

The Niagara-on-the-Lake LOCAL



Conservative
MP Rob Nich-
olson won't
seek another
term

page 2

The trusted voice of our community.

notllocal.com APRIL 18, 2019 Volume 1 · Issue 14

Forged in tradition



Antiy-Demian Savov and Minette Murphy are first year students at Willowbank, learning to forge steel. The students were demonstrating the skills required of a blacksmith for those at Willowbank's school of restoration arts open house Sunday. (Fred Mercnik)

Natural playground for Queenston park

Willowbank students to help with build

Lauren O'Malley
The Local

"Imagine this epic journey to the peak of the castle."

That's how designer Mike Salisbury envisions the experience of his "Spiral Mountain" playground in the Queenston Commons park.

Kevin Turcotte, Niagara-on-the-Lake's manager of parks and recreation, says Salisbury's design for a natural playground was easily the most popular proposal after a series of community engagement sessions in person and via the Town's Join the Conversation website.

Village residents had been very clear they didn't want a traditional children's playground. "They thought the character of Queenston didn't lend itself to fluorescent colours," says Turcotte. A natural alternative was proposed, and Turcotte and the

Town were intrigued. "I was excited about it," he says. "We haven't done it before, and I'm excited to see how it turns out."

Turcotte says research supported this kind of treatment. "The chief medical officer of health says kids need to have access to nature," he says. "It's about personal challenge, active play — about kids getting in there and getting their hands dirty."

Salisbury certainly agrees. "Really the direction we're going for is modern kids, like millennials, are no longer interested in being told they have to do a certain thing a specific way. They like to use their imagination, and create their own experience. Neither millennials nor kids are interested in seeing teeter totters, or the teeter totters of the working world," he says.

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Protests begin in Old Town

Penny Coles
The Local

With the start of tourism season and a busy Queen Street in Niagara-on-the-Lake Saturday came protesters, with a new twist to their efforts to stop the use of horse-drawn carriages in town.

Also on the street to defend a popular, community-minded business were members of Locals for Carriages, offering support to the family who has been providing horse and carriage rides through the Old

Town for the last 30 years.

It was business as usual, said Laura Sentineal, as their carriages lined up along King Street outside the Prince of Wales Hotel.

Sentineal Carriages had weddings booked, reservations for tours, and carriages waiting for tourists who decided on a spur-of-the-moment tour on a warm, sunny day in NOTL.

This time last year, in response to the protests, on the advice of police and hoping for a safe day for all, Sentineal

decided to keep her horses off the street.

"Not this year," she said. "That was just one day, and it will never happen again."

Her husband Fred, dressed in his elegant black suit and preparing for work, chatted for a few minutes before climbing into a carriage and taking off on a tour.

The fact that it was such a busy day, and carriages weren't sitting idle, she said, "reminds me of why we're doing this."

But without the pre-bookings, she added, "it's hard to

say" what impact the protesters would have had on business.

While supporters set up early at the corner of Queen and King Streets, the protesters tried a different tactic from last year, spreading out along Queen Street. There were eight of them stationed at each intersection along the main street, avoiding direct contact with members of the support group, and talking to passers-by about their cause. They are members of AWFAN (At

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Dan Turner, Laura Sentineal, Eric VanNoort and Fred Sentineal prepare for protests, with Locals for Carriages out to support the Sentineals' horse-and-carriage business. (Penny Coles)



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Rob Nicholson giving up federal politics

After a lifetime of service to his community, he plans to continue, but not as an MP

Penny Coles
The Local

Rob Nicholson is one of those very fortunate people who decided as a youngster what he wanted to be when he grew up, and has done exactly that very successfully, becoming the longest serving member of the Conservative Party.

He has decided it's time to move on to a life after politics — the representative for the riding of Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie has announced he will not seek another term.

He's been a candidate in several elections, he says, and always makes his decision about running six months out. "We're about six months away from the October election, so it's time," he says, although he's stepping away from a career he has loved.

"I'm very grateful to the people who have given me this opportunity."

Nicholson tells a story

of how he came to know he wanted to be not just a politician, but to make a difference in people's lives.

When he was in Grade 5 at Valley Way Public School in Niagara Falls, his teacher encouraged her students to read the news of the day so they could discuss it at school, he recalls.

quite on the same page. I asked my parents, who were not political at all, about Diefenbaker, and my father explained the prime minister was concerned about fishermen, farmers and seniors."

That answer clinched it for Nicholson — he decided whose side he was on, and wrote a letter to tell Diefenbaker

sponse from Diefenbaker, he received a call from him years later — as leader of the opposition, in 1965 — saying he'd be at the Serbian picnic grounds in Niagara Falls, and offered to meet with Nicholson, who was 13 at the time.

"When I met him, he asked me if I wanted to be a Conservative MP. I sure did, I told him."

As he gets set to move on to other avenues of service to his community, more than 50 years after that conversation, Nicholson says of his political career, "It's been a dream come true for me."

Now 66, he started helping out on Conservative campaigns in Niagara Falls in the 1960s — he remembers being given a bunch of tea bags and told to hand them out at school, telling his classmates to "have a cup of tea with a Conservative" — and worked on every campaign until he was ready to put his name forward in 1984.

A lot of people remembered him from his days helping out, he says. When the vote was held, 1,700 people showed up, "and I managed to win."

He was re-elected in 1988, 2004, 2008, 2011 and 2015, and held several positions under three different Conservative prime ministers, including parliamentary secretary, minister of justice and attorney general.

He was elected to regional council in 1997, 2000 and 2003.

He has pledged to work on at least one more campaign — he will help opposition leader Andrew Scheer as he tries for a Conservative victory in the October federal election.

Nicholson admits to feeling "somewhat emotional" about his decision



Rob Nicholson, MP (Photo supplied)

not to run again, but recalls his defeat in 1993 to Liberal Gary Pillitteri, which was followed by more good years for Nicholson. He went back to practising law, and won a seat on regional council.

He remembers telling a reporter after the election he wanted to do more work for his church. "I won't write that," she said, dismissing the notion helping out at church could somehow replace a political commitment.

But almost 30 years later, that is still one of his goals. A member of St. Patrick Roman Catholic Church in Niagara Falls, Nicholson says when he was so often out of town, he felt he couldn't give as much time to his church as he wanted, but he will now.

There are other groups

and organizations he has wanted to work with but couldn't as a politician, he says, but that too has changed.

"When you're in the business of service to people, trying to make a difference, that's what brings you satisfaction," says Nicholson. "I'm hoping to continue to provide service to the community."

He also plans to get to the gym more often, and although he has done a lot of travelling during his career, he has told his wife Arlene when they go on vacation now, "we can go for longer periods of time. We don't have to be back in eight to 10 days."

He hasn't eliminated the possibility of running for local government again, but says "I'm not expecting to. I would like to do a few other things I haven't been able to do."

"I'm very grateful to the people who have given me this opportunity."

Rob Nicholson

Nicholson took his assignment to heart and read the Niagara Falls Review, learning about the Cuban missile crisis, which was the big story of the day.

"I read about Kennedy and Diefenbaker, and learned they were not

that. He also mentioned he'd started a class fan club for the prime minister.

"Of course a girl in class also started a fan club for the Liberals," he says.

He not only got a "beautiful letter" in re-

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Council considering accommodation tax to fund infrastructure

Penny Coles
The Local

Council wants a third round of debate about an accommodation tax that could benefit municipal coffers, although many in the tourism industry have said in earlier debates it will do more harm than good.

The previous council twice raised the issue of imposing a tax on hotel rooms, bed and breakfasts and short-term rentals — first in January 2018, and again last August.

The January report was shelved, and in August the discussion gained no traction, dismissed as an eleventh hour attempt to overturn the January decision before the election.

Both times it elicited strong opposition from hotels, the Ni-

agara-on-the-Lake Chamber of Commerce and owners of rental properties and B&Bs.

Last year's recommendation discussed by council was for a four per cent tax, half of the proceeds to go to the Town, and half to the Chamber of Commerce to bolster tourism.

Last week Coun. Norm Arsenault put it forward again, asking for a subcommittee of three councillors and some staff to review the January report and look at how other municipalities handle the extra charge.

The first discussion in 2018 was bad timing, said Arsenault, coming after the hike in minimum wage.

Coun. Wendy Cheropita, named to the subcommittee along with Arsenault and Coun. Allan Bisback, said the review

would include discussions with hotel representatives and the chamber, looking at "both sides of the coin."

Arsenault said although he's not convinced the situation is unchanged from last year, the extra tax "remains a big 'if' at this point."

Any Town revenue from the tax would be targeted at tourism-related costs, rather than used as general revenue, he said.

"Nobody likes taxes, but if it's targeted, designed to go to tourism infrastructure, it might make sense. We're hoping to bring everybody in to discuss the issue again, from a different point of view. We want to engage residents as well — to set a process in place that will be a win-win situation," said Arsenault.

Residents want to see a portion of the cost of tourism paid by tourists, he said.

"But we're only thinking about it at this point," he stressed.

Janice Thomson, chamber president, spoke to councillors last August to oppose the tax. Nothing has changed since then, she said — the chamber continues to be against it.

The Town receives more than \$2 million annually from bus parking, parking meters, and the provincial gas tax rebate — revenue that stays in town, rather than being split with the Region, she said.

When municipalities were granted the authority to implement an accommodation tax, there were certain principles the Ministry of Tourism attached

to it, including that it ensure the maintenance of a "stable, vibrant tourism environment."

Based on feedback from chamber members and a professional analysis of the impacts of Bill 148, which introduced an increased minimum wage and other legislated requirements for businesses, "it is not appropriate to burden visitors with additional taxes," she said.

Bob Jackson, CEO of Vintage Hotels, also continues to oppose the tax — his view hasn't changed since the issue was first discussed last January.

"One of the disappointments to us was that when it came up last year, there was no consultation with businesses beforehand," he said.

Vintage hired the Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis

to look at the issue, "at considerable cost to us," he said, and received a data-driven, factual report which "unequivocally" determined the extra tax would be economically detrimental to NOTL — not just for the accommodation sector but for all businesses.

The analyst estimated changes to provincial labour laws could reduce the number of overnight visitors by almost 4,000 per year, and an added tax could double that, costing local businesses \$3.4 million annually.

Jackson said he is both surprised and disappointed the subject has come up again.

"It's a new council, and I hear they're talking about tourists paying for infrastructure through an accommodation tax, but I think in all honesty that is misguided."

Overnight guests drive to town, park their cars, and walk or take shuttles from there. They contribute substantially to the economics of the town and put little demand on infrastructure — that comes more from the day-trippers and tour buses, he said.

"This is an issue we feel strongly about," said Jackson.

He's glad council is planning on engaging with the hotel industry and other businesses, he added, but "I would rather not be having this discussion again."

Best view in town



Chairs await visitors to the NOTL Golf Club Saturday — it was a beautiful sunny day, but a little too cool to sit and enjoy the view. (Alex Nikolaev)

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‘Community support makes difficult days better’

Continued from page 1

War for Animals Niagara), and call themselves anti-speciesists — they oppose the use of animals for human purposes.

Adam Stirr, the leader of the group, had 40 protesters spread out, to put some space between them, the local supporters, and the horses. It worked out well, he said.

He was acting on an agreement reached with the Niagara Regional Police Service, he said.

“We’ve agreed we’re not going to have gratuitous swearing and we’re not going

to make a lot of noise. We’re not there to cause a ruckus and we don’t want to get in the way of what’s happening,” he said. “We don’t talk to people in carriages and we don’t stand in the way of people going on a carriage ride. We just want to tell people what we believe.”

In addition to staking out street corners, “making themselves extraordinarily conspicuous,” said Laura, protesters were following the horse-drawn carriages as they made their way through Old Town streets.

She also saw police walking along Queen Street looking out for disturbances and helping to keep the peace, and although there was no yelling at carriage drivers and those enjoying a tour through town, as happened last year, the protesters were “putting on a show, trying to scare people away.”

There were also well-marked vehicles “following and circling the carriages,” she said. She has asked the police to stop that practise for safety reasons, but to no avail.

