ceremony at the Niagara-on-the-Lake town hall to recognize Truth and Reconciliation Day was one of the many events taking place in Every Child Matters er, spoke to the small crowd, Mi’kmaq Traditional Healer Audra Maloney, a Mi’kmaq Traditional Healer, spoke to the small crowd. She called on all those present at the ceremony and the day it represents to acknowledge and remember the trauma experienced by our ancestors. Calls to Action, federal recommendations to acknowledge the horrifying history of the residential schools system, and to stop such abuses from happening ever again.

Penny Coles The Local

As it was meant to be, the ceremony at the Niagara-on-the-Lake town hall to recognize Truth and Reconciliation Day was one of both acknowledgement and education, and also a time to listen.

And for those who gathered to listen, there was much to hear and learn.

Audra Maloney, a Mi’kmaq Traditional Healer, spoke to the small crowd, many in Every Child Matters orange T-shirts, reminding them of the goal of residential schools as summarized in a quote from Bishop Vital Grandin, a Roman Catholic priest considered a key architect of the schools. Their purpose, he said, was to instill in the children “a produced dis-taste for the Native life so that they will be humiliated when reminded of their origin. When they graduate from our institutions, the children will have lost everything Native except their blood.” But, said Maloney, he was wrong. What he and others who supported the schools didn’t factor in “was that our blood was our direct connection to our ancestors.” Traumas experienced through the residential school system, which impacted her family, her husband’s family, and so many others, “can weigh heavily on our people,” she said, but “I have hope. I have witnessed many people work through their healing, release the heavy weight of trauma as we reach for our languages, our culture, our songs and our communities.” She called on all those attending the ceremony to “personally engage” in the 94 Calls to Action, federal recommendations to acknowledge the horrifying history of the residential schools system, and to stop such abuses from happening ever again. Maloney, whose traditional name means She Who Sees Far Like the Eagle, said the ceremony and the day it represents were “about true relationship-building, respect for another’s way of seeing the world, compassion and understanding.”

Students visit Landscape of Nations

Teachers and students from Royal Oak Community School gather around the turtle at the Landscape of Nations and spend the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation at Queenston Heights to participate in interactive activities. For more photos please see page 18. (Mike Balsom)

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WHEN YOU CALL GREG, YOU GET GREG!
Irish Harp’s $5,000 takes cenotaph fundraiser over the top

Penny Coles
The Local

The Irish Harp’s owner, Jovie Joki, is known for her fundraisers to help local causes, the most recent of which was the restoration of the cenotaph. The fundraiser for the joint project of the town and the Niagara-on-the-Lake branch of the Royal Canadian Legion has now reached its $80,500 target to tender the work that is required sooner rather than later, to restore the cenotaph, which was celebrated for its 100-year history on Queen Street in June, 2022.

Joki says she enjoys the opportunities she has to help the community by holding fun events for patrons that allow her to contribute to many good causes, and the cenotaph is an important landmark to the town, and a cause she could embrace easily. It needs to be cared for to remain the structure it is, she says. “I feel we have to keep it up.”

Peter Warrick, as ex-military and ex-police, sits on the cenotaph committee, which is a partnership between the town, which owns the iconic landmark in its place on a municipal road, and the legion, which took on the responsibility to have its condition assessed on the occasion of its 100th anniversary. It began with extensive research by Willowbank School of Restoration Arts students, and a 40-page report detailing repairs that were needed immediately. It also emphasized the importance of ongoing maintenance once the immediate repairs are completed.

Although at that time there was no cost associated with the work, the committee launched a fundraiser to pay for it and to also establish a fund for ongoing maintenance.

Warrick, knowing the Irish Harp’s reputation for holding fun events that also raise money for community causes, recently approached Joki about the cenotaph.

“Literally within two days of reaching out to our local community, Jovie and the Irish Harp pledged their support, and as can be seen, delivered on their promise of support to this iconic town landmark. This is truly endearing and amazing. The restaurant held a raffle, and offered weekly raffle tickets for a chance to win an Irish Harp basket valued at more than $150, a draw a week for four weeks, asking patrons to raise a pint honouring the Irish and contribute to the restoration of the clock tower. They raised $5,000 in a month.

That not only meant the committee reached its goal and the town could put out requests for proposals from companies to bid on the work, says Warrick, “but also allows a trust to be managed by the town for further maintenance.

Although it’s possible to see some deterioration of the brick work from outside, the most immediate concern is related to water damage inside, he says.

The report lists 12 recommendations for work that should be carried out immediately, and other repairs also suggested that aren’t urgent.

Donations can still be made to the cenotaph fund at the Virgil town hall at 1593 Four Mile Creek Rd., or the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 124 located at 410 King Street, via cash or cheque (made payable to the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake) or online at notl.com/recreation-events/community-initiatives-events.

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First capital budget reveal shows possible 7.5% increase

Niagara-on-the-Lake is beginning to crunch numbers on its 2024 budget.

Staff presented a capital plan to councillors Wednesday — a 70-project, $10.3-million plan to councillors Wednesday — a 70-project, $10.3-million plan to councillors Wednesday. The project with the second-highest price tag in the town's capital plan is a Hunter Road watermain replacement between Four Mile Creek Road and Concession 4, at $1.65 million. This is followed by $750,000 in work to a culvert on Dorchester Street, a $500,000 replacement of a 2009 dump truck, and $400,000 for new parking machines.

“There are five projects that prioritized. Parking in the heritage district has been an ongoing topic since most of the metres in the area stopped accepting credit cards, and began only taking coins or payment through the HonkMobile app. Even though the town is setting aside money for new parking machines, it could not be well into next year before any are available for purchase, said director of corporate services Kyle Freeborn, citing supply chain issues as a major factor.

"Hopefully by next spring we’re in a position where vendors come through," he said. Coun. Gary Burroughs raised concerns about staff recommending that council defer a decision on a $1.75-million overhaul of Mississauga Street until future years. "Most residents and tourists come down that road — and it's not attractive," said Burroughs. Staff later said in the meeting that this project could be supported if funds are pulled out from another area of the budget. Coun. Wendy Cheropita said she’s pleased to see infrastructure projects being prioritized.

The top five budget items equal $5.2 million. "These are areas where you cannot not invest," she said. Freeborn said the budget could be approved as early as mid-December, and that kicking off the process in late September puts the municipality in a better position when it comes to tendering and pricing. According to the staff presentation, the capital budget is planned to be finalized on Oct. 4. The operating budget is expected to be discussed Oct. 11.

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Gateway project nearing completion

Although the town was trying to keep the dry stone wall and plantings at the corner of Queen and Mississauga Streets out of the public eye until the project was completed, that became a little difficult once the fencing was removed. Funded through a donation from the Gerald Kowalchuk Family Foundation, the dry stone wall has been completed by expert Andrew “Ricky” Watson, and the official opening ceremony will be announced soon.

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Kris Dube  
The Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Niagara-on-the-Lake council is on its way to potentially spending more than $1 million to update the town’s fleet of vehicles, but there was mixed reaction earlier this week about how heavy a foot the town should have on the pedal.

During Tuesday’s regular meeting, council sent a decision to the budget review committee to consider $1.108 million from the capital spending plan to be spent on converting 10 to 15 per cent of the town’s trucks and cars to electric vehicles.

Staff is also recommending six electric vehicles be acquired through the upcoming budget process, and to consider facility upgrades of $100,000, such as charging stations.

And there’s more money that will be needed ahead on the road.

The budget review committee has been tasked with evaluating whether the town should hire two new full-time employees with a cost of $215,000, and increase its fleet replacement reserve by $492,000 in 2024. Nearly $425,000 of that amount impacts the tax levy. In 2023, the town put more than $351,000 into the replacement reserve, reads the staff report before council on Tuesday — a day before the budget review committee was set to meet.

In 2021, the town commissioned a consulting firm to conduct a fleet service review and green fleet strategy for its fleet and equipment assets to improve fleet asset management and operational efficiency, and to steadily transition towards a green fleet.

With this vision in mind, the goal is to provide an ambitious yet feasible and attainable roadmap for the town to achieve service excellence and significant greenhouse gas emissions reductions in its fleet.

Coun. Erwin Wiens said he’s “not opposed to electric vehicles,” but the town having to make such an expensive transition to them might be further down the road than what staff is suggesting.

