2:15 gathering honours Indigenous children
Small group pays respect to all children buried at residential schools

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

A group of just under 30 people came together in Simcoe Park Sunday at 2:15 p.m. to share two minutes and 15 seconds of silence, recognizing the 215 Indigenous children whose bodies were discovered buried at the site of the Kamloops Indian Residential School in British Columbia.

Organizer Cosimo Chiavetti, a local resident, put the word out on the Facebook group NOTL 4 All on Friday.

"I'm not a parent, and cannot imagine the pain of losing a child," Chiavetti told The Local. "In this case, the parent lost the child twice, once to the school and once in death. The purpose of this gathering is to shed light on that pain."

Just before 2:15 p.m., Chiavetti and a group of friends, all wearing orange shirts, approached Simcoe Park where a small gathering had begun. There was very little communication other than a signal that the specified time was approaching. Maintaining physical distance, the participants bowed their heads in quiet reflection, considering the plight of the young children and the horrors they must have faced.

Fred Ouimette of Niagara Falls was one of the participants.

"I happen to be First Nations," said Ouimette. "I think like everybody, we've all been touched by what we've learned. Canada has a history. We know that this existed. But having the 215 confirmed dead is something that wakes us all up and makes us want to do better."

Ouimette wasn't surprised by the discovery of the bodies. He is certain that further investigation will uncover more secrets behind the country's treatment of Indigenous children through the residential school system, which removed them from their families and into the church-run institutions.

Growing up in Northern Ontario, Ouimette recalled attending school with classmates who revealed many years later that they had spent time in residential schools. He remembered being told at...
Mustafa Hirji, the region’s medical officer of health, would like to see.

A little more than 40 per cent of those in two age groups, 12 to 17 and the 18 to 29 age group, have been vaccinated or made appointments, he says.

When eligibility for those age groups first became available, there was a good uptake of those making appointments, but that number has plateaued.

In the meantime, those in the older age groups who can now book their second appointments are doing so, and while that is good to see, Hirji says he is concerned about an apparent hesitancy among younger folks, who are now in the age groups with the most infections.

He says he doesn’t know what is causing the hesitancy for their first dose — possibly they become impatient with the booking system, or because they have to wait a couple of weeks for their appointment.

“The lack of uptake might also be due to hesitancy among parents of the 12 to 17 age group, and with those 18 up to 40, because of the busy lives of those who need to get to work and make a living, Hirji suggested.

Public health has tried to offer lots of availability, he says, including youth and family-oriented clinics, ”and we didn’t get much uptake on them.”

Hirji continues to stress his work about the B1617 variant, now referred to, as dictated by the World Health Organization, as the Delta variant.

He believes it may be responsible for new cases in Ontario and Niagara, although Ontario labs are not confirming numbers for that particular variant. Reporting is lagging behind both due to screening capacity, and the lengthy time it takes to do the sequencing, explained Hirji, so at the moment, the two cases known to be in Niagara date back to March and April.

He is afraid there are many more than that, and that the Delta variant is known to be about 50 per cent more contagious than other variants, causing more severe illness that is more likely to end in hospital and intensive care unit admissions.

In another few weeks, the region will begin looking at data to determine where vaccination hesitancy is taking place.

He hopes that will shed some light on what is motivating that hesitancy, and how to overcome it.

He compared the initiative to the private sector which uses similar data to sell products to people, he says. “We’re going to be using that to try to understand how to influence people, and to sell them on the importance of getting vaccinated.”

Hirji had some good news about cases in the province and in Niagara, with below what they rose to between the second and third wave.

The province and region are seeing fewer new daily cases, reproductive rate has fallen below 1, and hospital and intensive care unit admissions are falling steadily.

But as the province begins to reopen, the Delta variant is “the wild card” that could throw provincial modelling out of whack, he says, fearing the variant will not keep the reproductive rate below 1, and cause some significant risk, including the ability to keep up contact tracing.

Hirji’s message this week is also to those who are experiencing mild symptoms to get tested.

The number of tests being carried out by public health has fallen significantly, he says, and that will become more of a problem during reopening, especially if numbers rise due to the variant, as he fears.

Contact tracing then becomes especially important, he says. “If we can’t do that if people aren’t being tested.”

Hirji is basing some of his concerns on what is occurring in the U.K., which Ontario has often mirrored in the past.

The U.K. came out of a third wave safely, but now is dealing with an increase due to Delta variant cases, for which it has a better screening process. It is seeing more cases, especially among young people.

It is looking at the possibility of a fourth wave, and although there were further steps to reopening planned in the U.K., for the coming weeks, they are not likely to go forward, says Hirji.

There will be a family vaccination clinic at the Niagara-on-the-Lake community centre June 23.

For more information about eligibility and how to book, visit https://www.niagararegion.ca/health/covid-19/vaccination-appointment-booking.aspx or call the provincial booking system at 1-833-943-9900.
Mourning deaths of Indigenous children

There are effects that are still being felt today. There are parts of Indigenous people’s culture and traditions that are lost. There are children who never came home, and there is land that has never been returned. Residential schools and all of the assimilation that was forced upon Indigenous people is a shameful section of Canadian history. But we mustn’t ignore it because it hurts. We must move forward with this knowledge, and right the wrongs of the past, so that we do not repeat them in the future.

We mourn the death of all the Indigenous boys and girls who have been omitted from our story until now. We are here for the survivors of residential schools and the families who never got to see their children again.

We need to make sure that we never forget.

The tragic discovery of the 215 Indigenous children found buried on Kamloops Indian Residential School grounds sparked conversations to inspire real change, and to help our Canadian family heal together.

I say these things in the name of the Canada we want to build. One that is a mosaic of unique people from different backgrounds. One that learns from her mistakes, and a Canada that lifts each other up.