“It’s frightening, manipulative, and very unnerving for drivers. I’m not comfortable with that. I think having vehicles following carriages is crossing the line. We do ev-

everything we can to keep things safe for our horses, drivers, and passengers. And we have amazing horses and drivers. I don’t feel anyone is in danger, but there could be a potentially unsafe situation. We want to ensure safety in every situation.”

Stirr said he had seven vehicles out Saturday, using them as “mobile signs.” He intends to do more of that this summer — he is referring to the activities he has planned as “rolling thunder.”

It’s a way of making the most of the space he has available to him, he said, adding he has no desire to spook the horses or cause an unsafe situation. His drivers have been told if they find themselves behind a carriage, they should stay back and turn off when they can. Although there may have been “isolated times” when drivers were following or circling Saturday, his drivers have been told not to do that, he said.

He plans to continue the protests at least part of every weekend throughout the summer, not with as many people out as Saturday.

Laura says although it is her business singled out by AWFAN in NOTL, there are other areas where farms are being targeted by protesters, and it’s just a matter of time before restaurants and other businesses are hit in Niagara. “Dairy, pork, beef — they want to put a stop to it all.”

She hopes her situation



Saturday was a great day for a carriage ride, and the Sentinel carriages were busy. Fred Sentineal hopped into a carriage to take one of the morning tours through the Old Town. (Penny Coles)



Protesters, members of AWFAM (At War for Animals Niagara) took up their places along Queen Street to talk to passers-by about their cause, which is to stop speciesism, the use of animals by humans. (Penny Coles)

could be the “lightning rod” for protecting those businesses, she said.

She continues to be overwhelmed by the outpouring of support from the community. With fundraising efforts underway to help pay for legal actions that might be undertaken against AWFAN — the activists respond that they aren’t breaking any laws — Laura said people were dropping off donations at the office Saturday.

Any time she has a difficult or stressful day, invariably someone will offer support — through donations, a thumbs-up or even just to stop by and say hi.

“There may be 25 people in town who don’t like us — everyone else is behind us and very supportive,” she said.

“Horse-and-carriages don’t necessarily align with everybody’s ideals, and that’s fine, but don’t try to destroy our business. We can have differences of opinions, and we can all make our own decision.”

Tickets for a trivia night fundraiser organized by Locals for Carriages were quickly sold out — another welcome reminder of the huge support in the community, said Laura. But for a small donation at the door following the dinner and trivia event, people are welcome to drop by for snacks and entertainment at 9 p.m., May 11 at the Royal Canadian Legion Hall on King Street.



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The protesters are using vehicles to spread their message. Laura Sentineal would like them to be prohibited from following and circling carriages. (Fred Mercnik)

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To celebrate, there will be a grand opening event at the new retail location, featuring a Joseph Ribkoff Trunk Show, with cocktails, prizes, and swag. The event takes place Friday, May, 10, from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. Visit Bella Grace Boutique for complimentary VIP tickets or go to their Facebook page to reserve your spot — spaces are limited.

Bella Grace has enjoyed more than 10 years in business on Queen Street and is happy to open its biggest and brightest location to date. This designer ladies' clothing boutique is locally-owned and operated. The owner, Joy Kassai-Molon, is inspired by today's modern woman, and aspires to dress all women of all sizes. "It is our duty to cater to the needs of beautiful women of every shape and size," she says.

After many years studying psychology, holding a bachelor's and master's degree in science, specializing in psychology, Kassai-Molon left a career in counselling to pursue her "PhD in fashion," she jokes. Fashion runs in her blood, she notes — her mother, Brenda, has run a successful manufacturing business for more than 30 years and was the inspira-

tion for Bella Grace.

"I was raised by an intelligent, hard-working mother, who defined true style."

Kassai-Molon founded Bella Grace Boutique, with her daughter Bella Grace as the namesake. She is blessed with two children, Anthony and Bella, and her husband Jeremy, who have been a constant source of love and support for the small family business, and can be found helping out at

fashion shows, festivals, Joseph Ribkoff trunk shows and all the great events and happenings in town, she says.

The knowledgeable and exceptional staff at Bella Grace provide a shopping experience that transcends the traditional personalized shopping experience, cultivated from years in the field and an unsurpassed knowledge of style, cut, fit, fabric, and care of designer clothing. The staff at Bella

Grace has spent a decade or more in art, fashion, and customer service.

"It is our mission at Bella Grace to make every woman look and feel her best, whether it's a new look or something special for an upcoming occasion," says Kassai-Molon.

Ann Cosford, the store manager, has been there since day one. Having previously owned a boutique and catering business, she is vital to

Bella Grace with her extensive knowledge and incredible customer service.

Both elegant and refined, Sharyn Knight, an exceptional sales associate, delivers a personalized shopping experience, cultivated from many years in the fashion industry.

With incredible attention to detail and exceptional artistic skills, the resident designer and artist, Dorothy Booth, hand-paints one-of-a-kind jackets,

sold exclusively in Bella Grace.

With a panache for high fashion and a keen ability to personally stylize each and every customer, Sheila Krause brings her exuberant passion for fashion and style.

Junior manager Dakota Stevenson shares Bella Grace events and happenings, new arrivals and hot looks through Facebook, Instagram, and personalized online and customer email service.

Ribkoff, the featured designer for the event, is celebrating more than 60 years as a Canadian fashion label, with his designs made in Montreal. He also enjoys an international stage, seen by the likes of politicians, royalty, and celebrities, with a designer line that exudes timeless style and grace. The main attraction of the grand opening is his trunk show, where lucky guests will be the first to see the upcoming 2019 fall fashions. The new looks will be featured on Bella Grace's beautiful models, Susanne Heslop, Kassai-Molon, and the ladies of Bella Grace.

Kassai-Molon says she and all the ladies at the store would like to thank their loyal customers and the beautiful town of Niagara-on-the-Lake by hosting this complimentary VIP event, "showing how much your local support means to us."



Left to right: Dorothy Booth, Dakota Stevenson, Joy Kassai-Molon, Ann Cosford, Sheila Krause, Sharyn Knight

Joseph Ribkoff

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EDITORIAL

We can all do better

Tiny steps, but in the right direction. As Earth Day approaches, we're reminded every step is important.

We've come a long way since 1970, when Earth Day became an annual, global event to remind us to respect our environment.

This year, more than a billion people in 192 countries are expected to take part in what could be the largest day of positive activism in the world.

In the intervening years, beneficial and sustainable changes have occurred. Recycling is one of them.

It's only one way we can be environmentally responsible, but in Niagara, it's a hot topic these days.

Big news from the Region, appropriately leading up to Earth Day: there will be curbside pickup of batteries, just for the next week, and ziplock plastic bags have been added to the long list of recyclable material we can put out week-

ly. Yes, tiny steps.

As the Region begins the process of negotiating a new waste collection contract, there are more changes coming. Although they're based on economics, negotiating the best contract for the services we want, the impact should be an increase in recycling — also good economically and environmentally. They seem to go hand in hand.

Across the province our overall diversion rate is below 30 per cent. In Niagara, we're doing better than that — 52 per cent — but not at the 65 per cent goal set by the Region.

As environmentalists, we range from the passionate — those who don't have a lot to recycle because they choose reusable — to the apathetic, who throw plastics and other recyclables in the garbage without a second thought. Most of us are somewhere in between.

The real embarrassment is that according to a regional audit, 50 per cent of garbage

being put out in bags is organic waste that should go in green bins, but people just see that as too icky and smelly. Once we're only putting out bags every two weeks, that should and likely will change. We're going to have to get over it.

The alternative is putting more garbage in a landfill site until it can take no more, and in the meantime, launching expensive searches for more places to dump it.

Each one of us generates an average of almost a tonne of garbage per year. Each time we add one more item to our recycling boxes and green bin we are helping to slow global warming. We are reducing the strain on landfill. We are preventing air and water pollution. We are saving energy resources.

If it isn't a way of life for us yet, it should be. We can do better.

Penny Coles
The Local

What's happening here?



Parks and recreation manager Kevin Turcotte supervises as the Town public works department installs large Armour stones at the entrances to the Heritage Trail on Charlotte Street. The Heritage Committee asked that these stones be used to enhance the entrances at Charlotte and John Streets. (Tony Chisholm)

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 **Niagara-on-the-Lake**

LOCAL

The trusted voice of our community

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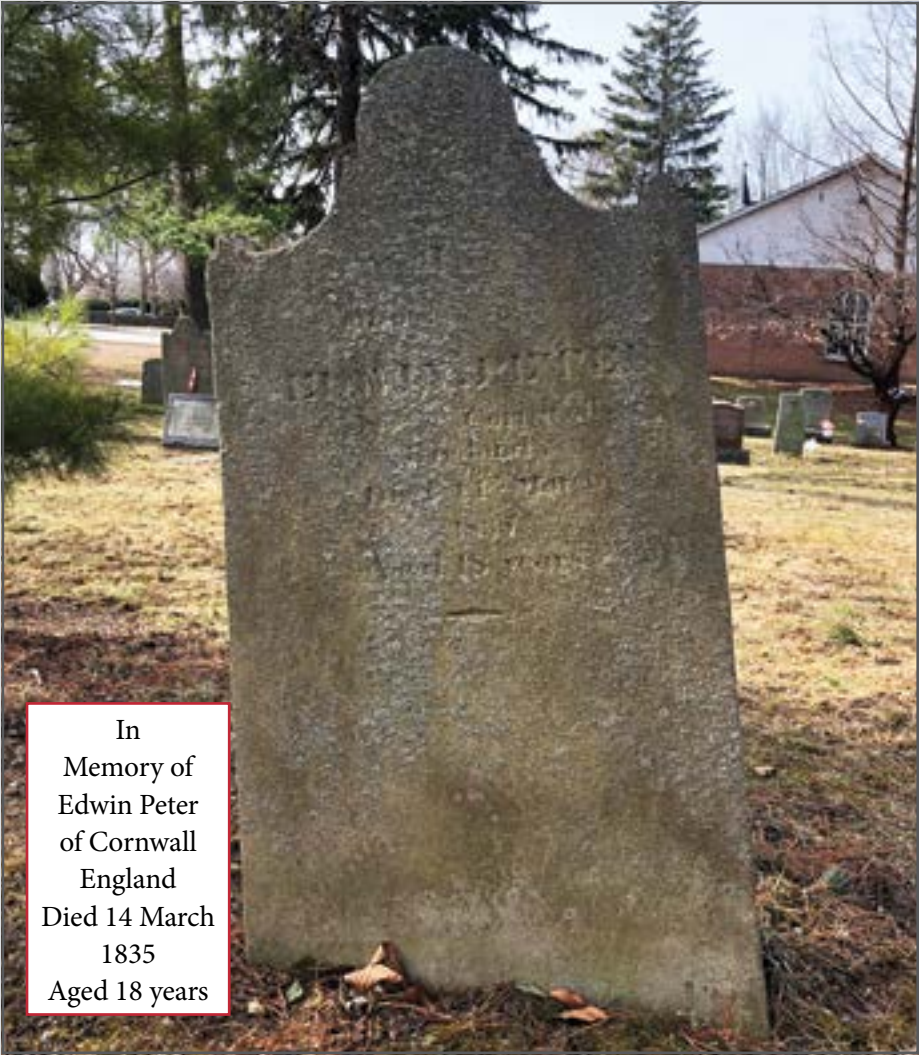
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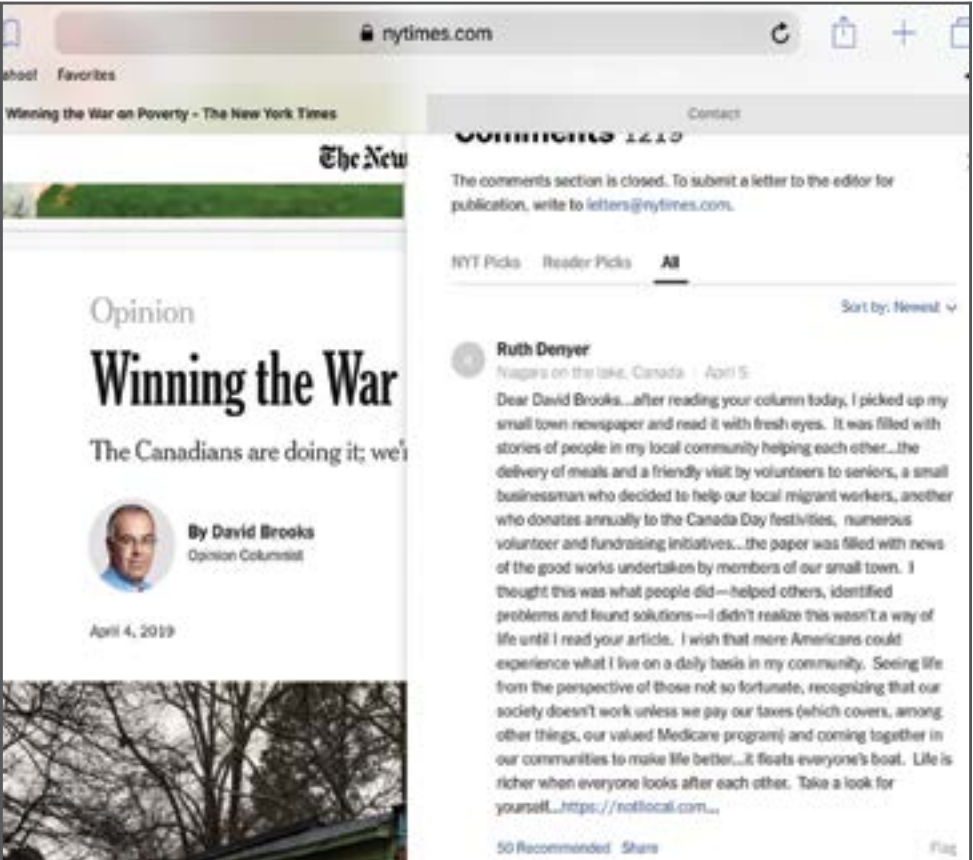
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Aged 18 years

