Remember to change your clocks Sunday, March 8!

Black History experts told ‘riveting’ stories

Personal stories brought history to life

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

At the tiny, historic chapel in Queenston, the Niagara Parks Commission hosted its first Black history symposium Saturday, with three community historians telling riveting stories of themselves and their families. Parks commission heritage manager Jim Hill says the event sold out very quickly, and it was the personal stories as told by the speakers that made the afternoon such a success. “These were dramatic experiences, brought to life for us by people who were personally connected to them, and also connected to important historic sites where they are accustomed to talking about generations of history to visitors every day,” says Hill. The speakers at the Queenston Chapel, which has been renovated to make year-round events more comfortable, included historian Rochelle Bush, who spoke of Harriet Tubman, and Penny Coles.

Ready to offer programs

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

The expansion at the Niagara Regional Native Centre is complete, with new programming beginning soon.

Although there has been no date for an official opening celebration, programming for children and families will begin in the new space March 23, and there will be a drumming and dancing event to recognize it.

A five-day-a-week EarlyOn Centre will open at that time, and some existing programming will move to the new premises, which include three new rooms. They are bright and colourful, with comfy seating, lots of toys and books for children of all ages, big windows to let in natural light, and decorating, such as artwork on the walls, that reflects Indigenous culture.

The EarlyOn program is open to the community, says registered early child educator Dianne Tomlinson, who is in the process of setting up the schedule for the new premises, which is officially called the Clear Skies EarlyOn Child and Family Centre.

As with other EarlyOn centres, funded by the Province but administered by the Region, experts will be invited for specific programming, such as yoga and infant massage — Tomlinson already has two.

Native Centre addition finished

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**Dianne Tomlinson prepares for the EarlyOn Centre opening at the Niagara Regional Native Centre March 23.** (Penny Coles)
Museum session highlights what’s best about it
Also brings out what needs improvement

Penny Coles
The Local

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum needs more space, more visitors — especially young ones — and stable funding to ensure both operations and the historic building are sustainable.

Those were some of the many passionate responses to questions raised during an envisioning session held at the museum Friday, as part of a process to create a strategic plan for its future.

The session was led by Rebecca Jones of Dysart & Jones Associates, aided by Daryl Novak, also of D&J and the chair of the NOTL Public Library board.

About 40 people attended, many with connections to the museum or other local cultural organizations.

“The board has to make difficult decisions that will impact on the organization for the next five to 10 years,” said Jones, asking the audience what is important to them about the town.

Answers included the feeling of peace and quiet, its proximity to major centres, the cultural activities offered, the cultural networks, the natural beauty, its uniqueness as the “little gem we have here,” and the history and heritage it represents.

When asked about concerns, audience members spoke of inappropriate development, overwhelming tourism, the threat to museum funding, and that it might be closed.

There was also a fear expressed of reluctance to be open to change, about losing the tender fruit industry to wineries or even cannabis growth, and about how the town would react to climate change and the environment.

The lack of affordable housing was also discussed. “People who work in town can’t afford to live in town,” said one audience member.

“That’s an issue.”

“The town is career-end- ing,” said another, citing a lack of professional job opportunities.

Public transportation and shuttle hours are also issues, especially for those who need to get to work in Old Town or Glendale.

“I’m concerned about the town becoming an amusement park,” said another audience member. “I’d like it to remain a liveable, working town.”

Turning to talk specifically of the museum, Jones asked about what prompted audience members to attend the session.

One response was out of concern for the museum, which is “an under-appreciated gem in the community.”

A common theme among supporters was a lack of understanding or awareness of how much the museum has to offer, and the need for expanded space for more displays and events that would attract a larger group of people.

“You have to understand the role and strength of the museum, its ability to protect memories of the past, educate locals and visitors about the town’s history, and preserve the authenticity of the town.”

If the stories of the community aren’t told, nobody will know them — they need to be shared in a way that’s accessible and understandable, Jones heard.

“The role of the museum is essential in our community, to preserve who we are,” was another comment.

Its role is preserving not only artifacts, but also documents, which represent a continuous history of the town.

It also has a role as a partner to other cultural organizations, which would benefit from working together and helping each other, Jones told.

Others talked about the museum as a community hub, and a place to hold events that would draw people to it, including children and school groups.

“Entertainment will bring people in, tracking people into learning something. They have to be entertained and can be surreptitiously taught while they’re here,” was one comment.

“Fashion shows instead of clothes behind glass,” was another.

“There are so many compelling physical elements about this site, a heritage property in this world having an eye to the future,” said Coun. Clare Cameron, who was one of three council representatives, along with Couns. Allan Bisback and Erwin Wiens.

“There was also discussion about the museum having a larger role in telling the stories of Indigenous history, and fostering dialogue around Indigenous history, which has been cited as one of the reasons for the expansion.”

Jones then turned the talk to the barriers that prevent the museum from being all people want it to be. Accessibility was one that was mentioned, as was “the word museum,” which to many conjures visions of old and dusty exhibits, a turn-off especially for the young.

“It’s considered a place to visit when it’s raining,” said one audience member, drawing chuckles from the crowd.

But others, said one lover of museums, “might find it a place of awe and joy. Museums mean different things to different people.”

Lack of space to display current exhibits alongside the “chronological history” of the town so important to visitors was mentioned.

“Locals want new and different, visitors want to get their bearings of where they are in the community.”

A teacher who has taken school groups on museum visits suggested more opportunity for interaction with exhibits would allow them to “come away with a positive experience.”

“There is a missing voice here, of people under 20,” said another. “We have to get them involved.”

The location is a barrier, off the beaten track, said Bisback. “We’ve got to get people off Queen Street to the museum,” he said, adding, “I’m not suggesting we move it.”

