Ray Guy will be missed by many

Lord Mayor speaks of first 100 days in office

Mike Balsom
The Local

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa assessed the first 100 days of the new Niagara-on-the-Lake council in front of a friendly crowd gathered in the Lounge at the 124 on Queen Hotel and Spa last Wednesday evening.

It was the first event in a planned monthly speaker series in the modern new lounge space.

Zalepa began by thanking the evening’s hosts, calling the new hotel a beautiful, great location.

“The expansion that has happened for this business, “ he said, “and it being part of the Heritage District here, is really special. We are able to share our town with our guests who come to visit in a truly exquisite, top-notch facility. ”

He then complimented the current council, who he said is “a really engaged group who is asking excellent questions, working very hard. They have the community’s spirit in mind when they do what they do. I’m really impressed, and it’s been a lot of fun to work with them.”

Zalepa said one of the first things council has already begun working on is the tourism master plan, one of the top priorities for the current term.

“It’s really an important instrument that we’ve never had before,” the lord mayor said. “It’s a guiding plan for the community to help manage the pressures that successful tourism brings. It’s flattering that so many people know and come to Niagara-on-the-Lake, but...”

Continued on page 4

Regional state of emergency inspires optimism for future

Mike Balsom
The Local

When Niagara’s regional councillors voted on declaring a state of emergency over mental health, homelessness and opioid addiction recently, Niagara-on-the-Lake representative Andrea Kaiser was pleased that the motion passed the second time around.

“When I ran in the election, that was identified to me as a concern and priority for the region,” she tells The Local. “It did come up often when knocking on doors.”

The longtime NOTL town councillor (2003 to 2014) remembers meeting someone who was vocal, passionate and committed to the need for support within the community for issues surrounding mental illness back in 2019 when she ran in the federal election. That same advocate reached out to her again during her campaign for the town’s seat on regional council last year.

Welland resident Steven Soos first brought his demand for such a declaration to the region about a year and a half ago, but it was defeated. Soos and others were part of the more recent delegation that led to the successful vote on a motion put forth by Welland regional councillor Pat Chiocchio.

“When I learned that they hadn’t supported the state of emergency back then, I was very surprised,” Kaiser says. “There was some discussion again this time about what it would actually accomplish, that it wasn’t tied to specific actions or budget items. But this statement acknowledges that there is a problem.”

When Kaiser and Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa, who also sits on regional council, were deciding which committees they would put their names forward to serve on, Kaiser wanted the opportunity to sit on the region’s public health and social services committee.

“I have a keen interest in learning more about the health services we provide, including mental health,” Kaiser says. “I am a big proponent of talking openly about mental illness and addictions. I feel that part of the problem that makes it more difficult to receive treatment is the shame associated with mental illness and addictions.”

Kaiser goes on to talk about efforts such as Bell’s Let’s Talk campaign helping to shed the stigma attached to mental illness in recent years. And she shares her own personal story.

“It’s flattering that so many people know and come to Niagara-on-the-Lake, but...”

Continued on page 5

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Konzelmann estate winery
**Zahra Hmoud**  
**The Local**

The developer behind plans for a subdivision bordering the Rainbow Estate will present his proposal to the town this spring — along with a local group fighting development on the historic estate.

Solmar Development Corp. has submitted heritage permit applications to the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake for proposed alterations and demolitions at 200 John Street East and 588 Charlotte Street.

They are speaking at a virtual municipal heritage committee meeting on Wednesday, April 12, at 5 p.m., a meeting scheduled solely to deal with their proposal. The newly-formed municipal heritage committee had its first meeting of 2023 on March 8, during which it reviewed the presentsation and delegation process.

Town staff received notice of Solmar's complete applications on Feb. 17. They will publish a recommendation report on these applications on Wednesday, March 29.

After the April 12 meeting, an in-person public meeting will take place Monday evening, April 24, with final presentations and deliberations; it is then that council will make its final decision on the subdivision plans.

This proposal has been the subject of debate and litigation for nearly five years, since the public first learned of plans to build a hotel and conference centre on the estate, and a subdivision beside it, in 2018.

Since then, members of the community group SORE (Save Our Rand Estate) have been involved in legal challenges involving these development plans.

Following Solmar's presentation, SORE members will give their own presentations on the applications, as a party in associated litigation matters. Solmar and SORE have been allotted up to 30 minutes for their presentations, while delegations from the public can last 10 minutes each.

The Rand Estate was the subject of a separate discussion at the start of this year, during the Jan. 24 general committee of the whole meeting. The committee reviewed a staff report which detailed how four parts of the wall are not designated as heritage properties under the Ontario Heritage Act.

Because 200 John Street East and 588 Charlotte Street have these designations, the developer is required to get council's approval to change or demolish in heritage attributes — the same, council and staff discussed, is not true for parts of the wall at 2 Weatherstone Court, and 1 and 9 Christopher Street, and 580 Charlotte Street.

According to chief administrative officer Marjorie Cheeks, if there are any issues with these parts of the wall, such as safety concerns with its deterioration, then municipal property standards rules would apply — but this has no connection to the Ontario Heritage Act or the heritage committee.

"There’s still a mechanism to make sure things are safe but they don’t actually fall under that criterion of the Ontario Heritage Act so we can’t lay charges or have penalties," she said on Jan. 24.

As written in the staff report from Jan. 24, the brick, concrete and stone wall is “one of the most visually prominent original elements of the Rand Estate which continues to provide visual cohesiveness.”

Giving these properties official heritage designation, however, would be a significant process. Coun. Erin Wiens noted the municipal heritage committee has its work cut out for itself this term of council, with 209 properties in town to review on the municipal registry of heritage properties for potential designation.

