

Alexander Page joined the others on the sidelines for Sunday’s game in Platville as a result of an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty Friday. Page competed with some chance words on the ice that earned the new Niagara forward, in only his third game with the team, a suspension for Sunday.

Turnbull and assistant coach Connor Shipton had to rotate defencemen into the sixth forward slot just to keep two lines rolling.

Bucci thrived with all the extra ice time Sunday, picking up five points on two goals and three assists. His linemates Noah Caperchione, with a hat trick and a helper, and Jason Humphries, with two assists, accounted for all of the scoring in a 5-4 victory, with defence-man Maxwell Bredin adding an assist.

Caperchione got the ball rolling just 15 seconds into the first period, then added his second goal three minutes later, giving Niagara a 2-0 lead. Kyle Struth got the Lakers on the scoreboard before Bisci netted his first, then added a second goal to narrow the margin to 3-2. With Carter Square in the penalty box, Platville’s Lucas Bart tied it up before the period ended.

Turnbull made a golden-edging change before the second period began, replacing Jacob Callco with David White. Bucci’s second of the night came on the power play at 8:32 into that period, but Platville’s Malcolm Campbell knocked the score yet again as that frame closed out.

Caperchione completed the hat trick five minutes into the final frame when Humphries fed him a pass from Niagara’s face-off circle to centre. Caperchione turned and beat two Platville defenders to sneak a wrist shot past goalie Rahul Bola for the winning goal.

“Turnbull is hoping to have three lines for the upcoming weekend, which they open Friday night at home against the North York Renegades. The Predators hit the road for a Saturday night match in Windsor, then head in the other direction for a Sunday rematch at the second place Renegades’ home arena.

With two games this weekend against the Renegades, Niagara is going to have to find a way to solve forward Santino Foti, who has 29 goals and 63 assists on the season and is second in points in the GMHL’s South Division, fourth overall in the league.

“We really have to put a person on him, and we can do that when we have three plus lines,” explains Turnbull. “We’re just going to have to keep an eye on him. He’s a gifted player, but it’s not just Foti, they have a few. We’re just going to have to stay close to him as best we can and be aggressive.”
WICHERT, GEORGE—passed away Sunday, February 13, at Pleasant Manor in Virgil. He was 94 years old.

George was born in April 1927 in Kitchener, Ontario, to Henry and Elisabeth Wichert, who had immigrated to Canada from Russia the year before with their 3 eldest children. George was the first of five children born in Canada. Except for Margaret, who died at age 2, the rest all remained in and around Virgil, and in time the 7 siblings, 6 spouses, and 23 children formed a large and close-knit family clan.

In 1935 the family bought land in Niagara-on-the-Lake, on Niven Rd., where George grew up and developed his love of farming. After WWII interrupted his schooling, George finished high school at the newly formed Eden Christian College (now Eden High School), then located in Niagara-on-the-Lake. He was the first in his family both to finish high school and to go on to university, attending Waterloo College of Arts (now Wilfrid Laurier University), and a year of teacher’s college in Toronto, before becoming a high school teacher.

In 1954 George married Bertha Dick, recently graduated from nursing school. A year later he returned to Virgil, and to Eden, to begin his 32-year career at the school, including 12 years as principal. He built a house on Henry St., at the time only a dirt track, with electricity, but no running water. In December their first son, David, was born, followed, in later years, by 4 more children: Nancy, Timothy, Geoffrey and Suzanne.

In 1970 the family moved across Virgil, to a farm and new house on Line 1. The cherry and peach orchards became another defining feature of the family, blending the rhythm of pruning and harvesting with the cycles of the school year.

George was ordained as a minister in 1964, and after his retirement from teaching in 1987 he and Bertha spent several years doing pastoral ministry in Mennonite churches, first in Germany and then back in Virgil. Bertha died of cancer in 1997, after nearly 43 years of marriage, and the following year George married Linda Willms, with whom he would spend the remaining 24 years of his life.