Jones asked about “accelerators” that would move the museum forward, which turned the talk to the excellence of the staff and volunteers, the society that supports the museum, the fundraisers, such as polo on the commons, camps for children, walking tours, the tiny museum on wheels now in the works, potential partnerships, preservation of the building, and being a burden on taxpayers.

“I would like to be pragmatic, and know that we have funding so that we don’t have the roof falling down on us. You need a consistent model that the museum can rely on. Fundraising should go toward artifacts, not the roof or furnace.”

Ron Dale, former Parks Canada supervisor of historic sites, suggested an increased use of technology, including virtual reality alongside exhibits so visitors, instead of just seeing a spinning wheel in a glass case, “will be able to see someone in period costume using the spinning wheel.”

Having that website that “draws people in from outside Niagara,” that shows more of the collections online, was another suggestion for the future.

The conversation wrapped up with a discussion of the “perplexity” of locals either not knowing about the museum, or not visiting it, and the opportunity, and necessity, with the coming expansion, to change that.

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Town moving forward to determine hospital future

Penny Coles
The Local

Three years after purchasing the former hospital for $3.6 million, the Town is moving toward a decision about its future.

A steering committee, to include the members of council, is being appointed to engage the public during the consultation process, and ensure the community feels a strong sense of ownership and support for the site—appropriately developed.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero.

“Some might want to use it, or might say it’s not salvageable”

The property includes the hospital building and nurses’ residence at the back, as well as the front parking lot. Most of the property behind the hospital is owned by Parks Canada, says Disero. “We need to get started. We need to see if there is anyone out there to help us move forward with this.”

The building could be renovated, or it could come forward, she said. “We’ll talk about what the town would like to see there, and we’ll consider a public-private partnership or a long-term lease.”

The results of any expressions of interest will be presented to council, and council will decide how to move forward, says Disero.

“Until now, we’ve been getting questions about Black history,” he says. “The older generation is really interested in learning these stories, and are learning more, but also want to know what happened. We were just providing the venude to let these stories be told, these incredible stories of bravery and sacrifice.”

And not just during Black History Month, he added — watch for more such events hosted all year long on parks properties, says Hill.

“Of course, the younger generation will probably be interested, who didn’t learn about this in school. They are really interested in learning these incredible stories of bravery and sacrifice.”

The police have also requested they be included then-councillor Disero, was disbanded at the end of the previous council term.

Black history and incorporated it into events and plaques, but is beginning to do more, and trying to ensure they are telling the correct stories, and anyone out there to help us move forward with this. The building could be renovated, or it could come down, depending on the expressions of interest that come forward, she said. “Someone might want to use it, or might say it’s not salvageable.”

The property includes the hospital building and nurses’ residence at the back, as well as the front parking lot. Most of the property behind the hospital is owned by Parks Canada, says Disero. “I suspect that will probably be renewed for a period of time. There are a whole bunch of variables.”

The hospital committee will discuss a timeline at their next meeting, she says. “We have to move cautiously and get our timing right.”

The Town is currently paying about $61,200 a year in interest on the property, intended to be funded through lease payments, a report to council says, and from fees for the parking lot.

The public consultation held for three months from March 20 to June 20, 2018 resulted in some comments being gathered, but no action was taken. Join the Conversation, the Town’s website for gathering public comments, elicited 45 suggestions for the future of the hospital property, which included housing condos or apartments for seniors; a pub art gallery or museum; a multi-purpose complex with seniors housing, retail shops and educational programs; a parking lot; a tourism office, a cultural hub for artists and farmers; tennis and pickleball courts; a new town hall; an indoor mall with a pool and playground; a hostel for low-income travellers; a fine arts centre that could be an art gallery with space for the Shaw Festival; or that the property be returned to Parks Canada.

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Continued from page 1

her last stop in St. Catharines. Bush, a descendant of a freedom-seeker, is the minister at the Queenston Chapel Saturday. (Fred Mercnik)

Ayo Adewumi came from Nigeria in 2004, and spoke of the history of the Underground Railroad Centre spoke to a full house at the Queenston Chapel Saturday. (Fred Mercnik)

Author Saladin Allah of the Niagara Falls, NY Museum and Underground Railroad Heritage Center in Niagara Falls, N.Y., and spoke of the history of the Underground Railroad in Niagara. He is a descendant of a freedom-seeker Josiah Henson.

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Ayo Adewumi came from Nigeria in 2004, and spoke of the history of the Underground Railroad Centre spoke to a full house at the Queenston Chapel Saturday. (Fred Mercnik)
The space is designed to meet the standards of a daycare centre, and that might be possible at some point down the road, but not in the immediate future, says Tomlinson.

One of its goals is to ensure culture-sensitive prenatal programming for families. Tomlinson says, in addition to continuing the EarlyOn program to be offered five days a week, the centre has been the co-ordinator for the Canada Nutrition Prenatal Program at the Native Centre for years, a program that is moving to the new family space. It is funded by the federal government to allow community groups to help improve the health of pregnant women, new mothers and their babies.

One of its goals is to ensure culturally-sensitive prenatal support for Indigenous women.

Tomlinson came to the Native Centre after a long career in early childhood education, and didn’t realize until she arrived here she has Indigenous roots herself. “I learned my great-grandmother was Indigenous,” she says.

It has been 49 years since she graduated with the second early childhood education graduating class of Niagara College, she added, and has continued to take courses since then.

When she is ready to retire after a 50-year career, probably in spring of 2021, she will be happy to do so with the knowledge that she was able to help set up the new space at the centre, and arrange more programming for families and children in the community. “It will be a nice way to end a great career, but my goal right now is to see it used,” says Tomlinson.

EarlyOn program to be offered five days a week
Going green in the personal care market, how one company is leading the way

Nature’s Aid is a true natural health and beauty care company that was a one-product business only six years ago and has since grown into a multi-facet-ed brand, right here in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

A family-owned business, run by Al Huberts and his daughter Courtney, Nature’s Aid products are now available in over 4,000 retail stores across North America, and are making their way into global markets.

