



**New Year's  
Levee  
cancelled**  
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Justine Nicholls, Sam Quinn, Chris Bjorgan, Owen Bjorgan, Katelyn Knox, Chris Knox, and Pat Quinn are the seven who completed the three dips Sunday to make it official. (Mike Balsom)



## Penguin Dip records official 46th event

**Mike Balsom  
Special to The Local**

Though it was officially cancelled as a public event for the second straight year due to the pandemic, a small group of die-hards gathered quietly at Ball's Beach on Boxing Day for the 2021 Penguin Dip.

It was a family affair of sorts, almost an extension of the Christmas gatherings for the Bjorgan, Quinn and Knox families.

Perennial penguin Chris Bjorgan was there with his daughter Justine Nicholls. The mother of two had skipped a few years but was back for the fun last weekend. Chris Knox was there with his daughter Katelyn. At 21 years old, she was about to take the plunge for the very first time along with her friend, Shawn Kelly, 27.

Pat Quinn was back for another dip. He joked that he was the only penguin to arrive for the event with proper COVID protection, then proceeded to pull a scuba mask out from behind his back to prove it.

Rounding out the group of eight were Sam Quinn and Owen Bjorgan, the last to show up for the 1 p.m. scheduled meeting time. Bjorgan, who writes a regular column for The NOTL Local, pushed this reporter to take the plunge in 2022. It's one of the tricks of the job, by the way, to come up with creative yet believable excuses as to why one has to report on the news, and not necessarily be a direct part of it!

With no crowds there to watch and no heated trailer to retreat to between dips,

**Continued on page 2**

## NRP officer cleared of shooting in NOTL

**Mike Balsom  
Special to The Local**

The province's Special Investigations Unit (SIU) has cleared a Niagara Regional Police officer of any criminal offence in the fatal shooting of a man on the Niagara River Parkway almost a year ago.

After a Jan. 5 pursuit that had begun just under an hour earlier on Lundy's Lane in Niagara Falls, police forced a stolen pickup

truck driven by 27-year-old Martin Gordyn off the Parkway near Line 3 and surrounded the vehicle with their cruisers.

Officers left their vehicles and converged on the pickup. According to the SIU report, one officer discharged his firearm twice at Gordyn, who was pronounced dead that afternoon at the Niagara Falls hospital.

The incident started when the NRPS responded

to reports of a possible impaired driver from a business on Lundy's Lane. An employee of the business said a man and a woman, later identified as 29-year-old Lindsey Archer of Dundas, were unconscious in a pickup truck. NRPS officers arrived and the occupants of the truck fled in the vehicle. That same vehicle had been involved in several pursuits earlier in the day in Welland, and also in Hamilton.

A short time later, NRPS officers attempted to use a spike belt on the Niagara Parkway near York Road, with no success. A rolling vehicle block was also attempted. A Niagara Parks Police Service cruiser was then rammed by the vehicle.

Cruisers continued to follow the pickup truck along the Parkway. At about 2:21 p.m., the cruisers forced the truck off the road and into the east

ditch, north of the intersection and to the east of the footpath, where Gordyn spun the wheels of the F-150 in an attempt to flee once again.

Officers approached the truck, asking the suspects to step out, and they refused. There was an attempt to break a window to open the door, and when that failed, pepper spray was applied through a rear window, but Gordyn and Archer remained inside.

When Gordyn was seen reaching into a duffel bag, an officer, fearing he was reaching for a gun, fired, hitting Gordyn in his shoulder. The driver continued to rifle through the duffel bag, coming up with what the officer thought was a gun. He fired another round through the rear window of the truck at Gordyn, this one proving fatal.

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# Veterans, first-timers keep tradition alive

Continued from page 1

the whole thing took less than 10 minutes.

Chris Bjorgan, joking that he was wearing clothes from Costco because not a single piece of his outfit would absorb any water, led the group down to the beach.

As they waded into the river, Katelyn was the first to submerge herself completely, come up for air and head back to shore, perhaps showing her inexperience. She then journeyed back in for her second dip while the others were still making their way back to shore.

Her inexperience caught up with her when it was pointed out that to make it official, she was supposed to dip exactly three times with the group. She actually ended up going in four times.

Kelly, wearing a Patrick Marleau Toronto Maple Leafs jersey, packed it in after his second dip, perhaps the only truly sane one in the bunch. The other seven all met the requirement to submerge three times to make it an official dip.

For first-timer Katelyn, it was a big accomplishment, and she was happy to have taken part in a family ritual.

