



Matteo Giampa ready for next stop of hockey journey
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notllocal.com March 2, 2022 Volume 4 • Issue 9



Bob Oleskiw was at the St. Catharines rally Saturday, as was his daughter Jane Oleskiw (centre, back row). Bob is preparing to help Ukrainians who make their way to Canada. (Photo supplied)

Local man joins rally for Ukraine

**Mike Balsom
Special to The Local**

Local resident Bob Oleskiw was heartened by the show of support for Ukraine at a rally Saturday that began at Sts. Cyril and Methodius Ukrainian Catholic Church in north St. Catharines.

According to Irene Schumylo Newton, president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress - Niagara Chapter, almost 1,000 people turned up to march from the Niagara Street church down Facer Street to St. George's Ukrainian Orthodox Church, many waving the blue and yellow Ukrainian flag or holding signs denouncing Russian president Vladimir Putin.

"The overwhelming support for the Ukrainian community has been fantastic," Oleskiw told The Local Sunday. "The community is interested in what is going on

in Ukraine. It really means a lot to us. It's hard to believe that in this day and age a situation that is so reminiscent of what happened in World War II is happening right in front of us."

Oleskiw is of Ukrainian descent, as is his wife Tina. With Tina's relatives still living in Ukraine, the couple usually visits the country every second year. Their last trip was about three years ago, and they would have made another recent trip if the pandemic hadn't made that nearly impossible.

"She has aunts and cousins there, who we stay with when we visit," he explained. "Thankfully we've been able to get in touch with them recently. At this point in time everybody is safe. They live in a smaller village, about 40 kilometres from one of the airports that was bombed."

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Locals with relatives in Ukraine wait and worry

**Penny Coles
The Local**

In Niagara-on-the-Lake, as around the world, we hoped for a diplomatic solution to stop the attack on Ukraine we feared was coming. When the invasion began last Thursday, locals with ties to the Ukraine, surprised by the extent of the attacks, began waiting for news of relatives.

They are learning some

had hunkered down, some were trying to escape to Poland or other safe havens, and others were still struggling to make a decision about what to do.

Local Shirley Madsen has family in the western part of Ukraine, and heard Friday morning they were safe, but she is still frightened for them. She is praying for them, she says.

"This has hit me harder than I thought it would. I feel like I did when 9/11

happened, just numb."

One of her cousins lives in Ivano-Frankivsk, with her daughter-in-law, who had never been outside her hometown, and two young children.

Despite the recent lead-up to the Russian invasion, they had no plans to leave.

Madsen's cousin's son was in Poland, where he works, and once the attacks started, if he'd gone home, he wouldn't be able to leave. On Thursday,

when the military airport in their town was hit by a missile — captured on video and shown around the world — her cousin's grandkids were crying and scared, and they decided to pack up what they could to fit in their small car, get money from the bank, and head to Poland.

They live just three hours from the Polish border, says Madsen, but there were so many cars on the road, it took them all last

Thursday night to drive one kilometre.

Friday morning, she heard they were only three kilometres from Poland, and then learned later they had crossed the border safely. She heard Sunday they were heading to a Catholic women's monastery 90 kilometres away to live, the children separated from their father, "and their lives behind them," she says, at least for now. They feel once the war is

over they will all go back home.

Madsen also has a cousin Roman, who lives in Kyiv, but travelled to Sokal, north of Lviv, to stay with his parents. Attacks continued to focus on the capital city, and he doesn't know if his apartment is still there.

"He said there is no bombing there (in Sokal), so for now they are safe,"

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Councillors share their support for Ukraine

Penny Coles
The Local

At Monday's council meeting, Lord Mayor Betty Disero and councillors spoke to the people of Niagara-on-the-Lake of Ukrainian heritage, very painful to many Canadians, particularly those of Ukrainian heritage.

The town, she says, stands with the people of Ukraine and extends a plea for peace to those imposing harm and violence against them.

"The news we have observed coming from Ukraine is devastating," she said.

"We stand with Ukrainians worldwide, those experiencing these horrific actions, and those watching and hearing the disturbing news reports. The destruction is severe, and the actions taken against Ukraine are unwarranted."

Together, the town and members of council "support the Prime Minister of Canada and world leaders in their response to this attack."

Other members of council also spoke in support.

Counc. Allan Bisback said he too is saddened by events in Ukraine, and encouraged council members and residents to print out

the Ukrainian flag to post in their window.

He has one in his window, and has also printed out copies for friends and a few businesses on Queen Street to post as "just a small measure of support."

Coun. Clare Cameron spoke of the people, the energy and turnout that occurred in St. Catharines at the rally held Saturday, and suggested when people are shopping they can support some of the Ukrainian businesses in the Facer Street area of St. Catharines, and through online fundraising.

Coun. Wendy Cheropita said her grandparents on her father's side were born in Ukraine, "when the borders were different than they are today." She still has relatives there, and "even just acknowledging the situation with kind words is appreciated."

"Ukrainians are tough, strong people," she said. "They don't feel powerless. They feel empowered by all of the support, prayers and the many acknowledgments around the world that make them feel stronger. So know that that's how Ukrainians are, and that they will succeed, that this will be over,

and they will survive."

"It's important to take a few minutes talking about this," said Coun. Gary Burroughs. "I'm sure we've all been watching on television, day in and day out, being amazed every time another day has gone by and seeing the strength of individuals. I'm so impressed by the people of Ukraine that are able to stand up and really defend their country, and I wonder

if we could all do the same. So yes, we need to support them any way we can."

"It is astounding to me," said Coun. Norm Arsenault, "that one individual, one tyrant — the only word I can use — can actually cause this kind of angst around the world. It is encouraging to see all the communities, the countries around the world and all the people that are showing their support.

You see so many changes in countries who have sat on the sidelines in the past, and who are now stepping up and helping out."

He suggested the Red Cross as a good organization to send donations to, with the government of Canada matching those funds. Donations can be made at <https://donate.redcross.ca/page/100227/donate/1?locale=en-CA>.

"I encourage people to continue supporting the Ukrainian community. I think it's extremely important that this gets resolved satisfactorily."

Coun. Sandra O'Connor also said how important it is to support Ukraine, a democratic republic. "Democracy is at stake here, with people fighting to maintain their way of life. It's just heart-breaking to see."



The Ukrainian flag was raised at the town hall Friday. (Photo supplied)

Oleskiw preparing to help refugees as they arrive

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They saw some of the action but weren't in immediate danger."

For Oleskiw, it's the uncertainty that Ukrainians are feeling as Putin's attack on the country continues that is concerning. On the day he spoke to The Local, he was driving to Toronto to help a friend from Ukraine who was in Canada when the Russian invasion began.

"He's here for a visit, and his wife and daughter are there in one of the villages," Oleskiw explained. "His English skills are not the best. He's not sure how to navigate the situation and figure out what to do. He wants to know if she gets to the border in Poland or Romania, will they be able to be re-

united?"

When he was last in Ukraine, there was no inkling that the situation would turn out the way it has, though in October, 2019, Russia kicked off a test of the country's nuclear arsenal, dubbed Thunder-2019, close to the border between the two countries.

"There was always hope that that's all it was," he said, "that it wasn't part of his master plan to overtly bring all these troops in and execute this devious invasion. No one thought that the hands of sanity could be turned back. When I watched the footage at my parents' place the first day, it was surreal."

Seeing average, everyday Ukrainians being weaponized to join the defence effort hits home for the fire-

fighter. His own father did exactly that in the Second World War. Once he emigrated to Canada, the elder Oleskiw never revisited his birthplace.

Watching the footage of men leaving their families at the border and going back to fight has been a gut-wrenching experience for the father of Jane and Julia.

"Those are families that may potentially never be together again. But the men realize that they have to defend their country. Who knows what they will be going back to?"

Like many, Oleskiw worries about the threat of a full-bore nuclear conflict.

"The hard part is to see the world standing by and watching," lamented Oleskiw. "Putin's nuclear threats are legitimate. He has nothing

to lose at this point. But I know everyone has to err on the side of caution."

He admires the approach of Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy who, when asked by the U.S. if he wanted them to come in to remove him safely from Ukraine, said, "I don't need a ride, I need more ammunition."

"That's been the sentiment, not just of this recent incursion or World War II, but for centuries countries have been encroaching on the sovereign Ukraine, trying to take it over. It's something that my wife and I, as kids, grew up learning about, the culture, the invasions, the fighting for their solidarity."

And it's something he has worked hard to impart to his daughters. The elder one, Jane, was at the rally

with a group of her friends, taking an active role in supporting the community.

As second vice-president and chair of the Niagara Folk Arts Multicultural Centre, Oleskiw is preparing to help out with Ukrainian refugees when the time comes.

"We've had experience with Syrian and Afghani refugees," he said, "and we're set up for those from Ukraine. Our provincial government saying they're going to open up the doors really means a lot to those of us who have families there. It gives us some hope that there will be some good news for them after they are forced from their country."

With rallies taking place across Canada and around the world, Oleskiw is appreciative that people have been paying close atten-

tion to what is going on in Ukraine as the invasion continues.

"Twenty years ago, things would have been much different," Oleskiw said. "With social media we have instantaneous live feeds, and we have organizations like Bell offering free phone calls to Ukraine, and Elon Musk providing Starlink to have internet services. Those are vital for information's sake and for us to be able to assure people."

Oleskiw urges anyone wishing to support Ukraine with donations to visit the Canada-Ukraine Foundation at cufoundation.ca and donate to their Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal, or to donate to the Canadian Red Cross Ukraine Humanitarian Crisis Appeal at redcross.ca.



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Gardens of sunflowers can honour Ukraine

Penny Coles
The Local

Shirley Madsen grew up in a Ukrainian community in Toronto, and still has family living in Ukraine, in a few different areas.

Since late last week, she has been keeping up-to-date with their whereabouts, deeply distressed about the Russian invasion, and fearful for the safety of her relative.

She really wanted to do something to help, and by Monday morning, with support from the Canada

Ukraine Foundation, she had a plan.

Madsen, a gardener, remembered sunflowers are Ukraine's national flower.

She has already put a blue and yellow flag along the fence of her Lakeshore Road home, and has decided she will plant sunflower seeds as well. She is encouraging others to do the same.

She quotes Helen Keller: "Keep your face to the sunshine and you cannot see the shadows. It's what the sunflowers do."

"Many of us are feeling empty and helpless, wondering what can we do," she says. Sunflowers are her answer. The idea of Sunflowers for Ukraine came about after she saw a report on MSNBC of a woman confronting a heavily-armed Russian soldier, offering him sunflower seeds to put in his pocket so that they might bloom when he dies. The video can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJJ8zmcBH2A>

"Brave women carefully put sunflowers paired with blue flowers, symbolic of the Ukrainian flag, in their hair," she says. "The darkness in

the middle of the sunflower represents sadness, while the bright yellow petals are the possibility for happiness and sunshine."