“We’re best known for our multi-purpose, true natural skin gel. It’s a one-product, dozens of uses formula that has become a staple in homes across Canada due to its effectiveness. It’s a first aid, skin care and beauty aid all rolled into one,” says Al.

However, their other products including lip balms, shampoos, body wash and bar soaps are quickly catching up.

“Having our skin gel receive an award for Best Body Care product in Canada by the natural health community was a real honour for us, and we strive to ensure every product we create meets the same level of quality our customers have come to expect,” says Courtney.

Along with their desire to create clean, natural health and beauty products for consumers, Nature’s Aid wants to create clean, natural products for the planet.

“Personal care products have some of the worst recycling rates, with upwards of 80 billion plastic shampoo and conditioner bottles being thrown away globally each year,” adds Courtney. “As a company that creates natural beauty and body care products, including shampoo and conditioner, this is an issue we want to address.”

For liquid products, Nature’s Aid sources bottles made from non-virgin plastic so that they’re not adding more to the world. They’re also in the process of designing refill stations for their retail partners, which will allow customers to bring their Nature’s Aid bottles back to the store to be filled up, extending the life of these already recycled bottles.

Another way they’re addressing the issue of plastic waste is with the launch of their new solid shampoo and conditioner bars.

“Working hard over the last year, Courtney says her company has created four varieties of salon quality, solid shampoo and conditioner bars that not only work like their liquid counterparts, but are colour-safe, vegan friendly and cruelty free, while containing no parabens, SLS, silicones, palm oils or artificial colours or fragrances.

Going green doesn’t end here for Nature’s Aid. They continue to support the Nature Conservancy of Canada by donating proceeds from the sale of their bath and shower products as well as developing other innovative products that will eliminate the need for plastic packaging.

You can learn more about Nature’s Aid and their true natural products at www.naturesaid.ca.
Black history should be recognised year round

Jim Hill, of the Niagara Parks Commission, in discussing Black History Month, got it right in two very important ways.

First, he says, we should be recognizing Black history with every event that celebrates our local history, every chance we get, all year long. Especially here in Niagra, where it played such an important role in our past, and our county’s past.

His other point is that we have to get it right. And to help us learn, he gathered three experts with personal connections to the history of our country for a symposium, to make sure we get it right.

He mentioned the same problems with our knowledge of Indigenous history – it is our history, plain and simple, and should be recognized as such. But we have to get the stories right.

A month-long celebration is a fine idea in trying to right wrongs of the past, in bringing awareness to the forefront, and focusing on education. But it shouldn’t be confined to just one month.

Celebrations of Black history began in Canada in the late 1920s, following a similar move in the U.S. During the early 1970s, it became known as Black History Month, and grew into Black History Month in 1976.

It has officially been recognized in Canada since 1995, with a goal of celebrating the many achievements and contributions of Black Canadians who, throughout history, have done so much to make Canada the ‘culturally diverse, hospitable and prosperous nation it is today,’ as our federal website says.

For a long time, there was no recognition or acknowledgment of the many sacrifices by soldiers of African descent during the War of 1812, says Hill. The parks commission is trying to correct that, not only with plaques and mentions in many events, but in a much broader, more comprehensive and focused attempt, as are many cultural organizations in Niagara.

We all know we’re not there yet, not as knowledgeable as we should be, about Black history or our Indigenous people. But we are very fortunate to live and work in an area where there are many occasions to remind us.

Canadians today, ‘as our federal website says, “should be grateful there are those who are willing to tell their stories, over and over if necessary, until we all have them firmly implanted in our minds and hearts, and no longer need the reminders.”

Penny Coles
The Local

Let’s make black history a year-round celebration.

Solution to garbage a complicated problem

Re: Same volume, different collection schedule for garbage (The Local, Feb. 20).

Why do we allow manufacturers to make items that are not recyclable? These items include packaging, but also electronics, cars and appliances.

The manufacturers profit by allowing their leftovers to be taken care of by someone else and then of course there is the mercury from paper plants, and the oil contamination left at the oil fields … all clean-up to be financed by someone else.

The trusted voice of our community

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The NOTL Local acknowledges the land on which we gather is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples, many of whom continue to live and work here today. This territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties and is within the land protected by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum agreement. Today this gathering place is home to many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples and acknowledging reminds us that our great standard of living is directly related to the resources and friendship of Indigenous peoples.
The environment lost out in the recent pipeline protest

When the Indigenous groups blockaded railways, highways, and border crossings across the nation, and the federal government was under immense pressure to react most appropriately, we wondered who the real winners and losers would be.

I’m not taking sides. Instead, I’m going to ponder, with you, how we got here in the first place. This is also an act to protect the earth’s natural heritage on a large scale, and I will offer a perhaps unpopular opinion to digest.

Oil is necessary to power our society, for the time being. As a civilization, giving up oil overnight, or entirely, is going to be an impossible course. Giving the green light for new mega oil projects while simultaneously pushing onto traditional territories is not a pleasant combination.

It’s a step in the wrong direction for our global biosphere. The plan has doubled up as a showcase of indifference toward native groups at the corporate scale, namely the Wet’suweten people of British Columbia in this case. The oil companies may look bad to some, but they are heavily backed by other forces seen through the lens of the jobs and the economy. It must be challenging to be a massive business with sufficient funds and ideas for a project, only to have treatments and minority groups stop it.

When the Wet’suweten protesters and others close to home had their protests cleared out, the RCMP and the OPP were doing their job and following orders respectfully. It must be an appreciably awkward spot for some of the men and women on the force, as they embody Canada, while doing their most loyal duty possible in tense times.

But it’s complicated. Not every Indigenous official was against the pipeline. In fact, some have been openly supportive, because of the potential for job opportunities.