“The technology — not a lot of folks are using it,” said Wiens. “People haven’t bought into it, he added, noting that his household has begun the move to non-combustible-engine vehicles.

“What we probably should have been doing is monitoring the situation,” he said, adding there is more spending for the town ahead. “This is just phase one of an awful lot of money into our fleet.”

Director of operations Rome D’Angelo said the first phase is “six to eight” electric vehicles, as well as a $100,000 retrofit of the operations centre.

The town will also need to consider the purchase of a generator and a transformer as possible future investments.

The next spending ask, as early as 2025, could be more than $250,000, said D’Angelo.

Wiens tabled an amendment to defer the recommendation about converting to electric vehicles until next year’s budget process, but due to a tie, that idea was defeated.

“I think we need to start now to replenish our fleet,” said Coun. Sandra O’Connor, one member of council who voted against Wiens amendment.

Lord Mayor Gary Zepeda also wants to hit the road with the plan quickly. Admitting what is proposed involves a lot of “up front” costs, he estimates the bulk of it can be recovered in five years through savings on fuel and maintenance.

Coun. Gary Burroughs has also asked staff for a future update on the pros and cons of leasing versus purchasing vehicles.

During Wednesday’s budget meeting, councillors reiterated positions, stated the previous day about fleet upgrades when they discussed the town’s $10.3-million capital spending plan.

Although there was still no decision on the fleet strategy during the budget committee discussions, they did agree the process to consider it will continue through budget deliberations.

Region to invest $84 million in NOTL roads over five years

Kris Dube  
The Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Niagara Region has plans to invest $84 million in improvements to roads and bridges in Niagara-on-the-Lake over the next five years.

This information was provided to town council Tuesday morning in a presentation from Regional Coun. Andrea Kaiser and Frank Tassone, the region’s director of transportation services.

After Kaiser provided an overview of projects that regional council has been working on in recent months, some of which related to roads, Tassone gave a breakdown on work currently taking place — as well as other improvements that will occur in the future.

Ten projects were touched on in the presentation.

A reconstruction of Niagara Stone Road between Four Mile Creek Road and Line 1 is nearing completion, and a community workshop will soon be held to discuss landscaping plans as one of the last steps.

Other projects Tassone explained are in early stages include potential upgrades to Airport Road between Niagara Stone and York Roads, and the possibility of a roundabout at Townline Road between Stanley Avenue and Four Mile Creek Road.

Bridges on Line 4 and Lakeshore Road are also being looked at for future improvements.

One project that generated some discussion is a roundabout in St. Davids, planned at Four Mile Creek and York Roads.

Coun. Sandra O’Connor said council has told the region the town does not like this option, and that businesses in the area believe they would be negatively impacted.

She said those concerns are “not being heard,” and called it a “serious omission” that the project continues to move forward in its early stages, a project that has been discussed since 2021.

The second half of the presentation involved the region’s Zero Vision program, and efforts being made to address road safety.

Vision Zero is a program used in other parts of Ontario but is somewhat new to Niagara,” said Tassone, adding that other municipalities who have implemented the program have noticed a 45-per-cent reduction in serious injuries.

“We’re building upon lessons learned in some of the other municipalities,” said Tassone.

There will be four rotatable cameras at red lights in these areas as well, he added.

The program is not meant to primarily be a revenue generator, even though it will bring in money — split between the region and town — which in turn must be used to fund road safety efforts, Tassone explained.

“We want to see the fraction decrease, which tells us we’re changing the behaviour of motorists.”
St. Mark’s Church service to bless animals Oct. 4

The Reverend at St. Mark’s Anglican Church is calling for all pet owners and their pets to attend their “Blessing of the Animals” service at 5 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 4, which is St. Francis of Assisi Day.

“This is part of St. Mark’s ministry to the wider community, where folks cannot only just see the church and see our rounds, but take time to be reflective, to be thankful and to think about the blessings of life in this context,” said Rev. Leighton Lee.

“St. Francis was well-known for his love of the natural world and animals, and so these sorts of services where people can come and have their pets blessed and celebrated have become increasingly popular,” explained Lee.

The short service will include a reading, a prayer of Thanksgiving, and individual blessings for the pets. “It’s better to do it individually so we don’t have cats and dogs, and dogs and dogs getting into it,” said Lee, who added that the service is not just confined to cats and dogs. All pets are welcome including birds and fish, although he admits transporting fish may be a bit tricky.

This is the first service of its kind since Lee took tenure at St. Mark’s in June of 2021. He noticed that “there are plenty of animal lovers in town and plenty of dog walkers,” and thought the service would be a nice way to bring the community together.

“This is not an Anglican specific event, simply for the folks of St. Mark’s,” said Lee. “It’s not even just a Christian event. It’s a community event framed within the context of an Anglican liturgy, constructed in a way that it’s not sectarian. People of all faiths are more than welcome, and we hope that the service will be appropriate in that way.”

“It’s part of what we love to do, is have people come and see that this isn’t just a church for Anglicans, but it’s a place for everybody in our community and we love to be able to demonstrate that hospitality,” said Lee.

St. Francis of Assisi is a very famous saint within the Christian tradition, explained Lee. He was the founder of the Franciscan Order, and was well known for his love of the natural world. The fourth day of October is the day that is set aside in the Christian calendar for him to be remembered. “That’s why blessings of animals tend to take place at the end of September, early October, to tie it in with his love of the natural world.”
This is National Newspaper Week, and also the week leading up to Thanksgiving. For those of you who enjoy living in a democracy, with all the associated checks and balances, ethics and balanced reporting in newspapers and on legitimate news websites are part of that system.

Otherwise you end up with all your news from social media, which may be what some people are looking for in today's world, however, social media doesn't offer much in terms of alternative voices that seek something more informative and trustworthy.

We believe community news is very important in its role of providing local information to residents as the daily world. That's why we are here. We publish what's happening in urban areas across the province, the country and the globe. If we weren't certain, we wouldn't do what we do.

Although the Local continues to focus on new ways to engage the community, readers who visit our Village Media website will find much more than local news, which is just as committed to being every bit as trustworthy.

For the approach, Thanksgiving, allow us to say that we are so very grateful to be able to keep our community informed with local news and all those who share their stories with us. Of course we couldn't do it without you.

We feel just as strongly about our website. If you are reading our news online, you will know that all reports are fair and balanced and reporters have the same integrity, whether the content originates in NOTL or across the country, and follows a strict code of ethics. Whether it's provincial news or our website about the recent shenanigans of Premier Doug Ford, a significant local event such as the Truth and Reconciliation ceremony which is not expected to be good news for local tax payers, or the stories about the many fascinating events in towns that we love, to share, we are proud to be the voice of the community, and hope you know you can trust.

Penny Coles
The Local

Breath of Fresh Air conference exactly what it sounds like

Donald Combe Special to The Local

The 10 episodes of Shrink (Apple TV, 2023) offer a unique insight into both the personal and professional lives of several psychiatrists, one of whom starts to tell his clients exactly what he thinks, while ignoring his training and ethics. This refreshing series stars Jason Segel and Harrison Ford.

Donald Combe is a retired English teacher who loves to go to the movies. Until he resumes going to theatres, he has graciously agreed to share his reviews, with the occasional “short and sweet” exclusives, of Netflix series and movies for The Local.

Where’s Ben?

Eden student Ben Foster continues to discover new locations in NOTL, according to local officials, others may be with them.

If you know where this photo was taken, email penny@notllocal.com.

Last week, Ben visited a petting farm at the corner of East and Line and Townline Road, as correctly identified by Nicole Cook.

 maid's work. I was reminded to rewrite the lessons of my brain and reflecting on some cases has a direct impact on our lives, to tell great stories and themes, and to celebrate our reputation for fair, balanced and ethical reporting. We have great respect and to report on every reading minor violations we could not be committed to every bit as trustworthy.

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The Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library board and staff are interested in exploring the special place books, reading, storytelling and libraries hold in the hearts of our community members. The power of the written and spoken word, the exchange of ideas and childhood memories of time spent with books, creates a profound tapestry of emotions and experiences. This interview series prompts introspection and reflection, offering a unique lens through which to examine the bond between readers and their connection to books, storytelling and libraries. Watch this space for interviews with an array of interesting community members.