“It wasn’t as bad as I thought, it wasn’t that cold,” she said as she towelled off at her car. “I felt pressure to do it, but just once is okay. I’m not sure whether I’ll do it again or not.”

If she doesn’t do it again, Katelyn will not be able to officially call herself a penguin. To become a member of the NOTL Penguin Club, she’ll have to repeat her accom-

plishment two more years. If she changes her mind eventually, though, those two years do not have to be consecutive.

The last year a public NOTL Penguin Dip event was held was 2019, when 20 people took to the water at Ball’s Beach.

In 2020, plans to mark the 45th anniversary by making it a massive fundraiser for Red Roof Retreat were scuttled due to the pandemic. But Chris Bjorgan made his way down to the beach, joined by even fewer swimmers than this year, to keep his streak alive.

Before the weekend dip, the two Chris’ reminisced a bit about previous years, when up to 70 hopeful penguins took the plunge some time in the mid-90s. They also tried unsuccessfully to remember the name of a woman who celebrated her 80th birthday by jumping into the river.

Lorne Bjorgan, Chris’ brother, was part of the first Penguin Dip, which started when he and three friends, Terry Ball, Rick Oswald and Leo McCarthy, were looking for a way to cool down after playing ball on Easter weekend. It was moved to Boxing Day as an official event the following year.

Over the years Red Roof Retreat, started by Steffanie Bjorgan and her husband Moe, another of Chris’ brothers, was the recipient of funds raised by participants. Steffanie has done the dip, and was there this year but stayed on shore, cheering on her brother-in-law and her son.

When this reporter snuck away to avoid further speculation as to whether or not he

might lose all sense of reason and join in one day in the future, he overheard the group

deciding whether or not to head over to the Sandtrap Pub & Grill to celebrate their

collective accomplishment. At least one of the penguins said he preferred heading

home to sit by the fire to watch the Bills play the Patriots.



Organizer Chris Bjorgan and his nephew Owen Bjorgan, both veteran penguins, enjoyed the 46th annual dip.



The group comes out after their first dip for 2021 Sunday. (Photos by Mike Balsom)



Katelyn Knox took her first icy plunge for this year's Penguin Dip at Ball's Beach.



Pat Quinn joked he was wearing a mask – a scuba mask — to protect against COVID.

## Queen Street icewine activities postponed

Penny Coles  
The Local

New Year’s Day has officially been proclaimed Icewine Day in Niagara-on-the-Lake, but unfortunately, Icewine Festival activities, slated for later in the month, have been postponed in response to the alarming surge in

COVID-19 case numbers and hospitalizations across the province.

It was a difficult decision, but one that had to be made, says Eduardo Lafforgue, president of the NOTL Chamber of Commerce.

However, wineries across the region are expected to go ahead with

some of their month-long plans to celebrate icewine, following all COVID restrictions, he said, although it’s best to check with them first.

Wine lovers are invited to participate in the annual celebration on the official Icewine Day by opening a bottle of their favourite icewine on Jan. 1. This rare

dessert wine is only produced in a handful of countries around the world, and due to Ontario’s unique climactic conditions, Niagara-on-the-Lake winemaking sub-appellation is now the largest and best producer of authentic icewine.

“Icewine propelled Canada onto the world’s wine stage nearly three decades ago and has become inextricably tied to our winemaking heritage as it continues to garner global acclaim,” said the town’s proclamation.

“The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake will continue to pay homage during the month of January to this rare and exquisite gift from Mother Nature.”

As an alternative way to enjoy icewine during January, residents can have it delivered to their door, paired with icewine culinary delights or recipes.

Visit [www.icewinetrail.com](http://www.icewinetrail.com) for more information, and use #IcewineDay when you open a bottle of icewine, the NOTL Chamber of Commerce suggests.



### CAN A HUMIDIFIER HELP DRY EYES?

**Dry eye tip for cold weather:**

Sleep with a humidifier in your bedroom. By adding more moisture in the air, tears evaporate more slowly, keeping your eyes more comfortable. Keep in mind that both furnaces and air conditioners decrease humidity in the air. Want more tips on dry eye treatment or management? Contact us today!



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## CADET BOTTLE DROP OFF

### January 8



**Locations:**

- Legion 124 - 410 King St, Niagara-on-the-Lake
- St. Davids Lions - 1462 York Rd, St. Davids
- Cornerstone Church - 1570 Niagara Stone Rd, Virgil

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# Advocacy group hoping to make more noise

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

With a second virtual public meeting coming up in January to discuss development plans for the Parliament Oak property, a group of residents wants to ensure their voices are heard, hoping town councillors will step up to protect the iconic historic property in the heart of the Old Town.