Michealah Irvi
on behalf of the Lord Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council

Matoe Grussoo and Julia King, members of the Lord Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council, and council mentor Amy Casey, were on hand for a flag-lowering at the town hall Saturday to remember the Indigenous children buried on the property of a residential school. The flag was to be raised Wednesday, with a mailing from LMVAC member Michealah Irvi. Across the country, shoes have become symbols for the 215 Indigenous children found at the former grounds of the Kamloops Indian Residential School on Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation grounds, near Kamloops, B.C. (Town photo)

Veronica Puskas (left), an Inuk originally from Rankin Inlet, spoke to The Local Sunday about her horror of the discovery of the buried bodies of 215 Indigenous children at a residential school in B.C. Bruce Howard (right) also attended the gathering to remember the children, and spoke of his shock and dismay on learning of the graves. (Mike Balsom)

‘Mind-boggling’ that people could be so evil

Continued from page 1

the time that these children had gone to live with relatives, and had no idea that the institutions even existed.

“I see the opportunity to have stuff come out of the darkness and into the light is necessary to move forward for all of us,” Ouimet says. “Outcomes feel the Canadian government and the Roman Catholic Church share in the responsibility for the deaths of the young members of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation. ‘I think there’s equal share to go around,’ Ouimet says. ‘Outcomes accountability is one thing that helps move forward. I don’t pro- claim to know the history, but I do know that in order for there to be reconciliation, whatever that means to people, we have to face what happened.”

Having a chance to share their grief with others was important to Ouimet and other mourners in the park Sunday.

On a personal healing journey this week,” Ouimet explains. “There’s been a lot of emotions. I’ve been having moments that are very challenging. Meeting strangers here who are experiencing the same thing, that’s an important thing to do, that collective moment of recognition.”

Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Bruce Howard ex- pressed shock and dismay at the discovery of the mass graveyard in Kamloops.

“We’re capable of great love, and we’re capable of great horrors like this,” Howard told The Local. “It’s just carried on through our history. Hopefully we’ll evolve at some point, but it’s too near in our past. We keep thinking this is something, many, many years away, but this is something in our recent history as well. That’s the shocking part, I think, that it’s in our lifetime. We tend to think these things don’t happen in our backyard.”

The Kamloops Indian Residential School operated from 1890 to 1969. At that time, the federal government took over its operation from the Catholic Church, and continued to run it as a day school, until it closed for good in 1978.

Tk’emlúps te Secwépemc Chief Cadmus Delene- rme, of the Cowessesse First Nation in Saskatchewan, has said his community is planning to explore the grounds of the Marieville Indian Residential School, which operated from 1899 to 1997.

Veronica Puskas, an Inuk originally from Rankin Inlet, has lived in NOTL for about 10 years. She joined in the vigil to honour her First Nations cousins. While speaking to The Local about the horror of the discovery, emotion brought tears to her eyes.

The sheer number, and the age, as young as three years old,” she laments. “It’s mind-boggling, especially for those who were in au- thority to have kept it qui- et. It blows my mind that people could be so evil.”

The history books need to be rewritten,” she continues. “I want the Pope to apologize. And the Canadian government. I don’t want any more lip service. I want the people to be edu- cated on the history of the residential schools, and the treaties that were made, and how they’ve been bro- ken time after time. We’re just fighting for our surviv- al.”

Chiovitti felt heartened by the turnout Sunday, and plans to organize another gathering in the near fu- ture to honour and reflect on the lives lost. He is hop- ing to consult with Niagara Regional Native Centre be- fore moving forward with those plans.

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Chamber distributing rapid tests to local businesses

Monique Landry of the Old Winery Restaurant watches a video of rapid testing with Nicole Cripps of the NOTL Chamber of Commerce, before picking up kits for restaurant employees. (Photos by Mike Balsom)

Business owner Jordon Williams, with NOTL Chamber president Eduardo Lafforgue, town CAO Mamie Cluckie and Lord Mayor Betty Disero, were at the chamber office Tuesday, when rapid testing kits were being picked up to be used by local businesses.

The kits make good business sense, says Williams. “I see them as an opportunity to be a good corporate citizen, and also to provide peace of mind for everyone involved.”

He could be asymptomatic and unknowingly have COVID-19, and this test would prevent him from spreading it to others.

“We have so much economic fragility right now. I want to do whatever it takes to keep my employees and the community at large safe, so that we can have a faster recovery. My employees are very receptive to the idea. It’s an easy way to keep everyone safe,” he says.

Drive-in dining

Jennifer Colicchia, and Jason, Dani and Ben Van Bghel-Wood enjoy Ruffino’s Pasta Bar and Grill Car Hop in the restaurant’s Mary Street parking lot. They were celebrating Dani’s birthday. You don’t need a picnic table in a truck to order out-door dining, just a vehicle with a win-dow, where 50s-style drive-in dining will be offered. Serving them was Rachel Dickinson (Penny Coles)

Monique Landry of the Old Winery Restaurant.

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The program was organized and tests supplied free of charge thanks to the federal and provincial governments, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the Ontario Chamber through its Chambers Network, says Lafforgue, and is expected to continue for about two months.

When the idea was first hatched to provide these tests to small and medium-sized businesses, the local chamber was one of 28 involved to help work through the process. More have come on board, and others will join the effort in the coming weeks.

Changes have been made since the beginning of the discussions, says Lafforgue, who has been working to iron out any issues that have arisen, and more changes could be made in the future, but the NOTL Chamber began handing out boxes of tests Tuesday based on the current regulations.

Each business participating must appoint one person to pick up the tests. That person will be shown a video explaining how to administer it, says Lafforgue, and will also be responsible for reporting matters.

The tests are being provided through the StaySafe rapid antigen workplace screening portal.

More than 760,000 rapid test kits have already been shipped to the 28 chambers that were the first to participate.

The StaySafe COVID-19 program has a portal for learning about and ordering the tests, through chambers of commerce, but businesses do not have to be chamber members to participate.

The NOTL chamber has put aside two days, Tuesdays and Thursdays, for 15-minute appointments to pick up the tests and view the instruction video, says Lafforgue.