Tombstone offers puzzle of young man Donald Combe Special to The Local

This 1835 memorial stone to 18-year-old Edwin Peter (9 Dec. 1816 - 14 Mar. 1835) stands near Addison Hall in St. Mark's Church cemetery. A genealogical search tells us he was the fifth of the six children of John and Mary (Hender) Peter of Illand in Cornwall, England. From the family charts they appear to have been of some prominence, and Edwin seems to have been the only one who went far from home. There are two puzzles: What was young Edwin doing wandering around in the colonies; and who paid to have the costly monument erected?

LETTERS

NY Times readers learn why residents love NOTL



Thank you Ruth Denyer for spreading the word about NOTL, and also for mentioning The Local.

Time spent outdoors is good for our health

Nature makes us feel better emotionally and physically



Owen Bjorgan
Special to The Local

What does the word biophilic mean? It's a mouthful, and often a confounding word. "Bio" is the prefix meaning "life", and "-philic" is the exact opposite of "phobic", or to be afraid of something. It's this urge, as Edward O. Wilson coined it in 1984, that describes how humans innately seek to be closer to nature and other living things — essentially, the concept that we are a part of nature, and not apart from it.

We're not here for an extended grammar lesson — we're here to talk about the feelings and effects that are very real in all of us. When is the last time

you allowed yourself to be exposed to the unequivocal forces and healing effects of nature?

The theory of biophilia proposes all people, as individuals, are capable of tapping into nature, but is the drive being smothered? If so, we have to ask ourselves, by what?

In our current world, we live in a humming human machine that is growing fast and making our lives more convenient to live at home.

Perhaps the outdoors doesn't exude the same invitation it once did, because people are increasingly more comfortable in their familiar, routine environments. Add in social media, and suddenly we find ourselves in a non-stimulating environment, coupled with way

Continued on page 8



Some doctors prescribe nature time so more moments, such as enjoying a beautiful sunset over Lake Ontario, can positively affect our health. (Owen Bjorgan)

Students protest provincial cuts to education



Alexcia Cofell
The Local Community
Advisory Board

The youth-led #StudentsSayNo movement has been a trending topic this month. However, what is it?

It has been organized online by teen activists across Ontario to protest education cuts.

An estimated 100,000 elementary and high school students in Ontario walked out of their classrooms on Thursday, April 4, for the movement at 1:15 p.m.

Some of the consequences resulting from Premier Doug Ford's government plans for education are average class size requirement for secondary Grades 9 to 12 being adjusted to 28, up from the current average of 22.

There will be a loss of about 5,000 teaching positions in Catholic schools, according to The Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association — 1,558 fewer teachers for the 2019-2020 school year, and the following year, another 3,475 teaching jobs will be cut.

There have been other cuts announced as well: free tuition for low-income post-secondary students has been eliminated, along with

other programs for needy students, and those who require extra academic help, in elementary and secondary schools.

The revised curriculum will replace an interim teaching plan based on 1998 materials, and the Ford government has cut funding to the Ontario Arts Council's Indigenous Culture Fund.

These cuts are detrimental to students, and they are not all of the negative consequences the Ontario school system will face.

The protest was one of the largest and most inclusive protests seen in Ontario since Ford was elected premier last year.

Students from as many as 700 schools left class, in-

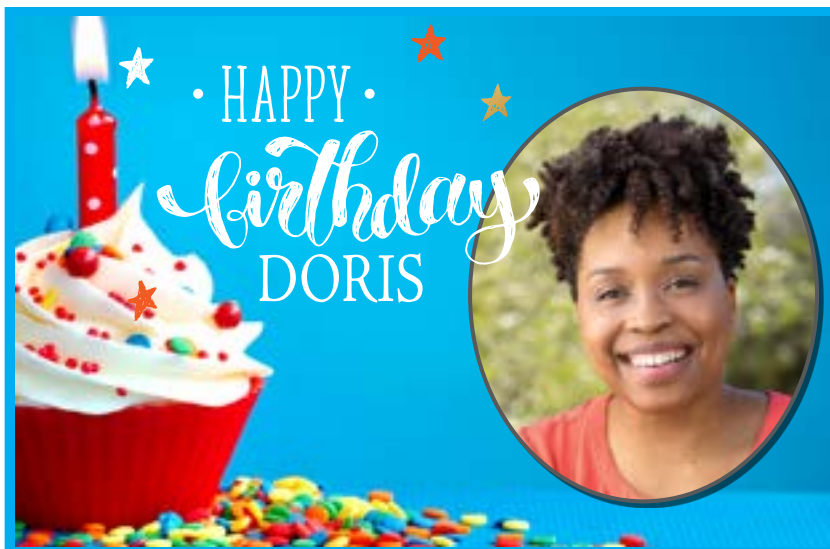
cluding schools from the Niagara region such as Laura Secord, St. Francis, Holy Cross, Stamford Collegiate, Denis Morris, Sir Winston Churchill, Saint Paul, Westlane, A.N. Myer, and others.

I feel as though the protest was necessary to show the government and Ford that students will be negatively affected by education cuts, and students really do have a concern for the future of education.

I hope the #StudentsSayNo movement does bring awareness to the fact that these government cuts are not in the best interest of youth, and potentially cause some reconsiderations from Ford and his provincial government.



Camryn Tabaka and Marisa Capara, students from A.N. Myer Secondary School, protest as part of the #StudentsSayNo movement. (Alexcia Cofell)



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‘Warm spring days spent outdoors give us energy, make us feel better’

Continued from page 7

too many brain inputs. Our bodies and senses become increasingly out of tune with the artistry and lessons from the outdoors. Is this good for us?

When you’re taking a walk into a forest somewhere in Niagara-on-the-Lake, perhaps the picturesque woods known as Paradise Grove, the changes begin immediately. You’re about to get biophilic.

From the walking alone, blood pressure begins dropping. It drops a little further when the scenery of the forest, a place where we don’t typically spend much time, becomes apparently beautiful.

The human mind is subconsciously registering these new smells, sights, and the peaceful environment.

It is thinking about them and processing the inputs, enjoying them for what they are. This is good for stress and anxiety. Humans have always had an unchallenged captivation with fire, running water, waves, and other audiovisual experiences from nature - the sorts of things

we find ourselves simply staring at.

I would say sitting around a fire is being biophilic. What other feature in our modern lives can several people sit around without saying or doing a single thing and still be comfortable?

Last weekend I found myself and my good friend standing still in a trance-like state, as the incredible frog sounds beckoned us to pause. Without a word being spoken.

It’s what we are meant to do, and it’s good for us mentally. With mental wellness improvement, the body begins to operate at a more peaked level physically.

Energy levels increase and become more consistent, and the immune system actually perks up and becomes stronger.

Some countries, such as Scotland, officially and literally prescribe nature to their patients. This is happening more in other areas of the world as an increasing trend. Outdoor time, activities, and exploration are key. The changes of scenery, new experiences, sun exposure, fresh air, and contemplations that arise out of nature

time are all proven to benefit mental health and a sense of wellbeing. It would be naive for me or anyone to say that nature is a direct substitution for medication or other ways of healing, but it seems to be a forgotten, ancient alternative.

For fun, I can’t help but describe the “fuel” I get from being outside. I especially feel it in spring. There’s this sensation deep in my bones that my body is actually healing, almost upgrading. I believe it’s because of the correlation with longer days, more sunshine, warmer temperatures, seeing and hearing wildlife again.

We can’t all help but like that, but the proof is out there in the many studies that show there might also be some seriously beneficial things happening to our bodies and minds.

Warm spring days spent outdoors make me feel energized. I find myself eating better and in a top-notch mood. Why? Because I’m biophilic, and if you’re doubting that you are, then try some nature time.

Prescribe another, please, Doc.

Training to use naloxone kits can save lives

Local drugstores offer kits and provide necessary training

Lauren O’Malley
The Local

While there is currently no evident opioid crisis in Niagara-on-the-Lake, local pharmacists are prepared to offer assistance and are training others to do so as well.

Opioid overdose rates in Niagara leapt by 225 per cent from 2016 to 2017, according to the regional associate medical officer of health, Dr. Andrea Fuller.

Whether opioids are taken by prescription or recreationally, a naloxone kit has the ability to briefly override an opioid overdose, literally bringing a patient back to life.

The kits are free to anyone with a health card, says pharmacist Kate Wojtowicz at the local Shoppers Drug Mart. An appointment with the pharmacist is required, for comprehensive training she says can take anywhere from 15 minutes to an hour, depending on the recipient’s level of knowledge. At the end of the session one receives a kit with either injectable naloxone or an intranasal spray (she says the latter is generally preferred by the public), and a certification card. As well as the potential to save a life.

However there are possible complications, in that it is a temporary fix, so professional medical help needs to be alerted and engaged immediately.

Kit Andres, a NOTL native, says, “The kit is about the size of a pencil case and light enough that I can keep it attached to the strap of my backpack with no problems. I like keeping it visible for different reasons; it’s handy in case I ever need to use it, but also I think the visibility helps reduce stigma. Drug use and addiction are still treated by

many as moral failings and that’s not true,” says the activist. “People in our communities are dying because they are shamed into not seeking help, or the help is just not there. Drug use and addiction are not moral issues and we all need to take responsibility in reducing the shame and stigma that surround them.”

Andres goes on to say, “NOTL has one of the lowest rates of opioid overdoses, so while it’s less likely I’ll need to use it in town compared to downtown St Catharines, it’s a great conversation starter that I can use to encourage other community members to get trained. There’s nothing to lose by getting this life-saving training. Opioid addiction doesn’t discriminate based on income level, race, or what part of town you live in. Overdoses don’t either.”

Laura Tait, library manager, agrees. She says she read about libraries — as public institutions — carrying the kits. She looked into it, and promptly arranged for training. “It was really eye-open-

ing,” she says. “All of our staff came to the training. Some dismissed it because they felt we wouldn’t need this in NOTL — but the opioid crisis could affect anyone, even very innocent people who use painkillers.” Tait likens the kits behind their counter to the defibrillator in the library’s entryway: they’re another potentially life-saving tool.