Many young men, fathers and grandfathers have left their families behind, she says, picking up arms to defend Ukraine against the Russian invasion. "Many women, grandmothers and children have fled the country or are huddled in subways or bomb shelters. Many have left their homes,



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Family here trying to help relatives reach safety

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Madsen says, hoping to get more information during a WhatsApp video call with them this weekend.

She and her husband Finn hoped to meet her family during a visit they were planning to Ukraine in April, 2020. Her cousin Roman was going to be their tour guide, but then COVID hit, and the trip was put off.

Madsen grew up in Toronto, in a Ukrainian household in a Ukrainian community, attended a Ukrainian Catholic School, and belonged to a Ukrainian Girl Guide group.

Her grandmother and her mother were born in

Lviv.

"My mother lived through all of this. My grandmother lived through this. Now we're doing it all over again. We have to stop this."

She and Finn attended a rally in St. Catharines, and both found it very emotional. Shirley says she doesn't understand why more isn't being done to stop the attacks.

"If nobody stops him (Putin), nothing will stop him from going to Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia. He's an evil man who will just keep going."

"Putin needs to be charged with war crimes by the World Court. He should also lose Russia's position on the Security

Council. The financial and banking penalties against Russia are only a start. It's not the Russian people, it's Putin!"

Helen Arsenault, who has worked for The Local since shortly after it opened, is another NOTL resident with family in Ukraine. Hers was new-found. After losing her father in the fall of 2019 — her mother and brother had already passed away — she decided to find a reputable genealogist to track down her family, and she discovered she had relatives on both sides of her family, in the East and the West. On Ukrainian Christmas Day, Jan. 7, 2021, she made her first phone call to connect with



The photo of the family goes with the story that started on pg 1: Helen Arsenault's young cousin and her husband had found a place they felt was safe over the weekend, where they were planning to stay with their twin three-year-old sons. (Photo supplied)

them, and talked for hours. "There were so many tears, so many stories about family," she says. "We've been in touch ever since."

"In a nutshell," Arsenault adds, "I went from no relatives, or so I thought, to 10 on my maternal side in Western Ukraine near Lviv, and to 19 in Eastern Ukraine near Odessa. On both maternal and paternal sides, my grandfathers and my cousins' grandfathers were brothers."

Arsenault learned Friday that her maternal cousin's daughter, Viktoriia, married with two three-year-old twin boys, tried to get to Poland from Lviv, where they live. She and her husband were travelling with his brother, wife, and their two children. But when they reached the border, the men were told they couldn't leave — men from 18 to 60 years old are being conscripted to fight for their country. The four adults decided to take their children back to a family farm outside Lviv, a place where they felt safe, while deciding what to do. They were struggling with the choices — stay in Ukraine, keep their families together and risk death, or leave the men behind, the women taking their children to safety in Poland amidst bombardment along the way. They felt they would stay put, and Viktoriia was working with a group of women putting together supplies for others who were planning to head to Poland.

"She says she feels useful doing something, rather than just sitting in fear. It takes her mind away from the terror. So far, she and the family are safe where they are. But that's fluid, and can change rapidly."

Another older cousin said she wouldn't leave, says Arsenault.

"She said she would stand her ground, that she would rather die than leave her country. She said she would stay and take whatever is coming. She and her family have enough to eat, and where they are, they were not being bombed, they're okay for now."

A cousin in Eastern Ukraine in a village that was being bombed, said that the Russians had entered, and told Arsenault he was able to get his parents out of their village, to a place of safety. His brother had been conscripted, and he was expecting to be called to fight as well, but was worried about keeping his wife and one-year-old baby safe.

"They're getting shellacked. There is bombing all around them, and they have to make decisions about what to do, where to go," she says. They are constantly living in a state of terror as well as traumatized by the carnage around them.

Arsenault's cousin shared a video sent by his conscripted brother of an attack on Kyiv, with Ukrainian residents throwing Molotov cocktails at an approaching



Shirley Madsen, with relatives in Ukraine, is showing her support for all Ukrainians with a flag on the fence of her Lakeshore Road home. (Photo supplied)

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Russian student doesn't feel safe in her own country

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

Through a contact, The Local was able to speak last weekend with a 20-year-old student currently studying at a university in Russia. She needed to remain anonymous to avoid being targeted for arrest by Russian officials.

Having grown up in Russia, she expresses dismay at the direction her country's politics have been taking as of late, resulting in the current invasion of Ukraine.

"In my view, Russia has been developing its politics in the wrong direction," she says. "Now we are going even further from Europe. I don't know how we will be able to communicate with other countries after such an event. I'm scared to be isolated from the rest of the world. I feel a lot of hatred right now toward my government."

"Ukraine is an independent country," she continues. "Independent from Russia, from everyone. They have their own direction to develop their country. Russia is invading a country that shouldn't concern them at all."

She mistrusts Vladimir Putin, and feels that part of his motivation for the attack

is to make a big statement, to be remembered as a great ruler.

"He talked about it three years ago in an interview with a Russian journalist, (Vladimir) Pozner," she says. "That he wanted to be remembered for doing something great. In my opinion Putin is definitely failing. Future generations will not agree with these current Russian policies."

She describes the fear felt by her fellow students at the university.

"I saw some police and other armed men in many places just standing and waiting," she says about a recent visit to the centre of her city. "I felt that if I had something written on my backpack saying I was against the war, that I would be arrested immediately. It's happening all over Russia."

Rumours began earlier this week that officials were beginning to use COVID restrictions as a pretext for arrests, as well. She sees it as another way for the Kremlin to control the message.

The student says the people who she has talked to are against the invasion, especially those around her age. Fear is keeping them from protesting openly, leading them to look for other ways to help, including donating

to charitable organizations that are helping the people of Ukraine.

She tells The Local that her long-term plan after graduation is to leave the country.

"I wouldn't say I was ever comfortable living in Russia," she says. "I was never feeling safe, or truly comfortable. I support feminism, I support LGBTQ communities, I support people from other countries coming here. I see that Russian politics is against all of this. I've never felt safe here."

Complicating matters for many throughout the country is the difficulty of trying to wade through the information they receive. Traditional Russian news sources continue to claim that there are no deaths in Kyiv, and that Putin's objective is to merely ensure the safety of Ukraine.

She fears that Russians of a certain age, those perhaps with memories of the Cold War-era USSR, are buying into that propaganda. She says one of her relatives from Ukraine actually supports the war, suggesting that the influence from those sources has worked.

Meanwhile, younger people are turning to alternative sources online via social media and video blogs,

getting the real story from people on the ground in Ukraine. But rumours are that the Kremlin is starting to put pressure on those sources and censoring many of them.

What she has seen so far has been extremely upsetting.

"Some of my friends have relatives there," says the student. "One of my friends, his family was able to escape. I see this affecting people who are important to me. When I see all these

Links for seeds, donations

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pets and lifelong memories, others have lost their homes and have nothing to return to."

She has set up a website, SunflowersforUkraine.ca, encouraging residents and businesses to plant sunflowers, and to raise funds to help Ukrainians.

She hopes anyone who decides to plant sunflowers will register on the website, which has a link for donations to the Canada Ukraine Foundation, which is working to complete several projects with continued finan-

cial support.

Madsen is still working out the details, but is contacting seed companies with a plan to link to them on her website — she has several onboard so far.

She will also be contacting some other organizations, hoping that since this is the Year of the Garden, they might want to piggyback their projects with hers.

She has also set up Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts, and is hoping for volunteers to help her manage them.

The Canada Ukraine Foundation and the

people at the border waiting to leave, or hiding in the Metro station, I feel a lot of anger."

Her fellow students also fear a coercion or possible future conscription into Russia's military forces. Last week at the university a number of her male friends received calls from the same number that they suspected might have been the first step toward convincing them to contribute to the attack on Ukraine.

With all that's going on,

her studies at the university have fallen a bit to the wayside.

"My priorities have suddenly shifted," she says. "Since it started on Thursday, I didn't do any school work, Friday either. Most of my friends were the same. We just couldn't do anything. And I see it everywhere."

"The longer it goes on, it starts to feel normal," she concludes. "You start to accept it. And that feels even worse."

Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC) have launched a campaign to raise \$5 million to provide humanitarian assistance to those in need in Ukraine, and to address any further aggression by Russia. By Monday, total donations were over \$2.3 million; their medical mission in Ukraine popularized on CTV's W5.

"Let's plant sunflowers to be a messenger for peace, and donate what you can to the Canada Ukraine Foundation," says Madsen.

For more information e-mail: donatesunflowers-forukraine@gmail.com or contact Madsen at 905-468-2325.



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Hirji goes along with provincial, local lifting of restrictions

Doesn't mean pandemic is over, he warns public

Penny Coles
The Local

Pandemic restrictions local to Niagara have been lifted by acting medical officer of public health Dr. Mustafa Hirji, who says he has no plan to continue any of the measures the province lifted Tuesday — at least not at this time.

That includes all capacity limits, and the need for vaccination passports to enter restaurants, theatres and gyms.

Hirji's orders and letters of instruction, which imposed

local restrictions on restaurants, some retail stores, and sports and recreation facilities, have also been rescinded.

But taking these steps, Hirji warned, "doesn't mean the pandemic is over."

It does mean individuals will now be responsible for making their own decisions about what level of risk is acceptable, and the personal actions they will take to reduce that risk, he said.

Hirji, the region's chief medical officer of health, has made no secret that he is afraid it might be too soon to

lift restrictions, and that hospitalizations in the coming weeks could increase to a level that is unsustainable. Vaccinations, he says, become even more important, because as infections spread, they will at least help to keep people out of the hospital.

Despite limited availability to COVID-19 testing, Niagara's positivity rate is still about 15 per cent, higher than during previous waves, he added.

At his Monday news conference, he said he is hoping and recommending businesses such as restaurants will voluntarily continue to call for proof of vaccination, although he won't require it.

His own local orders and letters of instructions have

been the subject of discussions across the region in recent weeks. Hirji said again Monday, as he told regional councillors recently and has repeated in media interviews, that the province allows for and encourages local restrictions. He went further in his defence of the measures, about which he said "there's some false narratives that maybe have taken hold," explaining that there have been more than 100 such measures imposed by public health units across the province, and that 100 per cent of the 34 health units in Ontario have been subject to some local regulations — Niagara is by no means alone.

He explained he rescinded the orders and letters of instruction, with the exception



Dr. Mustafa Hirji (screenshot)

of one designed to keep agriculture workers safe, because with the lifting of provincial measures "they are no longer likely to have significant effect."

And if hospitalizations surge, he added, the province has indicated it will likely be up to local public health units to decide when and if restric-

tions should again be implemented.

Hirji said he would like to see mask regulations continue, because although they are uncomfortable, they continue to be helpful.

Premier Doug Ford has suggested mask regulations could be lifted later this month.

Four locations recommended for rainbow crosswalk

Penny Coles
The Local

The towns' diversity, equity and inclusion committee has made recommendations for the location of a rainbow crosswalk.

Councillors agreed to the recommendations, but also acknowledged there is to be public consultation before making any decisions.