Under Ontario’s new Bill 23, coming into effect this July, there will be changes to how heritage properties are designated under the Ontario Heritage Act. The town councillor and lord mayor previously expressed concern it will become more difficult to protect its historic properties.

Since then, members of the SORE committee have proposed a new motion to create an internationally recognized heritage label, which will be presented on April 24, with final presentations and deliberations: it is then that council will make its final decision on the proposal.

Rand subdivision the subject of upcoming meetings

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

With the town still working on a budget that is heading toward an 8.56 per cent increase for taxpayers — more for those in urban areas with sewer charges — there is an amount of about $900,000 that was earmarked for transportation that seems cause for discussion.

This is the first year the region is adding transportation to a levy for all Niagara taxpayers, including $1.2 million for Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Also around $900,000 in the budget is the cost of new employees for the town — a list of 13 suggested hires, with another four that are currently contract positions listed as conversions to full-time employees, with all the pension and benefit costs attached.

The new hires have been briefly discussed during the last two budget meetings, and that is expected to continue.

At Monday afternoon’s meeting, some specific positions were discussed, such as a climate change coordinator, a senior analyst, and an assistant for Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa to handle social media.

The only motion made and voted on before time ran out was to defer the climate change coordinator to 2024, and it’s expected there will be more questions, motions and votes at Thursday’s budget meeting.

Coun. Mario Mavridis says he has tried to ask where the $900,000 transit money sits in the budget, but so far, she hasn’t had an answer. “I know that it’s staying in the budget, but I don’t know where it’s staying. I’ve asked three times, where is the money?”

What is it being spent on? And I’ll ask again Thursday. I am worried these new positions are being offered by that money.”

She was hoping it would stay in transportation, and pay for increased services for residents, she says.

Finance director Kyle Freeborn told The Local it is staying in the budget to “subsidize transit” for taxpayers, offsetting the levy to the region.

Municipal transit costs in NOTL have always been funded by parking revenue, not taxpayers, Freeborn said. This year parking revenue has been used in the operational budget to cover items such as discretionary grants, which were not issued during COVID years.

“We have used it already in our operation budget to offset other issues," explains Freeborn. “If council doesn’t approve the use of parking funds, our current increase would go up another 7.3 per cent.”

That the almost $900,000 used to offset transit is a similar amount to the cost of new staff, he said, is “a weird coincidence.” It’s the “weird coincidence” of our cost of transit to residents, he stresses.

Although that money could appear to offset the cost of the hikes, “that’s not the intent at all. They are separate issues," although they are all part of the same budget, he added.

Mavridis spoke to The Local about her concerns after Tuesday’s budget meeting, and she says she’s not alone — that there will be motions from her and other councillors Thursday.

She says she’s not going to approve the budget the way it is, and other councillors are saying the same.

“All of the staff are justified. The question is which ones are our priority right now? We have to cut something, and we want to be sure we make the right decisions to get that 8.56 down.”

She also plans to question the high cost of library staff for a public library in a small municipal, and the need for extra staff for communications and social media — she says she runs seven social media platforms for businesses and volunteer organizations, including websites and emails, “plus I work full-time. It boggles my mind” that the town needs more help in that department.

Rand subdivision councillors have been told “it’s not our job” to micro-manage staffing levels or the budget. But it is my job to look after our people,” and that includes doing her best to ensure the budget is fair to taxpayers.

Freeborn says unless more meetings are added for further discussion, he expects the budget to be approved March 28.

Changes expected as budget discussions continue
Town cuts storm levy hike by $38 for 2023 budget

Zahraa Hmood
The Local

More cuts have been made to this year's operating budget, with the town continuing to balance the town's financial books by trimming expenses. The town has now eliminated $300,000 from its planned expenses, which would have gone toward a full clean-out of the stormwater ponds, plus approximately $54,000 after raising plans to hire a full-time climate change coordinator in the town. During the town's latest budget review committee meeting on Monday, during which town manager Kyle Freeborn explained what was cut, approximately 54,000 of the town's stormwater ponds, plans to include the possibility of a new committee for a new pool in the building would have been replaced, and was left in the building – a small number of the existing pool. The town has been working on forming a new committee, and a pool fundraising committee will be one of the next steps to be approved, she says. "Once we get the committee going, we'll talk about federal and provincial grants. It's not going to happen overnight," she adds. But she's not going to give up. We can't lose our only facility in St. Davids. We have a growing community!" The pool was reopened for the 2023 season, and as far as she knows, "the pool is open this year," for lessons, a swim team, and hopefully a full schedule of programs. Early in budget talks she asked about a replacement diving board for Veterans Memorial Park — it had been broken and out of use for swimmers in the last two seasons. Coun. Nick Ruller jumped into the discussion asking why a councillor had to request it be repaired or replaced, assuming it should be part of regular maintenance. All councillors agreed, and there will be a replacement board when the pool opens. Like the diving board, the pool in St. Davids already exists, and is part of the St. Davids community, says Vizzari. "We're not asking for a new pool — it's an asset we already have, and that needs to be replaced!" She hopes council will agree. "This new council is very aware, and really out to support residents. It feels great to be part of it. We're all hoping to do good things for our community."
Continued from page 1

what comes with that is the pressure on a small community to serve millions of people.

According to Zalepa, the town needs to find an effective balance by determining what the gaps are to ensure that the quality of life for residents is maintained, while at the same time sharing what the town has to offer with its visitors.

“We've just begun with that,” he pointed out. “In fact, on our website, you can now go and engage with the firm that is helping us with that. Tell us what is important to you. That work will be pulled in for consideration. And over the next few months we’ll be going out to meet with residents to get an understanding about what is important to them.”