Once the tests are ordered through the StaySafe portal, there is a schedule showing openings for appointments that can be booked online.

With files from Mike Balsom
Greg Sykes is ranked in the top three realtors out of nearly 1,700 agents in the Niagara Real Estate Board, and has been selling and investing in real estate for nearly 15 years in Niagara.

Once a professional musician and contemporary Christian music songwriter, Greg is now a full-time realtor who leads a team of six agents, called The Sykes Team, at Re/Max Niagara. They are a powerhouse bunch, who have already sold more than 100 homes in Niagara in 2021 alone.

But the most exciting part of this story is that Greg and his family now reside in Old Town, Niagara-on-the-Lake. Just a couple of blocks from the water, Greg’s new home caught his attention last January, while he was looking at the morning’s latest listings, just moments after the house was listed for sale. He raced to the home in his pyjamas and made an offer from the kitchen, he says.

Greg’s brother, Jeff Sykes, and his family also live in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and Jeff owns and leads one of Niagara’s premier landscape design and construction companies, Sykes Landscaping.

Greg and his forever love are now completely renovating their new home near Gage and Butler Streets, and design plans are underway for a major overhaul of the already beautiful treed backyard, which will of course be handled by none other than Sykes Landscaping.

Greg and Jeff were born and raised in Windsor, Ont., and moved to Niagara almost 20 years ago to set up shop for themselves in the beautiful Niagara Region.

He was living in Virgil when his two children were born, and they spent their early years in Virgil. After a time living in St. Catharines, he’s happy to be back in town.

“Life can be so fast-paced, but in Niagara-on-the-Lake, there is just the most beautiful tone of serenity and appreciation for life. Getting out for walks, chatting with the neighbours and enjoying the most beautiful town in Canada is a privilege that I will never take for granted, and I’m grateful to be able to call Niagara-on-the-Lake home,” Sykes says he’s excited to announce that plans are also in the works for a real estate office in town, with those details to be rolled out in the coming months.

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He’s also still having fun with his music, and has even found a way to use his creativity and love of music in his real estate business, writing songs to accompany his listings on social media to help his clients market their properties to a broader audience.

Life seems to have come full circle, says Sykes, who is overwhelmed at his good fortune, able to live and work at a job he loves, close to his brother and family, in a town anyone would feel proud to call home. “It feels so good to be back.”
'Normal’ is simply no longer good enough

So much news this week, and unfortunately more heartbreak for many who are already burned out by bad news, fighting to stay positive in a challenging environment. Time off, the declining number of daily cases in Ontario and Niagara, and all the accompanying statistics — especially the decreasing number of admissions to hospitals and intensive care units — as a result of that, a relief. But then, we’re reminded of the Delta variant, and what could come of it.

There is a sense we’re being too lax. Photos show people outdoors, having fun, enjoying the fresh air, getting exercise.

Some of the medical experts are looking at photos of these activities in the GTA, much more crowded than in NOTL, and saying in outdoor situations, the risks are low. The weather is great, we’re getting outdoors where it’s safer, as long as households stay within pods and keep their distance or wear a mask. But we’re at a stage where we’re inclined to believe if it looks like people are having fun, there is something they’re doing wrong, and that’s wrong.

Although the numbers of visitors has increased with the warm weather, the tourist area look-terribly crowded. The towns’ new parks bylaw is doing its job, with visitors enjoying their barbecues and tents at Niagara Parks property along the Niagara River Parkway, where they can spread out. It’s good to know they are able to find a comfortable spot to enjoy their outings, without being shooed away.

We’re told about an increased concern over the Delta variant, which we have to watch closely. But with more and more people being vaccinated, many with their second dose, we look forward to a gradual reopening we will hopefully be able to navigate safely.

And we’re told there are lots of vaccines coming to Canada, to Ontario and hopefully in time measures to Niagara to continue to increase the percentage of people vaccinated with first and second doses at a good pace throughout the coming reopening.

That’s the good news that we’re all for, as we see a gradual return to normalcy.

And yet, as we look at us, it’s hard to understand what normal means anymore in this country. Our grasp of what we thought it meant is being snatched from us.

You’re being forced to face the fact that our good life, our great country, is showing disturbing sides that are unacceptable. Bigotry, racism, hate. Unacceptable.

And inaction, completely totally unacceptable.

In addition to calls for the Catholic Church to apologize — a move that seems so obvious and simple, yet early this week was so far not forthcoming, but hopefully may have changed by now — there are also calls for the government to move forward on action called for by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, including providing funding for investigating into the deaths and disappearances of children at other residential schools, and further, that the government should ensure all Indigenous children should have access to health care and all support and services our country offers to others.

These are calls for action that cannot be ignored. While we mourn the deaths of young Indigenous children, taken from their parents by the Catholic Church, with permission from the leaders of the day, we are faced with another display of intolerance and bigotry that isn’t part of our past, but our present.

It brings another call to action for every Canadian, every single one of us, to not only recognize and denounce the killing of a Muslim family in London, Ont., as a hate crime, and an act of terrorism, but for each of us to actively show our support for all communities of all people across this country.

Hat is not acceptable, ever, anywhere. The call to action is reverberating across the province and the country, and cannot be ignored.

All of us, in our hearts and our personal actions, and in our communities, along with our leaders at all levels of government in their ability to initiate action on a larger scale, are responsible for taking steps to put a full stop to any signs of hate or violence toward anyone, for any reason.

It’s a huge task, but there has to be a start, a movement, and now the time is to acknowledge the need for change and act on it.

The normal we are imagining is simply not good enough.