Sean Simpson of Simpson’s Pharmasave also agrees ‘Ontario’s prettiest town’ is not immune. “I have never had to administer naloxone, but I have dispensed to people who have had to use their kit.” The pharmacist continues, “From the potentially devastating fact of someone suffering an accidental or intentional overdose, this is a relatively easy way to give that person a second chance.”

Naloxone kits and training are available through pharmacies and community-based organizations. More information can be found online at the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, and ontario.ca.



NOTL Shoppers Drug Mart pharmacist Kate Wojtowicz will train people interested in carrying a naloxone kit. (Lauren O’Malley)

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Named after John Prideaux, (1718–1759) was a Brigadier-General in the British Army, Prideaux St is one of the most sought-after addresses in NOTL. Located between the Lake and Queen St., the street is filled with wonderful old homes.

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Record Store Day

One of Virgil’s best kept secrets is its only record store: SRCVinyl, on Henegan Road. Owners Danny Keyes and Jennifer Miles have also launched a distillery in the same place. Celebrating Record Store Day, Keyes totals up the eclectic purchases of Welland’s Doyle family: Andrew, Malachy, one, Crystal, and Molly, three. (Lauren O’Malley)

Put your worries behind you dancing at Nia

Penny Coles The Local

Didi Wilson has been dancing all her life, and now, having discovered Nia, she says she's never looked back.

The local Nia instructor loves the holistic approach of the music and movements, designed to help mind and body wellness — mentally, physically and emotionally.

She also loves the kind of community developed through Nia, of people who are providing love and encouraging wellness for each other, she says, and the ease with which it's practised — “you just follow the steps.”

It's a good workout, “but it touches other parts of our lives. I hear from so many people that when they dance, it changes them. They feel a lot better — they can come in feeling tired and stressed, but it's so uplifting, they leave feeling energized.”

“We need to connect, we need kindness and we need love. Nia provides that. Everyone walks out thinking ‘What did I just do? I feel great.’”

The technique is a mind-body physical conditioning program of non-impact aerobics, a health and fitness alternative,

meant to be softer and easier on the body. Nia combines martial arts, modern dance arts and yoga in a workout set to music.

Steffanie Bjorgan, a regular in Wilson's class, says that to her, Nia stands for “Now I Am.” When she steps onto the dance floor and into the routines, “everything else is left behind.”

“For me it's not about the physical fitness. That's definitely a benefit, but it's also such a great release of emotions, a time to be free and shut everything else out,” she says.

The music and the movements provide “such a mind-body connection, you can forget everything else.”

Bjorgan says sometimes she catches sight of herself in the mirror during a Nia class, “and I realize I'm smiling. It's just such a great sense of escape. And it's got a great spiritual vibe to it.”

Perhaps what is best about Nia classes is “we're our own little community. We're each living our own lives, but there's a connection between all of us,” she says.

“I also love the multi-generational nature of it. Age doesn't matter at all. Didi is in her later '70s, and she's a great friend and mentor, and a lot of fun.”

Bjorgan has been going twice a week for six or seven years, she says. “I plan my week around Nia. I try my hardest not to miss it. There have been so many things going on in my life during that time, but when I get to Nia, I let it all go. It's been great to be able to do that.”

To those who might be hesitant about giving it a try, Bjorgan says, “you don't have to be a dancer, and you don't need any level of physical fitness. I've danced my way through several injuries. Anybody can do this.”

Shari Hartwick has been a member of Nia for 10 years, and it's also helped her enormously, she says.

“For me it's been different things at different times of my life. I started when I'd been going through a difficult situation at work, a bullying situation. A friend took me to Nia, and I found the martial arts part of it really helped get rid of frustration and anger in a productive way. I could go home afterward and put it behind me.”

And yet there is a softness to the movements, encouraged by Wilson, who reminds them to be kind to their body, she says. “It's so much gentler than aerobics, and



At the community centre Monday evening, Steffanie Bjorgan, instructor Didi Wilson and Shari Hartwick “dance like nobody's watching.” (Penny Coles)

that's important as we get older.”

There is a meditative end to the class, she says, “which is a great cool-down, and really relaxing. It puts you in a Zen-like state.”

The feeling of belonging to a community of like-minded people is also important, she says, and she too tries to get to two classes a week.

“I row as well, but I work the rest of my life around Nia.”

Although in the winter, when people are away, only half a dozen people might show up to dance, at other times there could be as many as 30, she says.

“I was a very self-conscious dancer when I started, but it's changed so much for me. Now it doesn't matter. It really is dancing like nobody's watching.”

Wilson's community centre classes are Mondays at 6:30 p.m.

and Thursdays at 10 a.m.

Wilson and the Niagara Region Nia ladies are hosting their eighth annual Dance and Dine, with live music, and proceeds to go to Women's Place South Niagara.

Dress theme is red, black and white, Saturday, May 11, beginning at 5 p.m. at the Kinsmen Hall on King Street. Tickets are \$45. For tickets go to niagara-niadineanddance.eventbrite.ca.



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Southbrook owner giving away milkweed seeds

Passion for monarchs drives efforts to encourage their protection

Lauren O'Malley
The Local

While as recently as 2014 you would be forced to eradicate any of the monarch-friendly plants, you are now encouraged to grow milkweed to support the endangered insect.

Southbrook Vineyards is here to help.

The winery's passionate proprietor, Bill Redelmeier, is offering milkweed seeds to any and all, for free. He'll even mail them to you at no cost if you don't live in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

"My feeling about monarchs is that they are important, as the canaries in the coal mine of life," says the crop sciences expert. He brandishes a children's book proudly, and says, "My mother's physiotherapist [Carol Pasternak] wrote this wonderful book, *How to Raise Monarch Butterflies: A Step-by-Step Guide for Kids*. Once you're interested in learning about monarchs, you start to want to learn about other things too." He sees the showy insects as a gateway to saving the environment.

One of the problems for monarchs is the widespread use of neonicotinoids across North America, including Canada, where they remain legal, says Redelmeier. The insecticides have been banned in Europe. "When monarchs leave Mexico, they have thousands of miles of poison to get through before they get here." He says he would like to ask anyone in power why neonicotinoids are still legal in Canada.

Redelmeier explains the "milk" in milkweed is full of good alkaloids the monarch needs after a long migration. The sap is also extremely bitter, which birds find repulsive — thus protecting the monarch and its earlier forms (larva and caterpillar) from one of its main predators.

In Canada, monarchs only lay their eggs on milkweed, which is in decline due to the use of herbicides and the elimination of hedgerows, as well as its former categorization as a noxious plant.

"I grew up on a farm. If my father knew I was planting milkweed he'd

spin in his grave," says Redelmeier. He goes on to say we didn't have to plant it before, but now we need to replenish it.

At Southbrook there are several types of milkweed and other pollinator-friendly plants in beds, as well as growing wild in the vineyards and surrounding fields.


Support for other pollinators abounds, including solitary and honey bees: there are 12 to 15 hives on site, despite grapes being wind- or self-pollinating. "But they are part of our statement," says Redelmeier, pointing out the flock of hens that has recently been added to the biodynamic property, joining the sheep, and the newly-installed field of solar panels.

"On sunny days, our electricity meter actually rolls backwards," he says. "It's all about food webs, and food networks. We're all about the diversity idea."

Envelopes of milkweed seeds will be available at the winery and by mail as long as they last, and come with instructions for planting and growing it.




Bill Redelmeier will give away milkweed seeds for as long as they last. (Lauren O'Malley)



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Storage building burns

As fire trucks rushed to Colaneri Estate Winery on Concession 6 in Niagara-on-the-Lake Tuesday, a local radio station and social media were reporting the winery on fire. Heavy black smoke could be seen from a distance, but it was a storage building to the rear of the winery that was burning. The main building was not affected. NOTL firefighters battled the blaze for about two hours. (Pat Darte)



LOCAL WORSHIP



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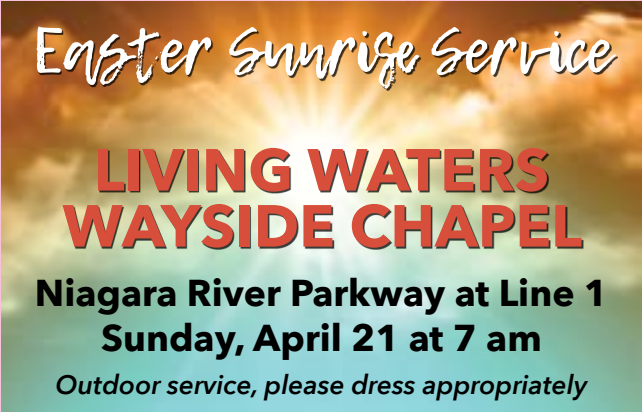
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Six week series every Wednesday until May 15th. 500 years after his death, Leonardo remains as elusive and as enigmatic as Mona Lisa's smile. Who was the 'real' Leonardo? Find out with art historian Penny-Lynn Cookson at RiverBrink Art Museum, 116 Queenston St., Queenston. <http://riverbrink.org> Cost: RiverBrink Members \$45 / Non-members \$50 Please register early! sdelazzer@riverbrink.org, or call the museum at 905-262-4510.

ART & FASHION LECTURE SERIES AT THE MUSEUM

Thursday, April 18 - 7:30 pm - 8:30 pm
Back to the Future-the Museum and Deaccessioning - David Aurandt. Tickets are \$10 for the general public or free for Niagara Historical Society Members. 43 Castlereagh Street. Please reserve at contact@nhsm.ca as seating is limited.

FAMOUS AND INFAMOUS

April 22, 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm
On the third Monday of the month the Niagara Historical Museum offers a free community day and the popular Famous & Infamous biography series open to all. The discussion will be about Hannah Peters Jarvis.

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April 23, 6:30 pm - 9:00 pm
Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre
14 Anderson Lane
Speaker: Paula Berketo, Paula was responsible for the development of the Oakes Garden renovation in Niagara Falls. She will talk about the garden, then later in the summer she will lead a tour of the garden when it is in full bloom.

Spiral design will include castle top

Continued from page 1

"The most dangerous thing on a playground is boredom. If you don't give them something to challenge themselves, they'll find a way to create challenge," says the Guelph-based designer.

Salisbury designed a unique layout based on a spiral, with a low grassy berm on one end, and a wood fibre mulch area on the other. On the berm is a small castle top, with large rocks spiralling out from it. "The berm is about one metre above ground level, and the castle walls are three quarters of a metre high. The stones are random, although I chose them myself — I found one that is six feet long which I plan to place vertically, or at least on a diagonal," he says.

The limestone is from the Queenston quarry, and the small castle will be built by Willowbank students. "When I learned about the Willowbank students, I said, 'You know what? This would be a really cool way to involve the community,'" says Salisbury. "I know they'll do an artisan job. They've been a really great bunch of people, and this will be a good portfolio piece for them. It's exciting to have them be part of it."

On the wood fibre side are wooden poles, two to two-and-a-half metres tall, punctuated with several levels of hand- and toe-holds, "created to be technically scaleable to a variety of physical abilities or thresholds for risk," says Salisbury. "We hope kids say to themselves, 'Next week I'm going to challenge myself to try to climb to the next level.' The climbing



Queenston residents wanted something unique and natural for their park, as befits their village. (Image supplied)

structure is designed to have a number of ways to use it, up to and including some really, really challenging things. The posts are designed so that it's close enough to make that step from one to another, but also difficult enough to make you wonder if you can make it."

Both Salisbury and Turcotte assure all users the park is "fully expandable to all levels of family use."

Safety has also been considered, with all elements having CSA approval. The grass around the rocks will grow through a rubber matting in a grid format that has an excellent impact rating, and will allow the grass to stay healthier longer, and need less mowing. The wood fibre mulch is a high safety fall surface, and is also wheelchair accessible, says Salisbury.

"The really interesting thing for me, is that this is the first time I've submitted a plan that I really liked, and I didn't expect them to go for something this unconventional, but they did," says the designer (who

also happens to be a Guelph city councillor), thrilled with the collaboration with the residents of Queenston, and with the Town.