The diversity committee is recommending a rainbow crosswalk be located at one

of four possible locations: on Niagara Stone Road at Anderson Lane; the intersection of Queen and Mississauga Streets; the intersection of Wellington and Picton Streets; or King Street, where Ricardo Street turns into Front Street.

The committee also recommends that "expediency of installation be a factor in the decision."

The committee supports the idea of public consultation on the choice of one of

the four locations, the minutes of their Feb. 14 meeting indicates, and also asks that the public be given an opportunity to financially sponsor the crosswalk through fundraising.

Since the committee was tasked with considering alternatives to the proposed location of King and Queen by the Prince of Wales Hotel, the Anderson Lane location was suggested as on the route into town which greets visitors.

It was also suggested "the crosswalk be located where a lot of visitors would see it, and in an area that is identifiable as Niagara-on-the-Lake," the committee minutes say, "to help get the message across a really broad geographic area

that NOTL is an inclusive place."

That would include Wellington and Picton Streets, where the Shaw Festival crosses over to the hospital site; the intersection of Queen and Mississauga

Streets at the golf course and where the new welcome wall is going to be built; or the intersection at King and Front Streets, "where people cross to go down to the gazebo."

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Town buildings reopen

Penny Coles
The Local

The town hall and the operations building have reopened for in-person service to the public, and resume regular hours of Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

CAO Marnie Cluckie told councillors Monday night during her COVID update that "staff did a really good job welcoming people back into the building," and staff reported that many returning customers were "delighted" to be back in person, and also said how much they appreciated the remote service they received during the time the building was closed to the public.

Cluckie explained the plan to lift the State of Emergency that exists in Niaga-

ra-on-the-Lake and other municipalities is to do it at the same time, "soon, hopefully."

The following provincial changes to public health and workplace safety measures are in effect as of March 1.

- capacity limits have been lifted in all indoor public settings
- proof of vaccination requirements have been lifted, but businesses and organizations may choose to require proof of vaccination upon entry

- other protective measures, such as mask/face covering requirements and passive screening of patrons remain in place
- businesses and organizations that are open must continue to have safety plans in place

Aligning with provincial regulations, proof of vaccination is no longer required to enter town buildings.

In the town announcement of the lifting of restrictions, Lord Mayor Betty Disero said, "after two very long years, the province and chief medical officers of health have determined it safe to remove and ease the majority of public health restrictions." "I know that a great deal of sacrifice, determination, and cooperation has brought us to this place," she added.

"On behalf of Town Council, thank you to Niagara-on-the-Lake residents and businesses for working together for themselves and others throughout this pandemic. The road has been long, but the end is finally near."



Four locations have been suggested for rainbow crosswalk. (Marc Bruxelle Shutterstock.com)



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EDITORIAL

Canada must do all it can to support Ukraine

As Coun. Clare Cameron said at council Monday, it is easy to feel powerless. We want to support Ukrainians. We want to help. We want to stop the barrage of horror we are watching, glued to the news.

We want our country, and every country, to support Ukrainians, and many, even most countries around the world, are doing what they can.

Yet as each day goes by, we continue to watch the disturbing images, and it just

doesn't seem enough. If it were enough, the attacks would have stopped, and Ukrainians of all ages, the men, young and old, who are fighting, the women and children who are at grave risk, could go home and be safe.

Coun. Wendy Cheropita says they are tough, they are strong. We see that, we are overwhelmed by their fortitude, when they have every right to be terrified in the face of such adversity. And we wish

they didn't have to be so tough, so strong.

There are many kinds of support. Individuals are being encouraged to donate money if we can. The Ukrainian flag is flying in support in Niagara-on-Lake and in small towns and big cities across the country. Coun. Allan Bisback suggested posting a print of the Ukrainian flag in our windows.

Resident Shirley Madsen is asking us to buy sunflower seeds, Ukraine's national flower, and plant them.

Our provincial government is donating money and has withdrawn Russian-made liquor from LCBO shelves.

The federal government is sending weapons, it has pledged \$125 million in humanitarian aid, and with other countries around the world it is participating in every sanction imaginable to hold Russia accountable, including cutting it off from international banking systems and freezing assets.

Interim Conservative leader Candice Bergen has supported what has been done so far, and is calling for more, including expelling the Russian ambassador from Canada, and recalling Canada's ambassador in Moscow. She is also asking for Visa-free travel to help families come to Canada, and for the CRTC to revoke the license of Russia Today, Putin's propaganda machine.

All are important. From the Ukrainian flag in our windows,

to removing vodka from local shelves, and sending millions of dollars in humanitarian aid and anti-tank weapons, anything we can do is important. And hopefully, eventually, enough.

Even the smallest gesture shows we care, we're keeping these strong, proud people in our hearts, and hoping against hope this ends soon, and ends well.

Penny Coles
The Local

Environmental work and education come with mixed feelings



Owen Bjorgan
Special to The Local

In this week's article, I'm going to open up about my personal challenges of being a biologist, tour guide, and public educator. What do all three of those positions have in common?

The unbiased, unpretentious, and irreplaceable ecosystems on the third rock from the sun serve our entire human existence, and their own inherent wonder.

With local and global ecosystem quality declining, I find myself bounding between optimism, pessimism, and realism.

Admittedly, I spend little bits of time in each sphere of thinking. A peculiar blend of professionalism and emotion can surface, and providing these thoughts don't stay in one rut, I believe it is perfectly normal and healthy to be provoked in such ways.

Let's start on an optimistic note. COVID-19 got people in touch with nature again. When people had to reinvent how they spent their spare time, Ontario took to nature like it never did before. This means there are more people out there who appreciate the

flora, fauna, and the protected areas they reside in. That's a bonus for future generations.

I also have hope people can be inspired by the information available at their fingertips. What a time to be alive! You can use a search engine to identify the tree in your backyard, or social media to find a scenic waterfall in your area. There are free courses and field guides and outdoor traveling tips spread across the vast world of the internet.

When I was in grade school, biodiversity wasn't discussed in class. Climate change was just beginning to make a rumble. Nowadays, both are discussions in public school, among other institutionalized settings. This makes me happy and comforted to know.

On the flip side, there are undeniable pockets of pessimism, which you shouldn't keep in your pocket for any length of time, but let's address the human condition that impacts how I see the fate of the natural world.

I have been in the loop for, and often exposed, dozens of questionable and sometimes straight up unlawful removals of our natural heritage. They seem to happen overnight, with little or no major repercussions. Sometimes, I think about how monstrous the immovable object of money is, especially when backed by corporate greed or politi-

cal objectives. Money weighs nothing, but goodness me, is it heavy.

Spearheading the movement to save the Thundering Waters Forest in rural Niagara Falls was a classic example. People were sued for speaking out. I, with others, was publicly labelled "a special interest group" and I got a first-hand taste of how big money will shut down or silence opposition. Seeing those devious wheels in motion right here in Niagara left me knowing it can happen again, and still happens all around us.

While the pandemic got more people exploring nature, it also clogged and clouded our airwaves, screens, and dinner table conversations for two years straight. I often worriedly wonder what sort of paperwork, deals, and signatures have allowed development of our natural areas while we were occupied.

Ultimately, I find my resting place in realism. No sugar-coating, and less emotion. We all recognize that when you love something, as I love the environment, emotion always finds a way in.

If I could word our societal relationship with nature and how it's going to realistically pan out, I see it going down, but how much are we willing to save? And how can we celebrate what we save? The key word being we. This is going to take a collective effort from cit-

izens and governments alike.

To deliver the plea of realism on civilization's relationship with nature, I have to change gears in language for different age groups and demographics on the job. We must strike the balance between hope and joy, but also, when appropriate, expressing the concerns of the times.

When your profession is a battle to protect something so enormous and so all-encompassing, it can become overwhelming. There exists a contrast in my head where I imagine 78 million acres of the Amazon rainforest being lost every year, and I'm also teaching a young kid why they should want to protect spiders and flowering plants in NOTL.

Dread, in my profession, is staring up at the ceiling on many nights, and asking, did I do enough for the greater good today?

We are all human, experiencing mixed feelings in our day-to-day lives. However, no matter how challenging

and complex the task at hand is, you have to move forward with confidence and positivity. Even on top of the realism, this is always the highest road you can take if you ever want to see real change and bestow it upon others.

It can feel weird and kind of cosmic to fight for something bigger than yourself. I have felt that way about the environment my whole life, and especially about my fellow humans over the past years. As we look around the world, there is a strong, factual correlation between a stable society and a healthy environment. When society is socially and politically healthy, it functions as a whole unit at a more purposeful and efficient pace, which is exactly what our environment needs right now.

We all have to move forward with intention and inspiration as the main objective if we're going to see the positive results we hopefully desire.



Owen Bjorgan describes this as a photo of him, in the middle of realism, with a symbolic representation of optimism and pessimism for nature on either side. He hikes on both sides of the road, from time to time, he says. (Photo supplied)

View from the couch

Donald Combe
Special to The Local

Man and Boy (Prime, 2002) is a story of love, infidelity and responsibility, and there is no correct answer. However difficult matters are

for those involved, compromise leads to a satisfactory ending. The film shares with us a touchingly human experience; I heartily recommend it.

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.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake

Local

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COMMENT

Post office has eliminated outdoor line-ups

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

A daily ritual for many who live in Old Town Niagara-on-the-Lake just got a little more normal.

On Friday, Canada Post lifted limits for customers allowed inside the building. Gone are the days of one visitor in the box lobby at a time, and there is no longer a cap of two customers in the retail area. And, miracle of all miracles, the door between the two indoor spaces has now been unlocked. It is now possible to collect one's mail and walk directly up to the counter to retrieve an awaiting package that was too large to fit in one's mailbox.

When the news was conveyed to me last Friday, it seemed the staff at the Queen Street post office was as excited about it as the residents who were there to retrieve their mail. Staff member Valerie Novacek, who recently had been joking that the pandemic restrictions would change by the year 2030, was overjoyed when she informed me of the changes.

Forgive me if I am making a mountain out of a molehill, but to me this is indeed a momen-

tous occasion. I might even put forth the idea that this is a true turning point after just under two full years of this COVID-19 pandemic.

As NOTL Post Office supervisor Doug Binning reminds me, Canada Post operates under federal statutes, while other locations along Queen Street fall under provincial guidelines.

As of this Tuesday morning the province had lifted all indoor capacity limits and vaccine passports were no longer required for entry into places such as restaurants, theatres, gyms and casinos. But Binning got the go-ahead from Ottawa on Feb. 25 that indoor capacity limits were no longer required.

Hearing the news at the post office five days before the provincial changes made it seem that much more momentous.

When I tell people who are not in the know that I have to go to the post office to pick up my mail I am always met with a quizzical look.

Some laugh, and ask if we have party lines on our phones as well, conjuring images of Eddie Albert and Eva Gabor in *Green Acres* answering their phone only to find a pig oinking back at them, hoping to connect with local celebrity swine Arnold Ziffel.

nold Ziffel.

It's a quaint little quirk that comes with residing within areas of NOTL where there is no home mail delivery.