Penny Coles
The Local

Town update shows weekend visitors

Town staff provided an update on traffic to Niagara-on-the-Lake, from Friday through Sunday, June 4 to 6:

- Number of devices entering NOTL boundaries (excluding the QEWI): There were 28,840 unique Bell Devices; translates to approximately 87,000 total unique devices. (Down 35,000 from last weekend)
- 55% Niagara (Up 13% from last weekend)
- 27% GTA (Down 14% from last weekend)
- 6% Hamilton (Down 1% from last weekend)

Number of devices entering Old Town:
- 11,710 unique Bell Devices; translates to approximately 35,000 total unique devices. (Down 14,000 from last weekend)
- 61% Niagara (Up 15% from last weekend)
- 29% GTA (Down 20% from last weekend)
- 6% Hamilton (Up 2% from last weekend)

Although there haven’t been recent complaints about barbecues in town parks, visitors were able to sneak one in between the St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Cemetery and Simcoe Park. (Photos by David Ghichlat)

Simon and Queen’s Royal Parks appeared to be busy, but the stay-at-home order has been lifted, and they were not as crowded as last year, without the many barbecues and tents.

Local

The Trusted Voice of Our Community

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View from the couch

Bill Auchterlonie Special to The Local

The full week of Auchterlonie on Astrology can be found on the Facebook page for The NOTL Local, and on the website www.auchterlonieiastrology.ca.

Now the week ahead:

On June 11, 1993, a new record was set as Jurassic Park opened, eventually earning $525 million. Saturday, June 12: The Moon and Venus, both in Cancer, make for a lovely, warm and supportive time where anyone who is healing an old wound is not easy, but is definitely worth it.

Tuesday, June 15: It’s the Ides of March, but of June! Ides means the 15th, and today it’s not badstakabning, as with Julius Caesar. Rather it’s likely a bit of a wake-up call regarding a health or work manner. It was June 15, 1215 – 906 years ago — that England passed the Magna Carta, the first ever document outlining human rights in the history of the world.

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Thrifts, spellers and fillers: Marrying annuals and perennials

Janet Ennamorato
Member of the NOTL Horticultural Society

The marriage of annuals and perennials makes for a gorgeous show all through the season. The effort involved in selection, placement and care is well worth it!

The quality of soil is critical. Amend the Niagara triple mix each year to ensure a great start to the long-awaited warmer season, and working in a slow-release fertilizer is huge bonus to all the plants.

The perennial base you choose frames the space for annuals. It is best to consider hardy, reliable perennials to lower overall maintenance.

Below are some great annual/perennial combinations you’ll be wanting to try:

1. Sedum comes in many varieties - a spectacular low sedum “takes immense Atlantis” works really well, with the Pink Diamond petunia. Of course, Fruited Fire and Night Embers sedum, the showy upright varieties, perform beautifully from spring to fall with a chartreuse annual like Nicotiana alata Lime Green.
2. Russian Sage (especially the shorter varieties that stand firmly upright) and Sweet William Lavender (with the deeper shades of purple) both thrive on neglect. Great annual companions would be the Senecio for hot spots.
3. Rudbeckia is juglone-tolerant and the Irish Eyes cultivar is a beautiful color choice. What fun to combine this with Salsa Purple salvia.
4. Echinacea look gorgeous in the garden and work well in containers. Try Yellow My Darling with Sunsatia Blood Orangenemesis to provide dramatic accent.
5. Veronica is a long spike of flowering perennial that brings movement into the garden. It is said that Veronica is host to lady bugs. While Wanda is a romantic, wispy white that honey bees love. Make magic with these ecologically supportive plants by combining them with Love-in-a-Mist nigella. A few shade-loving perennials for the frameworks.
1. Hosta, with an almost endless variety of sizes and textures of leaves, cannot fail, as long as you proactively provide the garden with digging and slug treatment. A spectacular hosta to check out is Empress Wu, growing three to four inches tall and five to six inches wide. The annual companion to enhance Hedgewood hosta is a John Smith begonia.
2. Helenium Lime Ricki and Colorscape Golden Dreams are sold choices. Bacopa has a great leaf structure and in combination with Hakonechloa macra Aurea. Again begonia provides an eye popping color and textural contrast. With many more wonderfull perennial combinations to consider, there’s no stopping us now!

The NRC has seen recent development of the corn to fit the needs of the county. We are seeing an increased focus on teaching and learning excellence. The NRC has seen recent development of the college to fit the needs of the county. We are seeing an increased focus on teaching and learning excellence.

We are being encouraged to book our second vaccine jab, and all vaccines, according to government officials, are readily available to all those over 70 years old, amongst others.

As “a good citizen,” I spent several hours on the computer and then, since booking was refused online (big red letters, “appointment cannot be booked, contact support”), hours waiting on the telephone to book the second accelerated dose. I have the first appointment set originally at my first injection site March 22, and second appointment July 12.

I was then stunned by the support worker stating my first site was not on her system, and I would have to go elsewhere.

I explained I had the confirmation of the second dose, on paper, in my hand, but the worker was adamant this site did not exist.

What an unmitigated disaster!

Ontario’s COVID response ‘unmitigated disaster’

Peter Thomas (Dr.)

Regional medical campus brings doctors to Niagara

Dr. Larry Chambers
Dr. Amanda Bell
Special to The Local

Dr. Larry W. Chambers is a Family Physician and the research director of the Niagara Regional Campus of the Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine, McMaster University. Dr. Amanda Bell is a family physician, and the assistant dean of the Niagara Regional Campus, Michael G. DeGroote, School of Medicine, McMaster University.