Dr. Tim Bastedo is a family physician with the Niagara North Family Health Team. He moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake in 2013, where he lives with his wife, two children, and their chickens and bees. I ran into Dr. Bastedo and his little girl at the NOTL Public Library on a Saturday afternoon. She was holding a tall, wobbly stack of books and could barely reach the check out station. So I thought, this was a parent who definitely encourages reading, visits the library and is building memories with his children. A week later, I sat down with Dr. Bastedo in his office to talk about some of his favourite books, childhood library memories and the importance of reading in his and his children’s lives.

Q. Where does your love of reading come from?
I grew up in a family of readers. My mother was a teacher and father a doctor in family practice. My parents read to me as a child in family practice. My parents read to me as a child. This was the tradition that was passed down with a good book was a quiet time; early mornings, rainy afternoons and late night reading under the covers with a flashlight are all part of my childhood experience. As the third of four children, I was always reading while my older siblings were reading and even though I would eventually be given their books, I was impatient. My books were on the lower shelves so I could easily access them. I remember climbing up on a step stool to be able to reach the top shelves on the bookcase to pull down some of the books not meant for me.

Q. What childhood memories do you have related to library visits?
I grew up in the countryside outside of Huntsville, and the public library was a central gathering point for our family if we were meeting in town or getting picked up after school. I distinctly remember the trip I took there when the library was built and first opened to the public; especially how it felt enigmatic by what my heartspace was. I was very young then, but I remember it clearly. I spent a fair bit of time at the library as a young child and later in my high school years it became a place to hang out with my friends.

The great thing about selecting books at the library was the wide range of possible choices; different from the books we had at home. I remember one elementary school classmate who would often be at the library at the same time I was. He was allowed to check out dozens of books at a time. I definitely had ‘library envy’ — was he taking out something great before I had even discovered it? We did not know each other at the time, but later became good friends.

Books that appealed to us were the Hardy Boys, Nancy Drew mysteries and the Judy Blume series.

Q. What is your favourite book of all time?
Two books stand out for me: Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, and the story collection by Miranda July called Nobody Belongs Here More Than You.

Charlie is a classic story about lessons, about honesty and hard work to persist in the face of adversity and generosity, critical values to any child’s growth and development.

Miranda July is an American film director, screenwriter, actress and author. Her work includes film, fiction, monologues and performance art. Her books are quirky, funny and hard to describe — but they make me laugh out loud.

Q. What kinds of books are you reading now? (Genre/authors/fiction/non-fiction)
I read both non-fiction and fiction. At the moment, I am enjoying a compendium of essays by Malcolm Gladwell, Talking to Strangers, about the assumptions and mistakes we make when dealing with strangers. Running my practice at the Family Health Clinic and being the father of two active young children, managing my practice at the Family Health Clinic and being the father of two active young children, often in response to environmental stimuli.

Finally, a book that has stayed with me from my student years is the classic by Desmond Morris, The Naked Ape, written in 1967, that looks at humans as a species and compares us to other animals.

Q. Do you have a favourite author (dead or alive) that you would invite to dinner?
I would enjoy sitting at the dinner table with Shel Silverstein, author of Where the Sidewalk Ends; The Giving Tree and of course the Canadian classic, Paddle to the Sea by Holling C. Holling.

Q. Do you have any professional reads that have inspired you?
Yes — we exchange books at each other when we are finished reading them. The Whole Brain Child, by Daniel Siegel MD and Tina Bryson PhD, is a book I have recommended. Based on the latest neuroscience research, this well-written, funny book provides strategies to nurture a child’s developing mind. I urge all parents who want kind, happy and emotionally healthy kids to read this book.

Q. Do you recommend books to family and friends?
Yes — we exchange books during the holidays and pass books on to each other when we are finished reading them. The Whole Brain Child, by Daniel Siegel MD and Tina Bryson PhD, is a book I have recommended. Based on the latest neuroscience research, this well-written, funny book provides strategies to nurture a child’s developing mind. I urge all parents who want kind, happy and emotionally healthy kids to read this book.

Q. Do you read to your children?
Absolutely! Reading is part of our daily routine, every morning, and every evening at bedtime. One book my children particularly enjoy is Peck Peck Pick by Lucy Cousins, about a woodpecker.

Omar El Akkad. The main character in this book is a Syrian refugee boy who survives a journey by sea and the teenage girl who saves him. It is a compelling story of two children finding their way through a hostile world, a story of empathy and difference, of hope and despair.

Q. What book should every kid/person read?
Anything by Shel Silverstein and of course the Canadian classic, Paddle to the Sea by Holling C. Holling.

Diwali, Eating, and the story of two children finding their way through a hostile world; a story of empathy and difference, of hope and despair.

Q. Do you have any professional reads that have helped you to shape your life?
Related to my profession, I like to read about evolutionary biology. In The Selfish Gene Richard Dawkins explores the idea that the more two individuals are genetically related, the more likely they are to behave cooperatively with each other.

In Nature via Nurture by Madly Bailey the author claims that genes are not unchanging little bits of DNA: their expression varies throughout a person’s life, often in response to environmental stimuli.

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Finally, a book that has stayed with me from my student years is the classic by Desmond Morris, The Naked Ape, written in 1967, that looks at humans as a species and compares us to other animals.
Town still trying to fix Concession 6 connection to Niagara Falls

8 month after work started in 2021 and 2022 to complete quests another $250,000 on severing the connection. The bridge finally reopened in 2019, but then the road closed for repairs, severing the connection.

A town staff report requests another $250,000 on top of funds approved in 2021 and 2022 to complete the first phase of the project, from Warner Road to the Niagara Falls border. But an overhaul of the road was put on hold last month after work started in May — due to “unforeseen site conditions requiring design changes and additional costs,” said the staff report.

The town is recommending a reconstruction with open ditches, paved shoulders, and/or bicycle lanes, reads an explanation contained in the budget package presented to council last week.

The second phase of work, from Warner to York Road, is a continuation of the first phase, and is the most expensive line item in the town’s proposed capital budget, coming in at $1.9 million.

Work will include road widening and re-alignment, with better sight lines.

More than $1.4 million of the $1.9-million second phase is proposed to be paid for through the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund.

Rome D’Angelo, the town’s director of operations, said Concession 6 needs to be reconstructed to a regional standard in order to facilitate future discussions about uploading the road to the region.

This would also need to be co-ordinated with Niagara Falls reconstructing their portion of Concession 6 to Mountain Road, said D’Angelo, who added the road was identified in the region’s 2017 transportation master plan as a future regional road connection.

He said there have been discussions about a transfer, “but the region won’t have any official discussions regarding a transfer unless they are receiving the road constructed to a regional standard.”

Coun. Gary Burroughs asked about the project during last week’s budget review committee meeting, and told The Local on Tuesday that he has concerns with the timing of the project.

The stretch of road that has been closed since construction started in May has also resulted in there being no access to Mewburn Bridge, a main access to the Queen Elizabeth Way, which was replaced and re-opened in 2019 after more than 10 years of it being out of service.

“Why would we not leave it open for summer — and then in the fall do the restoration?” he asked.

He also wants to know when the stalled work will resume and be completed, which he says remains a concern for area residents who use that route.

D’Angelo told The Local Tuesday that earlier in the day he took part in a meeting about the project with the contractor, Walker Construction.

“Right now we’re in the process of reviewing their design,” said D’Angelo.

He expects more information will be available in the coming days about when work will resume.

“I’m hoping by the end of the week we will have some kind of direction on where we’re going with this,” said D’Angelo.

The town’s budget review committee is set to meet again Wednesday morning, Oct. 4.
Volunteers host celebration before tackling Thanksgiving hampers

Penny Coles
The Local

Brenda Shah, long-time volunteer at Newark Neighbours going back to the days of found- er Peggy Anderson, couldn’t believe what she was seeing.

Anderson wouldn’t have believed it either.

When Cindy Grant and the team of volunteers at the thrift store and food bank opened the doors to guests for a celebration of their new Virgil location, all they have accomplished to help the growing number of people in need in Niagara-on-the-Lake was revealed.

The highlight is the bright, beautiful community space and desk — not your usual thrift store by any means — and then for the evening celebration, the clothes racks in the main space were moved to the side, the front desk turned into a wine station, and guests, many of the home donors, were given an opportunity to see what is behind the beautiful window displays seen from the street.