In 2018, the District School Board of Niagara sold the 1.6 hectare King Street property to developer Liberty Sites Ltd., following community protests and failed negotiations with the town, which had made several offers to purchase it.

After three years of discussions about possible development of the property, residents got their first look at a proposed subdivision in June, and were vocal with their objections. They had an opportunity to respond to a revised proposal from Liberty, which slightly reduced the density of their proposal, at a November virtual open house, which showed five detached homes, four semi-detached, and 71 apartments.

The concerns voiced at that meeting were that the apartment building is too high, and the project as a whole too dense, and not in character with the neighbourhood. Residents also fear if the proposal is approved, it will set a development precedent for the remaining large parcels of land in the Old Town, such as The Wilderness, another significant historic property nearby.

Since that first open house, Alan Gordon, Marilyn Bartlett and Connie Tintinalli, neighbours of the property, have banded together to establish a platform for those opposed

to the development. Called Preserve Our Special Town (POST), they have created a comprehensive website, postofnotl.com, that explains what is planned, and how residents can best voice their objections.

They are encouraging attendance at the Jan. 10 public meeting, and asking for comments to be sent to the planning department and council before the meeting.

“We want as loud a community as possible to voice their opinions to council,” says Gordon.

“Our council put in place the tools to control development through our entire town,” says Tintinalli. “They already have the tools, now they have to use them to reject this proposal.”

In addition to concerns over density, height, and the roads to enter and exit the development, she is concerned about the “architectural language” of the design, which didn’t change in the revised proposal, and is out of keeping with the surrounding neighbourhood, she says.

In the first submission, she adds, “the drawings kept showing the height of the building at 11.0 metres, but this was taken from the first storey and not the average grade as per the bylaw definition of height. The proposed bylaw amendment at that time submitted by the developer and architect included a revised definition for height for this property alone. This was an audacious attempt to deceive. If a requirement of zoning cannot be met, relief is asked for - you don’t change the definition.”

This change in definition was dropped in the second submission, and a height of 12.4 metres (excluding the mechanical penthouse) was indicated in the proposed zoning

amendment, says Tintinalli. “This is not shown on the elevations or sections however, the deceptive 11.0 metres remains on the drawings.”

They are already getting good traction on their website from others who agree with their concerns, including letters from several people objecting to the development, even one from an out-of-town couple who love to visit.

As well, 33 people have filled out sign-up forms in the first 10 days, says Bartlett, and nobody has commented in favour of the proposal.

With COVID preventing an in-person open house, “our voice is limited,” says Gordon. “If we were meeting in person, there would be hundreds of people lined up to speak. We’re now generating the momentum of people in town with our website, not just from this neighbourhood, but all over Niagara-on-the-Lake.”

People move to NOTL to get away from the intense development being proposed on King Street, adds Gordon. “This is the complete antithesis of what people come here for.”

They are anxious about the town staff recommendation, which is expected to be discussed at the Jan. 10 planning meeting, and how council will proceed.

“We’re very nervous,” says Gordon. The only “noise” so far is from the town’s heritage committee and urban design committee, which have been surprisingly supportive, which is worrying, he says.

“Their response was certainly lame,” adds Bartlett. “We just don’t know what to expect.”

Gordon has prepared a draft of what he plans to say at the public open house, referencing what he calls “the boring details” that may put people to sleep but are also what he hopes will convince council to reject the proposal.

For instance, although it is easy to see the density is much greater than the surrounding area, the numbers show the average density of all blocks surrounding the site is 3.47 units per acre, says Gordon, while the net density of the proposed development is 22 units per acre, the apartment building alone is 27 units per acre, the houses 6.6 units per acre, he says.

The developer is applying



Although the apartment is three storeys, residents say from the back it will look like a four-storey wall.



The design of the homes and apartments will include lots of metal and stone, out of keeping with the Old Town neighbourhood, POST members say.

for a medium density designation, which has a limit of 12 units per acre, adds Gordon.

“The developer, architect and even planning staff keep referring to this as a ‘medium-density’ development,” says Tintinalli. “Medium-density is six to 12 units per acre, not the 22 to 27 units per acre proposed here. If we hear it often enough, will we believe this to be a medium-density development?”

Gordon also cites the Official Plan addressing intensification, and notes that the Parliament Oak property is not in an area designated for intensification as shown in the Official Plan.

He also cites the consid-

erations for medium density development, and notes the proposal is well in excess of the 10 metre-height permitted, including a portion that includes the mechanical penthouse which is 16.4 metres high when measured from Centre Street.