In fact, I myself may have graced my now-wife Mishka with one of those quizzical looks in 1999 when we were first dating. We saddled up two of Jackie and Fred Sentineal's horses and trotted to the loading dock behind the post office to pick up her mail one afternoon. The staff in the sorting area loved it, and deemed Mishka and Dusty the horse local celebrities in a way.

Visiting the post office is a quirk I soon grew to love. For 21 years it was part of my daily ritual. And I do mean daily, as I usually make a point of visiting the post office Monday through Friday. I've come to know the names of most of the staff, and often stay long past my welcome socializing with them.

When my children were little they loved being handed the responsibility of holding the key and opening the mailbox. And ours is on the second row from the bottom. For many years, directly in line with our mailbox, a staff member had placed a teddy bear that both of my kids eagerly looked for every time.

I know I am not alone in my

love of those daily visits. Canada Post is almost like a town hall, a place where residents come together and often run into one another, stopping to take time to catch up.

My daily visits, however, were reduced to weekly during much of the pandemic. With fears of the spread of COVID-19 and its various variants, it made less sense to so frequently put oneself out there where there could be risk of bringing the virus home to family.

And when I did visit, I dutifully followed pandemic protocol, wearing a mask and waiting outside two metres away from the box lobby door and from anyone else in line, until whoever was in front of me walked out with their mail. That was the case through rain, sleet, snow and frigid temperatures.

I know it wasn't easy for many. The Local received several inquiries about the indoor limits, wondering why during the colder temperatures more people couldn't be admitted or why one couldn't walk through the door into the retail area without having to line up again outside. As Binning would reply, the head office made those rules and nothing could change without their go-ahead.

Then there were the people in line who sometimes lost their cool, watching as someone emptied their mailbox and subsequently stood at the sorting table leafing through envelopes like a kid from the 1960s going through a pack of baseball cards looking for a Mickey Mantle.

I once witnessed a woman three spots behind me in line walk past everyone to open the door to say to someone inside, "there are people outside waiting to get in, can't you sort your mail at home?" When the sorter in question slowly inched out the door with the aid of her cane in one hand and a pile of mail in the other, I hope the impatient woman felt just a little embarrassed at her tirade.

Thankfully, those uncomfortable moments should be coming to an end. Binning, though, informed me Monday that people have been slow to pile into both indoor spaces, and the door dividing the box lobby from the retail area has not been swinging off its hinges.

Perhaps that's because they didn't yet know about the change, or perhaps it's because they were still being cautious. I would assume it's a little bit of both. It will take time for many of us to ease into feeling com-



Mike Balsom and others who use the Queen Street post office are delighted to see restrictions lifted. He demonstrates that the door between the box lobby and the retail area is now unlocked. (Photo supplied)

fortable after living this way for so long.

I'm still wearing a mask as I return to my daily visits, and I'm still giving people enough space to ensure the highest level of comfort in all social situations.

But as we move forward into a NOTL that feels a little closer to normal, isn't it great that some of our daily rituals, as benign as they may seem, can again be enjoyed? I bet even Arnold Ziffel would oink in agreement.

Local LETTERS

Housing affordability report hands planning to developers

Dear Premier Doug Ford and Minister Steve Clark,

The recently released Housing Affordability Task Force report could only have been produced by a select group of developers, builders and service providers ancillary to that industry.

The recommendations contained therein, if enacted by your government, would lead to the disembowelment of the entire level of municipal and regional

governance in the province of Ontario. It would hand the entire planning process over to the development industry and their financiers and completely destroy the concept of heritage designation, community planning and environmental protection in the supposed name of "dealing with the housing affordability problem."

The development industry and their coterie of experts have for years been carping about a

lack of supply driving prices to unattainable heights because of municipal red tape and drawn-out approval processes precluding builders from getting building permits to construct residential dwellings, and yet according to Statistics Canada in the last four months of 2021 the lowest total in any month of existing building permits in Ontario was 2,563,464 (1,233,415 single dwellings and 1,330,049 multiple dwellings), which hard-

ly represents any form of lack of supply.

Having been a realtor for over 40 years in Ontario, I find your government's proposed response to the housing affordability problem completely lacking in common sense and slanted entirely to prolonging the problem at the expense of the public to the benefit of your developer friends and their wealthy investors. The essential problem with housing is the concept that

housing is not a place to live for citizenry, but rather a commodity to be traded in for profit of speculators, wealthy investors and developers.

The first and cheapest, easiest solution to steeply rising home prices would be to outlaw the blind bidding process entirely in the province. Virtually all sales in the past year have been through blind auctions where buyers bid with no idea what the other bids are in the marketplace, which entirely slants the process in favour of the seller and leads to escalating prices not based on market values, but rather on how much a buyer can be duped into paying without the information as to how much other buyers are offering. Would the same hold true in the stock market, or any other market for goods or services? Perhaps there shouldn't be any price tags on the food we buy in grocery stores and it should go to the highest blind bid?

The second action you should take would be an immediate and effective speculation

tax on all residential property which would make it unprofitable for speculators and speculative syndicates to profit from trading in residential real estate. According to Teranet (the provider of Ontario's online property search and registration), investors accounted for a quarter of all housing sales in Ontario in the month of August 2021, the highest percentage in over a decade. They were the biggest group of buyers, underscoring the heightened risk to the market, which is perhaps why Swiss Bank UBS ranked Toronto second behind Frankfurt in the 2021 Global Bubble Market Index.

I'm hoping that you and your government will be crystal clear in your position on your plans for the future of Ontario, and the roles of municipal and regional levels of governments in those plans, such that the voters in Ontario will have a clear choice when heading to the voting booth.

Robert C. Bader
NOTL

Reader takes exception to editorial

Wow, Penny Coles. Yup spoken like a true NDP'er LOL ... *emerge to save the day with common sense and compassion* (Editorial, The Local, Feb. 3).

Not sure Jagmeet could have written it better himself!

So how proud are you of Jagmeet Singh now who saved the day by propping up a historic bill only to be revoked 48 hours later by an equally inept leader. So serious and so urgent was

this threat that it dissipated before they could pass the bill. An emergency so serious that it was gone before any emergency took place.

Wonder if you will have the integrity to write about how wrong you were to praise such a poor decision by such a poor leader. Write it with the same zeal and admiration on how wrong he was. How wrong the entire emergency act was. How wrong

it was to invoke such unnecessary powers to a government to wage against protesters who had a different agenda than the liberal "elites." How wrong it was to allow this corrupt government the authority to invade and freeze bank accounts.

Interesting no such emergency existed when socialist David Suzuki said blowing up the pipelines would be justifiable or when Black Lives Matter protests

shut down streets. No, that narrative doesn't fit with your personal bias.

I suspect there will be no such editorial. It's folks like you who have a platform to influence the politically illiterate that is of real concern. Your pouring of praise for such premature ineptness speaks to your naivety, inexperience and bias.

Matteo Gentile
NOTL



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‘Quick handover’ to new president from former president

Minerva Ward up for challenges she expects to face in NOTL

Penny Coles
The Local

Minerva Ward, the next president of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce, will take over the position March 7, and is already becoming acquainted with her new job.

Ward spent a couple of hours in what she calls “a quick handover” in Niagara-on-the-Lake Thursday with former president Eduardo Lafforgue, whose resignation took effect Monday. He has left to take the job of director of tourism for the Yukon Territory.

As one of the members of the selection committee, Lafforgue said he has great confidence that Ward is the right person for the job, and he is delighted she will be taking it on.

Ironically, Ward’s most recent job was as the Government of the Northwest Territories’ regional tourism development officer — she spent three years living and working in the Arctic.

She says the attraction of

this offer was both the job and location — the job ties in with her tourism background, which includes economic development, destination marketing, and everything she had done in her career to date, and where she wants to go with it in the future.

“And of course, I couldn’t ask for a better location — a mature tourism destination in what is known as the prettiest town in Canada, for good reason.”

It will be also be a challenging time, she adds, with the arrival of the Municipal Accommodation Tax, a subject of some controversy that will have to be worked out, and the destination marketing development aimed at moving businesses out of COVID recovery and into the future — but she is here to meet that challenge.

After 18 years of honing destination management, marketing, and tourism development skills, her experience is varied, beginning in her birth place of St. Lucia at the Air & Sea Port Author-

ity, where she managed one of St. Lucia’s cruise terminals which included retail shops, restaurants, and a cultural animation centre (a visitor experience facility using animation technology).

She has also worked for the five-star luxury resort Sandals Grande St Lucia Beach Resort & Spa, she’s owned and operated her own real estate company specializing in the sale and rental of luxury homes, and was the project consultant for residential developments concepts, business, and marketing plans.

Although St. Lucia is beautiful, with a thriving tourism industry, it is also very small, she says. She has family in Toronto, which was partly behind her decision to come to Canada, “but I also wanted to see what the rest of the world is doing, beyond my little island.”

In 2012, Ward moved to Canada and worked for the Tourism Human Resource Association of B.C., where she implemented a multi-channel marketing plan for careers in the province’s tourism industry. She managed the redevelopment of the career’s portal of the website, developed the social media strategy, and all the marketing tools to promote the province as a place to live, work, and play. She also served on several advisory boards including the provincial Ministry of Education, South Fraser School District, and Vancouver



Eduardo Lafforgue welcomed Minerva Ward to the NOTL Chamber of Commerce and spent a couple of hours at the office with her Thursday. (Penny Coles)

School Board.

Following her work in B.C. she moved to the Northwest Territories, readying the eight communities in the region for the influx of tourists that came with the opening of the new Inuvik-Tuktoyaktuk Highway, the only public road in North America to the Arctic Ocean in North America.

The structure of the Chamber and Tourism NOTL, two entities run by one board, is different from anything she’s seen, she says, but makes sense in a mature tourism destination, “where tourism is a touchpoint for so many businesses in NOTL, whether directly or indirectly. Tourism is an advantage for all businesses,” she says, whether agricultural, professional business services or any industry — they all benefit from tourism.

Although she stresses she is not coming to town with any “preconceived judgments,” she is also aware of the balancing act necessary between support for tourists and residents in any mature tourism destination — typically, as a tourism industry grows and more people come to town, and there is an increasing physical impact on residents, that has to be increasingly measured and managed, including their understanding of the value of tourism, its impact on property values, and the availability of services and amenities it presents.

“The value of tourism is closely tied to why people want to live there,” she says. As desirability increases, so do property values and amenities. The number of visitors increasing is important, without the town being “overrun,” she says. “There

has to be value, and there has to be quality. But I’m saying all this before I even get to NOTL, so I’m saying it without judgement until I start my role and begin understanding the sentiment and vision of where tourism will go.”

That leads Ward to the topic of the development of a tourism strategy, which she knows is a hot topic in NOTL, and a process she is excited to be part of.

“A tourism strategy is so important, and I would love to be a driver, with the town.” She sees it as a roadmap to allow the town to be “active rather than reactive” as the tourism industry continues to grow, “so everyone is on the same page with the strategy — the industry and residents.”