On the topic of strategic planning, Zalepa stressed that the town needs to focus primarily on three or four high-level community priorities.

“We need to focus on building a plan around some action items,” he explained, “and then giving the staff the direction to get it done. A lot of the debate will come around growth management, health and wellness for our residents, sustainability in our delivery of services and the infrastructure to deliver those services.”

When the lord mayor told the crowd budgeting is a topic that is near and dear to his heart, it elicited many chuckles from the gathering.

“Council has begun the process,” he explained that it has been a bit delayed because of the election. “We’ve been engaged in this process. We did shake it up a bit, doing a complete council involvement as opposed to a small group managing the budget.”

Council members have been participating in workshops on the three categories of the budget: capital, rate and operating sections. Zalepa said at a committee of the whole meeting followed each workshop, giving councillors a chance to discuss the details of the budget proposals, business plans and suggestions.

“It’s been really engaging,” he added. “I’m hoping to wrap that up soon and have a sustainable budget for the community that addresses the gaps in our infrastructure management and the ability to maintain our infrastructure going forward.”

Town hall meetings at each of the NOTL’s five villages should be starting within the next month, promised Zalepa.

“We’re calling them Village Open Forums,” he said. “They’ll be a workshop format, not an official council meeting. We’re going to ask the residents what’s missing in their community, what they’d like to see. Do they have ideas? Do they have solutions? Council needs to listen to them. We won’t be there to talk.”

He went on to plant the seeds for some of that upcoming conversation, mentioning housing as a top issue of discussion.

“I really believe we’re in a generational issue with housing attainability,” the real estate executive stressed. “Housing needs to be available in our community for those earning a typical income in this community. When we don’t have that, it causes a dysfunction in the housing market. It affects first-time home buyers and seniors who are looking at staying and aging in place.”

Acknowledging the supply of homes for those types of buyers is nearly non-existent in NOTL, Zalepa said the government has a role in changing that.

He suggested that those open forums starting soon are a great place to have the conversations about how flexible housing can fit into each of NOTL’s five villages.

Zalepa concluded his speech by talking about the town’s youth, whom he called inspiring and passionate.

“I’ve had a chance to meet with the young people on the Lord Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council (LMYAC), and I’ll tell you, our jobs are at risk,” he laughed. “They’re excellent, thoughtful young people, and they’re really passionate about life here. I really look forward to engaging with them on their initiatives.”

His choice to conclude speaking of the LMYAC was appropriate, as he then turned over the microphone to Caroline Polgrabia, who followed Zalepa with an update on the NOTL Youth Collective, begun earlier this year.

The evening was a fundraiser for the fledgling community initiative, which has been providing a place for young students to gather after school, earn babysitting and other certifications, and attend movie nights and other special events.

“I’m pleased to involve the NOTL Youth Collective,” Zalepa said. “It’s really important work in our town. We know the pressures that young people have in our community. We’re so appreciative of the work being done by that group.”

Alana Hurov, director of marketing at 124 on Queen, said totals are not final, but 60 people attended the event, raising about $1,200.
Support for state of emergency ‘gets conversation going’

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Youth Collective taking a much-needed break. Caroline Polgrabia, chair of the collective’s planning committee, took a moment to reflect on the first eight weeks of running programs for the town’s young people.

Unveiled at a presentation to an audience of community supporters at the NOTL Library, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Youth Collective’s little library has donated more than 200 books for the Youth Collective’s little library as well as three desktop computers for the students to use while there. Polgrabia admitted. “You’re involved in the process in your mind that helped manage the anxiety.

“Those are the kind of things that I’ve been able to do in the past, and it helps sometimes to put things into perspective and to be strong.”

Medication helped Kaiser for a short time, and she was able to turn to books and then began developing processes in her mind that helped her manage the anxiety.

“I’m really fortunate,” says Kaiser, “to have been able to live a very happy, successful business. I could have easily given up, another path. I had allowed that anxiety to impact my personal and professional life.”

Kaiser says she shares her own story in the hope that it inspires others to understand that their own struggles are not so unusual.

“I’m very happy that the motion passed,” adds Kaiser, “and if it gets some conversations started that lead to some creative ways to support people with mental illness in the community, that can’t be a bad thing. It’s the first meaningful step to help people in the community who have these challenges in their lives.”

Brock University Department of Psychology lecturer Scott Neufeld supports Kaiser’s opinion. And he’s suitably impressed with how getting to this point began as a grassroots effort.

“You have to acknowledge the efforts of Steven Soos and others,” Neufeld told The Local, “to demand care of other people’s kids, ‘and specifically lauded Kaiser’s opinion. And he’s suitably impressed with how getting to this point began as a grassroots effort.

“You have to acknowledge the efforts of Steven Soos and others,” Neufeld told The Local, “to demand care of other people’s kids, and they did it. I thank them for that.”

One of the keys to success, she added, has been consistency. During the eight-week sessions the organization ran daily after-school drop-ins and one evening event each week. There have also been a number of social events and movie nights.

She went on to thank the NOTL community as a whole for ‘coming out of the woodwork to support our kids,’ and especially lauded the YLC for their sponsorship of the Santa Run this winter, as well as Ruffin’s Pizza With Santa event, which helped raise $5,000 for the collective.

With the help of the Garrison House and the NOTL Lions, 385 healthy snacks and 100 snacks — plus meals on Wednesday evenings were provided to participants.

The NOTL Public Library has donated more than 200 books for the Youth Collective’s little library as well as three desktop computers for the students to use while there.

Polgrabia pointed out the participants in the collective have already earned 90 certificates, including 34 Home SAFE, 36 Babysitter and 20 First Aid certificates. As well, they’ve welcomed 20 local experts to give talks and lead programs and events.