George has always loved to travel. In addition to regular family camping trips, he and Bertha did major excursions to Europe, India, and Africa. Together with Linda he travelled to Europe, Israel, Alaska, UK, the Mediterranean, and the Caribbean. In between these major excursions, Ontario canal cruises and several US locations were favourite destinations, as well as trips to western Canada to visit children and grandchildren. We celebrated his 90th birthday with a Caribbean cruise including all 4 children and their partners.

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George is survived by his wife, Linda, 4 children, 13 grandchildren, 5 great grandchildren, brother Walt and sister Marian. He is predeceased by his first wife, Bertha, eldest son Dave, brothers Henry, John and Jake, and sisters Margaret and Louise.

The funeral will take place Tuesday, February 22, 11:00am at Cornerstone Community Church, 434 Hunter Rd., Niagara-on-the-Lake, with visitation an hour before the service (10:00am). The service will be livestreamed at: https://cornerstonenotl.online church. Burial at Niagara Lakeshore Cemetery immediately following the service. There will also be visitation at the church on Monday, February 21, from 5:00-7:00pm.

Memorial donations may be made to the Eden High School Spiritual Life Centre (www.slceden.com/donation) or Camp Crossroads (www.campcrossroads.com/give/)

SHERLOCK, SHANE—It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing of Shane Robert Holtam Sherlock, after a heart attack on Saturday, February 5, 2022 at the age of 52.

Shane was extremely intelligent, thoughtful, generous and wild. Such a philosopher, such a rebel. He touched the lives of so many from all walks of life. He lived for any sport, music, nature, but most of all his family. He was the hardest working and best damn father there is.

Shane leaves behind his wife and best friend Stephanie of 26 years. Beloved father of Chloe, Paige, Marty, and Ty. Loving son of Glenda Edgar (Marc Bertrand). Caring brother of Lucia (Christian Olofsson) and her children Pontus and Sebastian. Fondly remembered by his dogs Rufus and Kiki and the many members of the Tribe and Bjorgan families.

Cremation has taken place. A celebration of Shane’s legacy will take place on Sunday, May 29, 2022 with details to come closer to the date. Arrangements entrusted to MORGAN FUNERAL HOME, 415 Regent Street, Niagara-on-the-Lake. Those who wish to make a memorial donation can do so to his favourite charity, Red Roof Retreat. Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at www.morganfuneral.com

SUDOKU ANSWER

This is a live-out position. Work from Monday to Thursday. $700 weekly. Administrative Assistant position (part-time). Must be able to interact. MUST HAVE REFERENCES AND BE RESPONSIBLE.

If interested you can reach Jackie at burnsh9jjackie@meefeltzhpcdhvaed.com

Sell your unwanted items or advertise your garage sale in our CLASSIFIEDS

To place your classified ad, contact Karen: classifieds@notllocal.com

Deadline: Mondays at 3 p.m.
FREE HOME EVALUATION

CALL OR TEXT GREG DIRECT
905.329.3484

This market is wild and the average sale price of a Niagara-on-the-Lake home is now nearing $1,200,000. If you want to know what your home is worth, call Greg now for a free evaluation.

GREG SYKES real estate TEAM

12 St Andrews Lane
$1,075,000
Elevator, gorgeous finishes

2241 Four Mile Creek Rd
$1,450,000
Gorgeous property with large barn and double garage!

3 Meritage Lane
$1,645,000
Backing onto a vineyard

5 Sandlewood
$3,250,000
5,500 square feet of finished living space

6 Brown’s Point
$3,995,000
6 bedroom, 8 bathrooms. Over 11,000 ft.

16 George Manor
$995,000
Gorgeous end unit townhome

831 Concession 6
$1,790,000
42 beautiful acres

8 Harmony Dr
$1,850,000
Jumbo bungalow with private backyard, call Greg for asking price!

56 Niagara On The Green Blvd. NOTL
$850,000
Beautiful 2100sq ft. 2 Storey Detached Home

1550 Concession 4
$899,000
Sold to our happy clients

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St. Davids

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