Ward holds a master’s degree in tourism and hospitality management and a bachelor’s degree in tourism management, both from the University of the West Indies, in Jamaica and the Bahamas respectively. She holds a certificate in digital communications from Simon Fraser University, and leadership development from the University of Alberta. She is pursuing her economic development accreditation from the University of Waterloo.

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Several ways to support humanitarian aid

Continued from page 3

Russian tank, destroying it.

Her daughter, Alexa, who lives in Toronto, by extensive personal and business networking, was able to secure rooms in a hotel in Poland, close to the Ukrainian border, for relatives and their immediate circle if they can make their way to Poland. Alexa and her brother Jonathan are offering to pay for all their expenses: accommodations, food, gas and anything else they need for as long as needed. Arsenault says, "if they

didn't have relatives, she and Jonathan would do it anyway, for anyone else."

They are doing this for relatives they have never met, that they just discovered a year ago, but that they have grown close to through texts and messaging, using online translations.

"My kids are now saying they have never been so proud of being part Ukrainian. There is nothing they wouldn't do to help, not just relatives, but wherever it is needed. They are texting and messaging them to say 'you're not alone. We're here for you — you just have to ask

for help."

Arsenault speaks Ukrainian and has spoken to her family in Ukraine by phone — they were all delighted to discover a year ago that they have relatives in Canada. The Arsenaults had been planning a trip to Ukraine this July to meet everyone and visit ancestral homes.

If any of them want to come to Canada now, her family is ready to help in any way they can, Arsenault says.

By phone and through texts, her relatives have expressed the gratitude of Ukrainians for Canadian support.

"Phone calls are sporadic for them, but they say Ukrainians are grateful to know Canada is opening their doors, and grateful the world is standing with them. They are very optimistic, very hopeful they will win this. That's the feeling they have, that the world is on their side. That's very important to them. This is giving them the strength and courage to fight back. They're hoping Russians who are protesting will keep it up. They are entitled to freedom, not an authoritarian government," she says. "These are real people. There are bombs, rockets, drones and missiles all around them, and we don't know if they will survive this."

Irene Schumylo Newton, a St. Catharines woman who is president of the Niagara chapter of the Ukrainian Canada Congress, also knows firsthand the anguish, fear and heartache shared by Ukrainians in Niagara — she is not sure of the exact number, but says likely around 20,000 to 30,000. Like her, many have family in Ukraine, some staying put, others trying to flee to safety.

She was in contact with them Thursday, "and thankfully they live close to the Polish border. They

were not feeling the shelling at that point. They locked their doors and were holding tight."

But they are lacking the most basic supplies, she says. "The people in Ukraine need help. Basically, they have nothing — store shelves are empty, banks, pharmacies have nothing, schools, airports are closed. People are in dire straits."

Newton said people who want to help can donate through the Canada-Ukraine Foundation at cufoundation.ca.

"They are an amazing group of people. They did this first in 2014, when there were a lot of casualties. They know how to do this," she says. "They sent hospital equipment, doctors, medications, food supplies, blankets, everything. That's what they will do again."

She has confidence that anything donated to the foundation will arrive at its destination, although it might take some time — with airports closed or bombed, aid will be flown to Poland, close to the border, and then transported to Ukraine any way possible.

In the past, the Canadian government paid for a cargo plane to ship goods, and she is hoping to hear that will happen again.

The town is also supporting Ukraine. The blue and yellow flag was raised at the town hall Friday, and a message from Lord Mayor Betty Disero on behalf of town council says the town "stands with the people of Ukraine and extends a plea for peace to those imposing harm and violence against them." The province is offering \$300,000 in aid, and a pledge to expedite the settlement of potential refugees, with jobs and settlement services for them when they arrive.

Premier Doug Ford also said Russian vodka would be removed from LCBO shelves.

NDP leader Andrea Horwath has said what the province is offering isn't enough, and has called on Ford to commit to at least \$3 million to the Canada-Ukraine Foundation, and to match all donations by Ontarians.

Ontario has the largest number of people of Ukrainian descent in Canada, and Canada has the largest Ukrainian population outside Ukraine and Russia.

Niagara residents who wish to donate to the Red Cross Ukraine Humanitarian Crisis Appeal at <https://donate.redcross.ca/> or by calling 1-800-418-1111.

Public to be consulted

Continued from page 5

The diversity committee is recommending that since five rainbow benches are expected to be installed in town, one of which is being funded through a grant, the other four benches be placed in suitable locations throughout the community, with public consultation on the location of the benches, and private funding pursued.

Coun. Gary Burroughs said he expects the public to be involved in the decision of the location of the rainbow

crosswalk "before any money is spent on it," and that the public might have other recommendations of locations. He is hoping, he added, that when staff go to the public "they don't use the same format as they did for the wall committee for the Queen/Mississauga Street project," which was to present options and ask residents to choose.

He suggested instead the public be asked, "What do you think of a rainbow crosswalk, where should it be, and do we want one?"

"I get that diversity committee wants this," he said.

"I think we have a history in NOTL of looking after a very diverse community for 50 to 60 years. Maybe it's for visitors. Maybe I'm misunderstanding what this is for," he said, adding he hopes for a good response from the public "so we understand how they feel."

CAO Marnie Cluckie said although it wasn't the plan, staff can go back to council to discuss how community input will be sought.

Burroughs was the only councillor to vote against the diversity committee recommendations.



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Meals on Wheels hoping for awareness, volunteers

Penny Coles
The Local

Erica Lepp was been delivering Meals on Wheels for 16 years, and although she has done other volunteer work, this is her favourite, she says.

Her kids have always helped her when they could, although now it is just Tia, 12, the youngest and only one still living at home, left to help.

Meals on Wheels has continued to provide a much-needed service throughout the pandemic, although meal delivery was adjusted to ensure safe dropoffs, and continues to protect clients and volunteers.

Pre-COVID, Meals on Wheels volunteers provides not only a nutritious meal, but a friendly face, five days a week, says Lepp. "It's also a kind of wellness check," she adds. Volunteers get to know their clients, and before the pandemic, could take a few minutes to chat with them. If volunteers notice any concerns about health issues, they pass on the information to the office, so family members can be notified.

"During COVID times," Lepp says, "Meals on Wheels has been offering the same great hot meal and frozen meal deliveries, direct to homes, but they have adapted their protocol so the delivery is contactless and safe."

And it is still a wellness check, she adds. Volunteers drop the meals at the door in a single-use plastic bag, and watch from the car to ensure recipients receive them. "We give them a wave from the car, instead of the usual hello and small talk we used to enjoy with them."

If the client doesn't come to the door, she says, she'll call them from her car, and if there is no answer, will take the meal and let the office know it wasn't delivered.

"This means so much to Meals on Wheels clients. They are so appreciative," says Lepp. "You can sense as a volunteer that it's really important to them."

Not all clients are house-bound — some just choose meal delivery because they get a good variety of balanced meals they don't have to cook. Meals include soup, a main course with meat or fish, two vegetables, pasta or a potato, and dessert.

There is a four-week cycle of menus, and substitutions will be made for a limited number of food preferences and intolerances. All therapeutic diets, such as for diabetics, or salt-restricted, can be accommodated.

Meals are prepared and packed by staff in the kitchen of the Niagara Ina Grafton Gage Retirement Village in St.



Melanie Kelch and Allan Cobham deliver meals to NOTL residents one day a month, and fill in gaps when needed. (Photos supplied)

Catharines, under the supervision of qualified dietitians, and sent to Niagara Falls in heated bags, to be loaded in volunteers' vehicles, and delivered Monday through Friday between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.

Frozen meals can also be ordered, and are delivered on Tuesdays, around noon.

Volunteer deliveries take about two hours, and those interested in helping can sign up for as little as once a month, says Lepp.

She chooses to be a flex driver, which means rather than having one set day, she fills in for other drivers when they are away or for some reason unable to deliver on their usual day. She typically has one or two days a month scheduled, and the occasional morning call with a request to drive for someone who is unavailable that day.

Marianne McRae and Ann Ellis, the women who run the Niagara Falls program, which covers Niagara-on-the-Lake, make it a pleasure to be a volunteer, says Lepp.

"They make it easy. The service is very efficient, and very reliable. And the the program is amazing. I love it."

"We get to know people on our routes," adds Lepp, "and for some people, we might be the only person they see all week."

Since most of the volunteers are retired, she says she's always been one of the youngest, and on the days when her kids could go along with her, many clients really enjoyed chatting with them — some offered the kids candy, and she had one client who always produced an apple.

"It was the first volunteering I did with my kids. I wanted to show them a way to give back that isn't monetary. It's your time you're giving. Meals on Wheels has been a great way to get them involved. Everyone loved seeing the kids. And my kids never argued about doing it, they liked it. Sometimes they'd bring their friends along. The clients were so appreciative, so sweet and nice about it. It's an easy way to be engaged in the community."

Melanie Kelch agrees Meals on Wheels is a good way to become involved in the community. When she and her husband Allan Cobham moved to St. Davids, they decided to devote some of their time to Meals on Wheels.

They deliver meals on Mondays, one day a month, and fill in occasionally on other days when needed.

Knowing they are the only people a recipient might see that day makes it very rewarding for them, as does knowing that person will have one hot meal, Kelch says.

They also appreciate it's done safely to protect against the spread of COVID. "We have long arms to reach out, and we always wear a mask. Sometimes I just leave the meal on a chair, and step back, but we always make sure we see them. It's important to have eyes on them, to know they're okay. Sadly some of them are very isolated, and so much more so during COVID."

Kelch says she and her husband have both lost their parents, "but we know that if they were in need, we'd have appreciated having someone to help them. We do this in their honour."

They also grew up in families who were involved in their communities, and who taught their children to do the same. "We both had parents who passed that on to us, that it's important to give back. Even as seniors themselves, they continued to help others."

Kelch has friends whose elderly parents receive Meals on Wheels, and she's heard from them how grateful they are that someone is checking on their family members when they make their dropoffs. "It's good to hear that from other family members. And I feel this is something I can do for others who are still working, and can't do it themselves for their parents."

Ann Ellis, program coordinator for Niagara Falls and Niagara-on-the-Lake, says since people aren't travelling as much since COVID, at the moment they have a strong

Continued on page 11

Retired women teachers group fill welcome kits

Penny Coles
The Local

A group of retired teachers in Niagara have enthusiastically embarked on a project to help farm workers as they arrive in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Melanie Kelch, vice-president of the St. Catharines branch of Retired Women Teachers of Ontario (RWTO), and also a St. Davids resident, says members decided, as one of their outreach projects, to fill welcome bags that are distributed through the Niagara Workers Welcome organization.

Tuesday afternoon, 75 brightly coloured green bags, filled with all sorts of necessities and goodies for the men and women as they arrive to work on local farms, were delivered to The Farm Workers Hub at Cornerstone Church, filled by retired women teachers.

“Our motto is caring and sharing, and it’s not just about each other, it’s about other communities,” she says.