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Below are some great annual/perennial combinations you’ll be wanting to try:

1. Sedum comes in many varieties - a spectacular low sedum “takes immense Atlantis” works really well, with the Pink Diamond petunia. Of course, Fruited Fire and Night Embers sedum, the showy upright varieties, perform beautifully from spring to fall with a chartreuse annual like Nicotiana alata Lime Green.
2. Russian Sage (especially the shorter varieties that stand firmly upright) and Sweet William Lavender (with the deeper shades of purple) both thrive on neglect. Great annual companions would be the Senecio for hot spots.
3. Rudbeckia is juglone-tolerant and the Irish Eyes cultivar is a beautiful color choice. What fun to combine this with Salsa Purple salvia.
4. Echinacea look gorgeous in the garden and work well in containers. Try Yellow My Darling with Sunsatia Blood Orangenemesis to provide dramatic accent.
5. Veronica is a long spike of flowering perennial that brings movement into the garden. It is said that Veronica is host to lady bugs. While Wanda is a romantic, wispy white that honey bees love. Make magic with these ecologically supportive plants by combining them with Love-in-a-Mist nigella. A few shade-loving perennials for the frameworks.
1. Hosta, with an almost endless variety of sizes and textures of leaves, cannot fail, as long as you proactively provide the garden with digging and slug treatment. A spectacular hosta to check out is Empress Wu, growing three to four inches tall and five to six inches wide. The annual companion to enhance Hedgewood hosta is a John Smith begonia.
2. Helenium Lime Ricki and Colorscape Golden Dreams are sold choices. Bacopa has a great leaf structure and in combination with Hakonechloa macra Aurea. Again begonia provides an eye popping color and textural contrast. With many more wonderfull perennial combinations to consider, there’s no stopping us now!

This is the third in a 10-part series on wondering whether to choose annuals or perennials. It is said that Veronica is host to lady bugs. While Wanda is a romantic, wispy white that honey bees love. Make magic with these ecologically supportive plants by combining them with Love-in-a-Mist nigella. A few shade-loving perennials for the frameworks.
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Couple looking up for answers over denial of B&B licence

Penny Coles
The Local

Owners of a Dorchester Street bed and breakfast are into the second season of struggling to understand why they have been denied their licence to operate.

They are seeking answers, a monetary settlement through the court system and an investigation by the Niagara Regional Police to ascertain if criminal charges should be laid against the town.

Jennifer Elliott and Col- in Telfer operate the ESkoot business on Niagara Stone Road, and have two rooms they rent out in their ESkoot Bed and Breakfast.

They had successful seasons with their B&B, but ran into trouble when their home required new inspection.
Billy Pillitteri-Smith is used to seeing coyotes on the farm, but was shocked to be chased by one. (Photo supplied)
Bob Moore became a volunteer with Civil Air Search And Rescue Association (CASARA) Niagara to save lives. While training as a ground homing specialist (GHS), Moore spent considerable time traveling with the unit’s mobile command vehicle. Learning the vehicle’s long history, and its role in search and rescue as a communications platform, Moore combined his volunteering with his career as service responder with Canadian Automobile Association (CAA) Niagara.

More recently approached CAA Niagara’s President and CEO, Peter Van Hezewyk to request a donation of CAA membership for the CASARA vehicle. In response to CAA’s donation, CASARA Niagara President, Stewart Harris presented Moore with a certificate of recognition. Accompanying Harris was Rick Kaczkan, who is the team leader for the mobile command vehicle. With Moore was Todd Morris, a CAA fleet driver, who has experienced vehicle extractions in his work. Both Moore and Morris know the importance of helping people in distress, and support the volunteers of CASARA.

While CASARA focuses on rescuing stranded drivers, CASARA volunteers focus on rescuing stranded aviators, and also respond to searches involving people on the lakes. CASARA is tasked by the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre (JRCC) at Canadian Forces Base, Trenton. As with CAA, CASARA is classified as an “essential service.”

CASARA Niagara has found it a challenge to maintain operations of “on-call” status during the pandemic, as all members are required to continue their training and certifications. With anticipation of COVID restrictions being lifted over the summer, they have been informed by JRCC to be ready for a higher-than-normal level of calls. Commitment for searches conducted by CASARA volunteers can range from a couple of hours to several days. In the previous two years, CASARA Niagara was involved in 22 searches, four of which were major, involving several other military and civilian aircraft and ground vehicles.

As a non-profit, charitable organization, CASARA Niagara depends on donations for its vehicle, aircraft and facility at Niagara District Airport. All members volunteer their time, and their personal equipment, spending hours training and responding to call-outs. The contribution from CAA Niagara will provide roadside service for the aging mobile command vehicle.

For more information on CASARA, or to share a tax-deductible donation, see the website www.caresniagara.ca.
When Kathy Brown (left), manager of the Virgil Avondale, heard about the tragic circumstances of the Pusey family in Jamaica from an article in The Local written by Jane Andres (right), she decided to show support by putting a donation jar at the checkout. Gladstone “Gussy” Pusey worked for Froese Farms for 35 years before suffering a heart attack and passing away in March, just a few weeks before his return to the farm for the season. Brown and her customers raised $705, which will gratefully be received by Eunice Pusey, Gussy’s wife of 35 years. Although she will be entitled to a small death benefit, his widow was informed by the Jamaican Liaison it will likely be a year before it will be processed. The amount contributed by caring locals will be a big help in providing food and necessities. (Julia Buxton-Cox)
PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice of Virtual Public Information Centre #2 Municipal Class Environmental Assessment York Road and Four Mile Creek Road Intersection Improvements, St. Davids, Ontario

Niagara Region is undertaking a Municipal Class Environmental Assessment to address and improve conditions for all modes of transportation at the intersection of Regional Road 81 (York Road) and Regional Road 100 (Four Mile Creek Road), St. Davids. Public Information Centre #1 was held on March 25, to introduce the study. A summary report documenting the comments received from Public Information Centre #1 and the study team’s responses are provided on the project webpage niagararegion.ca/projects/regional-road-100

A green frog, our most common species of frog in NOTL, lives in a small leftover puddle that serves as protection during heat waves. (Owen Bjorgan)

Owen Bjorgan Special to The Local

It’s not too often that by early June, we’ve expe- rienced not one, but two profound heat waves here in NOTL. It’s not impossible, but it’s certainly not com- mon. Daytime highs of low 30s and an unseasonably dry spring have set the tone for what the remainder of summer may look like for our town, its locals, and lo- cals.