A tour of the building takes you through a large sorting area, with windows so volunteers can see what’s happening out front, a private office space and a washroom. The food bank, with lots of new shelving and gleaming new commercial sink, refrigerator and freezer, is in an area also separate and private, with its own entrance and comfortable sitting place for those who come in need of food — plus a beautiful, brightly painted wall mural made, especially for the space by young Niagara Pumphouse art class students.

“It was a really amazing eve- ning,” said Grant.

“We were all thrilled with it, all on a bit of a high that eve- ning, and really pleased with the turnout.”

There was a good crowd in attendance, and the store looked beautiful. The team worked very hard to get it set up, and it looked really wonderful; she was making the committee “feel like they pulled it all together. It was a lot of hard work.”

Peller Estates supplied the wine — they had also supplied the property for Newark’s former location in recent years — and provided some high-top cocktail tables for the evening, but made the space quite elegant.

And then it was back to real- ity, sorting and getting ready for the upcoming Thanksgiving hampers — more new clients have come in to reg- ister, Grant said.

But they have had an out- pouring of generosity from the community to help make it hap- pen — their recent porch pick-up was a success, and food has continued to come in since.

The Niagara North Family Health team asked for food do- nations at both their Virgil and Village locations, and Vineland Academy brought in a load of food for a team later.

“One Old Town resident pulled up in an SUV filled to brimming with bags and boxes of food,” she said. “People have just been so generous.”

At one point the food room was so stacked with food to be put away “you couldn’t move around the room. We’re more than stocked for Thanksgiving, and probably a good way to- ward Christmas.”

Cornerstone Community Church has already contacted her about a food drive Hallow- een night — they intend to dis- tribute 1,000 paper grocery bags to people with a food list for Newark Neighbours, and pick up the full bags.

“We’ll be getting a lot of food at the end of that month,” said Grant.

During the evening celebra- tion, Shah, who has just turned 96, reminisced about the small, crowded barn, about half the size of what it was when Newark moved out this spring. It had no running water, a freezer outside for food, no rads inside, just breathing for whatever clothes were dropped off — Anderson sold them at $5 for a full garbage bag — and some stacks of food at the back.

But although volunteers un- derstood the need to move on, she and many others loved the beautiful surroundings at the former John Street location. “I started coming in ‘95, I think,” she said. “I heard a lot about Peggy and I wanted to help. And for me, it was a chance to get to know people from town.”

Shah ran a bed and break- fast and was busy in the sum- mer, but in the winter Newark Neighbours became a place for her to meet locals, make new friends, and feel useful.

She was one of the Tuesday group — she laughed when she said “we called ourselves the Tuesday Tarts.” Some of them still volunteer, and stay in touch, enjoying social occasions with those who have retired and are still around. Shah was delighted to visit with some of them over a glass of wine at the celebration.

“They were all such good people,” she said of the volun- teers she worked with. “They all did so much.”

But while she expressed some nostalgia for her days at the barn surrounded by nature, explaining that “Tuesdays felt like a holiday for me,” she just kept shaking her head at what she was seeing and saying, “I can’t believe it.”

Grant is having trouble believ- ing the amount of food that is ar- riving daily at their new location.

The big sign out front, asking for donations, is a help, she said, raising awareness of the need that exists in this community to drivers as they pass by. Also important is “location, location, location,” with the Virgil store front in the middle of town.

As thrilled as volunteers were with their celebration, Grant added, “they are really excited to be able to help about 110 families this Thanksgiving.”

Hampers were being packed Wednesday and deliv- ered Thursday.

She feels that with their move, Newark Neighbours “has launched a new generation” of helping people in need. “And once again, this community is demonstrat- ing its extreme generosity.”

Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa with Cindy Grant, Brenda Shah and Mark Avedesian, Broker of Record Century 21 Avmark Realty Limited, Brokerage
Mystery, music and more coming for Shaw’s 2024 season

Mike Balsom
The Local

Classic Agatha Christie and Sherlock Holmes characters, a 1956 Broadway classic and two plays based on ancient Chinese stories highlight the 2024 season at Niagara-on-the-Lake’s Shaw Festival, just announced last Thursday.

“You will see My Fair Lady, one of the few perfect musicals; One Man, Two Guvnors, the funniest show on the planet; and a new Sherlock Holmes,” artistic director Tim Carroll said in a news release. “There’s also Shaw’s Candida, and two Canadian premieres, including Marcus Gardley’s The House That Will Not Stand.”

It kicks off on April 6 at the Royal George Theatre with Agatha Christie’s Witness for the Prosecution, directed by Alistair Newton.

Adapted from the master mystery writer’s short story, Witness for the Prosecution is directed by Alistair Newton. “It’s full of clever twists, shock and mounting tension. The same could be said for Sherlock Holmes and the Mystery of the Human Heart, previewing at the Festival Theatre on July 24. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s beloved detective is at the centre of a brand new work by Réginald Candy, in which Holmes faces a villain so clever he may have finally met his match. Next year’s run will mark the third time for the well-known Holmes character and his confidante Dr. Watson to walk the Shaw floor.

“We bear a lot from our audiences about how much they love the tension and the devious they are able to do themselves,” says associate artistic director Kimberly Ramsepad of the two mysteries. “In a way it’s an articulation of what TC (Tim Car- roll) calls two-way theatre. They like that natural inter- action.”

Ramsepad and Carroll will be co-directing My Fair Lady, the musical based on Shaw’s own Pygmalion. The Lerner and Loewe adaptation was last done at Shaw in 2011. “It’s time to bring Eliza Doolittle back,” Ramsepad tells The Local. “Our audi- ences have been asking for it. It’s a beautiful musical, big and sweeping. The music is so gorgeous, and our music director Paul Sportelli always does such beautiful orchest- rations.”

As Carroll’s associate, Ramsepad worked on the upcoming season’s playbook with him. She likens her role as that of a senator, providing sober second thought as the pair bounce ideas off of one another.

On their co-directing re- lationship for My Fair Lady, the jokes that it is more like a mom and dad arguing at times.

“We have had a great working relationship,” says Ramsepad. “Our first time working together was when I was an assistant director on (2017’s) Androcles and the Lion. We had a dynamic and fun time working on that play. I think we both crave being in a creative space to- gether, too.”

In the vein of this year’s Prince Caspian, Jay Turvey directs another family-oriented production, The Secret Garden, opening in June 2024. “We think it’s so import- ant that we offer incredibly intelligent pieces for young people in particular,” Ramp- ersad says. “The Secret Gar- den is such a beautiful piece, and Jay Turvey, who directed our musical (Gypsy) this year, is such a wonderful and gift- ed artist.”

Known by many as the Chinese Hamlet, The Or- phan of Chaos is one of the oldest plays in the Chinese canon. The Shaw production, opening June 13 at the Royal George, is an adaptation of the revenge tale created by Shaw ensemble member Mi- chael Man.

“Calling it the Chinese Hamlet is a way to make a parallel to what Hamlet means to the English culture and what this means to the Chinese culture,” explains Man. “The story itself is not all that similar, though it is epic in nature, and there is a mas- sacre that happens. And It questions the bonds be- tween parent and child, too.”

Man says he was original- ly asked to write a translation, but felt that he wouldn’t be able to add any value to the many translations already out there. Instead, he suggested an adaptation, with the two- fold goal of both reinterpret- ting the 13th century Chinese drama form for a Western theatrical sensibility, and re- newing the context of the tale in today’s society.

“I feel a great sense of honour to have an opportu- nity and a place to share this with audiences,” Man says. “I remember telling my folks about this and how ex- cited they were to hear I was doing it. My goal, my barom- meter for success is to be able to make them proud when they come and see it.”

Another classic Chinese tale, The Injustice of Dou E That Moved Heavens and Earth, comes to Shaw in the form of Snow in Midsummer, appearing at the Jackie Max- well Studio Theatre begin- ning Aug. 8. Adapted from a 15th century drama from the Yuan Dynasty, this reimag- ined work is part ghost sto- ry, part murder mystery and part family drama.

Elsewhere, The Spiegeltent is back for 2024, with a num- ber of unique performances that will continue the trend begun during the pandemic of tapping the varied talents of the members of the Shaw ensemble. The lineup there includes a cabaret, a variety show and two musical revues.