When Indigenous groups across Canada stood up in solidarity to show anger toward the Wet’suweten arrests, their protests worked.

If the Indigenous people were successful in protecting their traditional lands and natural heritage by stopping the pipeline, the world’s biosphere and Canada’s culture would have won. Imagine if we poured that kind of money and ambition into larger, greener projects that could employ just as many people. Oh, but we do also need oil to tide us over. It’s complicated, all right.

From a global perspective, I have no issue with railway blockages, highway shut-downs, and protests on the steps of Parliament. Providing they are temporary, they have a place in the global gears and cogs in wheels that stimulate real change. Every protest is a step toward a bigger issue, boiling over our heads — climate change.

The protest ripple effects have economically inconvenienced millions of Canadians and countless businesses, with folks trying to go about their daily work lives, caught in the whirlwind of tricky times — or literally in a traffic jam.

Some view the protests as extreme, but they worked, to a point. People are still talking about them.

This was an act of not only solidarity, but desperation. This desperation had been brewing for a long time, and sometimes it takes extraordinary acts to start a fire in a cold winter.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said the blockades must come down. He was careful not to specify how or in what timeframe. It has been interesting to watch the moves that followed. The protests have stopped, and the pipeline will proceed. The environment was clearly not the winner.

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Keeping brain active is important as we age

Larry W. Chambers
Hanna Ley
Eva Liu
Special to The Local

According to Niagara-on-the-Lake’s Community Wellness Committee January 2020 Report recommendations, community vitality involves both connectedness and education through life-long learning, for either personal or professional reasons.

Life-long learning is a guiding education principle of the McMaster University Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine. At present, 82 of the 609 students in the three-year program are based at the Niagara Regional Campus. Life-long learning for these students is highlighted by understanding that new scientific discoveries will repeatedly change how they approach caring for all residents. Continual professional development is recommended supporting lifelong learning programs at designated educational institutions. U3A is an international concept of Universities for the Third Age (U3A), first developed in France in 1980, is offered in many communities. U3A is an international movement whose aims are the education and stimulation of older adults in the community – those in their third age of life. Generally, U3A are groups of older adults that come together to continue their enjoyment of learning subjects of interest to them. An interesting feature of U3A is that there is a complete division between the learners and the teachers – everyone can take a turn at being both if they wish.

Another option is the federal government’s Life-long Learning Plan, which allows Canadian residents to withdraw funds from their Registered Retirement Savings Plans to help pay for formal learning programs at designated educational institutions.

Learning does not need to take place in a formalized setting – one can just as easily exercise our brain through reading the newspaper, playing mahjong, working at a part-time job, or pursuing a hobby.

Life-long learning is ongoing, voluntary, and self-motivated seeking of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons. It enhances social inclusion, active citizenship, and personal development, but also self-sustainability, as well as competitiveness and employability.

Larry W. Chambers has authored 175 articles and books concerning disease prevention (e.g. dementia), quality improvement in long-term care homes and innovative approaches for continuing professional development. He is research director of the Niagara Regional Campus, School of Medicine, McMaster University. Eva Liu and Hanna Ley are medical students at the Niagara Regional Campus of the McMaster University School of Medicine. They are interested in improving community well-being of trail older adults in NOTL by narrowing the fitness (physical and brain) gap, diversifying housing options for older adults, and increasing economic activity within the community that also increases ability of our minds to interact with people and ideas.

Larry W. Chambers
Hanna Ley
Eva Liu
Special to The Local

Keeping brain active is important as we age

Larry W. Chambers
Hanna Ley
Eva Liu
Special to The Local

According to Niagara-on-the-Lake’s Community Wellness Committee January 2020 Report recommendations, community vitality involves both connectedness and education through life-long learning, for either personal or professional reasons.

Life-long learning is a guiding education principle of the McMaster University Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine. At present, 82 of the 609 students in the three-year program are based at the Niagara Regional Campus. Life-long learning for these students is highlighted by understanding that new scientific discoveries will repeatedly change how they approach caring for all residents. Continual professional development is recommended supporting lifelong learning programs at designated educational institutions. U3A is an international concept of Universities for the Third Age (U3A), first developed in France in 1980, is offered in many communities. U3A is an international movement whose aims are the education and stimulation of older adults in the community – those in their third age of life. Generally, U3A are groups of older adults that come together to continue their enjoyment of learning subjects of interest to them. An interesting feature of U3A is that there is a complete division between the learners and the teachers – everyone can take a turn at being both if they wish.

Another option is the federal government’s Life-long Learning Plan, which allows Canadian residents to withdraw funds from their Registered Retirement Savings Plans to help pay for formal learning programs at designated educational institutions.

Learning does not need to take place in a formalized setting – one can just as easily exercise our brain through reading the newspaper, playing mahjong, working at a part-time job, or pursuing a hobby.

Life-long learning is ongoing, voluntary, and self-motivated seeking of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons. It enhances social inclusion, active citizenship, and personal development, but also self-sustainability, as well as competitiveness and employability. Life-long learning is a key component in the formula that helps close the fitness gap and add life to years.

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Ted Mouradian
The Local

I have noticed that there seems to be a rise in board and council conflict in the news recently.

I would like to share my experience on many boards since the early 1970s, to currently conducting board governance and human skills training.

Boards that have been around for years usually have a small group of long-term members whom we will call the old guard. These people have been the kingpins on their specific board and they bring many years of history and continuity to the board.

In 1981, I joined the Ontario Real Estate Board of Directors as the regional director for Niagara, a young man from Niagara sitting on a Toronto board of about 25 successful realtors from across the province in an oaken boardroom with a group of paid staff to assist. It was pretty awesome.

There was also an executive committee of the past president, the current president and the two vice-presidents. Apparently, they met to discuss many of the items on the agenda and comment on those items to give guidance to the rest of the board.