In the natural world, es- pecially in a region with four distinct seasons, wildlife is considerably adaptable. We’ve got to credit where it’s d. Every year, frogs emerge from hibernation to call in the early spring sun, only to get put on pause by another flash freeze or a last minute winter storm. Bees, snakes, and turtles enjoy more than half a year of positive tem- peratures before they return to some sort of dormancy, where the sun doesn’t shine. Deer, eastern cottontails, and coyotes lose their mobility strengths to travel and find es- sential resources when things begin to dry up.

I recall growing up with warm springs, or a spring with a few hot days, but never a hot and dry spring. Of course, it was during the first heat wave in late May that I recently planted 32 native tree spe- cies. Every morning before work, I would step out into the morning and its tropical air to water each tree. The earth was hard, cracked and crumbly — not so typical for a NOTL spring. However, I began to no- tice a pleasant surprise when I would walk up to the base of the tree with a water buck- et in hand. Without fail, I could find toads hunkered down into the damp soil at the base of the tree, taking full and clever advantage of yesterday’s watering session. They intentionally wiggle their bodies a couple inches into the marginally wet- ter soil, and during the hot spells, this is the only place I’ll see toads on my 12 acres. If you have a pile of mulch, soil, or a consistently wa- tered spot in your yard, this is where these watery amphibians are most likely hanging out.

While tending to the “tree babies” and their asso- ciated amphibian friends, I also got polka-dotted in dog ticks. Many people have asked me over the past five years or so, ‘is it just me or, are the ticks really bad this year?’ Although there has been a slight uptick (pun intended) in their preva- lence over the years, this year seems exceptional. This is most likely the re- sult of having two short and warm winters in a row, and then catapulting straight into summer weather. An- other couple of factors to consider are how NOTL’s expansive suburban growth has brought more wildlife (tick carriers, such as birds, rabbits and deer) into more backyards and other areas, or, as they adapt to a dwindling green landscape.

While hiking in a local woodlot with a good friend this past week, I noticed the classic effects of how even a small forest can become an ice cube refuge. On the outside of the treeline, we felt like we were walking in some sort of intense Texan heat. On the inside of the forest, the temperature must have dropped a handful of degrees. The soil was dark with moisture, where scores of Solomon’s seals, Jack-in-the-pulpit, and trilliums grew (their iconic flowers now seasonally shrivelled up). You can also bet that deer and coyotes take shelter in these forested areas in the heat of the day.

The surrounding, scorched vineyards were surely but silently benefit- ting from the forest, which was working hard, if you will, to keep all that soil moisture on the property, and provide relief from the direct and intense UV rays. If NOTL had a higher coverage of forest and wet- land features, we wouldn’t see such severe desiccation of our local creeks. Season- ally, it is expected that One, Two, Four, and Eight Mile Creeks all become reduced in water flow come summer, and that’s pretty normal, versus a sign of bad health. What sparks concern though is when these water levels begin to drop much earlier in this year. This also slows more for the wa- terways to be exposed to ambient heat and sunlight, which leads to higher rates of evaporation, warmer wa- ter temperatures, and the explosive growth of algae, which deoxygenates the wa- ter. This leaves local fish spe- cies which depend on deep- er and healthier waters in a stranded setting, and that could be troubling for birds which hunt inland versus on the open water. Arguably, southern On- tario is one of the most dif- ficult geographical locations in the world for which to make accurate, long-term seasonal forecasts. We have far too many variables to consider, as our weather systems and climate as a whole are connected to oth- er weather systems of the U.S. and the world. Consider- ing that water is the ulti- mate life-giver and taker, I would suspect the wildlife is going to congregate at the local watering hole, just like many locals are looking to do this coming weekend as the province moves to step 1 of its reopening.

NOTL’s wildlife, forests gear up for long, hot summer
Picnix a successful summer business for university student

Mike Balsom
Special to The Local

When a parks bylaw was approved by Niagara-on-the-Lake council in March, Queenston resident Abbie Gowans breathed a sigh of relief. Her summer business of delivering gourmet five-course meals for two in a fancy wooden picnic box on wheels, would be acceptable under the new rules.

This will be the second straight summer running Picnix for the 22-year-old Laura Secord Secondary School graduate and current University of Waterloo arts and business student. Last year, after having completed two previous cooperative education semesters in Gatineau and Mississauga, she decided to start her own business to fulfill the requirement of her program.

“I had (co-op) job offers in Amsterdam and Toronto, and I was really excited about both of them,” remembers Gowans. “Unfortunately, because of COVID, those both got cancelled. My dad had been following this Picnix company in Vancouver, kind of thinking about it here in Niagara. He encouraged me to try running something myself.”

Gowans looked into the university’s Enterprise Co-op program, which provides mentors to help students start their own businesses. She and her father, Keith, reached out to SimonPearson-Roach, the founder of Picnix. He was excited at the prospect of his company building a presence in the Niagara area.

Keith got to work in his renovated barn/garage, redesigning Pearson-Roach’s original carts to make them lighter and more functional. Once he had a number of them ready to roll, Abbie launched Picnix Niagara in 2020, taking bookings through an offshoot of the Vancouver operation’s website. The concept is perfect for NOTL. Abbie prepares the menu at home. They load up the picnic wagon, tossing in reusable dining ware, a blanket and a few other extras, and deliver the cart to Simcoe Park at a pre-arranged time. Patrons can then wheel it to their chosen location, where they unfold the cart into a makeshift table to enjoy their picnic. Abbie returns to pick it all up at another pre-arranged time.

Last Friday she had a special booking for a birthday party. She parked her car near Queen’s Royal Park and wheeled the Picnix cart across the grass, where she laid down a blanket and attached an umbrella to the cart. Mical Lyss of Welland was planning to surprise her boyfriend with a romantic lunch.

Lyssas left a five-star review on the Picnix website following her experience. “Excellent,” the review said. “The set-up was amazing and the food was awesome.”