“So many of the audience members and our company spoke about the beauty of the Spiegeltent this year,” Ramp- ersad says. “It’s such a relaxed atmosphere for theatre. We have some really dynam- ic programming there for 2024.”

Also returning for 2024 are the coffee concerts, jazz speakeasies, gospel choir perfor- mances and intimate and interactive songbook events. And A Christmas Carol, directed by Ryan G. Hinds, re- turns to the Royal George in November.

Shaw’s 2024 season begins April 6 and runs until Dec. 22. For tickets and information visit shawfest. com/2024-season.

You’re invited for the holidays at the Shaw!

Buy Both Holiday Shows and Save 20%
Walk A Mile returns, need more crucial than ever

The numbers continue to get more staggering each and every year. In its 2023 annual report released last month, Gillian’s Place announced that 293 people lived in their St. Catharines shelter in the previous 12 months, 127 of them children. In addition, the non-profit organization’s community outreach services assisted 2,017 people with legal advice, Child and Youth counselling, transitional housing support and other programs.

As well, Gillian’s Place, which offers shelter as well as programs to support victims of domestic abuse, answered 10,383 crisis calls and texts over that same time.

With the annual Walk A Mile In Her Shoes fundraiser less than two weeks away, it’s a good time to discuss the importance of the work done by Gillian’s Place to end gender-based violence.

“It’s a pervasive issue in our region,” executive director Nicole Regehr told The Local. “This is an important fundraiser that really shines a light on something that is more typically kept behind closed doors. It’s also a real opportunity for men to become allies and work toward ending something that has typically been a women’s issue.”

Having participated in the walk last year as an ambassador, I was welcomed into the shelter for a tour last September. I saw first-hand the common area facilities where the women and children prepare their meals and participate in important programs.

I also met some of the staff who work in the child care area and who lead workshops. It was clear, as well, that the former Victoria School location on Niagara Street was bursting at the seams, evidence of the necessity for their Build a Safer Future Capital Campaign, designed to raise $8 million for an additional five private bedrooms and 10 beds along with a 9,000-square foot annex to accommodate their community outreach and violence prevention programs.

One of this year’s ambassadors, St. Catharines mayor Mike Saioce, recently sat down with me as well. “The idea that gender-based violence still exists,” he said, “should be offensive to anybody. As male and male-identifying allies we have to be part of the solution, we have to get the word out, and we have to raise money because the simple reality is it’s awful that a place like Gillian’s Place has to exist. But it absolutely does have to exist. Gender-based violence is an epidemic.”

That was made official last year when Ontario attorney general, Arif Virani, wrote exactly that in a letter in response to a public inquest into a triple femicide in rural Ontario. And just over a week ago Siace and other members of Niagara’s regional council voted to join more than 47 municipalities and townships across the province in declaring intimate partner violence an epidemic.

“We need more resources within the system for all levels of government to start to deal with this properly,” Siace added. “This lets our community know that this is a serious issue.”

Regehr explained. “It’s a signature fundraiser that goes a long way to ensuring that the organization can help the most vulnerable. “One of our most important programs is our legal program,” Regehr explained. “We employ a family law lawyer. Our legal system can be daunting and difficult to navigate, especially when you are leaving a violent situation. That program is one that is completely funded through fundraiser dollars.”

She added that the organization needs to raise $1 million every year to sustain its current operations. As the demand for Gillian’s Place’s services continues to rise, Regehr said, “it’s more important than ever that they continue to have that sustainability.

So once again on Oct. 14, I will be at the Pen Centre slipping into a pair of high heels to join the other male allies in the walk to end gender-based violence. I hope to see you there.
Pam and Nick, journey leaders hailing from Niagara-On-The-Lake, share their Vietnam experience with Craig Travel.

Niagara-on-the-Lake’s peaceful setting contrasts with our vivid memories of Vietnam. As journey leaders for Craig Travel, we’ve accompanied numerous travellers through this enchanting country, celebrated for its captivating landscapes, vibrant culture, and mouthwatering cuisine.

The streets of Hanoi greeted us with an exciting blend of sights. You’ll find rows of shoe stores, bustling market stalls, and intrepid sidewalk vendors offering exotic snacks like worms and snakes! Amid this lively chaos, talented locals offer pedicures, manicures, and makeup artistry right on the pavement.

In contrast, Hoi An’s rural charm and the serene ambiance of the beach resort provided a welcoming blend of relaxation and convenience. The accommodations throughout our journey were nothing short of stunning, and the dedicated staff consistently went the extra mile for every guest.

Picture this: You can have a tailor-made suit, skirt, or jacket measured and crafted in the morning, and it will grace your hotel room by dinnertime!

The popular scenery of Sa Pa, where emerald terraced rice fields sprawl beneath the rugged peaks of the Hoang Lien Mountains, is the very image of Vietnam’s iconic green step farming. This region is a haven for various ethnic minorities and is home to Fansipan Mountain, the country’s loftiest peak.

An absolute highlight of our journey was an enchanting overnight cruise along the spellbinding Ha Long Bay, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, where we explored an array of caves, grottoes, and a myriad of impressive rock formations.

History enthusiasts will also find immense value in exploring the Củ Chi tunnels, originally excavated for wartime communication in the 1940s and extending to the borders of Cambodia. Several of these tunnels have been expanded to accommodate visitors, providing an immersive window into Vietnam’s past.

Warm-hearted locals invite travellers to partake in their daily activities at local stores, bustling market stalls, and intrepid sidewalk vendors offering exotic snacks like worms and snakes! Amid this lively chaos, talented locals offer pedicures, manicures, and makeup artistry right on the pavement.

We found the perfect fusion of thrill and culture on our rickshaw ride to the Temple of Literature in Hanoi, a treat for history and architecture enthusiasts alike, offering a deep dive into Vietnamese heritage. The water puppet show is another cultural gem, presenting performances infused with traditional Vietnamese music, live acts, and captivating storytelling.

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In Hoi An’s historic canal network, a UNESCO gem.

No visit to Vietnam is complete without savouring two culinary highlights. First, Phở, a fragrant Vietnamese soup brimming with broth, tender meat, rice noodles, and aromatic herbs. Second, the exquisite egg coffee, a luscious concoction of egg yolks, sugar, condensed milk, and Robusta coffee, reminiscent of a crème brûlée gloriously blended into your coffee cup.

Don’t miss out on saving $200 per person when you book by November 1st. Join us in 2024 as we return to relish the beauty of Vietnam!
(NC) As the winter season quickly approaches, your vacation plans may be looming. Before you board your next flight, here are some helpful travel tips from the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority.

Arrive early. When planning your vacation, don’t forget travel time to the airport! It is best to arrive early so you can park, check-in and get through security without the need to rush. Airlines recommend you arrive two hours ahead for domestic flights and three hours in advance for U.S. and international flights.

Ask for assistance. If you are unable to lift your baggage onto the screening conveyor belt, or if you need help removing your items from the bin after screening, you can let the screening officers know that you require assistance. Upon request, they’ll expedite the screening process for you.

Identify your medication. When travelling through security, medications should be removed from your carry-on bag for inspection. Prescription and essential non-prescription medications are exempt from the 100-millilitre liquid, aerosol and gel limit. Although they don’t need to be in the one-litre bag with your other liquids, place all of them together so you can easily show them at security.

Choose easy-to-remove outerwear. When going through security, you must remove outer layers, such as hats, coats and scarves, and place them in a bin for screening. To prevent setting off the metal detector, avoid belts or clothing with large buckles, and limit the amount of jewellery you wear to the airport.

Limit inorganic products. Are you travelling with a secret spice blend for your famous holiday dinner? Perhaps you’re planning on baking with your grandkids and are bringing the ingredients. Before you pack food and spices, remember that certain inorganic powders are limited to a total combined quantity of 350 milliliters in carry-on baggage. Find more travel planning tips, or check if an item is allowed in carry-on, at catsa.gc.ca.

With the change in season, Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre program offerings transition to fall-themed classes and workshops for artists of various levels and interests. Programs in a variety of medium including pottery, glass, wax, watercolor, acrylic, oil and digital art. An in-person, art history lecture series that kicked off this summer is continuing through fall with more fascinating topics.

For older adults needing an extra help with technology, an iPad introductory workshop is available for those 50+ to register. This can be supplemented with an online workshop focusing on apps such as ProCreate and Sketches. These programs are available in part by Government of Canada’s New Horizons for Seniors Program funding. The early birds wanting to get a head start on their holiday preparations, workshops on glass tree ornaments and wreath making are open for registration.