During these discussions, I kept asking questions about issues that I needed more clarification about, in the belief that if I am being asked to vote on something I need to understand it, not just rubber stamp it because the old guard or an executive committee say they are in favour of it.

I ended up with a target on my back, was labeled as an outsider, and even by some a disruptor. It took many years to get that target off my back, and some still see it to this day.

When new people come on a board who are known to be questioners, they may automatically get this target on their backs and are discounted. Sometimes a concerted effort is made by the old guard to get rid of them so the board can get back to being run the way the old guard thinks it should be run. Not all old guard are bad, and not all disruptors are good. But this type of mindset can itself be more disruptive than the disruptor could ever be.

And sometimes a board needs to take a critical look at itself to see if there is any merit to what this newcomer is actually saying or doing. Two things can stop the conflict. First, the newcomer can slow down a bit, ask questions respectfully and not look for a fight or to disrupt simply to disrupt, do their homework and test the waters.

As for the old guard, get rid of the targetting and the circling of the wagons when someone simply wants to make the board better. Look to see if you might actually be the problem.

Also, when the target is placed on the newcomer, sometimes the old guard actually crosses a line to look for any excuse to punish the newcomer far more than they would their own.

A good example of this seems to be the current rift between some old guard on the DSBN Board and newcomer trustee Kate Baggott, who represents St. Catharines and Niagara-on-the-Lake, when she looked into a complaint from a parent about a student outside her area. She was suspended for one DSBN meeting.

Ed Smith, chair of For A Better Niagara, spoke at a recent board meeting, and said Baggott was found guilty of a code of conduct violation that was not based on any well-defined rule, but on the way things have always been done. He has complained to the Ontario Ombudsman about her suspension.

Members of any board who see the old guard target certain members need to stand up for what is right. It’s ironic that in this instance, a school board has targeted the new kid being different.

I think some deep self-reflection is needed by all parties involved in this one.

Ted Mouradian is the President of the 2% Factor Inc. and the creator of the Law of Cooperative Action. He is an author and a professional speaker and can be reached at ted@the2percentfactor.com.
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Every Thursday morning, a group of moms and kids gathers in the Rotary Room at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library. The kids are school-aged, but they don’t go to school. Their parents have chosen to teach them at home.

Kasia Dupuis, the children’s library associate, has organized two programs for children who are homeschooled, after a request from a mom looking for space for moms and their kids to gather.

“We have a homeschool community,” says Dupuis. “We wanted to have something to offer them.”

She asked whether they wanted an informal drop-in setting for moms and kids, or a more structured learning program for the kids.

The answer was both.

So every Thursday morning, she puts out chairs for the moms and educational toys for kids, and they gather for a social time from 10 to 11:30 a.m. Moms chat and trade tips, such as what is available in online educational programs. Sometimes kids bring board games to play with the others, sometimes crafts to share.

One Friday morning, from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Dupuis organizes a lesson for kids in Grades 1 to 6. It’s semi-structured, with an hour and a half for the kids to listen and follow instructions, but they can be stretched out on cushions on the floor, discussing the topic of the day, while watching their lesson on a TV screen, or doing a hands-on activity.

“It gives them a taste of school setting, and they are very engaged. It’s a really nice dynamic,” says Dupuis.

Last Friday their class was on nutrition. Dupuis had them peel and chop up vegetables for an instant pot, and then, as they wait

Continued on page 13
Kim Wade Special to the Local

Talented locals came out to the Royal Canadian Legion Hall Sunday for an afternoon of musical entertainment. These Open Mic sessions, hosted by local singer/songwriter Buzz Hummer, have been taking place on afternoons on the first Sunday of the month since October.

Hummer started the sessions to give members of the community an opportunity to explore their musical talent in a safe and positive environment. It’s a “nice, steady thing, and very relaxed,” he says, and also helps the Legion fill its King Street hall during a slow Sunday afternoon lull. He says about half of the performers return regularly, while the other half show up occasionally. He is always happy to see new performers attend. There is “a lot of talent in this town and it’s nice to be able to showcase it.”

First to kick off the afternoon were Gail Hawkins and Arlyn Levy with No One Will Ever Love You, by John Paul White and Steve McEwan, following it with a Linda Ronstadt/Johnny Cash song, and one by the Civil Wars. Hawkins was clearly at ease with the microphone for her second time performing at the Legion. She had seen posters for the event around town and thought she’d give it a try, she says, noting there was a better turnout than last month, with about double the size of the crowd.

Terry Sauchuck played Keep Me From Blowing Away with Paul Croft, and the Johnny Cash rendition of Personal Jesus originally written by Martin Gore of the 80s electronic band, Depeche Mode, and finished his set of three songs with One of Us by Joan Osborne.

Bob Gunns let his harmony do the singing for him as he performed his instrumental version of Patsy Cline’s Crazy.

No stranger to performing, Steve Goldberger, took the stage and entertained the audience with tunes such as Come From the Heart and You Turn off the 80s electronic band, Depeche Mode, and finished his set of three songs with One of Us by Joan Osborne.

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Julie Van Horne, Steve Goldberger and Rayburn Blake sing together at the Legion Hall Sunday. (Photos by Kim Wade)

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Next up was the youngest performer of the afternoon, 19-year-old Aidan Longo. He started his set with the Tragically Hip’s Bobcaygeon, which he followed up with two songs by St. Catharines native Dallas Green, Sleeping Sickness, and Death of Ma.” There was a late addition to the performance list, then since it was well before 5 p.m., Hummer cycled through the list again to see if any performers wanted to have another set.

Gail Hawkins, Terry Sauchuck, Sal Fasullo, and Julie Van Horne, accompanied again by Steve Goldberger and Rayburn Blake, performed a few more tunes.