Abbie has five carts in operation right now, with Keith currently in the process of building another three. With her Niagara website now exclusive of the Vancouver operation, she’s busy seven days a week, and will only get busier as the province opens up and more tourists return to town. She estimates that 70 to 80 per cent of her customers so far have come from the GTA.

Picnix offers four different menus, including dairy-free, vegetarian and vegan options. Gluten-free options are also available, and items can be mixed and matched from one category to another. Each menu is five courses, including a green summer salad and a dessert. Water and lemonade is also provided. And Abbie is dedicated to supporting other local businesses through Picnix.

“A lot of the vegetables and fruits are sourced locally,” she explains. “I try to get as many from local farms and small businesses. We get our local honey from somewhere on Line 6, and when the blueberry farm opens up, I’m a regular customer there.”

For the May holiday weekend, Abbie had all five carts fully booked.

“I woke up at 7 a.m.,” she says, “and prepared food until about 11. Then I delivered the lunches for 12. It was the first time I had to close off a day on the site, which was super exciting, though a little nerve-wracking. And my Mom (Sandra) was so clutch, if I could use the slang, helping with all the dishes in the kitchen.”

Abbie credits both of her parents for instilling in her the entrepreneurial mindset that it takes to run the business. She showed signs of that mindset as early as 13 years ago.

“My parents own a B&B, and when I was around 9 or 10, I created a fudge business,” she remembers. “I would make fudge and sell it to the guests. I made a few batches a week. During the summer we would steadily have all three rooms booked. I would go out there with my fudge, packaged with a sticker that said The Redcoat Fudge, and I would sell it to them for a dollar apiece.”

When speaking about her business, her enthusiasm is contagious. Her mind seems to be full of ideas on how to get the word out about Picnix. She talks of social media influencers and bloggers taking notice, and has captured the attention of wine tour operators and even CAA.

which is interested in adding her to its list of discounts offered to members.

The Picnix carts are attention getters. She often hears from her patrons that people stop to ask where they got the set-up. She ensures that she loads each cart with her business cards and pamphlets so those patrons can help spread the word.

She’s hoping to bring Picnix to other parks in the future, perhaps in Niagara Falls or at Queenston Heights. And she is also looking at ways to expand beyond her current demographic, which she defines as the 25 to 45-year-old age group. “I was thinking of starting a dessert sunset picnic option,” explains Abbie. “It would be on the lower price point, for those who would want something smaller. That could potentially be happening in the near future. It would be a cute thing to do for a date night.”

Abbie will graduate from Waterloo next spring, and hasn’t decided which road she might take at that time. The popularity of Picnix so far has given her at least one option to consider.

“I think it definitely has huge prospects to grow,” she says. “It’s such a great idea. It’s a great thing for people to do. It’s super unique, super Instagrammable, as people like to say nowadays. It’s a great way for people to spend quality time with each other, too.”

“When asked about expanding into other markets herself, she doesn’t fully count that out either.

“I think it’s definitely a possibility down the line,”

she tells The Local. “We were talking to a cooler company who makes a bike attachment, and they thought it would be a great idea to bring to Toronto or even up north. Maybe we’ll explore that option, either with Simon or with us.”

The basic Picnic package is $125. Deliveries to Simcoe Park are made at noon or 6 p.m., seven days a week. Visit picnixniagara.com for information.

Abbie Gowans delivers five-course meals to Queen’s Royal and Simcoe Parks. The university student is exploring options for an expanded business once she graduates. (Mike Balsom)
Three local girls to become Rangers in Guiding

Pathfinders Annika Janzen, Samantha Fretz, and Tannin Driedger-Bradshaw will become Rangers, the highest level of Guiding. (Photos supplied)

Megan Gilchrist
Special to The Local

Next Monday, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Pathfinders will celebrate our collective achievements and experiences over the past year, and in particular, those of our three members who will be advancing to Rangers (the oldest youth branch of Girl Guides) in September.

Tannin Driedger-Bradshaw, Samantha Fretz, and Annika Janzen have been members of Guiding in NOTL for many years, joining in Sparks for Tannin, and in Brownies for Sam and Annika. They have journeyed together through the Guiding program in Niagara, attending camping trips, learning new skills such as woodworking, coding, canoeing and rock climbing, and have helped to mentor younger Guiding members.

A large part of the Pathfinder program includes the option to work toward the Canada Cord, the highest award a youth member may earn in Pathfinders. In order to achieve the award, Pathfinders must complete all eight program areas, learn and demonstrate leadership through camping and leadership events, earn a community service award (totaling 15 hours of service in three areas), and complete bridging activities with both older and younger branches of Guiding. In addition, they must complete first aid training, and earn their Citizenship Certificate.

Not only have Annika, Sam and Tannin completed these mandatory parts of the Canada Cord, they have also fully completed the Pathfinder program, earning all 32 badges and three awards, as well as numerous optional challenges. Extraordinarily, they have accomplished this feat while living through 17 months of a pandemic, and balancing virtual schooling and Pathfinder meetings. We could not be prouder of their achievements, and it has been a true pleasure watching them grow into confident, capable and contributing members of our NOTL community. We can’t wait to see what they achieve next!

As Sam, Annika and Tannin advance, we look forward to reopening our NOTL Ranger unit next year, where we will be offering our oldest youth members the opportunity to participate in fun activities or to challenge themselves by working on the Trailblazer and Duke of Edinburgh Awards. If you are interested in Guiding in Niagara-on-the-Lake, please visit www.girlguides.ca/zone14 for more information. We have units for youth aged five to 17, and we welcome women aged 18 plus as volunteers. Congratulations to all of our current youth members, and we hope to see you in September!

Local staff

Brock’s Monument will be re-opening June 16 for the 2021 season.

Although the monument itself will remain closed due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, heritage interpreters will be on site to welcome guests and share the history of the Battle of Queenston Heights and the life of Major General Sir Isaac Brock. Thank you to support from the Niagara-on-the-Lake Tourism Recovery Grant, there is a new tent, and external displays available to help visitors connect with the history of the site.