Kelch taught for 30 years, mostly elementary schools, in many different communities, all over Ontario. When she and her husband settled in St. Davids, after years of moving about, living in big cities and small communities — she and her husband both preferred a smaller community for their retirement — she began to learn about the offshore workers who are so important to this community.

She read the articles Jane Andres writes for the NOTL

Local, and she heard her speak at a Newcomers Club meeting. That piqued her interest, and made her want to get involved to help in some way. When she heard about the welcome kits, she took that idea to her group of retired teachers, and they were quick and eager to come onboard.

At a meeting just before Christmas, when the group was able to meet in person, she was able to distribute the bags, and recently, the women who had filled them dropped them off so she and another member of the group could get them to the hub in Virgil.

The retired teachers organization has an interesting history, starting out in the mid-50s with a small group of women in Toronto known as the Rendezvous Club.

At the time it was formed, its purpose was to persuade the Ontario government to raise the level of pensions for retired women teachers to the same level as their male counterparts — women’s pensions in the ’50s were not even adequate, says Kelch.

For years, the Toronto women met with government officials to lobby for improved pensions, until they realized they could present a stronger case if they brought women throughout the province onboard, and many new branches were formed, becoming the Ontario Association of Superannuated Women Teachers.

That eventually gave rise to the Retired Teachers of Ontario, representing both men and women, with the Retired

Women Teachers of Ontario continuing to exist to represent the special interests and well-being of retired women teachers.

“There are still women who like to hang out with other women who were teachers,” says Kelch. “There are groups all over Ontario, and five branches just in the Niagara Region.”

Her branch really liked the idea of helping offshore workers, she adds. “It connects us to an international community. And they’re coming more to the forefront of our community. People are starting to better understand the importance of the work they do. It feels humbling to be able to do something for this group of people.”

They also like that there are more and more women who come to Niagara to work on local farms, she says.

“We’re starting to see more women, but we get the feeling that the public is not as aware of them, and it’s important for us to see them recognized as well.”

Kelch says the more she learned about the offshore workers, the more she wanted to do something to help, and she was very pleasantly surprised by the response she received from her group when she shared what she learned.

“This project turned out to be bigger than I thought it would be,” she says. “As teachers we always want to educate others. Once a teacher always a teacher.”

And teachers are people who are caring, giving and

generous, she says — they are used to giving their time to help their students in need,

and often spent their own money on classroom supplies to benefit their children.

“The caring and sharing in our motto, that doesn’t stop when we retire.”



Retired teachers Melanie Kelch and Monica Forbom drop off 75 welcome kits for Jane Andres of Niagara Workers Welcome, at The Farm Workers Hub in Cornerstone Church. (Photo supplied)

Wellness check important

Continued from page 10

base of volunteers. But that isn’t likely to last, as people begin to travel more, and she always welcomes more help. “We need a pretty big stable of volunteers to fill those gaps, and to have more people at the ready.”

There are about 15 to 20 clients in NOTL, and about 75 to 80 volunteers at the moment.

She says she’s watched Lepp’s kids grow up in the last 16 years, and although they haven’t had many volunteers bringing their kids along, they have sometimes seen grandchildren help out.

“Occasionally we’ll hear a volunteer say they can’t work on a particular day be-

cause they’re looking after their grandkids, and we suggest they bring them along. It works well in NOTL because there aren’t many apartments, and in most situations, one person can stay in the car with the kids.”

She also has parents and grandparents bring their teens along for the volunteer hours they need to graduate from high school, she says.

Next week, a flag will be raised at town hall to show its participation in March for Meals, a time when providers across Ontario participate in the annual campaign to increase awareness and community engagement with local Meals on Wheels providers. It’s important not only to attract more volunteers, says Ellis, but to remind seniors and

their caregivers of the value of the program, for the nutritious meals, and also for that wellness check, especially when often family members live far from their loved ones and can’t visit regularly.

Sometimes, she says, it’s a matter of a senior’s health declining slowly, “and by the time they get to the stage where they need help, they aren’t always able to make good decisions for themselves. It’s a gradual slide, and then all of a sudden it’s hard to get that sorted out.”

Anyone interested in volunteering for Meals on Wheels, or arranging meal delivery, can contact the Niagara Falls Meals on Wheels office at 905-356-9194 or visit <https://mealsonwheelsniagara.ca/niagara-falls/>.

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Photos of Tom Rooney (Cyrano de Bergerac), Julie Lumsden (Gaslight) and Shane Carly (Damn Yankees) by Peter Andrew Luszyk.

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NOTL Arts Collective exhibit opens Sunday

First Pumphouse event for fledgling organization

Penny Coles
The Local

Now that professional visual artists in Niagara-on-the-Lake have taken the huge step toward

promoting themselves as a group, forming a partnership that will help them network and support their community, they are ready for their first exhibit.

The NOTL Arts Collective is for NOTL professional artists, representatives of art local galleries and commercial art spaces, and artists who have taught at the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre, explains artist Patricia Haftar. “Members don’t

Continued on page 13



Artists Barb and Ron Zimmerman of Lakeshore Pottery have some of their pottery at the Pumphouse Arts Collective Exhibit, which opens Sunday.



Contemplation is a fused glass sculpture by Julia Kane that will be on display at the upcoming exhibit.

Collective aims to promote NOTL as arts destination

Continued from page 12

have to live in NOTL, but they do have to have very strong connections to NOTL.”

It’s been a long-stand-

ing goal to help promote the local visual art community, spearheaded by Lise Andreanna, chair of the Pumphouse, which she says as a non-profit organization is well-placed to grow the artistic community, while build-

ing strong ties to cultural partners through collaborative public events. The Arts Collective came together last summer, and now has grown to 21 artists, and they put a lot of effort into preparing an exhibit that was to

open in December. Once the most provincial shutdown was announced, that didn’t happen, and the exhibit remained ready to open.

Haftar is one of the collective’s members of the networking committee organizing the exhibit that opens at the Pumphouse this Sunday, March 6, with a “soft opening.” The artists involved will be on-hand for a reception that will run from 2 to 4 p.m. in the Joyner Gallery.

This is a beginning for the collective, says Haftar,

“which will take a while to build to what we’re looking for,” which is attracting attention for NOTL art.

It is also a start of what they plan to be many more events, including another exhibit beginning April 3, with the work of some of the newer members who did not get in on this one.

The collective and the events they hope to present are designed to increase awareness and appreciation of local visual arts, and to put NOTL on the map as a destination for visual arts.

The artists, many of whom work from home and may feel disconnected from other artists, are excited about showing their work and promoting the local arts community. At this coming exhibit, Haftar says, local artists will show pottery, sculptures, glass pieces, abstract, realism and “a whole variety of art for people to enjoy.”

Galleries involved include the Upper Canada Native Art Gallery, Art Space 106, RiverBrink Art Museum, and Lakeside Pottery.



Artist Pat Haftar’s painting, The Hiker, is part of the upcoming exhibit at the Pumphouse. It is done in acrylic with a palette knife. “I was drawn to the casual pose of the young lady and how relaxed and confident she looked,” says Haftar. (Photos supplied)

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Celebrate Seniors Golden Years Guide

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**Submitted by:
The Royal Henley**

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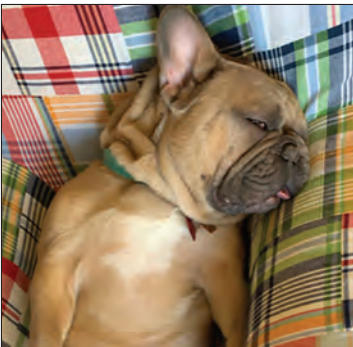
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SNOWY WINTER DAYS ARE MADE FOR NAPPING ACCORDING TO DUKE.

March 2022 Volume 2 • Issue 5

FIND THE SMILEY FACE HIDDEN ON THIS PAGE!

Local News

Spring is just around the corner (18 days) which means all of the NOTL summer camps are going to be opening up for registration! We are so lucky to live in a town that has so much to offer its youth. Sailing, soccer, swimming, stand up paddle boarding, golf, and so much more. What are you most

excited to sign up for this summer? Email joyousnotlkids@gmail.com to tell us about your favourite NOTL summer activities.

Book Review

by Taleah Bucci, 11

The book I will review today is called *Allergic* by Megan Wagner Lloyd and Michelle Mee Nutter. It's about a girl named Maggie who really wants a puppy, but she soon discovers she's allergic. The allergist tells her to stay

away from pets with fur or feathers, but Maggie still wants a furry pet. She and her friend Claire go to the pet store and buy a mouse, thinking that maybe if the furry animal is small, then Maggie might not be allergic to it, but she is allergic; Maggie tries to fight her allergies, but soon, her

parents find out about the mouse and she has to return it to the store. Maggie struggles with her wants for a pet to love and the added drama of her mother preparing to have a baby. In the end, Maggie gets a pet fish and decides to become a marine biologist when she grows up.

Interview with Cooper

- Q. What do you want to be when you grow up?**
A. I want to be a comic book writer and illustrator because me and my friend make comics for our class together.
- Q. What is your favourite thing about NOTL?**
A. My favourite thing about NOTL is that everyone here is very nice and environmentally conscious.
- Q. How did you keep busy during the COVID lockdowns?**
A. I keep busy during covid by writing and drawing and making comics!

- Q. How would you change the world if you could?**
A. I would change the world so that all pollution ends.

- Q. What is your ideal day in NOTL?**
A. My ideal day in NOTL would be making books with my friends and playing on my trampoline.

- Q. What is your favourite book?**
A. My favourite book is one of the books I made which is *Astro* a book about a dog who gets sent to space and it's based on the two dogs that got sent to space Kira and Astro.

- Q. What do you do to help others?**
A. I help others by being there when they are hurt and I protect the environment.

- Q. What is fun family tradition your family has?**
A. One of the fun things we do at my house we have a family show that we watch every night.

- Q. What is something special about you?**
A. Something that is special about me is that me and my friend own a comic business at my school and everyone in my class and that we know reads our comics.