"I want people to walk up to it and say, 'What is this?'," he says. "It's designed for open-ended, creative play. Inevitably kids come up with entirely different ways of using it." He describes the berm, when it's been seeded with tall grass and fescue, as "a furry mountain."

"We're all park age," Salisbury continues. "One thing I wanted to do, which might be the hardest thing of all, was to have something challenging for all ages to do. I'm going to give it a shot," he says of trying to climb to the top of the poles.

Turcotte says he looks forward to bringing his own family to the new park. "I take my kids to great playgrounds. A unique park like this, people will search it out," he says.

"It's our first natural playground," Turcotte continues. "The small size will give us a good gauge if the community decides to go natural in a new

or refurbished playground anywhere else in NOTL," he says, explaining the price points are similar, although the results and maintenance are quite different for each.

Both the Town employee and the playground designer were thrilled with the collaborative elements of the project. "I'm excited the community is behind us," says Turcotte. "It was a great process of working with the community throughout the design process. I'd like to thank the community for their feedback and engagement."

Salisbury echoes those sentiments: "I'm pretty grateful for the community to have that enthusiasm for something pretty different," he says. He goes on to express his gratitude to the Willowbank students who offered their own input. "They suggested design ideas, and I incorporated them. It's a very small park, but we packed a lot of stuff in there."

"If everything tracks as it should, we should be done by mid-May," says Turcotte.

Niagara Glen needs tidying

Lauren O'Malley
The Local

Spring cleaning doesn't just happen at home — nature could use a little help tidying up too.

The Niagara Glen, one of Niagara's favourite hiking spots, is hosting its second annual spring

cleanup on April 28.

"It's nice to see people take ownership of this beautiful natural heritage site we have in our own back yard," says Niagara Parks Commission manager of education and public programming Heather Gorman.

"It's a community partnership," Gorman says, explaining that many community groups have been invited, including Girl Guides, Boy Scouts, and various other clubs. Residents are also encouraged to come out and help. "It's a nice, casual day just to get people out," she says. "Show up at or around 10

a.m., and we'll provide garbage bags, recycling bags, and gloves," Gorman says. "Come back up with a bag of garbage, and we'll provide a lunch — hamburger, hot dog or veggie burger, a bag of chips and a pop."

Last year the event saw about 100 participants, says Gorman, all of whom collected "a truckload of garbage." Generally people picked up "water bottles, Gatorade bottles, wrappers — typical hiking stuff," she says.

Registration is capped at 200 for the sake of the small staff working the event, so it is

strongly recommended to visit eventbrite.com and register. "We're pretty impressed with the response we've gotten so far," says Gorman.

It's recommended people bring their own refillable water bottle, and use the available refill station. As Gorman says, "We ask that people leave only footsteps, and take only photos."

Dressing according to the weather and wearing appropriate footwear are also recommended.

The clean-up runs from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., and starts at 3050 Niagara River Pkwy.

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This was the haul from last spring's glen cleanup. (Photo supplied)

IT'S HOME IMPROVEMENT TIME!



Here's the dirt on soil

Submitted by
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Penner Home Hardware
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IT'S HOME IMPROVEMENT TIME!

Trees are a green gift that will grow for years to come



Submitted by
Mori Gardens

You could be the proud new caretaker of an evergreen sapling Mori Gardens is giving away to celebrate Earth Day this Saturday, April 20. Planting your sapling is a great way to give something back to the earth, and it's a gift we hope will grow with you for years to come.

Here's how to give your sapling its best shot:

1. Plant as soon as you can, or store it in a cool, dark location and sprinkle the roots just enough to keep them slightly damp. Don't soak the roots.
2. Evergreens can be

planted in early spring so you can get this little one in the ground right away. If you want more time to pick the perfect spot, grow your tree in a container and plant it after the first or second year.

3. This little critter is tiny right now, but it's going to get much bigger. The best spot to plant is far enough away (20 to 30 feet) from structures that might interfere with its mighty roots.

4. Saplings need a spot that's sunny, but not too hot. Roasting in the sun all day is bad for them.

5. Dig a hole about six inches wider than the root ball of your sapling, and three inches deeper.

6. Add mulch to the soil to drain excess water, and give the sapling a sprinkle of hen manure and bone meal every six weeks for nutrients so it will grow strong.

7. Keep the soil around your sapling moist, but not wet.

Planting a tree is a special way to honour the earth, give thanks, celebrate a special moment, or remember someone you love. Think about what planting this little sapling might mean to you.

Green plant gifts are always available at Mori Gardens to celebrate, commemorate and remember. Ask a garden consultant to assist you in finding the perfect green gift.

Is it time to get off the FENCE about all those outdoor projects?

Submitted by
**Andrea New of
NewScape Contracting**

Let's talk about fences.

You may not daydream about them like you would about a new boat or vacation, but a new fence can be a very worthwhile investment. We all know that house we drive by everyday in our neighbourhood that draws our eyes toward it. Is it the freshly painted door? Is it the new windows? Or maybe it's the brand new fence surrounding the house that captures our attention.

A newly-constructed fence can do absolute wonders to the look of any house on any street, but beyond just the aesthetics, a new fence can offer you many important functions. The primary reason we all have fences is for privacy. How friendly you are with your neighbours could drastically change the type of fencing you desire.

The traditional pressure-treated wood fence is the most common amongst home owners, as it provides both security and privacy. It is also one of the most cost-efficient choices. Many people



ple choose to let the wood naturally fade over time, however there are numerous treatments that can be applied to maintain that new look for years to come.

Other homes may suit more of a classic or modern look, in which case a beautiful ornamental iron fence would be the best option. These types of fences do not offer as much privacy, but they deliver a more sophisticated look to the property.

A newer trend in fencing is using vinyl material. As well as being super durable, it also gives you endless options for colour and size. The most common colour people choose is white, as it gives you such a bright, clean backdrop for your home.

Did you know that it's law to have a minimum five-foot fence with a spring-loaded gate surrounding your pool? The most popular types of fencing for pools would be either chain link, or ornamental iron. They both offer you the security you require, but also the ability to keep your eyes on what is happening in the pool.

Whatever kind of fence you're looking for, our team at NewScape Contracting can design and build it for you in a timely professional manner. When it comes to fences, you can trust Greg and his team to deliver exceptional quality. After all this is our specialty.

Contact us now to book your new fence in before the summer!

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IT'S HOME IMPROVEMENT TIME!

Wooden you like to know the proper way to prep your deck?

Submitted by
Creek Road Paints
Benjamin Moore

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of Creek Road Paints for all your deck and patio needs this season.

Featuring Arborcoat, our premium exterior stain, which has a complete collection of preparation products intended to enhance and preserve the enduring beauty of wood decks, siding, and furniture. From cleaning to restoring the natural colouring of your wood, to removing dead wood fibres, or even removing the stains of tannin rich woods such as cedar and redwood — try one of the preparation products (clean, restore, remove or brighten) — to ensure the long-lasting protection of your finish.

Timing: The best time to stain is when temperatures are moderate (between 10 and 32 degrees C), humidity is low to average, and no rain is in the forecast. After a rainfall, you should start your exterior project after three to four consecutive dry days. It is also important to complete your entire project within one week of surface preparation.

Arborcoat offers a wide range of opacities (varying degrees of transparency), different product types (waterborne and classic oil finishes), and a variety of different colours. With its mildew resistance and UV protec-

tion, Arborcoat stains not only enhance the beauty of the wood with colour, but provides outstanding hide with the solid and semi-solid stains.

When applying Arborcoat, it's important to ensure proper penetration and even drying results. By avoiding applying the stains in direct sunlight, you will eliminate the chance for improper penetration, and distribution of stain on your wood. Always stir the can frequently during the process to maintain the uniformity of colour, and never let the stain puddle on the deck.

Whether the wood is new or unfinished, worn and weathered, or even rich in tannins, there is a Benjamin Moore product to prep and finish any exterior project.

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Region adding to list of items to be recycled



This image on Niagara garbage trucks reminds us to use our grey and blue boxes, as well as our green bins.

Battery collection recognizes Earth Day

Put them out out on regular collection day in clear plastic

Lauren O'Malley
The Local

To coincide with Earth Week, Niagara Region waste management is collecting batteries curbside during the week of April 22 to 26.

Sherri Tait, acting manager of waste management services, says, "We do see people throwing their batteries in the garbage, thinking 'It's just one battery.' But they all contain toxic and hazardous materials, as well as materials that can be recovered and reused." When batteries land in municipal waste sites, their leached toxins can cause soil and water contamination.

Niagara uses a recovery operation in Port Colborne called Raw Materials Company. According to Andrew Paupst, sales manager at RMC, the recovered contents of batteries are used for a variety of purposes, and the process reclaims 100 per cent of each alkaline battery they receive.

Paupst says 100 per cent of the zinc, manganese and potassium is recovered and used as a premium micro-nutrient to grow corn. Also 100 per cent of the steel and nickel is recovered and sold back into the local market as a premium product in the production of new metals. The paper and plastic that make up eight to 10 per cent of the battery by weight is sent to an

energy-from-waste facility to create electricity.

Acceptable batteries include standard A, AA, AAA, C, D; 6V and 9V; button cells (watch batteries, toys, electronics, greeting cards, calculators); rechargeable battery packs: NiCad, NiMH, or Lithium Ion.

Unacceptable batteries include car batteries, and any leaking or damaged batteries — these can be dropped off at a household hazardous waste depot.

Because contact can ignite certain batteries, masking tape should be placed over both ends or sides of lithium, button cell and 9V batteries.

For curbside pickup on your regular collection day of that week, batteries must be in a sealed clear plastic bag, which should be placed next to your recycling bins, clearly visible to contractors collecting garbage.

Tait says curbside battery collection in Niagara started as a pilot program in 2012, and has grown since then.

"Last year we collected almost nine tons of batteries in the one week of curbside collection, in addition to anything that was taken to depots," she says. "We're trying to give people another convenient way to dispose of batteries."

Niagara has some progress to make when it comes to battery recycling. While some statistics claim the province collected as much as 50 per cent of the batteries sold in 2017, the region has seen only a 3.6 per cent uptake in curbside collection. Tait recognizes people are availing themselves of other battery collection services (in local grocery and hardware stores, for example), but would like to see an increase in homes taking advantage of the convenience of the curbside option.



Battery contents can be recycled for various uses. (Lauren O'Malley)

Lauren O'Malley
The Local

Niagara Region has just announced ziplock plastic bags have been added to the unusually long list of recyclables in our jurisdiction.

Because sorting is done using both optical and human resources, things like black plastic (from takeout containers among other things) can be recycled in Niagara.

In other regions, where optical sorters are the norm, black plastic can't be distinguished from the black conveyor belt on which it sits. But our trusted humans can separate and recycle that, as well as plastic lids, and now, ziplock bags.

Due to upcoming changes in legislation announced by the Province, recycling is shifting to increasingly become the responsibility of the producer. That likely means manufacturers of recyclable goods will need to increase their financial responsibility from the current 50 to 100 per cent of the cost of recycling, which may mean they'll be motivated to create fewer recyclables.

A discussion paper released by the provincial government states, "Currently, Ontario generates nearly a tonne of waste per person every year, and our overall diversion rate has stalled below 30 per cent over the last 15 years. Ontario needs to reduce the amount of waste we generate and divert more waste from landfill through proven methods like Ontario's curbside blue box program, existing and emerging municipal green bin programs and other waste recovery options. Existing and emerging technologies are increasingly allowing us to recover and recycle materials back into our economy rather than sending them to landfill. This is helping us to better protect our communities and keep our air, land and water clean and healthy."

This discussion paper is online, and is open for comments from residents until April 20. Visit <https://ero.ontario.ca/notice/013-4689>, or go to ero.ontario.ca and search "reducing litter and waste."

The good news is Niagara's diversion rate is 52 per cent, according to Sherri Tait, acting manager of waste management services for Niagara Region. The goal is "an achievable" 65 per cent.