The breather being taken now will give those involved a chance to look at what worked, what didn’t, and what the possibilities are to expand the program starting up again in April.

“We’re going to do a spring session,” said Polgrabia. “I don’t know what it looks like yet. Will we do a five-day program? Will we run movie nights? Will we run chess nights? Yeah, probably, but we have to sit down and figure out what that looks like.”

After holding their NOTL Heritage Moments Youth Curators Contest in partnership with the NOTL Museum, they are looking forward to continuing that relationship, as well as exploring the expansion of the program.

“Are we in the Shaw Festival to get kids into the theatre and bring people from Shaw to the collective, and work with the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre. ‘And we’re looking at the teens doing food safety and Smart Serve training.’

Polgrabia said the goal for this year was to involve 200 unique registrants in the collective programs, and with 112 already signed up, they are halfway to that target.

In the absence of having a high school in town, we wanted to have a safe place for kids to come together and to connect to and network,” said. “From the moment we opened the doors it took on a life of its own. I think we’ve exceeded our own expectations.”
The truth behind TikTok — will we ever know, and should we care?

TikTok has become quite the topic these days, worldwide. Governments at the highest levels are banning it or restricting access in certain circumstances, and in Canada that has filtered down to provinces, regions, police forces, the Bank of Canada, and more recently to municipalities, which are reviewing the app from computers in municipal spaces and town-owned phones, due to security concerns.

Niagara-on-the-Lake isn’t there yet, but will have discussions about it.

Niagara Region, Lincoln, St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, Port Colborne, Grimsby and Thorold, as well as Niagara Regional Police, have banned TikTok from their networks.

Other municipalities either have never permitted TikTok on corporate internet networks, or devices, or are reviewing their policies.

It doesn’t seem like so long ago that we were first hearing about the social media platform, which seemed mostly to appeal to younger people who passed videos to their friends to watch — often of themselves dancing or doing crazy things.

Today TikTok is really popularly and widely used, and is now used by all ages for all kinds of purposes. It is owned by ByteDance, a Chinese internet technology company, and that seems to be its biggest problem — fears of data collection and the possibility of cyber attacks have been raised in countries around the world. Some countries have banned or are talking about banning it completely, from any use.

Locally, Thorold was the latest to weigh in on the issue, with the city becoming the most recent in Niagara to ban the app. TikTok has also allowed TikTok on any corporate devices, and the city is now following the direction from upper levels of government to further protect from possible security and privacy threats by banning the use of it on all city network.

Marnie Cluckie, NOTL’s chief administrative officer, told The Local Monday that “currently, the town has not banned the use of TikTok on corporate devices. However, town staff are internally reviewing the privacy and security concerns of the app, the town’s information and technology policies and whether the corporation should ban TikTok on corporate devices.”

The federal government announced in late February it was removing the platform from all federal government devices, citing security reasons. Ontario followed suit on March 6 of last year, banning the provinces and territories do so.

News outlets around the world are explaining the dangers of TikTok, which like most social media platforms collects information about us, but goes much further in the scope of the data.

On a different but in some ways related topic, at a town budget committee this week, there was discussion about the number of staff needed to look after communications and social media, and how much that is going to cost taxpayers. It has now become a priority for government and government figures to use social media, which has evolved from harmless ways of families and friends communicating to include businesses, governments and government representatives using online platforms for communication and promotion.

TikTok is being singled out because it’s owned by a Chinese company and is reportedly able to collect data that will tell them at any time where one of the more than 1.5 billion users of the platform is physically located, should they want to know.

It’s unlikely those who still enjoy TikTok for its entertaining videos, or those who make money from them, will stop using it, but with all the social media alternatives out there, it is necessary for our government representatives, with computers and phones paid for by taxpayers, to continue.

It would seem the time has come to say no at least that one platform. Surely there are enough other options for them to choose from?

Owen Bjorgan  
Special to The Local

This gorge on the Lake Superior shoreline region is more than three times the depth of the Niagara Gorge. It’s a spot in Ontario all residents should experience at least once. (Owen Bjorgan)

Where’s Ben?

Eiden student Ben Foster continues to discover new locations in NOTL, wondering how familiar others may be with them. If you know where this photo was taken, email penny@notlocal.ca. Last week, Jennifer Waine was the first to identify a location we thought might be a tough one. Ben was at the community centre Rotary Disc Golf Course — if you looked closely, you’d see one of the disk baskets peaking out from the side of the photo.

Don’t miss visiting Biorgan’s favourite Ontario area — so far

Owen Bjorgan
Special to The Local

I always joked and declared that Ontario was one of the best places in the world to drum down lockdown life for a couple of years. When options of how to execute your spare time became limited overnight, we went to the outdoors within our own province like never before.

Ontario is like a country within the country. Globally speaking, our province fits several European nations within its borders, and the greatest statistical gift of it all pertains to how wild most of Ontario still is — let alone the sheer variety of climates and their associated ecosystems and human cultures. Our backyard is a smorgasbord of opportunity to travel, and it is amazing.

With spring on our doorstep, I’d like to highlight “Owen’s Picks” for the most fascinating natural regions of the province, which some of which I only discovered by creatively digging deeper during those unprecedented past two years. Others I have been visiting and learning about since childhood.

Feel free to use this article to inspire your next warm weather trip. The positive ripple effects of Canadians exploring more of their own big backyard is that we support local and, perhaps, subconsciously feel more inclined to show stewardship toward our land — especially in times of Ontario’s Bill 23, when some of southern Ontario’s most precious countryside destinations are at risk of being changed forever.

In no particular order though, let’s leave the south and start adventuring up north. Way up north.