There is also a small outdoor gift shop with books, souvenirs and other heritage items.

Towering over the quiet village of Queenston Heights, Brock’s Monument measures 56 metres (185 feet) in height, and is the largest monument of its kind in Canada. Situated on the site of the Battle of Queenston Heights, where British and American soldiers struggled for the destiny of two nations, the monument is the final resting place of Major General Sir Isaac Brock and his Aide-de-Camp, Lieutenant Colonel John Macdonell.

Guests can visit with costumed heritage interpreters, or take part in featured tours at 11 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. each day. Those wanting to take a tour are encouraged to purchase their tickets in advance, through the online store as space at talks is limited. To purchase tickets visit friendsoforteorge.square. Tours are $3.50 per child ages six to 16, $4.50 per adult ages 17 and up, and free for children under five.

Heritage interpreters will welcome visitors to Brock’s Monument, and guided tours will begin June 21. (Photos submitted)

The Friends of Fort George Gift Shop at Fort George opens June 16 for the summer, with limited capacity to ensure staff and visitors are safe. The store will be open Wednesday to Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Proceeds from sales help support student employment at Fort George and Brock’s Monument.

Heritage interpreters will help to support student summer employment opportunities at Brock’s Monument and Fort George.

For more information, contact the Friends of Fort George at www.friendsoforteorge.ca or call 905-468-6621.

Local Happenings

ST. DAVIDS LIONS DRIVE-THRU BBQ
Friday, June 18th • 4 to 7 pm
1462 YORK RD. ST. DAVIDS

PLEASE WEAR A MASK WHEN ORDERING/PICKING UP

COMBO MEALS:
Lions Burger & Fries $10 (topped with peameal bacon)
Lions Peameal Bacon & Fries $10
Leo’s Hot Dog & Fries $16

PLACE YOUR COMING EVENT COMMUNITY SOCIAL HERE
With or without a border, colour graphics optional. Includes your Logo! Prices starting at $50
Deadline: Monday 3 p.m. Call Karen 905-641-5335 or email: classified@notllocal.com

Worship Services

SUNDAY, JUNE 13TH
10 a.m. Worship Gathering (Online Only)
Speaker: Kevin Bayne
Message: Teaching, Exhortation, & Prophecy
Lion stream available Sundays at 10:00 am
www.ccchurch.ca

To advertise your Worship Services in this section, please contact:
karen@notllocal.com

ST. DAVIDS LIONS DRIVE-THRU BBQ
Friday, June 18th • 4 to 7 pm
1462 YORK RD. ST. DAVIDS
CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU

Across:
1. With a forward motion
6. Guitarist --- Clapton
10. And others in Rome
14. "Boléro" composer
15. Lead vocalist of U2
17. Overweight
18. Embryonic flowers
19. --- Lane, Clark's love
20. Sleepless in Seattle
22. Exercise venue
23. --- the ground floor
24. Adeptness
25. A lot
27. Think constantly
29. Badger
31. Beloved
32. Anti-ageist org.
34. "Boléro" composer
36. Cushion
39. Comparative costs
41. Getting on
43. Exercise venue
44. Exercise venue
46. Part
47. W. with a forward motion
48. Exercise venue
49. Exercised
50. E.g. Courvoisier
53. Pricey
54. World's largest economy
55. Stock-market debuts
56. Monotone.
57. Daytona racing
58. Exercise venue
59. Exercise venue
60. Exercise venue
61. Exercise venue
62. Exercise venue
63. Exercise venue
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66. Exercise venue
67. Exercise venue
68. Exercise venue
69. Exercise venue

Down:
1. Bouquet
2. Foam
3. Brought down
4. Secluded retreat
5. Gloves
6. Abate
7. Hanover
8. --- a plan, a canal, Panama
9. --- Lane, Clark's love
10. Sign up
11. Common odds ending
12. Operatic solos
13. Endure
14. "A Beautiful Mind" actor
15. Record keeper
16. Disemboweled Emulator
17. Flaring forth
18. Everyone
19. A Beautiful Mind" actor
20. Record keeper
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PUZZLE ANSWERS

Sudoku solution from June 2, 2021

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Please recycle this newspaper.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake
The trusted voice of our community.
How Heart To Home Meals is making independent living easier for seniors.

Living at home improves seniors’ quality of life, keeps them safe, and allows them to maintain their independence. When living at home, having access to nutritious food is essential and Heart to Home Meals makes it easy by delivering healthy and delicious meals, made with the nutritional needs of seniors in mind, right to their homes.

“Life should get easier for people as they age,” says David, co-owner of Heart to Home Meals. “And yet as people advance in age, new challenges can arise that make maintaining an independent lifestyle more difficult.”

Shopping for one gets harder and cooking is not as rewarding as it once was. Heart to Home Meals handles the prep work and the cooking so seniors can receive deliveries of convenient, nutritious, and delicious meals. “We know that we play a big part in making living life at home easier,” says Marianne, co-owner of Heart to Home Meals. “And that is what gives us the motivation every day to go out and do what we do.”

Heart to Home Meals is a compassionate and friendly service that delivers nutritious frozen meals that accommodate special dietary needs directly to customers’ homes. As part of our commitment to being leaders in senior nutrition and championing for all seniors to live a healthy lifestyle, Heart to Home Meals is now a proud supporter of the Relay For Life and the Canadian Cancer Society.

When you purchase one of our specially selected meals, $1.00 from each meal purchased will go towards our contributions to the Relay For Life and the Canadian Cancer Society.

With a menu designed by a chef and a dietician, it offers convenient, healthy, and delicious food. With over 200 selections to choose from, all Heart to Home Meals’ menu items are designed with seniors in mind. The meals are delivered in a safe, contactless manner by friendly delivery teams.

To learn more about Heart to Home Meals, call David, Marianne, and Alexander at 1-844-714-0333 or visit www.hearttomealms.ca.