As part of Earth Week, Niagara Recycling is offering tours of their plant in Niag-

ara Falls on Friday April 26, at 11:15 a.m. or 1:15 p.m. Perhaps seeing how household products are reused and diverted might help you take the extra step, Tait says. "We ask that people register through the Niagara Region Waste Info-Line at 905-356-4141 or 1-800-594-5542. Participants must be 10 years old or older, and must be able to climb a flight of stairs." She says tours are also offered to school groups and other organizations, and can be requested through the info line.

In the meantime, Tait clarifies what goes where. Regarding plastic bags and wrap, she says, "We accept stretchy outer wrap, packaging, any stretchy plastics, other than cling film (i.e. Saran Wrap). If it's not stretchy, it's not recyclable in Niagara."

She says they often see plastic bags that aren't bundled and are tossed in with blue bin items, which makes it all difficult to sort. It is requested that stretchy plastic bags be bundled into one bag and tied shut, and placed in the grey bin so they're not tangled up with other recyclables.

She also says Niagara is still accepting styrofoam, which many regions now refuse. Tait explains, "We just sort and ship to other markets in Canada and internationally. Those places then turn the recyclables into other things." Black plastic becomes shelving, barbecue wheels and garbage cans, for example.

"Step one is reduction," says Tait. "Think about packaging to begin with, before you buy. Use reusable cups and containers."

She says step two is to use all diversion programs. "The Region did audits in 2015 and 2016, and found that 50 per cent of garbage was actually organic waste [which can be diverted]. There's still a lot of room for improvement," she says. "An average of 13 per cent in the bags audited was recyclable," Tait says.

The largest room for growth is in the green bins, also known as organics, says Tait.

"People just can't seem to get over what we call the 'yuck factor.' We generally try to point out that you're still putting it in the garbage, just in a different container," she says. "If people are concerned about moisture build-up in the organics bin or bag, they can add tissues, paper towel, or even some newsprint to absorb it."

She points out all that waste is getting diverted from pre-

cious landfill space, and being turned into valuable compost. The compost is in turn sold to landscaping and agricultural businesses, and is also given away to the public during compost awareness weeks in the spring and fall. "We just ask residents to bring a donation for a food bank," says Tait.

"One of the misconceptions is that organic matter will break down in landfill anyway — but tests after two months show the matter is still intact," she says. "The Walker composting facility turns it into compost in two months. They've done work at landfills and have seen that four or five years later, the compostable matter is still intact."

A few products that people are constantly putting in the blue bin include propane tanks, which can explode, says Tait. She reminds people to take these to the nearest household hazardous waste depot.

Clarifying a few more misconceptions, Tait says multi-laminate bags — bags with several layers, such as pet food bags — are not currently recyclable, and belong in the garbage.

She says they also see a lot of furnace filters in blue bins, which can't be recycled because they're made of multiple materials. And of course, the ubiquitous takeout coffee cup: not recyclable. Tait explains these are another composite: cardboard lined with a plastic coating. These also belong in the garbage.

On the plus side, there are several things people don't think to recycle, such as empty aerosol cans, with their lids off. Tait cautions they must be empty, and taking the lid and even the nozzle off can indicate this. Also, plastic lids are generally recyclable, but should stay with the container with which they're associated — loose lids are too small to sort. Metal lids on glass jars, however, are not recyclable, and should be removed.

All lightbulbs are currently garbage, and if they're broken, they should be packaged in a sealed cardboard box so as not to hurt contractors, says Tait.

When in doubt, Tait suggests using the "handy dandy 'Where Does it Go?' function on the Region's website," which allows users to type in any item and determine where in the waste system it belongs.

Finally, Tait reminds people landfill sites have end-dates, which means the space is finite, and using it minimally is essential.



Linda Attoe, RP

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REAL ESTATE WILLS BUSINESS

Glasgow shipbuilder's career leads to seaway

But don't blame him when a bridge is up

Lauren O'Malley
The Local

The canal season is back, and if you haven't been "bridged" yet, you're likely to find yourself in a ship-cursing line-up sooner rather than later.

One of the last people you might be thinking about under those circumstances is Niagara-on-the-Lake resident David Craig, despite his job with the St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation.

In 2017, more than 38 million metric tons of cargo were carried by 2,270 vessels through the seaway — everything from steel to salt, petroleum to wheat. While we need the safe transportation of these goods, we don't like to wait for them to cruise the canal during our commute.

"The Welland Canal is a big chunk of the seaway," says the electrical designer and inspector. While he has no control over the schedules of the boats and bridges, he is key to the functionality of a service worthy of our awe, as well as our occasional profanity.

"I do the electrical drawings, so when a contractor comes on site they know where all of the electrical elements are," says Craig. "I also handle the integration between traffic lights and traffic gates," he says in his strong Scottish accent, full of burrs. "There are hydraulic pumps, which used to be rope and pulley systems — the seaway systems in Montreal still use the rope and pulley method."

"The seaway needs to make itself more attractive to ships, to be able to process as many as possible, because they're paid per ship," he explains. "One way in which they have done this is to provide hands-free mooring, beginning about four years ago. Instead of guys in the lock trying to tie off ropes and potentially injuring themselves while also taking up precious

time, vacuum pads come out and pull the ship into its berth. Three pads suck in and release the ship. We are one of the only places in the world to provide this hands-free system."

Craig says this means there are fewer people working on the locks, "But this coincided with retirements and redeployment. This was considered 'natural wastage,' with no jobs lost," he says, and further explains this project was not his responsibility, because he was too junior at the time, but was involved at arm's length.

Regarding the vagaries of the transportation system's economy, he says, "In the five years I've been working for the Seaway I've seen the finances go up and down because of the shift in what is being shipped. Coal, flour — there are ebbs and flows. If the crops in the prairies are poor, the number of ships carrying them goes down."

"We are also in competition with the CN [railway transportation], and some years we just can't compete. Some years are better than others. There is always pressure on the seaway to cut costs — for example the hands-free system. The bridges are all remote now, although we can still have people on-site."

Craig is a solid man whose currency is humour, having learned it as self-protection in the shipbuilding yards as a youth in Glasgow. With a soupçon of British comedian Ricky Gervais, Craig has a twinkle in his eye and finds the joke in everything. His career has taken several surprise turns.

"Shipbuilding was my first job," he recalls. "I built warships in Glasgow. Many of the world's major ships, including the QE2, were built there. I did my apprenticeship on those ships during the Falklands War. I worked on the control panels, which would launch weapons that could take or save someone's life." He pauses. "You just

didn't think about that."

Craig continues with his recollections. "What I miss is the ships' launch day. When we built these enormous ships — bigger than the ones you see in the canal — they were up on blocks. You could walk under them. It was quite a sight to see them go off the blocks and into the water for the first time. I don't think that's something you ever get tired of. Lady Diana — the Duchess of Cornwall — launched the HMS Cornwall, which I had worked on. She was standing just a couple of feet from me."

He remembers the tone of the docks. "Shipbuilding is rough — the language, the male energy — and an apprentice is everybody's victim. It taught you to be quick, and to always have a joke ready. I'm glad that was my grounding. But here in Canada, the way we learned to talk, to mock each other, to be a bit mean with the jokes, is not appropriate," he says, and describes having to consciously change the way he interacts with people.

"Every time I go back to Scotland I prepare for that dark humour bred from poverty and hardship," he says.

"We've been back a few times, for weddings and funerals. My mum's funeral was a great party. But I realized that every time you go to a funeral you get nearer and nearer to the front pews. At my mum's funeral I said to my aunt, 'I suppose the next one will be yours.' We laughed." And he laughs with the memory.

His career evolved away from the water for a time. "I went to the University of Scotland as a mature student, having previously been an electrician. I was a commercial interior designer, with an honours degree. I designed bars, restaurants, and office complexes," he says. "I had also trained as a locksmith before becoming an apprentice

electrician."

The intense stress of the work as a commercial designer nearly killed him — literally. "I had a heart attack at 40 from the stress of my job." This provoked a decision to make a major life change and move to Canada. "My electrical licence was transferable; the plan was to work for myself. I got my provincial licence, then found out you needed a master's licence. It didn't occur to me there would be such a thing. In the meantime I found work drafting, having had previous experience."

The Craigs moved to NOTL in September of 2006. "After the heart attack, we decided we could move anywhere in Europe, but realized there was too much bureaucracy, and potential language barriers. So we looked at the countries most English-speaking people consider: Australia, or Canada," he says. "We decided Australia was too far away, and Canada was just far enough away," he laughs. "My wife had family in Vancouver, and I had school friends in Toronto, so we decided to spend one week in each for research."

"We had the idea of having a B&B. We thought it would be great — we didn't realize how many there were already. We got in touch with a Scottish couple who recommended NOTL, so we booked a week here in May. By September of that year we had bought a house, found a job, and settled in."

Craig found himself in a series of interesting, but not dependable jobs. The economy was flagging. "I worked at Neptune Yachts in St. Catharines, where they designed multi-million-dollar yachts. In 2008, the value of the American dollar went up, and the higher prices drove the company to close."

Later, a friend from that company called him to say they had found a job at Can Ecosse Engineering, a business run by a Canadian and a Scot. "I worked there for three or four years, but the work was drying up. It was a family firm, and

those were tough times for them. I felt guilty taking wages from them," says Craig.

At this point the creative soul needed feeding, so he decided to try his own business — called Miniagara — making laser-cut detailed wooden models of local historical buildings. "I planned the business for a year before starting it," he says. He had hoped to find people who would be able to paint the models, but generally found the work wasn't up to his very high standards.

"I was working against the tide. The idea is still there," he says, eager to resurrect his passion for creating tactile pieces. (Craig says his dream job would be to create theatre sets, or "work for Disney, creating rides and sets, using unlimited imagination to create magic.")

At the same time he was managing an acreage with a dozen fruit trees and raised vegetable beds — another passion. "I was growing peppers and making hot sauces. I also grew a fig tree, and made chutneys," says the garden and kitchen creative. "I grew ghost peppers and dehydrated them and then ground them into a powder. I learned that if you stress peppers by letting the soil dry out and then watering it minimally, you can force the plant to create more capsaicin, making the peppers hotter."

While fig trees are relatively rare in Niagara, the eager green-thumber had to try. "A friend from work had a few fig trees, and gave me one. I had a 600-foot greenhouse and trained the fig tree along its walls. I'm going to be getting a cutting off that tree this spring," he says.

The gregarious Craig, who enjoys a wide social circle with his wife Loraine, says, "I was at a party speaking to a friend who worked for seaway. They said the company was looking for

a temporary electrical draftsman for a six-week contract. That was five-and-a-half years ago."

The settled Scot is very happy with his current employment. He praises the scrupulous safety standards and the community involvement of SLSMC, and points out they raise a lot of money for charities like the United Way of Niagara, matching donations made by their employees.

Craig finds his work with the seaway satisfying, interesting, and occasionally amusing. Regarding the van that was stuck on the raised Homer bridge last year, Craig says, "This bridge is quite peculiar: Typically the metal section is the part that moves. On this bridge the counterweights are underneath and invisible, and the tarmac also moves, which took the van's driver by surprise."

He tells of a later experience with the same driver. "While we were putting cameras in on the bridges, we climbed into the operations room. The van was the screensaver on one of the computers in the room. The van's driver took a photo of his van on the screensaver."

"The operations room is like air traffic control, tracking so many screens on all of the bridges. Because there are so many cameras, all emergency services can be given priority — that is one thing they will stop ship traffic for."

Like many professions, Craig's work can be a social liability. "People get frustrated about the bridges being up. Like when a doctor goes to a party and hears all about everyone's ailments, I hear about the bridges every time I go to a party. I get that in the neck all the time. I tell them I get stuck on bridges too — I just hope I'm not driving a seaway vehicle at the time, or I might get lynched," he says.



A picture from the very top of a fully raised Bridge 21 in Port Colborne on a beautiful day as one of the larger lakers passes directly underneath. (David Craig)



David Craig in front of the Homer bridge. (Lauren O'Malley)



"The gates in the winter look like a fantasy castle gate, like a Jacobean gate," says Craig [referring to an early phase of English Renaissance architecture and decoration]. (David Craig)

SCHOOLS

ROYAL OAK
COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Kiwanis Festival

Leila Ridesic
ROCS student

Royal Oak Community School recently participated in the Kiwanis Speech Arts Festival for the fourth year in a row. Each class had a poem to memorize, then performed it to an adjudicator. The day started with the kinders, performing When All The World's Asleep.