According to Dayna Riemland, programs coordinator at Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre, “We welcome art creators of all ages and skill levels to our programs. Whatever experience and expertise or preferred medium, you’ll find our programs offer a great place to connect and explore your creativity.”
(NC) Your eyes are your window to the world – they allow you to do everything from perform everyday tasks to enjoy the beauty of the world around you. When it comes to your vision, it is important to be proactive. Use these simple tips to keep your eyes healthy:

- Book an annual eye exam: Stay on top of regular eye exams. Less than half of Canadians report visiting their eye care professional every year. But it’s only with exams that they spot underlying issues – even if your vision seems good.

- Take a screen break: Our eyes need a break from all our devices. Consider following the 20-20-20 rule. Every 20 minutes look at something 20 feet away (6 metres) for 20 seconds – to minimize eyestrain.

- Eat healthy: Like our bodies, our eyes need nutrients to maintain good health. Eating foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids, beta-carotene, vitamin C and E, such as fish, leafy greens and citrus fruits, can help support healthy vision.

- Protect your eyes from UV light: Sunglasses and hats are not just fashion statements – they protect eyes from harmful UV light, which can contribute to the development of certain eye conditions.

- Stay informed: Vision changes as we age, and common conditions like presbyopia and cataracts can develop. Yet in a survey by Alcon Canada, nearly two-thirds of Canadian seniors aged 55 to 79 said they knew very little or nothing about cataracts. Vision changes as we age, and common conditions like presbyopia and cataracts can develop. Yet in a survey by Alcon Canada, nearly two-thirds of Canadian seniors aged 55 to 79 said they knew very little or nothing about cataracts.

Many of us enjoy the opportunity to buy baby gifts, yet the cost of that cute outfit, teething toy or set of stacking blocks is surprisingly high for its relatively short period of use. Finding something that will make a difference for years to come can feel elusive. The best gifts are often useful, unique, thoughtful and practical. For many parents and grandparents, the rising costs of education, housing and overall living are raising concerns about their children’s (or grandchildren’s) ability to be financially secure in the future. Here are two gift ideas that will be sure to make a lasting impact on their lives.

- Fund their Future: Many parents are already contributing to a Registered Education Savings Plan for their children, making tax-free, annual payments towards their future education costs. You could help top up this educational fund for a benefit that will make a big difference in the future. Other savings vehicles include in-trust or bank accounts in your child’s name and Tax-Free Savings Accounts.

- Provide lifelong support: Many people aren’t aware that whole life insurance can help at key milestones in a person’s life before they pass away, including the ability to access cash for a down payment on a home, for education costs or for a supplement to their income in retirement. That accessible cash grows as you pay the premiums. As policies can be paid off within 10 or 20 years, the children in your life receive financial benefits at no additional cost to them. Find more information about whole life insurance at rbcinsurance.com/wholelife.
Pillitteri comedy night raises $86,795 for Terry Fox Run

Joe Pillitteri gave a special shout-out to Ward Simpson for being such a great supporter of the community. (Supplied)

Friends and family, including Eileen Lamb, Caroline Martelli, Steve Smith, Eileen Pillitteri-Smith, Fred Fox with Joe Pillitteri, Vince and Margaret Pillitteri, Colleen O’Gorman and Terry Waud were at the community centre to support the Terry Fox Foundation. (Supplied)

He also thanked those who donated wine, food, raffle and live auction prizes, and gave a special shout-out to Ward Simpson, “an inspiration” for his long-standing support of the community, including the Terry Fox Run.

When Team Pillisy’s fundraising from the comedy night, and more than $50,000 from his run, is added to the NOTL run total, $177,741 has been raised for the Terry Fox Foundation, with more money coming in, said Joan King, the local run organizer.

Pillitteri typically finishes his comedy nights with an inspirational quote from Fox, but this year chose to write a letter instead — the 2023 T-shirt theme was ‘Dear Terry’ with messages sent from participants over the years printed on the shirts, and an invitation to others to send letters to the Terry Fox Foundation.

“Dear Terry,” Pillitteri read, “Tonight, just like every single time we hold this show in your honour, your spirit was alive. ‘I don’t think it’s an accident that I hold you in such high regard: I’m blessed with family that loves and cares for me like yours did for you. Your brother Fred came to the show tonight. He seems nice. I’m surrounded by a team of friends, new and old, that rally around me when something bigger than all of us must get done. I sold them all ticket to our show tonight.

‘Here’s the thing I’ll tell anyone who will listen — there is no better example of perseverance and hope than you, Terry Fox. When facing any problem, I often think of you getting up early in the morning and doing what you did — head down and running ahead, doing the thing that had to be done.

‘My kids always have a laugh at my ability to dig deep into big goals, especially when it comes to Terry Fox, but every person that runs, bikes or walks for the Marathon of Hope makes a difference.

‘My children all participate in the run, and nothing feels like a bigger parenting win than that for me.

‘I think you would be as proud of all the people in this room as you would of any of your Terry Foxers around the world. You once said, ‘I want to set an example that will never be forgotten.’ Tonight is living proof that you’ll never be forgotten. Not on our watch.’

And for a moment of quiet, after a night of comedy and much laughter, there wasn’t a dry eye in the house.

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Love Where You Live: SUPPORT Local
“It’s never been done this way before,” Adrian tells The Local. “It shows how the patriarchal focus causes the family to decay over time.”

“The two daughters,” Lucas adds, “the oldest is just like her dad, tough, smashing heads against concrete, but she’ll never be her dad because she’s not his son. And the other one wants nothing to do with it at all. She has no voice, she feels she can’t be herself.”

Esposito, known for her work in Spike Lee’s Summer of Sam and the television series Blue Bloods, plays the family’s matriarch in the film she wrote and directed herself. Domenick Lombardozzi (The Sopranos Boardwalk Empire) portrays the mob boss, while Odessa Akan and Emily Bader play Connie and Rose, their daughters.

As the hip-hop duo 80 Empire, Lucas composes the music and the beats, while Adrian writes, sings and raps the lyrics. They have collaborated in the past with some of the biggest names in the hip hop world, including Cee-Lo Green and Obie Trice and Swiftly McVay of Eminem’s D12 crew, and they’ve opened shows for Snoop Dogg.

Though the first generation Canadians of Italian descent are dedicated family men, each married with two children, 80 Empire’s music is authentic hip hop, with hard-edged lyrics that often take on life beyond the fringe. They record their music out of Lucas’ Old Town basement, where a professional studio has been set up.

Things got rolling with Esposito when the brothers found her email address and sent her a message, urging her to take a look at the 80 Empire Instagram page to check out some of their music. Within 24 hours, she had begun following them, and the connection grew to the point where she realized their music would fit well with her new project.

It became official when she reached out to them for some tracks.

“She would tell us the kind of mood of each scene,” says Adrian. “She wanted to evoke a specific era. The film is set in the 1980s and 1990s, so we wrote some music to capture that feel. We recorded full songs, even though only a short bit of it might be used in the movie. There’s one instrumen- tal, though, that plays for about 30 seconds of the scene.”

Though Fresh Kills has not yet been released theatrically, Esposito has been shuffling the final cut from film festival to film festival. It’s been screened at festivals in San Diego and Italy, and was featured at actor Geena Davis’ Bentonville Film Festival in Arkansas.

It’s also been featured at New York’s Tribeca Film Festival and San José Cinquest this past summer, both of which the Rezza Brothers attended, where they had a chance to walk the red carpet along with the cast.

“At Tribeca, Jen pointed to us, and called us “her guys” right in front of Spike Lee,” says an incredulous Adrian. “She didn’t have to do that, shout us out in front of him. And not only did she give us credit for the songs in the film, we are listed in a section for special thanks.”

Their music, cinematic in its nature, has also found its way into other film and television productions recently. Following their attendance at Tribeca, the brothers headed to Long Island, where they attended the premiere of a new television program called Grownovers, another 1980s mob story starring the likes of Armand Assante and Chazz Palminteri.