Imagine a bath tub where the water only runs cold, and it is nearly half a kilometre deep. Lake Superior’s chilly, Gotaer-bade-blue waters cover the largest surface area of any of the world’s freshwater lakes, making it the second largest in the world by volume after Russia’s Lake Baikal.

In southern Ontario, we feel like the Niagara Escarpment is our mini mountain. As we drive north into the Canadian Shield’s granite lands of lakes and forests, we suddenly feel like the Niagara Gorge — a spot in Ontario all residents should experience at least once.

When we drive nearly 12 hours up Lake Superior, you see cliffs and scenery that I would best describe as a tiny replica of the B.C. coast. It’s a whole other tier of massiveness unknown to most. Again, still not mountains by definition, but for conversation’s sake, those are Ontario’s mountains.

Must-dad rugged landscapes sit with authority as the ancient cliffs gaze over Lake Ontario’s most precious countrysides.

Continued on page 7

Where’s Ben?

Eiden student Ben Foster continues to discover new locations in NOTL, wondering how familiar others may be with them. If you know where this photo was taken, email penny@notlocal.ca. Last week, Jennifer Waine was the first to identify a location we thought might be a tough one. Ben was at the community centre Rotary Disc Golf Course — if you looked closely, you’d see one of the disk baskets peaking out from the side of the photo.
of protected land all along this rich region of the entire country. The most species-love with one of Ontario’s last through impressively surprising or sometimes meander gently and waterfalls, some without Check out sites closer to home busy as Crystal Beach in Fort Erie. beaches get toasty, they are just as dience the favour of identifying of his 2 per cent are universally to describe their most pertinent thing created, perhaps, in the in- able beyond belief.

For example, the claim is made a few times about the 98 per cent dichotomy on these topics is not offered, readers are free to interpret it as whatever thing created, perhaps, in the in- stantaneous fashion. The most species-love with one of Ontario’s last through impressively surprising or sometimes meander gently and waterfalls, some without Check out sites closer to home busy as Crystal Beach in Fort Erie. beaches get toasty, they are just as dience the favour of identifying of his 2 per cent are universally to describe their most pertinent thing created, perhaps, in the in- able beyond belief. For example, the claim is made a few times about the 98 per cent dichotomy on these topics is not offered, readers are free to interpret it as whatever

Check out sites closer to home

Continued from page 6

There are several ways to reach the Bruce Peninsula National Park. The best way is to take Highway 10, which leads you directly to the park entrance. There are also several campgrounds located within the park that provide access to the park's many trails and beaches. In addition, there are several boat launch sites located within the park, allowing visitors to explore the many lakes and rivers within the park. Finally, the park offers a variety of guided tours and interpretive programs, which are a great way to learn more about the park's many features and history.

One of the most awe-in- tinguishing things to do in the park is to take a boat tour of the Apostle Islands. The Apostle Islands are a group of small islands located just off the shore of the park. They are home to a variety of interesting plants and animals, including several species of birds and mammals. The boat tours are a great way to see these islands and learn more about their unique features.

In addition to the Apostle Islands, the park offers a variety of other activities, including hiking, biking, and fishing. The park also has several campgrounds, which provide visitors with an opportunity to experience the park's many features in a more intimate setting.

Overall, the park is a great place to visit if you are interested in nature and outdoor activities. Whether you are interested in hiking, biking, or simply enjoying the beauty of the park, the Bruce Peninsula National Park is a great place to spend a day or two.

To learn more about the Bruce Peninsula National Park, visit the park's website at www.brucepeninsula.on.ca. The website provides information on all the park's activities, as well as a variety of valuable resources for planning your visit.

The park is open year-round, and there are many opportunities to see the park's many features at different times of the year. Whether you are interested in seeing the park's many wildlife species, or simply enjoying the beauty of the park's many lakes and rivers, the Bruce Peninsula National Park is a great place to visit.

For more information, please contact the park's visitor centre at 705-633-9438, or visit the park's website at www.brucepeninsula.on.ca.
Ray Guy, at the Court House, pre-COVID, with Richard Coyne. (Photo supplied)

Ray Guy, a man of distinction, says his friends.

It was during his time in Detroit, which included tak- ing people on tours of Can- ada. He and his wife Val first discovered NOTL, says their youngest daughter, Ol- ivia Guy.

When Ray retired from his position with the federal government and they came to Niagara, he joined Niag- ara College as a program coordinator for the post-diploma and undergraduate programs in international business management, and remained a professor emeritus with the college after he retired in 2007.

“Ray’s McMaster story is more than a champion- ship title,” says Olivia. “It’s the story of Ray’s re- turn to rowing after a life- threatening heart attack in 1966. Not expected to sur- vive the accident, Ray re- covered and returned to the McMaster rowing roster to anchor the lightweight team to a first place finish.”

He was also a member of the Canadian National Rowing Team in 1966 and 1967, partici- pated in the 1967 Pan- Am Games, and won a total of 11 Canadian championship- ships and two U.S. champi- onships to all who knew him.

“Ray’s McMaster story is unfortun- able, says the un- dergraduate student who visited the Niagara Falls web- site. “A member of the varsi- ty rowing team from 1964 to 1968, Ray was the captain his final three years. While rowing for Mac, he twice led his team to a provincial uni- versity championship title.”

But perhaps more im- pressive than a champion- ship title, the website says, “is the story of Ray’s re- turn to rowing after a life- threatening heart attack in 1966. Not expected to sur- vive the accident, Ray re- covered and returned to the McMaster rowing roster to anchor the lightweight team to a first place finish.”

He was also a member of the Canadian National Rowing Team in 1966 and 1967, partici- pated in the 1967 Pan- Am Games, and won a total of 11 Canadian championship- ships and two U.S. champi- onships to all who knew him.