Then, the Grade 4/5 class followed with a performance of When Dinosaurs Ruled the

Earth, complete with actions. The 6/7/8s performed The House With Nobody In It, by Joyce Kilmer. Last but not least, Bubble was performed by Mrs. Dennis' Grade 2 and 3 students. The students all worked really hard to learn and practise their poems. After each presentation, the adjudicator gave us feedback to help us with our public speaking. In the end, all the groups did incredibly well, and look forward to performing next year.



Tennyson Powel, Skeilor Reese, Elwood Domaradzki, William Trapasso, Colby Martens, and Madeliene Bennett Friesen from the Early Years Class take to the stage at the Kiwanis Speech Arts Festival while the older students (right) watch their performance. (Photo supplied)

Integrated Studies

Joe Mangiacasale
Upper Years teacher

Engaging in authentic learning experiences helps students to see connections between subject areas. Recently, our Upper Years class worked through a combined science and social studies challenge. During their unit on structures and functions, students studied the purpose of certain structures and the interaction between structures and various forces. They also learned about forces that act upon those structures such as torsion, tension, compression, and shear, and they learned how certain structures are built to withstand such forces.

After a trip to one of Niagara-on-the-Lake's most famous structures, Fort

George, the students assessed the types of forces, both natural and human, that the fort was built to withstand.

Tying into our social studies unit on the British North America Act and New France, students were tasked with building a fort that would house and protect early explorers. The fort must meet specific criteria including the ability to withstand simulated tests of force such as an earthquake, wind, and be defensible against intruders.

Students are quickly seeing the importance of connecting the two subject areas, and the challenges early explorers were faced with when building their structures. We look forward to seeing how each fort will measure up against the simulated tests.



Grayson Tataryn and Holden Powell, both Grade 4, show off their Lego creation. (Photos supplied)



Ben Foster, Grade 7, Gabriel Santelli, Grade 3, and Isaac Trapasso, Grade 2 worked on a Lego project together.



After a visit to Fort George, Jack Wiwcharyk, Grade 7, and Tyler Cho, Grade 6, construct their own fort. (Photo supplied)

Lego Club launched

Grayson Tataryn
Grade 4

Royal Oak Community School has launched some new after-school clubs this spring.

One of the most popular is the Lego Club, which focuses on STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) projects which challenge the students to build with a purpose.

The first Lego Club challenge was to make a

structure with at least 20 pieces that would not break if dropped from four feet. Students learned that in order to pass the challenge, their structure needed to be packed together.

The second challenge was to make a structure that only had 20 pieces. The structure had to be able to slide down a zipline.

The hosts of Lego Club are Mr. Mangiacasale and Miss Koyle. Students in the club are really excited for their next challenge.

Easter camp

Royal Oak Community School is happy to announce we will be hosting a fun-filled, free camp on Easter Monday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., for any child aged four to 12, living in the Niagara-on-the-Lake area.

As a community school, we believe in finding ways to connect members of our community through learning and play, and a camp is a wonderful way to do that.

Pack a lunch and join our qualified teaching staff for a day of spring activities at our campus in NOTL. We're at 176 Wellington Street, at the back of the former hospital building.

Please RSVP by Friday at royaloakcommunityschool@gmail.com or call 905-328-9592.

Season brings memories of Easters past

**Jane Andres
Special to The Local**

It is an early April morning, 1973, and the sun's rays are hitting the top of the ridge in Kentish, Jamaica, where the lush green sugar cane is heavy with dew. The sunlight moves slowly, a cascade of gold and fiery orange on the vibrant red soil of the steeply terraced carrot fields.

The sounds of waking life can be heard following the waves of light rippling across the mountainside, where the little village of Ginger Ridge is nestled. The crowing of roosters wafts up through the dense fog that drifts over the valley far below, followed by a donkey braying and the occasional bellow of a cow.

A small cluster of children feel the warming rays of the sun as they gather friends along the rocky road to school. It's a long hike down, no time for dawdling. The air is filled with excited chatter. Easter is approaching and the school day is filled with activities in preparation.

A little blue bungalow is tucked into a stand of feathery bamboo, where the children's mother is clearing the breakfast dishes. Her husband Clifton is lingering at the table listening to the morning news crackling on the radio.

The year is shaping up to be memorable, although not in the way they had been hoping. Unemployment has now reached a record 25 per cent in many areas and the island is deep in recession. Sugarcane prices are plummeting due to oversupply on the world markets. The ongoing oil crisis has tripled the cost of fuel. Hotels remained empty as Americans and Brits cancel holiday plans. With inflation at almost 29 per cent, everyone is experiencing hardship.

He turns it off with a sigh and takes his tea outside, surveying with concern the meticulously-planted terraces. He's toiled extra long days, preparing the fields as best he can before his departure. His wife will be carrying the extra burden of his farm work for the next eight months, tending the coffee and cocoa as well as the freshly planted carrots and peppers.

Heavily subsidized American produce is flooding the local markets and driving prices down. Could they break even this year? How would she manage during hurricane season? With no phone line up in the mountains how would they communicate in an emergency? How would he send them money from Canada? So many questions.

It will be his first trip away, having signed on to the farm work program in Canada. Although full of trepidation about leaving his family, he is feeling hopeful.

Only a few weeks earlier his good friend Sonny moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake with his wife and four children.

The Canadian government had announced farmers who employed men through the Seasonal Agricultural Work Program could sponsor them and their families to become Canadian citizens.

Being away from families and loved ones for eight months was a real hardship, but especially challenging for families with children. He had heard stories from friends on the program becoming estranged from their children and it was heart-breaking to think he wouldn't be seeing his own children for eight months.

The families who had accepted the invitation were settling well into their life in Niagara. Maybe he and his wife would have the same opportunity as Sonny and his family.

Trip to Niagara begins

After a tearful farewell from his wife and a lingering hug, he put that life behind, gathered his suitcase and set off down the narrow path to where a friend waited with his taxi at the road. They headed off, carefully picking their way through the pot-holes on the steep decline. They slowed down at the school where they could hear his children's classes singing in preparation for the Easter program.

After they geared down at the intersection to Kitson Town Main Road, the driver reached over and cranked up the volume on the radio, a big grin on his face.

"Listen to these guys though — Peter Tosh, Bunny Wailer and Bob Marley. Gonna make it big some day," he said.

Stir It Up was the Wailers latest song to hit the radio waves — a fresh sound of hope for the new era that was dawning.

Sonny was one of the first men to be hired through the SAWP in NOTL, in the late 1960s. His employer Abe Epp found him to be a diligent, hard-working employee and in 1972 invited him and his family to move to Niagara-on-the-Lake permanently the following spring.

They arrived on a cold snowy day in March, and once they got some heat on in the old farmhouse they quickly set to unpacking and adjusting to life in their new home. When the weather warmed up weeks later, the four children walked into town on a weekly basis, loading up on books at the library in the old Courthouse basement on Queen Street and lugging them back. It didn't take long for the family to immerse themselves in the community, with fond memories of making many new friends while attending Virgil Public School and the little Fellowship Chapel on Concession 2.

After about 10 years on the farm Sonny moved on to a manufacturing job in Stoney Creek to ensure his children could receive post secondary education.

Years later when he retired and the children were established with families of their

own, he and his wife returned to winter in Jamaica. They purchased a three-bedroom home in Spanishtown, which soon became a social hub for visiting family and friends.

Andres travels to Jamaica

In February, 2008 my friend Jodie Godwin and I travelled for two weeks in Jamaica. It was my second trip and her first, giving us an opportunity to cross the island and meet the families of men who worked on the farms in our neighbourhood back home.

We especially enjoyed the warm hospitality of our good friends Sonny and Lynn in Spanishtown. We had come to know this very generous couple through our involvement at the Caribbean workers' church services in NOTL. They both enjoyed teaching us about Caribbean culture and sharing experiences about the early years of the farm work program.

Within minutes of our arrival, they quickly made Jodie and I feel at home. They dedicated the next day to taking us up to Ginger Ridge where they had both grown up.

It would normally take about 30 minutes to reach this mountain village. With Sonny at the wheel it stretched into more than an hour. He knew everyone in the area who worked in NOTL, so we would stop every five minutes to honk outside someone's home and make introductions. It was so wonderful to meet the families of the men who passed by our house back home. Some would make as many as a dozen trips a day delivering peaches from the orchards to the Epp's packing barn around the corner on Lakeshore Road.

Jodie and I were eager to learn about the history and local economy as we navigated the rugged mountain roads.

"It's not so bad going up," Sonny said. "It's going down that's so treacherous because of the loose stones on the road and the corners are so tight. If it's wet, man, you say your prayers and hope nobody's coming the other way."

Despite the fact I wasn't driving, my foot was continually jamming on the brakes; I was covering my eyes while he geared down through switchbacks and breakaways.

We finally reached the little hamlet of Ginger Ridge, stopping at a forlorn-looking building that dominated what once had been a bustling town square.

"This used to be so busy when we were growing up," Lynn explained.

"Everyone brought their coffee, cocoa and sugarcane here to be weighed and loaded up for market. It was also where we'd hold barbecues, a social place where we'd get news about what was going on. Now it sits. There's no money in coffee or cocoa for the next generation. No matter how hard you work, you can barely cover your cost for fertilizer." She shrugged her shoulders and introduced us to



Clifton, his grandson and Lynn had just picked fruit to show how sweet tree-ripened grapefruit tastes. (Jane Andres)



Jane Andres sits around her table with her guests, looking over maps. (Photo supplied)

a few seniors chatting on the porch of the darkened building. Their children left for England or the U.S. in the 1960s, when opportunity beckoned, and haven't been back since.

We walked down the red dirt road to visit their friend Clifton. It soon narrowed to a rocky footpath, with the mountain rising on the right and a densely forested slope to our left. Below we could see two gravesites — sepulchres they call them — barely visible in the tangled foliage.

Sonny walked ahead, and shouted out, laughing, "Four wheel drive coming."

He clambered aside to let a donkey loaded with lumber pass, sharing greetings with the owner.

Soon we arrived at a brilliant turquoise bungalow overlooking a spectacular view of the mountain range. Sonny shouted out greetings and a man I immediately recognized as Clifton came out carrying a young child. The previous year we had presented him with a certificate at a welcome concert to honour his many years of valuable contribution to our community and the tender fruit industry.

His little grandson was visiting from England — Sonny had met him for the first time only a few days prior. Clifton's face absolutely beamed with pride and delight.

Lynn took me to admire the view, pointing out the place on the adjacent ridge where she grew up.

Jodie and I were thrilled to spend time with Clifton and his family, soaking in the splendour of the distant mountains, inspired by the stories of these resilient and hard-working people. We bid farewell with a new sense of appreciation, and looked forward to welcoming him back to our neighbourhood in a few weeks.

It was the end of the day and we were overflowing with not only freshly-picked bananas and fruit but meaningful memories and conversations we have treasured for many years.

Two months later I invited Clifton and a few of his co-workers for Easter dinner and he was quick to take us up on our offer. We enjoyed a meal together on a brilliant Sunday afternoon, learning about the Easter traditions they grew up with back home. It was an education as the men described economic conditions that forced them to leave home for such extended periods of time. It was through this conversation we heard some wild stories about their families who struggled for survival without them during Hurricane Gilbert and the days following, when the men had no way to find out if their loved ones were among

the hundreds of casualties on the island.

I was stunned to learn this was the first time in 32 years Clifton had ever been invited into the home of a local resident, the first time he had been invited to share in Easter celebrations around a kitchen table.

At the close of the evening we packed up hearty portions of leftovers for our guests to enjoy after work the next day. I had much to think about that night after my husband drove them home.

By early May the neighbourhood was bursting with pink blossoms, the orchards carpeted in brilliant yellow dandelions. While out photographing a mockingbird, I noticed Clifton and his crew having lunch in their work van at the side of the road. We enjoyed a brief conversation, catching up on news from his family members we had met on our trip a few months prior. They asked me to take a picture they could show their families of the orchards in bloom.