Aidan Longo performed his encore with Bob Dylan’s Don’t Think Twice, ‘Tis Alright, to which Buzz Hummer commented, “It’s nice to see someone under 35 singing a Bob Dylan song.” For the last performance of that set, Buzz Hammer, Scott Harris, and Rayburn Blake performed Wagon Wheel, another Bob Dylan song.

The next Open Mic afternoon at the Royal Canadian Legion will be on Sunday, April 5 from 2 to 5 p.m., or until the last riff fades.

Julie Van Horne, Steve Goldberger and Rayburn Blake sing together at the Legion Hall Sunday. (Photos by Kim Wade)

Gail Hawkins and Arlyn Levy enjoy a chance to perform.

Scott Harris, Aidan Longo, Steve Goldberger and Sal Fasullo sing at the Legion Hall Sunday afternoon. (Photos by Kim Wade)

Scott Harris, Aidan Longo, Steve Goldberger and Sal Fasullo sing at the Legion Hall Sunday afternoon. (Photos by Kim Wade)
Kids learn at own speed and interest level

Continued from page 11

ed for their soup to cook, showed them a video about healthy eating while the Rotary Room filled with the aroma of home cooking, which they got to eat when the soup was ready.

There are about 10 to 12 families who attend regularly, she says, and she is hoping to attract others from around the region. Last week, she had one family from Fort Erie — there isn’t anything similar provided elsewhere that she is aware of.

“It gives moms and kids a chance to see, and it’s a good opportunity for kids to become more familiar with the library,” she says.

“I try to do a mix of subjects, such as science and art, and to offer them a well-rounded scope of projects.”

While the kids were learning about nutrition, three moms sat and chatted about their experiences with homeschooling, and the reasons for their choice.

Amika Verwegen has three children, two school-aged girls and a young son. Her kids would have gone to Parliament Oak, she says, and when it closed, “I didn’t like the idea of a suburb.”

So, she says, she’s been homeschooling for the last five years, but with a baby on the way, and a little one at home, she is going to send her kids to Crossroads Public School in the fall.

Her husband passed away last fall, and she’s on her own. “With number four on the way, I want to give this baby the same dedication and attention I gave the others. I’ve loved having the kids at home — it’s been absolutely wonderful. I feel like I’ve been learning with them, and seeing the world through their eyes. I feel I’m giving them an emotional foundation to survive in this big world.”

Patricia Fry, with two boys, aged eight and 11, adds, “you get to see all their firsts. When they’re learning to read, you see that moment when they get it.”

Shannon Wright explains she feels it’s “very special” to spend that time with her kids, knowing what each child needs and being able to give it to them. “They really thrive in one-on-one sessions,” adds Fry.

The moms agree they feel it’s important to let each child learn at his or her own speed, to never make them feel they’re behind, and to allow them to spend time on what interests them.

They also laugh about the concerns they hear from other parents, that their kids won’t be socialized.

Wright believes her children will have a “more realistic understanding of how society works,” than they would sitting in a classroom with a large number of kids — and, she adds, she’s very concerned about “who is looking after my kids. We’re passionate about foundational learning, and after that, they can learn about whatever interests them.”

“All we do at home is talk all day, and learn,” Wright says. “We also place a lot of value on time outside, exploring the woods. They love it, and it’s another way to learn.”

Fry says her two boys are very outgoing, and very comfortable with other kids and adults.

“They don’t need socializing,” she says. Her oldest son started out in school, but ran into issues with bullying, and when Fry realized it wasn’t going to be an easy situation to fix, decided he was better off learning at home.

“Learning social skills from a group of seven-year-olds maybe isn’t the best idea,” she laughs.

They all also agree the library is a great resource, and they are delighted with the programs that are being offered.

“It’s great to use the library during the day, when it isn’t so busy,” says Fry, whose boys enjoy playing Minecraft on library computers when the homeschooling program ends.

And best of all, “there are no labels. Nobody is ever behind. They are just who they are. Their self-esteem is so fragile. When they’re homeschooled, that’s not a problem.”

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Crossroads Staff shows support for Pink Shirt Day. Wednesday, Feb. 27, was pink shirt day at DSBN schools. To show their support in the effort to end bullying, students and staff wore their best and brightest pink items to school.

Sham Raad’s kindness pledge: I pledge to help anyone in need.

Maya Smith pledges to be kind. The DSBN is encouraging students and the community to take the #iPledge Challenge to end bullying. The campaign asks the public to help amplify awareness about bullying, and be a part of the movement to stop it.

Ellery Sawatzky, “I pledge to help everyone and stand up for those around me.” (Photos supplied)

You can Count on Me: Grade 7 students Hailey Epp, Allie Kroeker, and Lucy Hopkins sing their #iPledge Challenge.

Grade 8 Crossroads students join the #Pledge Challenge to be kind.

GREEN TIP from the Crossroads Coyote Eco Club

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Crossroads Coyote Eco Club’s mission is to encourage our students and school community towards a more sustainable future. The Green Tip of the Week focuses on creating awareness on how we can take small actions to make a big difference. Our goal is to educate our students on environmental awareness and encourage everyday sustainable actions that will lead to a better future.

Miaya Smith pledges to be kind. The DSBN is encouraging students and the community to take the #iPledge Challenge to end bullying. The campaign asks the public to help amplify awareness about bullying, and be a part of the movement to stop it.

Ellery Sawatzky, “I pledge to help everyone and stand up for those around me.” (Photos supplied)

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Crossroads Staff shows support for Pink Shirt Day Wednesday, Feb. 27, was pink shirt day at DSBN schools. To show their support in the effort to end bullying, students and staff wore their best and brightest pink items to school.
Mike Balsam
Special to The Local

Nineteen thousand fans are sitting on the edge of their seats, waiting for their home team, the Vancouver Canucks, to take to the ice. Suddenly, an army of 30 demon zombies, dressed in the uniforms of the other 30 NHL teams, invades Rogers Arena. It resembles a scene out of Game of Thrones.