“Ray’s McMaster story is unfortun- able, says the unfortun- able, says the unfortun- able, says the unfortun- able, says the unfortun- able, says the unfortun- able, says the unfortun- able, says the unfortun- able, says the unfortun- able, says the unfortun- able, says the unfortun- a...
Ivan Coyote’s *Care Of* is this year’s regional library choice

Sharon Burns  
**The Local**  

“*Care Of* is an important way to come together to talk about books that are important to the community,” said Debbie Krause, community engagement coordinator for the NOTL library.

According to a press release sent out by the One Book, One Niagara Steering Committee, “*Care Of* is a way that our Niagara libraries are able to work to fulfill this focus,” stated the steering committee.

“Members of Niagara-on-the-Lake’s library in-house book club, Fireside Reads, read *Care Of* in December,” said Krause. “In February, they welcomed Celeste Turner, LGBTQ2+ Support Coordinator at the Niagara Falls Community Health Centre, to discuss the release by the steering committee.

“Celeste’s presentation highlighted the importance of empathy and the many ways in which we can foster acceptance and connection in our community,” said Krause. "*Care Of* is a Canadian writer and storyteller who has written 13 books, an award-winning author and created four films, six albums that combine storytelling with music. Their books have won numerous awards, been named a Stonewall Honour Book, and was long-listed for Canada Reads.

"*Care Of* combines communications received from readers and audience members with Coyote’s responses, creating a body of correspondence of starling intimacy, breathtaking beauty, and heartbreaking honesty and openness," stated the steering committee. "Taken together, they become an affirming and joyous reflection on many of the themes central to Coyote’s celebrated work—compassion and empathy, family fragility, non-binary and trans identity, and the unending beauty of simply being alive, a giant love letter to the idea of human connection, and the power of truly listening to each other." The culminating event is happening on March 29 at 7 p.m. at Brock University where Ivan Coyote will be speaking,” said Krause.

**The Highest Total Volume of Local Sales for the Past Decade**

Highest volume in Niagara-on-the-Lake from 01/01/2011 to 09/21/2021. Source MLS.
Sharon Burns
The Local

The Farmworker Hub is only in its third season but the bustle and excitement were high as old friends were once again reunited at its open house at Cornerstone Community Church in Virgil Sunday.

Hub director Julia Buxton-Cox enthusiastically greeted new and returning farmworkers at the door while speaking both Spanish and English, and greeting some with ‘knuckles’ and others with hugs before encouraging them to help themselves to warm clothing and household items.

“We recognize that warm clothes are a necessity while they are here, and it helps them to save money to bring home,” said Buxton-Cox.

Volunteer Jodie Godwin helped to bag items for Markland Barrett, who works at Thwaites Farms growing asparagus. The community “can donate men’s winter boots and other winter gear, and pots and pans,” said Godwin. “Hoodies, too!” she suggested.

Barrett, who arrived here in February, agreed that hoodies are important when working in the field. He also suggested that farmworkers need garden tools, power tools, and hand tools.

The Farmworker Hub was created in March 2021 during COVID, because everything was closed and the men needed warm clothing,” said Buxton-Cox. “It started in our garages and we didn’t know it was going to be so big.”

“At the height of the season last year,” she added, “100 to 150 men and women vis-

Jamie Knight of the NOTL Rotary Club presents a cheque to Julia Buxton-Cox to help pay the rent as the season gets underway at the hub. (Barry Newcombe)

Farmworkers visiting the hub Sunday were happy to be able to pick up some free warm clothes, a necessity for them at this time of year. Donations are welcome. (Julia Buxton-Cox)
Warm clothing, winter boots, household items needed

Continued from page 10

...and the hub every Sunday. “Last year we had 30 workers opening day and today we already surpassed that.”

Buxton-Cox also encouraged farmworkers to visit a newly created social space upstairs, decorated with flags and smelling of fresh coffee. The pool table was being put to good use while the baseball game played on a large screen.

“This is a spot to call home away from home,” Buxton-Cox told farmworkers.

“The thing that I am most proud of about this place is not the free stuff, which is neighbours helping neighbours,” she said, “but it’s when you see someone like John Henry who comes in and it’s a big hug and ‘oh my gosh, welcome back!’”

Rotarian Jamie Knight was on hand to present Buxton-Cox with a cheque “that will help cover a few months of rent,” she said.

The Farmworker Hub needs volunteers, both at the Virgil site, and to help with driving farmworkers to the hub on Sundays. According to thehubnotl.ca, donations are also gratefully accepted.

“This place is just so joyous,” said Buxton-Cox.
March 2023 • Volume 3 • Issue 3

Actual Kid-Friendly News

Local News

To celebrate spring, Joyous NOTL is holding a photo contest! While you are out and about around town, take a photo of any “signs of spring” and submit the photo to joyousnotlkids@gmail.com. No camera? No problem! If you don’t have a camera, draw a picture of something you see around town that tells you spring is on the way! Ideas for these submissions include buzzing bees, daffodils blossoming, trees budding, and birds nesting. The winner will receive a $20 gift card to Cows ice cream. We want you to have plenty of time to get out and enjoy nature while looking for these signs so we are giving this contest an entire month. The winner will be announced around April 20.

Interview with Sophie

Q. What is your ideal day in Niagara-on-the-Lake?
A. I’d just stay at home. It’s my ideal day … staying at home.

Q. In your free time, what do you like to do?
A. Cook, read, ride my horse (I keep my horse at home). I’m a good friend and a great animal for a day, what would you like to do?

Q. What is your favourite TV show?
A. Probably The Office, it’s hysterical (though probably not appropriate for young kids). I’ve seen The Office all the way through eight times.