“We later sent Armand a new music video (shot partly at Ravine Vineyard) we shot with actor Raoul Max Trujillo (Mayans MC, Apocalypse, Get Shorty),” says Lucas. “He wrote back, ‘your stunning homage to 80s rap music, attitude and style works so well as a short film on so many levels. I wish I had been a part of this.’ And seven more of their songs appear in Jerry Brid, a film by writer and director Greg Russo that is currently in post-production. Their friend, actor Gino Catalalli, connect- ed Russo to the Rezzas, who composed the title song for the movie.

All of this has led to Adria- n and Lucas developing their own ideas for some films of their own. They have plans to shoot a documentary in Italy with their close friend Fatty Soprano, the filmmaker who has helmed a number of their music videos through the years. And they have begun formulating scripts for a short horror film and another revolving around the life of an assassin.

This weekend the Rezzas are boarding back down to New York State, where they will re- connect with Esposito for a screening of Fresh Kills Oct. 7 at the Hamptons International Film Festival.

And they’re hoping that in the near future Esposito, like Trujillo before her, can find some time to come up and visit sleepy little Niagara-on-the-Lake.

“She has a great singing voice,” Lucas says. “We want to bring her up here to record some music with us. We want to take her to Willow (Cakes and Pastries on Mary Street) and introduce her to some of Niagara’s wineries.”

“She’s really salt-of-the-earth,” adds Adrian. “She is so talented, so inspirational. And she’s just so appreciative and grateful. And that’s the beauty of all of this. We’re at that stage in our lives where we want to work with people who value what we bring to the table. She does, and she’s treated Lucas and I like family.”
Calls to action ‘a hike, not a leisurely stroll’

continued from page 1

Inclusivity. You can be an ally. You can be a friend. We can remember and respect our treaties together, as they were put in place for everyone’s benefit.”

For every child who did not come home, or who suffered abuse at residential schools, she said, “we pray for peace for you. We pray for the ancestors to retrieve you so you can be wrapped in the Creator’s embrace. We remember you and will not let your suffering be in vain. Instead, it will be thoughts of these children that will raise our determination even further to embrace what they were not permitted to — who we are as Indigenous Peoples.”

CAO Marnie Cluckie spoke of the importance of education about the residential school system, “and on how this legacy continues to affect Indigenous Peoples, and offer support to the many families and communities that have been affected.”

“As we come together today,” Cluckie continued, “let us remember that Truth and Reconciliation are not just words; they are actions, values and principles that guide us toward a better society.” Truth and Reconciliation Day, she said, “encourages us to listen, learn and empathize with Indigenous communities’ experiences, recognize their rich cultures and honour their resilience.”

The annual ceremony, said Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa, is intended to “honour the lost children, the survivors of residential schools, and their families and communities.”

“It is a time for us to come together to remember those who have been deeply affected by the residential school system,” he said, “and to work towards creating a better future.”

Sabrina Shawana, with a group of women she referred to as “Indigenous moms” called Strong Water Singers, was at the ceremony for the second year. She said she sometimes finds herself saying aloud what she should have kept in her head, however, what the Anishinaabe woman said also needed to be heard.

Referring to the calls to action, she said, “they can’t just be words. They have to be followed by action 364 more days of the year.”

The walk to reconciliation, she added, “is actually a hike. It’s not a leisurely stroll — you have to put some weight into it. I hope you will help us by carrying some of that weight with us.”

Co-founder of Strong Water Singers, an award-winning group of women who got together to use music to tell their stories, Shawana said their first song, The Longest Walk, was written for a group of Indigenous activists who marched for months from Alcatraz Island to Washington, D.C. in 1978 to bring awareness to their cause.

The women’s second song, Wildflower, was performed around the Every Child Matters flag — the wildflowers, she explained, were from seeds sown by children as they played, running freely through the fields, but once the children were taken away from their families and put into residential schools, the wildflowers stopped growing.

This was the third year a Truth and Reconciliation ceremony has been held at the town hall, and to finish the ceremony before a reflective walk through the Virgil Sports Park, the flag was raised and then lowered to remain at half staff “as a sombre reminder of the past,” said Cluckie, “and as a promise to work together to ensure a brighter future.”
Royal Oak’s Jamie Lynn Gillingham, whose Indigenous name is Diindiisii Kwe, led the students through a fun activity focusing on the seven grandfather teachings. Using seven beach balls, the member of the First Nations of the Mississaugas of the Credit, whose grandmother was a residential school survivor, discussed the meaning of the seven rules of life — respect, love, wisdom, humility, courage, truth and honesty. After that full school activity, the various grade levels split off for age-appropriate group exercises. Gillingham taught the intermediate students how to bundle sweetgrass, sage, tobacco and cedar to offer the four sacred medicines, while the younger students gathered at other spots with their teachers for other learning activities.

In the library at St. Davids Public School, teacher Bryce Honsinger led a session for all intermediate students that focused on the Indigenous teachings of the sanctity of and reverence for the land, and how the arrival of settlers changed all of that. Following the library session, the students returned to their classrooms where they reflected on what they learned. They wrote down on sticks their reactions to the lessons that were based on the books the Water Walker and A Stranger at Home and a collage was created for display in the school’s front hallway.

Similar activities based on age-appropriate readings were completed by other classes from Kindergarten to Grade 6, all resulting in displays within their classrooms.
Maria Klassen  
The Local

Captivating reflections of sky and sea abound in the current exhibit, *High Arctic Light*, at the Art Gallery of the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre, the work of artist Janet Read. The journey through this engaging display of the Arctic landscape runs from now until Oct. 29.

Read is a painter, musician and poet. She grew up near Lake Simcoe and has always loved the water's edge. During artist residencies in Newfoundland and Ireland, she sought access to the sea. This led to a lifetime investigation of the ocean — a metaphor for strength and fragility. Water in its many forms continues to inspire her work. She says she does not use photographs, and does not work on site. Read paints from memory of what she has seen on her travels.

She says she hopes to forge a connection between her work and the audience, inviting them to experience the Arctic landscape on a deeply emotional level. Read uses an array of mediums such as linen canvas instead of cotton, and hybrid drawing and painting on Dura-Lar. The hybrid combination consists of oil and graphite powder. Dura-Lar is a clear, glossy polyester film, used as an artwork surface for permanent inks. Her interpretation of light, colour and shape invokes an emotional resonance into a mysterious landscape.

Read says her experience in the Arctic changed her colour palette towards azure blues and icy aquas, with just a touch of red and purple, hinting at the wildflowers of the arctic tundra or the lights hidden in the ice. Blue is a dominant colour. It can suggest the depth of an iceberg, in the layering process of her work, or the knowledge of a world rich in colour below a frozen surface. She translates her personal dialogue with the landscape into a visual language. All of her Arctic works have a sense of space and light that combine to create a transcendental experience for the viewer.

At the heart of this exhibition lies a spiritual response to the landscape and the imperilled ecosystems of the North. Read says she hopes her work will heighten awareness and nurture a sense of stewardship for the delicate equilibrium of our planet. The urgent environmental challenges that confront the high Arctic include the rapid degradation of permafrost, sea ice and glaciers. Read's ongoing body of work presents landscapes of consciousness, from being in the natural world in the Arctic, and from encounters with those for whom the high north is both wild and home.

"My paintings are reflective of my personal experiences, always aware the indigenous voices must be heard to tell their own stories and history," she says. "My work tells the story of a visitor, a sojourner, to a remote and sublime region of Canada."

The opening reception will be held Sunday, Oct. 15, from 2 to 4 p.m., with Read offering comments around 2:30 p.m. Come out and chat with the artist personally, savour her artwork, connect with fellow art enthusiasts over refreshments, and enjoy an assortment of wine provided by Chateau des Charmes.

Art by Kristian Willman — $400

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Stick curling great way to stay active during winter

Mike Balsom
The Local

When golf season winds down each fall, Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Janet Trinder’s social life shifts from Eagle Valley Golf Club just outside of St. Davids to the Niagara Falls Curling Club.

There, the energetic and outgoing Trinder participates in stick curling, a form of the sport in which the rock is released from an upright position rather than from a crouch out of the hack, as most people are familiar with.

With about 45 members of the club hailing from NOTL, Trinder feels the Morrison Road club hailing from NOTL, familiar with.

“Being able to use the stick,” says Trinder, “is a way to keep up with the game we love as it gets harder physically to get up and down all the time.”