The crowd roars. It’s up to the Canucks to defend their home ice. The puck drops and the players quickly skate into action, throwing hip checks and playing with a fierce determination to vanquish the invading horde.

Forward Michael Ferland levels a punishing check, knocking a zombie into a shuttering panel of tempered glass. Centre Elias Pettersson takes the loose puck on a breakaway. His slapshot from the point shatters the zombie goalie, just like a false panel of glass. The puck continues its arc into the zombie net, and team captain Bo Horvat skates to centre, firmly planting the team flag to claim their territory.

The roaring crowd at Rogers Arena is real. The zombies are not. They are part of the opening scene in a film written and directed by Niagara-on-the-Lake native Michael Pohorly.

Pohorly was brought in by Canucks owner Francesco Aquilini about a year ago to revamp the in-game entertainment program. With this year’s 50th season approaching, it was important to Aquilini that the milestone be marked with renewed excitement.

From his younger days growing up in rural NOTL, hockey has always been part of Pohorly’s life. He fondly remembers rushing home from St. David’s Public School to skate on his family’s outdoor rink. Later, he played Junior B for the St. Catharines Falcons, and spent four years as a member of the Concordia University Stingers while earning a degree in communications and film. He was named an Academic All-Canadian in 1992-1993.

With his background in the sport, Pohorly was a natural for the job. It didn’t hurt, of course, that he also had close to 20 years working in film and television industries, with credits in films such as The Grey and The Incredible Hulk, and TV series such as DC’s Legends of Tomorrow, and Prison Break.

Pohorly came up with the concept, deciding to make the players stand out as warriors on the ice. He gathered a team of film industry professionals, including cinematographer Stephen Jackson and stunt coordinator Paul Wu. For the demon zombies, he hired actors who could skate, and members of the UBC and Simon Fraser University hockey teams. He also called on former Concordia Stingers teammates, such as goalie Angelo Karistiotis.

The result is a three-minute, Hollywood-quality run through a fast-paced, action-packed sequence designed to get the crowd excited about the game to come. And it works, says Pohorly.

“Basically, the Canucks had become known around the league over the years as being very conservative in how they approach game entertainment at the arena,” says Pohorly. “Francesco brought me in to change the vibe and atmosphere. The message is, you’re here for entertainment, you’re here to have fun.”

The entire opening sequence, with the video, the new projection system and lights, is designed to urge people in the stands to start cheering and to get loud. Pohorly adds, “there are three key moments when the noise level rises, and the team, getting ready in the dressing room, can hear that the fans are already getting into the game.”

Pohorly’s responsibilities as in-game entertainment director this season give him carte blanche to design and script what amounts to an engaging mini-movie 41 times a year. “It’s a four-hour show that we’re running, with breaks in between periods to cheer, that’s the way I look at it,” he jokes.

From installing fog lights below the score board, to choosing a new soundtrack, to goals scored by the Canucks (a loud loop of the word “Hey” from Van Halen’s Ain’t Talkin’ Bout Love), it’s all Pohorly’s vision.

He raves about the fun he’s had with Canucks idol, a crowd oratorio contest, and the Top Dog competition, during which players’ wives accompany their family dogs to the ice surface for an end-to-end race. Its popularity has seen stars such as Bo Horvat approaching Pohorly to get their pooches a spot in the next event.

Pohorly oversees a team of 15 full-time employees and almost 50 game-day staffers who bring it all together. “I did not realize everything that goes into this,” he admits. “And the more you add into it, the more variables there are.”

It seems to be working. Two out of the last three days of declining ticket sales, the Canucks are averaging 18,703 fans per game this season, up almost 700 from 2018-2019. Their attendance figures place them in the top 10, up from 14th last year. “We’re way beyond last year, and far beyond all of our sales targets, with 10 games to go,” says Pohorly.

And Aquilini must be happy the team is seeing success on the ice, as well. Having missed the playoffs last year, the Canucks at press time were sitting in the first wild card slot in the west, with 34 wins, just one less than last year, and with lots of hockey still to play.

Despite the success, and the fun he is having at Rogers Arena, Pohorly is looking beyond the Stanley Cup playoffs already. He has a new television series development in Bali, where he first visited in 2008. The idyllic island has become a bit of a second home, as he returned last summer to shoot some commercials.

His long-term goal, however, focuses on his first love. Eventually, he hopes to be able to shoot a film in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and he thinks it would be fantastic to be able to shoot in and around the vineyards, and to create a script that allows the fans to be one of the stars in the film.

Maybe that film will feature Pohorly’s uncle Joe, the Niagara wine pioneer who was originally involved in Inniskillin Wines, or his parents, Frank and Susan, who, along with his brother Steven, still operate the family vineyard. Or maybe it will feature demon zombie hockey players. With Michael Pohorly, one never knows what to expect.

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Pickleball fastest-growing sport

Penny Coles  
The Local

Pickleball is the fastest-growing sport in Canada, and its success is being mirrored in Niagara-on-the-Lake. John Hindle of the NOTL Pickleball Club credits in part the Town and its facilities for the popularity of the sport locally, with “the premier facility in the region.”

He is referring to the three outdoor courts opened last summer on the former tennis courts in the Virgil Sports Park.

The Town has also provided space at the community centre from the earliest days of the sport in NOTL, when in 2017, 55 players enjoyed eight hours of scheduled time. Hindle told councillors in a recent appearance at council to explain the growth of the sport.

Currently, to accommodate all levels of players in 20 sessions throughout each week, the gymnasium in the former Virgil Public School is also being used by the club, adding three more courts to the three at the community centre.

During the summer, says Hindle, while many players will enjoy the six outdoor courts, other club members will continue to play indoors, out of the sun, and without the wind that changes the game.