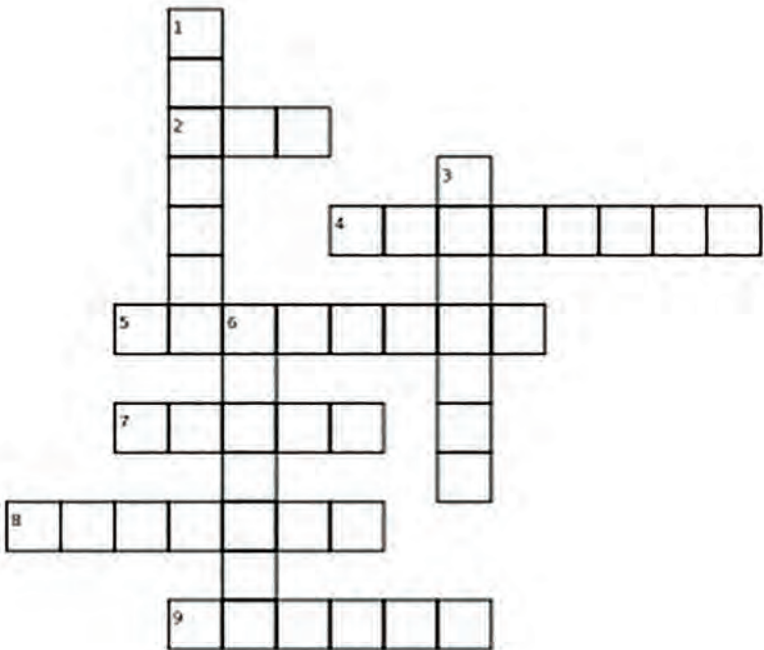
Cooper Connolly, 9

Artist's Corner

Snowman by: Mark Donis



Crossword: SPORTS



Across:

- 2 An enthusiast of a team
4 To perform repeatedly to become proficient
5 A person who plays on the same team as someone else
7 One who instructs a player or team
8 A person who is trained or skilled in exercises, sports or games
9 A cup or other decorative object awarded as a prize for a victory or success

Down:

- 1 An official who watches a game closely to make sure the rules are adhered to
3 Leader of a sports team
6 Someone who lacks experience

Answers: 1. Referee 2. Fan 3. Captain 4. Practice 5. Teammate 6. Amateur 7. Coach 8. Athlete 9. Trophy



RIDDLE

Submitted by : Jenna D.

Q. If you don't keep me, I'll break. What am I?

A. A promise

WINTER FUN FACTS

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SUBMISSION INFO

The hope for this page is to get kids involved and interacting with the community in a positive way. We welcome submissions for all categories from kids of any age. Please keep the reviews positive and all submitted content appropriate for kids of all ages. Please send all submissions to joyousnotlkids@gmail.com and in the subject line please put the category for which you are submitting. Thank you.

CHARITY

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Local SPORTS

Local teen plans next step toward hockey career

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

Matteo Giampa's hockey journey will soon be bringing him back home, following four years of pursuing his dream in Connecticut and Alberta.

The St. Michael Catholic Elementary School grad and former Holy Cross Secondary School student has committed to the NCAA Division I Canisius College Golden Griffins in nearby Buffalo, NY. He'll play one more year

with the Bonnyville Pontiacs of the Alberta Junior Hockey League (AJHL) before joining the Atlantic Hockey Conference (AHC) team for the 2023-2024 season.

"I'm really excited, and my parents are super happy," Giampa says from his billet home in Bonnyville, AB, where he is completing his first season with the AJHL's Pontiacs. "They'll be at every game. I've skated there a number of times during my junior career, and I've done a couple of Junior Sabres

camps over there. I love the rink, I love the facilities, and I love the staff."

"Everything's been great, Canisius has been great," he continues. "I'm tremendously honoured and grateful for the opportunity that they've given me."

After playing hockey for his hometown NOTL Wolves, Giampa moved to the Niagara North Stars AAA U15 team in 2017-2018. The following year he played for that organization's U16 team, with a call-up to

the older U18 age group for a single game.

He captured the attention of Ontario Hockey League scouts, and in the April, 2019 OHL draft he was chosen in the third round by the London Knights. He was 15 years old.

Giampa never made it to the London camp, though. He had been playing his minor midget year with an injured wrist he didn't allow to heal correctly.

"I didn't want to get surgery and be put in a cast for

my draft year," he tells The Local. "I wanted to play even if it was extremely painful. I ended up playing the whole season with a broken wrist. After the season, I went to a doctor and I ended up getting surgery. When the camp was going on I was in a cast."

At that point, he discussed his future with his parents Arc and Bonnie. He realized at the time he was a bit of a smaller player, between 140 and 150 pounds, and might need a little more time to develop to play com-

petitively in a much tougher league.

The decision was made to set his OHL aspirations aside in favour of pursuing the alternative NCAA route, with the goal of earning a hockey scholarship to an American college. He withdrew from Holy Cross after his Grade 10 year and enrolled in the Frederick Gunn School in Washington, Connecticut.

"It was tough to move away from the family," he

Continued on page 20

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LocalSPORTS

Preds in third place going into final weekend

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

The Niagara Predators have clinched third place in the Greater Metro Junior A Hockey League despite some strange circumstances over their last four games, playing only two games but earning five points in the standings.

The Predators leapfrogged over their rival St. George after a COVID outbreak caused the Ravens to forfeit games scheduled for Friday night in Virgil, and this Tuesday night at the Vale Health and Wellness Centre in Port Colborne.

Because of those forfeitures, Niagara was awarded two wins and four points for those games, which show up officially as 3-0 victories on the GMHL website. It's not the way Predators owner, head coach and general manager Robert Turnbull wanted to move past the other GMHL team he owns. "It's a huge let-down for

all of us," Turnbull said this week. "We've played very well against them. One of their players got COVID, and of course, when you get one you're going to get more. Another one tested positive the next day. You can't take any chances."

With the GMHL's regular season wrapping up this weekend, there was no room to find a new date for either game. Tuesday's 'home' game in Port Colborne had already been rescheduled from the extended January break when non-elite amateur sports were barred from continuing under provincial restrictions. With the Meridian Credit Union Arena fully booked, the Vale Centre was to be the best alternative.

"We looked at rescheduling it," added Turnbull. "But it would have been Thursday, and we'd have been looking at four games in four nights. To play four games in a row, that's jeopardizing our players' health going into the playoffs. And we're already short. I refuse to put the players' health in jeopardy."



Morgan Penwell in his first home game for the Predators, against North York. (Mike Balsom)

ardizing our players' health going into the playoffs. And we're already short. I refuse to put the players' health in jeopardy."

Their other two games over their recent four-game stretch resulted in a single point, with a loss in Oshawa last Wednesday to the Durham Roadrunners and a shoot-out loss to Plattsville Sunday.

In the Durham game, Niagara was outshot 54-41 in a 4-3 decision. Despite the loss, goaltender Morgan Penwell was chosen as the game's first star for obvious reasons.

"He played a hell of a game," raved Turnbull. "Fifty saves! We had nine forwards and five defence-men. Two players couldn't come due to work commitments, as it was a 9:30 p.m. game. We played fabulous, but we managed to lose the game on a freak goal with not too much time remaining."

The goal in question came with just over six minutes left in the game. Players from both teams were gathered around the crease when Roadrunners forward Kevin Serio managed to come up with the puck. He took a shot that caromed off the skates of three or four players and found its way past the goal-line.

The Predators held leads of 2-1 and 3-2 in that game before Durham's Trevor Urquhart tied it up late in the second. Georgy Kholmovsky, Jason Humphries and Reese Bisci all found the net for Niagara.

Sunday's game turned out to be the Predators first taste of overtime and first shootout of the season.

Alexander Insulander opened the scoring 1:33 into the game with assists from Humphries and Kholmovsky. Malcolm Campbell tied it up just a minute and a half later, then

Noah Caperchione and Bisci scored for the Preds before Plattsville's Lucas Bast closed the margin to 3-2 by the end of the first period.

Niagara couldn't solve Lakers goalie Rahul Bola from that point. Plattsville's Kyle Struth forced the tie with five minutes remaining in the second, and both teams went scoreless in the third and through the overtime period.

Bola came through in the shootout for the Lakers. Humphries was first to try for the Predators, ringing his shot off the goalpost. In succession, Caperchione, Insulander and Dante Massi were all stopped by Bola. After Niagara goaltender David White stopped three Lakers attempts, Bast snuck one past him for the shootout victory.

"I thought we could have played a lot better," reflected Turnbull. "I have to give Plattsville credit. They played aggressively, moved

the puck, had a good transition game, and their goaltender was very good."

The Ravens are two points behind Niagara in the standings with a single game to play, while the Predators will close out the regular season with three this weekend. On the strength of their winning percentage and their 4-2 record face to face, the Preds have locked up third place in the North Division, seven points behind second place North York.

Niagara will face either Plattsville or Streetsville in the first round of the GMHL playoffs, depending on the outcome of the games played by those two teams this weekend. The Predators are 4-1 against both teams this season, though they visit Plattsville again Sunday.

"We match well against both of those teams," Turnbull said. "This weekend, we'll give a couple of guys some rest to prepare for the playoffs. Josh (Davidson) needs some rest for his shoulder, and a couple of others as well. We're going to focus on the power play and the penalty kill, and we need to improve our transition game as we head to the playoffs next week."

The last home game of the regular season sees the Predators hosting the last place Tottenham Thunder, with a 3-30-1 record this Friday at 7:30 p.m. They travel to Tottenham for a Saturday night rematch, before wrapping up the season with a 3:30 p.m. game Sunday at Plattsville.

Meet the Predators

Name:
Brett Lee

Jersey number: **19**

Age: **17**

Birthdate: **07/07/2004**

Hometown:
Millgrove, Ont.