Q. What is your favourite book?
A. The Mortal Instruments series. It’s a fantasy set in modern times. It’s about fairies and angels and demons and people hunting demons. It’s a very interesting series about a girl who is a half-angel demon hunter but doesn’t know it at the beginning.

Q. What is your favourite food?
A. Tacos. Steak tacos. There’s a steak theme going on here, I like steak.

Q. If you could be an animal for a day, what would you be and why?
A. A cat. I just like cats because they seem so lazy!

Q. What kind of music do you listen to?
A. Most genres of music. I don’t have a favourite. Different moods mean I listen to different music.

Q. What is your favourite flavour of ice cream?
A. Mint chip. I grew up eating mint chip. It was my grandmother’s favourite — it always had to be the green one.

Q. If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would it be?
A. I would go to Italy! For the food and scenery. I want to travel all over Italy but if I could only pick one city there it would be Rome.

Q. What are three awesome things about yourself?
A. 1. I’m ALIVE! I had a health scare in December so being alive is pretty awesome.
   2. I received early acceptance into the college program of my choice.
   3. (Sophie was having a hard time so a friend stepped in and answered the third one) She is a good friend and a great listener.

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.
Native Centre basketball team on the road to success

Mike Balsam
The Local

A nascent basketball program running out of the Niagara Regional Native Centre (NRNC) is already making its mark across the province. The recent Ontario Native Basketball Invitational tournament in Sudbury, organized by Indigenous Wellness and Sport Ontario, Team NRNC, made up of local high school-aged boys, went 3-1, going undefeated in the round-robin stage. They finished the tournament in fourth place, stunning some teams from other locations across the province.

“We lost to a team that was well-coached,” says co-head coach Brandon Bell. “They’ve found a way to run a good program.”

Bakker says that as an Urbansia, he was surprised they were with Team NRNC’s performance in their semi-final loss against the squad from Jumpball Player Development, a long-established program from the Algogenquins of Pikwakagan First Nation in Renfrew County.

In contrast, the local program began this January at the urging of Pow Wow outreach and fundraising coordinator Willow Shawanoo.

“We had basketball teams years ago, but we had some co-workers who changed positions,” says Wiasa Nabin youth program coordinator Mia Bakker. “Willow really wanted to bring it back. She did all the logistics, and we went to our first tournament at Six Nations in the beginning of February.”

The team practices in the Airport Road native centre gym, which lacks permanently mounted hoops and on a floor not properly marked out for the sport.

“They roll in two outdoor basketball nets at either side of the gym so Hill and the other coaches can run scrimmages. Watching a recent practice, it was clear the kids playing to find their way and they need more of a team that was pieced together for the purpose of entering those tournaments,” Hill was trying to get the program started up in 2020, but the pandemic made that impossible. Now 22 years old, he is too old to compete in the tournaments, but was happy to step up and organize the practices on Wednesday and Friday evenings at the centre.

“I’m only two or three years older than some of them,” Hill says. “It’s fun to hang around with them, and I feel they do respect me and the other coaches. We’re all young, and we’re all learning together, which I think is pretty good.”

Bakker says that as an urban Indigenous community centre, no one is turned away from the NRNC’s new basketball program.

“In the process of developing,” she says. “These kids playing to find their way and feel safe. Being on this basketball team gives them a safe space where they can fit in and ball. That means really good friends in each other.”

At the recent provincial tournament the boys were still getting to know one another. But a week later Bakker witnessed them bonding at a Youth and Elders session in Fort Erie, joking and sharing stories together.

Hill, who lives in Fort Erie, was one of the players who represented the NRNC at tournaments from 2014 to 2018, when they won both the Six Nations Rez Hoops Tournament and another event in Thunder Bay. But he says there wasn’t really a program back then. It was more of a team that was pieced together for the purpose of entering those tournaments.

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Bakker says that as an urban Indigenous community centre, no one is turned away from the NRNC’s new basketball program. That means that Team NRNC is not solely made up of youth with Indigenous roots but also includes some friends of members of the native centre, such as its youngest player, Demarco Perry.

“My friend at school is a Native, and he told me to come and try out for the team,” says the Grade 9 student at Denis Morris Catholic Secondary School. “I’ve been a lot of fun playing with these guys. And I had a great time at the tournament.”

Shawanoo does the groundwork, hunting down the Indigenous tournaments for the team to enter. Some tournaments, however, demand that all players have Indigenous status. That means boys such as Perry have to sit those out. Basketball mixes with cultural sessions and performance at these Native tournaments, too. Both Hill and Bakker spoke highly of the singing, drumming and dancing which were part of the opening ceremonies in Sudbury.

Team NRNC will be heading back up to Sudbury next month for another tournament, while Hill hopes to take Team NRNC to Winnipeg’s Hop It Up tournament in May, another Indigenous tournament in Ottawa and potentially one in Arizona.

As far as the boys’ team is concerned, Vanderklis says they couldn’t have a better leader than Hill.

“They’ve only been playing together for two months,” he marvels. “A lot of the teams we were playing against were working together for five-plus years. They have a sense of cohesion that we are still in the process of developing.”

He continues, “Some of our boys have never played anything more than schoolyard basketball. They’re still learning. They’re at various levels of basketball IQ. My son, for example, is very good at pick-and-rolls, he knows where teammates should go, whereas others are still learning.”

Also along for the ride to Sudbury were four young female basketball players from the local native centre, playing as part of the regional Team Flight, who captured the bronze medal at the provincial tournament.

“At a lot of the community wanted a girls team, too,” Bakker says. “We didn’t have a lot of girls that came out. So Willow decided to connect with this regional team, and four of our players now play with them.”