The club now has more than 200 members, and it’s expected to continue to grow. In addition to many regulars for the winter, the club sees beginners walking through the doors of the community centre each week, and all of them stay.

Hindle, who has played many sports, says a comment he hears often from people within their first three games, is “I’m addicted.” He’s never heard that about any other sport, he adds. “People interact between games, and then they go out on the court to play. This is a sport that brings people together with others who have something in common. The question of what did they do for a living never seems to come up. They talk about family, plays they’ve seen, the protests — some of it’s very localized, about what goes on in town. Pickleball was designed to be a social activity.”

It’s also designed to be a relatively gentle, “delicate” game, with rules that require the ball to bounce on both sides during a rally, and a “no volley zone” in front of the net. Although shots can be aggressive, more often points are won by being patient and waiting for one side to make a mistake. Hindle explains.

Although it’s a great sport for all ages, including families, many players are seniors, with hip or knee replacements, some wearing braces to protect joints, and enjoying an activity that does not require a high level of fitness, says Hindle.

“The outdoor courts in Virgil have created ‘quite a stir in the region,’” he says, allowing it to become a year-round sport locally.

It was the outdoor courts that brought him to council last week.

“The club is planning on spending money on the town facility, hoping to put up a screen to protect from the wind, which impacts the game. He also hopes to partner with a youth summer program, offering lessons at no cost.

But the club is concerned about damage that has occurred to the public courts, from people using them for other reasons.

Since they opened, the courts have been used for soccer, road hockey, skateboarding, and rollerblading, damaging the surface and the nets, he says.

“It was the outdoor courts in Virgil,” Hindle says, “that brought him to council last week.”

From the Town.

AA MEETING every Wednesday evening, at 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. at St. Mark’s Parish Hall 41 Byron St. Niagara-on-the-Lake

March 5 & March 6 @ 8 p.m. KasheDance presents Facing Home: Love & Redemption

March 7 @ 7:30 p.m. Chorus Niagara presents Touch the Earth Lightly

March 8 @ 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Girls Nite Out

March 12 @ 7:30 p.m. We’ve Got Each Other

March 15 @ 2:30 p.m. NSO presents Masterworks 5 - Undaunted

March 16 @ 7:30 p.m. Bay City Rollers

First Ontario Performing Arts Centre

March 20th at 10 a.m. at 434 Hunter Rd.

Local Happenings

Visit us online at: www.notllocal.com
Pickleball club founder saw outdoor court open

Penny Coles
The Local

Case Bassie, the man who introduced pickleball to Niagara-on-the-Lake and pushed to have the former Virgil tennis courts resurfaced and converted for the sport, died Feb. 6 at the age of 72.

His death was as a result of two tragic accidents that both caused brain injuries—one he recovered from, the other he did not.

Last April, his wife Brigitte explained, he was discovered lying in a ditch on Line 2, where he had been cycling. He had had a heart attack, and when he fell, he hit his head.

A “good samaritan” came along and managed to resuscitate him, she says. “He crashed three times that day,” she recalls, and was in a coma for some time. He spent six months in the hospital recovering from the effect of lack of oxygen to his brain. But he had worked hard at his recovery and was doing well, and by January was living “the new normal,” Brigitte says he had been playing cards with his friends that afternoon, and later in the day he slipped and fell backwards down the stairs at home, hitting his head again.

“It was just a tragic accident,” Brigitte says. “He was gone within 24 hours.”

Case and Brigitte moved to St. Davids from Haliburton about four and a half years ago.

“When we got here, he said, ‘where’s the pickleball,’” she recalls, “but there wasn’t any.”

He went to the Town to ask about it, and Lord Mayor Betty Disero “was amazed. She helped get it going,” says Brigitte.

A club he helped establish soon had 55 members, and as it grew, he began to push for outdoor courts to make it a year-round sport.

He and Brigitte, who always did a lot of travelling, had had several great trips together in a short amount of time, during the year and a half before his accidents. They had also come to love their St. Davids neighbours, doing some travelling with them. They became a tight community, which was helpful during Case’s recovery, and again since his death, Brigitte says. “They embraced Case, and they embraced me. Their support has been wonderful. It’s a great place to live.”

When the six courts opened in the Virgil Sports Park last June, Brigitte and Disero cut the ribbon. Case was still in the hospital at that point, but he was able to visit them once he was home and see what had been accomplished, not only with the conversion of the courts but with the astounding success and growth of the club.

Brigitte describes him as a man always involved in his community, and always ready to tackle whatever needed to be done. And he loved that people in town embraced the sport that meant so much to him.

But he was also a humble man who wasn’t comfortable with compliments — he would instead deflect praise to others who had been involved, she says.

She has a photo of herself and Disero on the day of the ribbon-cutting for the outdoor courts, she says, which she had printed and framed and Disero on the day of the ribbon-cutting for the outdoor courts, she says, which she had printed and framed and which will be on display the day of the celebration of his life. It will be held April 19 at Navy Hall from 2 to 5 p.m., with tributes to Case at 3 p.m.

Lord Mayor Betty Disero cut the ribbon on the new pickleball courts in the Virgil Sports Park last June with Dan Makoemuk, Brigitte Bassie, wife of NOTL Pickleball Club president Case Bassie, and Kevin Turcotte, the Town’s acting director of operations. Case was in the hospital and couldn’t be there, but was able to see the outdoor courts before he died. (Penny Coles)

Games night raises money for cancer unit

St. Davids Leos organized a family games night at the St. Davids Lions Hall Sunday, to raise money for the MacKids Teen Zone Project, to upgrade a teen cancer unit in Hamilton. Jaeda Smith, Jason Christie, Tanner Smith, Ella Turner, Maya Dueck and Calvin Schouten were there to play board games. (Fred Mercnik)
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