Nickname:
Efft

Favourite hockey player:
Shea Weber



'Hype' song:
Deira City Centre by Night Lovell

Hockey highlight:
Winning the King of the Rings

Other sports you play:
Basketball

Favourite 'cheat' meal:
McDonald's

Secret talent:
Working on cars and constructing things

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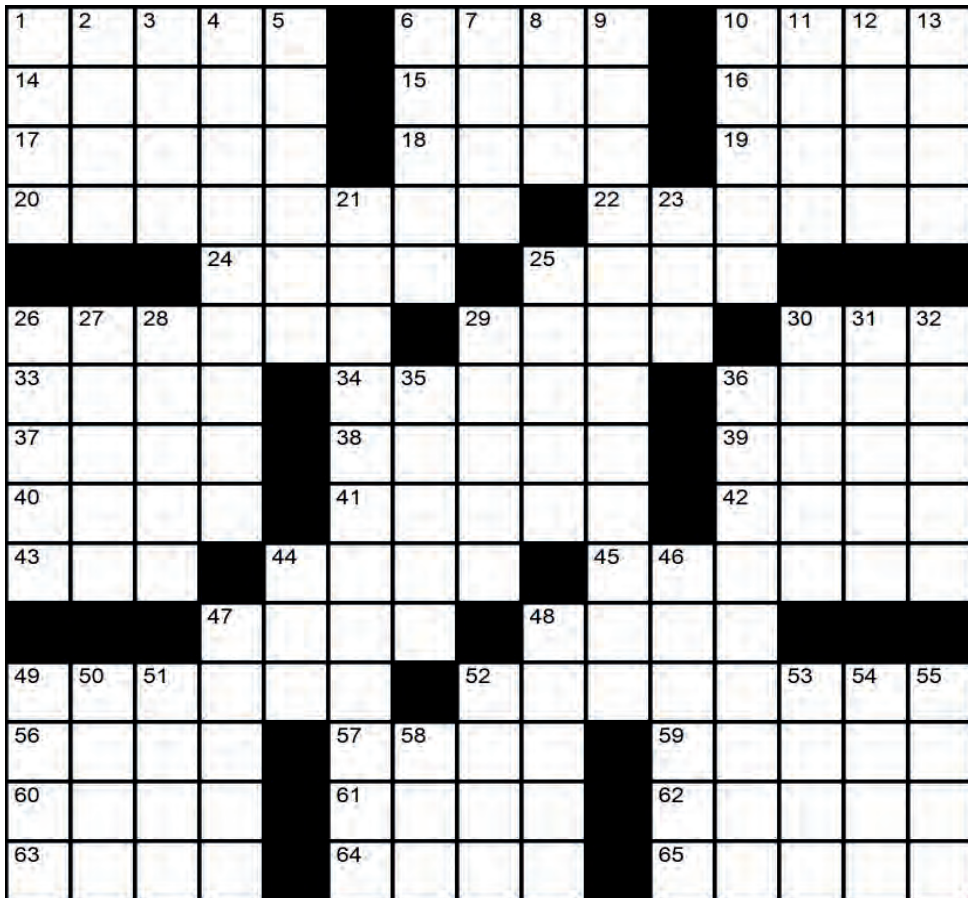
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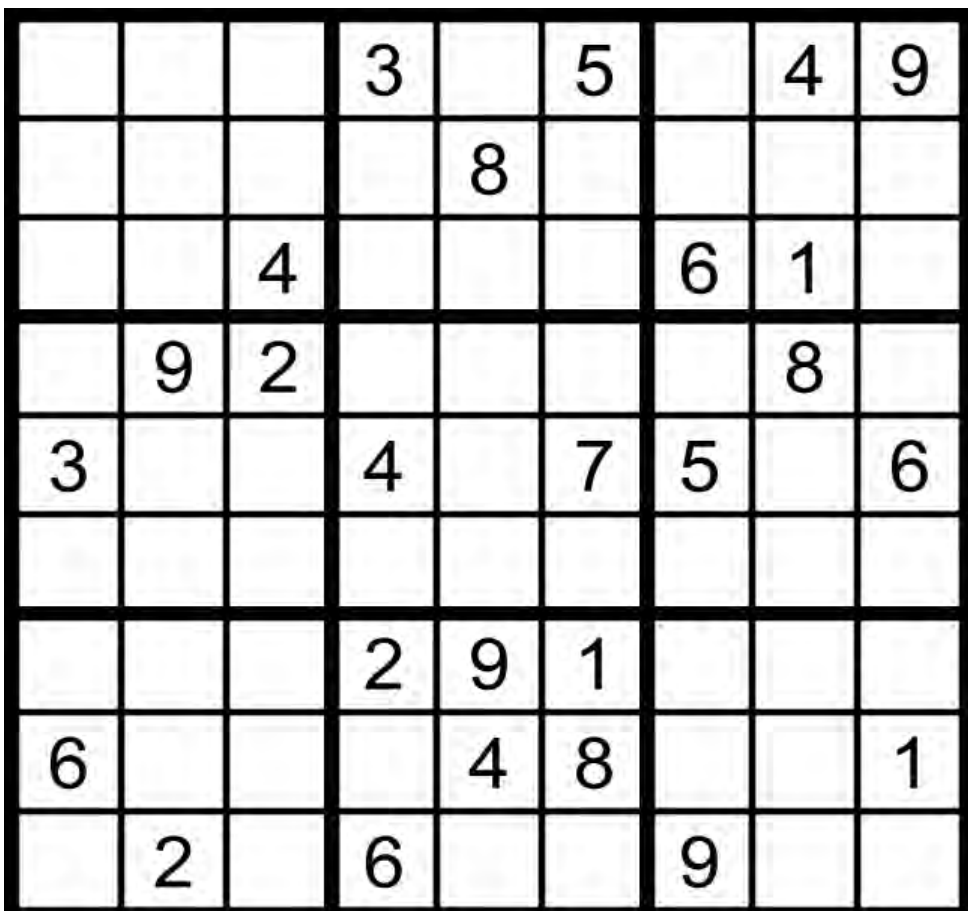
- 1 Portion
- 6 Totals
- 10 Champion
- 14 Hot chocolate
- 15 Deck division
- 16 Styptic pencil ingredient
- 17 Countertenors
- 18 Heroic tale
- 19 Unconventional early 20th century art movement
- 20 Occult
- 22 Two fins
- 24 Very fine-grained soil
- 25 Suffix for a focused event
- 26 For ever
- 29 Puff
- 30 Huckleberry Finn's pal
- 33 Boyfriend
- 34 Split fifty-fifty
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- 37 Admits
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- 41 Roman Earth
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47 Adverse criticism
48 Little Joe
49 Hit hard
52 Editions
56 Global auction website
57 Bong
59 --- Hawkins Day
60 Stain
61 Wicked
62 How golfers want to finish
every hole
63 Spanish kiss
64 Funnyman --- Carvey
65 --- as a lobster

Down:

1 Bunco
2 Sacred
3 Deeds
4 Underlying reason
5 Without difficulty
6 Analyze
7 Two-fold
8 Excavate
9 One of a hundred in D C
10 In case you --- noticed ...
11 Panache
12 Bad-mannered
13 --- Bradley, five-star
general

21 Broke
23 Sibyl's power
25 Act of kindness
26 Big banger
27 Jerry Lee ---
28 Collector's list
29 State of high honor
30 Skipper of the Argo
31 Out of favor
32 British W W II general
35 Had eight days according
to the Beatles
36 Residents of Abuja, for
example
44 Gaza Strip grp.
46 World's largest land
47 Reach by air
48 Chap
49 "Dragnet" creator Jack ---
50 Competent
51 Its capital is Vientiane
52 Conceited
53 Scent
54 Diamond team
55 New plant in the making
58 Walking in space



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Across: 1 Share, 6 Adds, 10 Hero, 14 Cocoa, 15 Suit, 16 Alum, 17 Alito, 18 Saga, 19 Dada, 20 Mystical, 22 Tenner, 24 Clay, 25 Fest, 26 Always, 29 Gasp, 30 Jim, 33 Beau, 34 Halve, 36 Nano, 37 Owns, 38 Swoon, 39 I S B N, 40 Mile, 41 Terra, 42 Goat, 43 B Ss, 44 Prey, 45 Trendy, 47 Flak, 48 Four, 49 Wallop, 52 Versions, 56 Ebay, 57 Peal, 59 Sadle, 60 Blot, 61 Evil, 62 In one, 63 Beso, 64 Dana, 65 As red.

Down: 1 Scam, 2 Holy, 3 Acts, 4 Root cause, 5 Easily, 6 Assay, 7 Dual, 8 Dig, 9 State senator, 10 Hadn't, 11 Elan, 12 Rude, 13 Omar, 21 Cash-stripped, 23 E S P, 25 Favor, 26 A-bomb, 27 Lewis, 28 Wants, 29 Glory, 30 Jason, 31 In bad, 32 Monty, 35 A week, 36 Nigerians, 44 P L O, 46 Russia, 47 Fly to, 48 Fella, 49 Webb, 50 Able, 51 Laos, 52 Vain, 53 Odor, 54 Nine, 55 Seed, 58 EV A.

LocalSPORTS

Coach expects ‘instant success’ for Giampa in U.S.

Continued from page 17

says. “We’re a close-knit family, but I knew if I wanted to take the next step in hockey it was a choice I had to make. I want to play pro hockey for a living. I just went for it.”

Known as The Gunnery, Frederick Gunn is a U.S. High School Preparatory, or Prep, co-educational boarding school founded in 1850 by Gunn, a well-known American abolitionist. Like many prep schools, The Gunnery is known for its athletics, and for feeding elite athletes into the U.S. college ranks.

“I loved The Gunnery,” the 18-year-old says. “I loved the coaches, and the school itself is a great school. I learned a lot as a human, not just as a hockey player. The experience was a great one for me.”

Matteo played 35 games in 2019-2020, amassing nine goals and 10 assists on the season. When he returned for his senior year the next fall, the pandemic was in full force, meaning hockey was out of the question. And after only a short time in his dormitory, an outbreak of the

virus on the campus forced him back to NOTL, where he completed his year remotely.

“I did great, I had the best marks I’ve ever had in my life, even though it was all on Zoom,” Giampa reflects. “My parents were happy I was home. I trained a lot during COVID, and kept my skills sharp. I shot pucks and stick-handled in the basement, skated on some ponds with my friends. I had to be creative.”

Without a chance to show his skills in his senior year, Giampa knew he would have to impress college scouts some other way. When the opportunity to join the Bonnyville Pontiacs came up, he was chomping at the bit.

“This year has been kind of like a new beginning for me,” says Giampa. “It’s high-level hockey here. Everyone is big and strong and fast. It’s a competitive, tough, hard-nose league. It’s definitely added another component to my game and helped me develop as a player.”

Now weighing in at 180 pounds and standing 6’1”, much taller than either of his parents, Matteo has contributed 18 goals and 25 assists

in 53 games for the third place Pontiacs, making him the third-highest scorer on the team. His wrist is fully healed, though he has missed a few games with some minor rib and hip injuries.

This past weekend he scored a goal in both games during a two-game road trip to Whitecourt, against whom the Pontiacs open the playoffs at home this Friday night.

Despite the cold temperatures, he’s enjoying life out west. Mom Bonnie has been out for a couple of visits and both she and Matteo love his billet family, including their three kids. Bonnyville is a true hockey town, almost three hours northwest of Edmonton, where the RJ Lalonde Arena plays a central role in the small community.

He’s enjoyed barnstorming throughout the province from town to town, and has had the chance to spend a day at the massive West Edmonton Mall with his teammates on a day off. He’s been fascinated with the wide open spaces and impressed with the number of fans who attend AJHL games. He loves his coaches and says his fel-

low Pontiacs have been very welcoming, helping him to acclimatize to playing out west.

This year Giampa has been concentrating solely on hockey. He opted not to pursue a part-time job in favour of working on his fitness and skill set to get to the next level.

Obviously, the Golden Griffins staff took notice of his efforts. Now that he’s earned a full scholarship with Canisius, Giampa anticipates maybe taking a couple of courses next year to reach ahead. He won’t have to choose a major for his studies, he says, until his second or third year there.

In a press release on the Pontiacs’ website, Bonnyville head coach and general manager Rick Swan says, “Matteo has all the abilities to become a great NCAA Division I player and it is great to see him rewarded for his hard work both on and off the ice. Coach Large and his staff are getting a total gem in Matteo with a very high ceiling. He will become an instant success to the Golden Griffins program and school.”

Bonnie says she has been impressed in her interactions



Matteo Giampa with the Bonnyville Pontiacs in the Alberta Junior Hockey League. (Photo supplied)

with Canisius head coach Trevor Large.

“He’s Canadian,” she raves. “He seems so authentic. He seems to really have the best interests of the players at heart. It’s so amazing.”

Interestingly, the Giampas may soon be helping another family member choose a U.S. college. Sixteen-year-old Madison, a Grade 11 student at Holy Cross, has been playing this year for the U22 AA Stoney Creek Sabres of the Ontario Women’s Hockey League. By the end of this school year she is expected to be fielding offers from a number of American schools.

So, as Matteo will be coming home following another season playing on the wing with Bonnyville, Madison may be heading out to the next step in her own hockey journey. Arc and Bonny, though, will certainly be crossing the Peace Bridge regularly to cheer their son on.



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