Sue Barlow from St. Davids is out Tuesday to try the sport for the first time, encouraged by two friends who play stick curling. She drifted away from the sport but came back to it after he retired about 12 years ago. He switches from time to time between traditional and stick curling.

“My body is starting to get older,” Elliot admits. “Sometimes I get down there and can’t get up that quickly. I might eventually have to go to the stick curling once I can get back on the ice. I love the feel of being down there, sliding with the rock, but there have been times I felt that I couldn’t get the rock down the ice, so I switched to the stick.”

Niagara Falls resident Randy Elliot curled back in high school at A.N. Myer Secondary. He drifted away from the sport but came back to it after he retired about 12 years ago. He switches from time to time between traditional and stick curling.

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“The game is just to get you out here to have some fun,” Elliot proclaims. “Going up there (the lounge) and talking to everyone, and meeting new people, that’s a major part of senior curling here.”

Trinder, a member of the Niagara Falls club’s board of directors, points out that new members who want to ease into the club can join on a trial basis for a half year at a price of $225.

Trinder is certain that anyone who does so will soon want to move up to a full adult membership, which is $840 per year. A social membership, which allows you to participate in club bonspiels and social events and to play out of club for Ontario Curling Association competitions, is only $60.

The free Learn to Curl open houses continue Thursday Oct. 5 and Friday Oct. 6 from 10:00 a.m. until noon. Get out and try a stick or no stick, and tell Janet The Local sent you.

Local Staff

A victory at the Fall Classic at Humberstone Speedway in Port Colborne brings a great way for driver Austyn Werstroh to cap his successful season.

His father, Jamie, there to see the win, says a field of 33 drivers tried to make the feature race, with 25 starting. Austyn finished second in his heat to qualify for the feature, where he started 12th, and by lap 10 had made it up to third just as a caution came, bringing the field back together.

After the restart he was able to work his way past the leaders up to first, says Jamie, and didn’t look back, earning his fourth victory of the year.

Austyn is a full-time driver in the mini stock division at Merriville Speedway in Thorold, where he earned three victories out of the 15 scheduled races this season, placing him second overall in points.

He also ran the Art Hill Classic at Ohsweseen Speedway in August, which is the biggest mini stock race of the year with over 40 cars trying to qualify for one of the 25 starting positions.

Austyn was able to win his heat which put him into the feature, where he led many laps. With a late race caution he was passed, but was able to hold on for a second place finish.
Big third period seals win for Preds

Mike Balsom
The Local

It took a wake-up call from coach Kevin Taylor before the Niagara Predators exploded for four unanswered third period goals to knock off the Toronto Flyers 7-4 in Greater Metro Junior A Hockey League action Friday night.

Despite strong goaltending from Toronto’s Tucker Clyne, the Preds cruised to a 3-0 lead early in the second period. But the Flyers clawed back with one in the second and two more in the third to tie it up with 11:18 to go.

Those two Flyers’ goals in the final period came during a stretch of lacklustre play by the Predators, with turnovers and traffic in front of the net. "There were a few turnovers tonight," Mankowski admitted about his team’s play early in the third. “We’ve been playing better teams, so I think tonight we played down to their level a bit. Once they came back, though, we brought it back up. The guys responded well after they (Toronto) tied it up.”

The well-travelled Mankowski comes to the Preds after stints with the Vancouver Giants of the Western Hockey League, Sharks of the British Columbia Premier Hockey League and the Florida Junior Blades of the United States Premier Hockey League last year.

With first-round draft pick Denning also hailing from the Western New York area, the two have grown to know each other well the last month or so. "We carpooled together," said the 17-year-old goaltender. "And we come over so often for both practices and games that we’re starting to get to know the guys at the border, too." Off the ice, Mankowski is taking some online classes and also holding down a job at the Armour’s Armour outlet store in Niagara Falls, New York.

The Flyers, by the way, played Friday’s game in plain white jerseys, no logos on their fronts. New owners Paul Di Rienzo and Melissa Hull were still awaiting delivery of their new uniforms for the team that was previously branded as the Streetsville Flyers.

In contrast to the Flyers, who are now 0-8 following a three-game weekend, the Preds have played only three games this season, losing their opening match to Tottenham and beating St. George for their first win on September 22.

Their next game, this Friday against a much stronger Durham Roadrunners squad, will be a litmus test for coach Taylor’s young team. He admits that he needs to see more intensity in their on-ice sessions this week to effectively prepare for a much tougher team. “Last Wednesday in practice I spent so much time trying to get their attention that I felt like I was a substitute teacher in school,” Taylor said. “And I watched the (pre-game) warm-up tonight and I saw the same lack of discipline. Maybe it’s because of the week-long breaks between games so far. It’s tough.”

And they’ll hit the road for their first away game Saturday night, when they lace up at Colborne, Ontario’s Keeler Centre to take on the 1-2 Northernterriers.

With or without border, colour graphics optional.
Prices starting at $26. Deadline: Monday 3 p.m. Call Joy 416-817-9520 or email: joy@notllocal.com

Preds’ Shane Kaplan fights for the puck against the boards.

Preds’ Logan Baillie watches as his shot beats Flyers goalie Tucker Clyne in the third period. (Photos by Mike Balsom)
Chorus Niagara fundraiser supports youth programs

Lauren and Vaughn Goettler threw open the doors of their Ricardo Street home Sunday to hold a successful Scholar’s Salon fundraiser for Chorus Niagara youth programs.

About 50 people joined Chorus Niagara artistic director Robert Cooper, Salon event chair Daryl Novak of Niagara-on-the-Lake and various board members and volunteers to experience performances from nine incredibly talented young singers. Each performer was an alumnus or currently participating in one of five Chorus Niagara programs designed to support their musical education and aspirations.

One by one, each singer addressed the audience with a bit of biographical information about themselves before explaining their reasons behind choosing the songs they were to perform.

Baritone Joel Lewczynski of St. Catharines and soprano Isabella Milano of Niagara Falls are both former members of the Safe-By-Safe High School Choral, which provides talented high school singers the opportunity to rehearse and perform with Chorus Niagara for one concert during their regular season.

Lewczynski wowed the crowd with an amazing rendition of Gehsemane, from the musical Jesus Christ Superstar, saying he first tackled the song in his musical theatre class in his final year at Laura Secord Secondary School. Milano, a 2022 A.N. Meyer Secondary School graduate now in her second year studying music at the University of Toronto, closed the afternoon with a playful version of Puccini’s O Mio Babbino Caro.

Tenor Marcus Tranquilli and soprano Adrianna Polito have both spent time as Robert Cooper Choral Scholars. The program provides a platform for singers between 18 and 25 years of age to explore their artistic potential and hone their vocal and choral skills through opportunities to perform as soloists and choral leaders. It comes with a $1,000 stipend they earn as they are mentored by Cooper, one of Canada’s foremost choral musicians.

Fresh off a 10-week stay in Italy where he studied with two opera groups, Tranquilli sang Donizetti’s Una Furtiva Lagrima, while Polito chose to present French composer Gabriel Fauré’s Les Berceaux, explaining before singing that the song’s swaying nature sets up perfectly the double metaphor of the rocking cradle and a ship at sea from the song’s lyrics.

By the end of the afternoon, those in attendance at the salon had donated almost $15,000 to support those programs, as well as Chorus Niagara’s Children’s Choir, the Associate Conductor Program, and the Theresa Pothier Vocal Scholarship, presented Sunday to 17-year-old Sir Winston Churchill student Alden Robinson.

“Your support is so crucial in providing these valuable opportunities to these talented young singers,” said Cooper after the final performance of the afternoon. “We can’t express our gratitude enough to you.”

Mike Balsom
The Local

Lauren and Vaughn Goettler with Chorus Niagara board chair Daryl Novak and artistic director Robert Cooper, behind the Goettler’s home, which overlooks the Niagara River.

Adrianna Polito entertains at the fundraiser.

Marcus Tranquilli singing at the Chorus Niagara fundraiser.

Chorus Niagara Fundraiser guests gathered for a group shot, which included Victoria Hoshowsky-Bel, artistic director Robert Cooper, Joel Lewczynski, Adrianna Polito, Isabella Milano, Marcus Tranquilli, Alden Robinson, Emma Kelto-Scoccardo, Tessie Mostowy, Bailey Williams, pianist Jessica Cowan, and MC (as well as Local reporter) Mike Balsom. (Photos supplied)