It made me think back to only a few years earlier when I would have been reluctant to even walk by a van with people inside, simply eating lunch.

I think I have a long way to go yet, to fully understand how these barriers evolved, and how we as a community can journey alongside to build bridges instead.

Students learn art of restoration



Evan Leitch demonstrates stone carving, using Queenston limestone, at Sunday's open house at Willowbank's school of restoration arts. Below, Tayna Dare's specialty is designing and creating stained glass — her completed project on display took her eight weeks to craft. *(Fred Mercnik)*



Polar Bear Walk



More than 50 people showed up for a Polar Bear Walk at Niagara College, which raised about \$3,000, exceeding the goal. The walk began at the college greenhouse, headed to Woodend Conservation Area and finished back at the greenhouse. Helen Toner (below) and Zachary Moore showed off a corn snake, one of the endangered species that was on display at the college's BioBlitz event. *(Fred Mercnik)*



Great day for golf



Niagara residents Sharron and Bernard Marlow enjoy a game at the NOTL Golf Club Saturday — the oldest golf club in Canada, and possibly the course with the best view. *(Fred Mercnik)*



Trevor Bodogh is coming down from the high of a circus stunt performer, and wondering what's next. (Photo supplied)

Cirque stunt cyclist performs in Saudi Arabia

Niagara native has choices to make about what comes next

Penny Coles
The Local

Trevor Bodogh is a man with so much passion for life, it's hard for him to decide which direction to take.

And he's a man with many choices, having just finished a two-week event with 18 shows, 70 minutes long, under a big tent with Cirque Eloise, a Montreal production company that does large-scale circus shows.

This series of performances, called Skyline, was part of a festival held to increase tourism in Dammam, the capital of the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia.

With Niagara as his home base, Bodogh is considered one of just two or three mountain bike circus and stunt performers in North America still active and with the level of skill to qualify for such shows. That well-earned distinction comes from a tour of 250 performances he wrapped up about a year and a half ago with Volte, a Cirque de Soleil production, which led to some short-term opportunities since, he said.

This was his third stint with Cirque Eloise — he did some shows in Miami, spent Christmas and New Year's Eve on stage in Tignes, France, and just finished the performances in Saudi Arabia.

His skill is as a trial rider, executing breath-taking stunts on a specially-designed bike, travelling across various obstacles while balancing on his bike pedals.

When the call came for the Saudi show, he says, he had to decide quickly whether he was in or out. He had three days to prepare his bikes, pack a suitcase, drive to Montreal, and begin an 11-day rehearsal program to learn the music, timing and dance choreography with the team at a modified industrial space in East Montreal.

Every show he's done is different — in choreography, pacing and makeup, which takes time to apply.

"That's the nature of these special events — there is a lot of work that goes into making them happen," a lot of expenses and a huge organizational effort, especially when they're so far away. This one in particular was a "landmark event" for that area of Saudi Arabia, with the unusual circumstance of men and women sitting together with their kids, to enjoy the show as a family, he said.

All costs for performers are picked up by the production company; all hotels, meals and transportation provided — perks that are provided "in exchange for our passion, energy, risking our lives, and our professionalism," he said.

The route to his Volte performances was a little different — it began with a meeting in Montreal and a tour of the Cirque de Soleil training facility in 2012, followed by two years of no response. Then in 2014 he was invited to an extreme sports casting call in Las Vegas, which he attended — with some help

from family — that included a one-minute, "show us what you've got" audition, and was told he'd be considered "for future opportunities."

Again, no word for another two years. In 2016, he received an email from his original Montreal contact, asking him to call, saying he was wanted as a trial artist, but again, no definite arrangements were made.

When he hadn't heard anything by New Year's 2017, he made a resolution to "get a real job," but a few days later was asked for some one-minute videos to show his athleticism and ability to learn choreography.

He set a camera up in a room at the Niagara-on-the-Lake community centre for that — to judge his athleticism, artistry, expression and energy. After sending off the tapes, he waited another six months, and finally heard the news he was waiting for.

"My whole life shifted," he says, as he headed for training at the Cirque de Soleil headquarters for what turned out to be "a huge production, with amazing technology which required 61 transport trucks to haul the infrastructure around. The size of the production was mind-boggling."

NOTL residents who walk through Queen's Royal Park might have seen Bodogh — he's the son of Louise Howe, from Niagara-on-the-Lake, and Gerald Bodogh of St. Catharines, who died in 2008 — training on the rocks along the beach. That was about eight years ago, when he was trying even then

to decide whether it was time to get a 'real job,' he says, while not wanting to give up on somehow turning his passion for riding into a career.

One of his pivotal moments occurred on that stretch of beach, when a woman walking by stopped to ask him what he was doing. After a brief chat, as she walked away, she told him she expected to see him on a big stage one day.

About a year later, Bodogh, with no direction and not a cent to his name, but still having a passion for riding, was again training on the beach as the same woman wandered along. He took her up on an invitation for tea and a chat.

As he was leaving, he says, she handed him an envelope, which he discovered contained \$3,000 — a gift to help him continue working toward his goal. He went to knock on her door a short time later to thank her again, he says, and found instead an empty house and a for-sale sign on the lawn.

It was also around that time he was asked to perform locally — a modest beginning to his career as a performer — at the Virgil Stampede, thrilling youngsters with his ability on a bike.

He has some other recollections of events that helped him get to where he is — one is peeling shrimp for his uncle one summer, earning enough for his first mountain bike, which he bought from Liberty! Bicycles in St. Catharines.

As a young kid, he says, he used to hang out at the bike store, bothering the staff with all kinds of questions about bikes and riding. When Volte came to

Toronto, the staff rented a party limousine and came to watch him — a pretty rare moment for the young guy who loved to hang out at a bike store. "It was so awesome to see them there."

He's currently staying with his "brother," a Cirque friend he met while training in Montreal, with whom he has performed and developed a close friendship, and whose family became his second family. They are in Miskolc, Hungary, a picturesque town about two hours east of Budapest, with beautiful sunsets and "a real Eastern European, country vibe" to it, where he expects to stay about another two weeks before returning home to Niagara. In the meantime, he's giving himself some time to unwind and try to figure out, not for the first time, what he's going to do with the rest of his life.

"It's a question I keep asking myself," he says. "It's been the question for the last four years: what's next? What's plan B? What does this evolve into?"

But at the same time he's working out his plan B, he is also waiting for the next email, the one that will offer him another opportunity to perform. He thinks it could come from Cirque Eloise in a few weeks, for two more weeks of shows in Kuwait — a trip worth making, he says, with similar conditions and the same team "to finish this journey."

The entertainment industry is volatile, and looking ahead, waiting for the next contract to come along while maintaining physical fitness to be ready when it comes can be tiring, and it makes getting into something more stable an attractive solution.

He has a diploma in business from Sheridan College, but if he plans to ever work a nine-to-five desk job, it isn't any time soon.

He's looking at sharing his mountain bike expertise with "a wider population," helping other cyclists to develop what they need to raise their skill levels and performing opportunities to the next level.

He is also "crazy about squash," a sport he learned from his father. He became a top junior player at the age of 15, and plans to become certified so he can coach.

Although he knows he has a great future and lots of options for rewarding work, he also knows he will miss the thrill of performing that nobody, other than another performer, can understand.

"It's such a high, that circus life. You're completely taken care of. There'll be no more makeup, no more high-energy performances — the lifestyle is like the rock and roll of circus people, where you're all in. People in the circus call people outside the circus world muggles — they can't understand how high your energy is, how much like a dream it is, what a special journey you're on," says Bodogh.

"I feel like I didn't get to ride the wave long enough. I got a teaser, a taste of what it's like. Now I'm going to concentrate on helping other artists to get to that point. It's a thrill like no other. The hidden gem is being able to use my experience and share the skills I've learned with the bigger mountain bike community, and help some of them to know the magic of being on stage."

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SUDOKU PUZZLE

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PUZZLE ANSWERS

64 Vin, 66 Cue.
59 Tabs, 61 E min, 62 Sect.
54 A-one, 56 Dodo, 57 Vera.
50 Solace, 52 Tines, 53 Helps.
41 Dawn, 44 Nor, 48 Behest.
36 Roosevelt, 37 Nora, 38 Snow.
32 Spare tire, 34 Leda.
26 Ops, 27 Lieu, 29 Lama.
20 Hillbilly, 23 Rore, 25 Icy.
12 Ties, 14 Sab, 15 Leon.
9 Reluctant, 10 Plane, 11 Elvis.
6 Sew, 7 Canada, 8 A B C.
3 Straddles, 4 Censor, 5 Tag.
Down: 1 Chan, 2 Bore.
69 Assent, 70 Sec, 71 TNT.
67 Reprise, 68 Bucolic.
63 Enliven, 65 Academe.
57 Viet, 58 Hoyt, 60 Loves.
51 Saw, 52 The real, 55 Node.
46 Toto, 47 Rob, 49 Laws.
42 Noon, 43 Susan, 45 Aida.
35 Yarns, 39 Peep, 40 Embed.
28 Roll, 30 Act, 31 Oils, 33 Tall.
22 Dior, 24 Indices, 26 Old.
18 Nears, 19 Whoa, 21 Unis.
16 Arrange, 17 Enclave.
13 Hot seat, 15 Labelle.
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ACROSS

- 1 Truckers' radio sets
4 Some coins (Abbr.)
7 Chew out
13 Difficult position
15 Singer Patti ---
16 Place in order
17 Enclosed territory
18 Approaches
19 Stop!
21 French part of U S?
22 Christian ---, couturier
24 Stock market measures
26 Advanced in years
28 Turn over
30 Deed
31 Medium for Old Masters
33 Lofty
35 Tales
39 Chirrup
40 Implant
42 High time
43 A lazy one just goes round and round
45 Verdi's Ethiopian princess
46 Dorothy's dog
47 Fleece
49 Statutes
51 Adage

DOWN

- 52 Part of concluding question in "To Tell the Truth"
55 Network junction
57 --- Cong
58 "Della and the Dealer" singer --- Axton
60 Adores
63 Energize
65 The world of scholars
67 Sinatra's record label
68 Arcadian
69 Concur
70 Perceive
71 Explosive used as a measure for others
1 Martial arts actor Jackie ---
2 Drill
3 Spans
4 Expurgator
5 Label
6 Mulligan, for example
7 Northern neighbor
8 Disney TV network
9 Unwilling
10 Shave
11 Tupelo "King"
12 Course launch pads?

- 14 Hindu dress
15 "Trinity" author --- Uris
20 Bumpkin
23 Repetitive practice
25 Very cold
26 Oh dear!
27 Place
29 Tibetan priest
32 Middle-age spread
34 Seduced by a swan
36 He started the Teddy Bear story
37 --- bene: pay attention
38 Coke
41 "Delta ---", Tanya Tucker hit
44 And not
48 Bidding
50 Comfort
52 Prongs
53 Facilitates
54 Top-of-the-line
56 Extinct Mauritian native
57 N Y C fashionista --- Wang
59 Checks
61 The "New World" symphony was written in this (Abbr.)
62 Religious faction
64 French wine
66 Signal

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Sailing season begins



Ron Critchley was introduced as the NOTL Sailing Club commodore at the recent Commodore's Ball held at the club. With him is his wife Debbie. The event is a celebration of the new commodore and new board coming in, and is also an opportunity to thank the out-going board. Wendy Edwards was introduced as this season's cruising director, and some items that need doing were discussed, including repairing some docks and possibly replacing others. (Photo supplied by Brian Schmidt)



The racing season has started at the NOTL Sailing Club, with opening day Sunday, April 7. Luckily there were few icebergs on the water. It was a cool day with moderate winds, and as usual, the NOTLSC was the first on the lake to begin sailing. The Furline Series, which begins in April, is usually the coldest and wettest, "but gives lots of bragging rights," says club member Donna Genge. Each month has a new series, ending in October. (Photo supplied by Donna Genge)

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