Team Flight was begun in 2014 by former Six Nations resident Jon Nolan, now living in Gravenhurst. It’s an elite Native girls’ team featuring Indigenous female basketball players aged 14 to 18 years old from across Ontario.

Bakker says the NRNC girls had never really had a chance to practice with their teammates until they went to the Rez Hoops tournament at Six Nations in February, where they won a silver medal. And they will finally get a full practice session on March 19, when they travel to Rama to gather with their teammates.

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This Thursday the Niagara Catholic Secondary School student Sam Walker, the feeling is very bittersweet, as he is unable to play in any upcoming tournaments, “assistant captain Walker added, “we really struggled to put the puck in the net.” But they turned things around when they really needed it to in February, entering the four-team round robin playoffs against Fort Erie, Pelham and Port Colborne. The Wolves finished with a record of 3-2-1, capping it off with a 3-1 win over the Meteor in Virgil to take second place and earn the berth at the provincial championships. “We really pulled things together,” head coach Tim Marotta said Monday. “We had a lot of injuries. Once everybody got healthy, that’s when they really started to challenge us and the other teams. They kept working hard and sticking to their game, and they were very, very well, played some really smart hockey in the playoffs.” Speaking to Marotta and a number of team members Monday, it was clear that many felt the team’s two goalkeepers, Theo VanderKaay and Mateo Grusso, were perhaps the biggest factors in qualifying for the championship. Grusso was missing from practice Monday as he was in Abruzzi, Italy, showing his talents as a centre midfielder for Pescara Calcio, a Serie C professional soccer club. The Queenston Road resident started his minor hockey journey in NOTL, but at 11 years old he moved up to AA hockey. A year later Grusso jumped to the Hamilton Bulldogs AAA program. Last year, he took a step closer to coming home by playing with the Niagara North Stars AA team. Then came the Ontario Hockey League draft. “I got interviewed by a couple of teams,” Grusso said on the line from Pescara. “Nothing really came of it. I had a decision to make, do I try to catch on with a junior team? Instead, I decided to go back to what I was most comfortable with, to where I can make the most memories down the road.” Returning to NOTL meant a chance for the St. Paul Catholic High School student to play with his younger brother Marco. “I wouldn’t change this decision for the world,” Grusso says. “I am playing with my best friend, my goalie partner Theo, and my brother on defence. It’s something I’ll never forget. Coming back to play with the guys I grew up with has been amazing. It means so much to me, way more than any other team I’ve played on.” Grusso’s teammate and assistant captain, Glenndale resident Cole Holmes, it will be the first time playing at the provincial championships, where he knows his team will be underdogs. “Going into the playoffs we knew what we could do,” said the A.N. Myer Secondary School student. “We’re excited that we got here and we’re just going to continue it. We know we’re underdogs, that’s not going to stop us.” After hockey was interrupted by the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, Holmes says it wasn’t difficult to convince this group of guys to get back onto the ice. “Everybody was ready to come back,” he says. “It’s what we’ve done our entire lives, and it’s always been fun. I played one year in Niagara Falls, and another year in St. Catharines. But I came back a few years ago and stayed. This is where I like to play.” Another assistant captain, Marotta’s son Jack, is also aging out of minor hockey after the Barrie provincial championships. As Jack’s Wolves career nears its end, Marotta reflected on the potential end of his coaching career with NOTL hockey. “As much as it’s his hockey, it’s our hockey,” he says. “It’s going to be a bit tough not coming to the rink anymore. It’s been a real bonding experience with him.” But he does think that Jack will have options to play the game in the future. “He’s planning to go to the University of Guelph,” Marotta said of his son. “I don’t know if he’ll continue to play hockey at a rec level, or if he’ll take time off then come back as an adult to play in a men’s league. The nice thing is the past couple of years these boys have figured out how to make pick-up games, especially during the pandemic. I can see them getting back together at Christmas to play.” Before that, and before the provincials, there’s the series against Fort Erie. Winning it would certainly give the NOTL team bragging rights and added confidence heading to Barrie. “They’ve been a thorn in our side all year,” Walker said of the Meteor, against whom the Wolves went 2-7 this season. “They put a good beating on us. But the last two games we’ve really played well against them (a 2-1 loss and a 3-1 win against Fort Erie in the round robin). It would be nice to prove that we’re a better team than them.” Game one of the Niagara league’s Tier One championships goes Thursday night at 7 p.m. in Fort Erie, while game two is scheduled for Saturday at 6 p.m. at Virgil’s Meridian Cred- it Union Arena. If a game three is necessary, it will be back in Fort Erie Monday night at 7 p.m. At Saturday’s game in Virgil, the 12 seniors on the team who are ‘graduating’ this year, most of whom have at least 10 years of NOTL minor hockey experience under their belts, will be honoured. “It would be great to pack the arena that night,” said trainer Jeff Dyck, whose son Griffin, the team’s captain, is one of those graduates. “Come on out and show your support.” Also playing for championships this weekend are some of the Wolves’ house league, or local league teams. Coach Gary Friesen U11’s, Matt Utamura U13, and James Cadeau’s U18 teams will be vying for titles over the next few days. As well, coach Joe Pagnotta’s U11 rep team will play in their division’s OMHA tournament the weekend of April 8.
KOPEECHUK, EDWARD RONALD — Passed away peacefully at his home in St. Davids with his wife and daughters at his side on Tuesday, March 7, 2023 at the age of 82.

Loving husband of Margaret (nee Lindsay) for 56 years. Beloved father of Linda (Glenn), the late Sharon (Brian), Carolyn (Conor). Proud grandfather of Eoin, Victoria and Fiona.

A service was held at Roadhouse and Rose Funeral Home on March 13, 2023. Memorial donations can be made to the Canadian Cancer Society.
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