He notes too that the traffic is directed toward Centre and Gage Streets, both local streets, directly contravening a section of the Official Plan.

The public meeting about this development is scheduled for Monday, Jan. 10, at 6 p.m. POST is asking residents to participate, and if possible register to speak by contacting Colleen Hutt, acting town clerk, at clerks@notl.com or

905-468-3061, ext. 248, as soon as possible, but prior to 12 noon on Monday, Jan 10.

Following registration, you will be provided with instructions to connect to the public meeting on your computer, tablet or telephone.

Written comments may also be submitted via email at clerks@notl.com or by mail to the Town Clerk, 1593 Four Mile Creek Road, PO Box 100, Virgil, ON L0S 1T0. Reference File Nos. OPA-04-2021 and ZBA-08-2021 - 325 King Street, Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Also, residents can join POST’s mailing list for updates by emailing: update@postofnotl.com



Connie Tintinalli, Marilyn Bartlett and Alan Gordon have formed POST, to prevent the current Parliament Oak development proposal from going forward. They are hoping for community involvement at the Jan. 10 public meeting. (Penny Coles)

## New Year’s Levee cancelled



The Jan. 1 New Year’s Levee at Navy Hall, a 30-year tradition hosted by Parks Canada and the Friends of Fort George, has been cancelled for the second year. The Friends of Fort George were disappointed to cancel it again, but are very hopeful they will be able to host it in 2023. (File photo)



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# Officer believed suspect was reaching for a gun

Continued from page 1

In his ruling, SIU Director Joseph Martino said he was satisfied that the officer “believed the complainant was reaching for a gun when he initially discharged his firearm, and that the complainant had

retrieved a gun and was about to shoot at the time of the second shot.”

The item Gordyn had retrieved from the duffel bag was later identified as a butane torch, often used to vaporize methamphetamine. Shaped like a garden hose nozzle, Martino said it was reasonable for

the officer to have mistaken the torch for a gun.

“I am satisfied that the officer, at the time of the shooting, discharged his weapon in the reasonable belief that it was necessary to do so to protect himself from death,” Martino concluded.

The pickup truck driven by Gordyn was reported

stolen in the Hamilton area on Dec. 15, 2020. On the morning of Jan. 5, a Hamilton Police Service officer spotted the truck blocking the drive-through lane of a Tim Hortons in Winona. The engine of the truck was running, and the driver was asleep behind the wheel.

The driver of the pickup truck drove away, and the vehicle was last seen travelling at high speed eastbound on Highway 8 toward oncoming traffic. The NRPS and OPP were alerted but the Hamilton officer did not pursue the vehicle.

The three police services continued to communicate throughout the day on the whereabouts of the F-150, and it is believed the truck struck both a house and another vehicle in an attempt to escape pursuit. The OPP had also applied a spike belt earlier in the day in an attempt to stop the truck.

In his SIU ruling, Martino pointed to the havoc caused by Gordyn beginning when the officer had spotted the truck in Winona.

“By the time his truck was effectively immobilized by the side of the road, the complainant had led police officers from four police services on an hours’ long rampage through the streets of several jurisdictions. The lives of third-parties had been directly imperiled as the complainant ran stop signs and red lights, grossly exceeded the speed limit, travelled in oncoming

lanes of traffic, and struck objects along his path. No reasonable person would have been in any doubt of the complainant’s dogged determination to escape police apprehension at any cost.”

“I am unable to fault the officer for approaching the open rear driver side window with his gun drawn and pointed at the complainant,” Martino continued. “In the circumstances, the officer was entitled to defend himself from an imminent and reasonably apprehended danger to life and limb. Thereafter, when the officer believed he saw a firearm in the complainant’s hand, he was similarly justified in meeting a potentially lethal attack with lethal force of his own.”

Archer, who originally gave police a false name at the scene, had been under a court order to remain at home at the time of the shooting. She pleaded guilty in February in Ontario Court of Justice in St. Catharines to charges of obstructing police and failing to comply with a court order.

Archer was sentenced to time served and placed on probation for 12 months.



It took four police services to finally pull over the suspect in his pickup truck on the Niagara River Parkway, and several lives were endangered during that time the SIU ruling said. (Mike Balsom, file photo)

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## Purchasing a home with an in-law suite/rental unit

With increasing housing prices throughout Niagara Region and beyond, the idea of a home with rental potential is probably attractive to some home buyers. The addition of an income producing unit in a residential area can be a great way to supplement the cost of home ownership, but there are several things buyers should consider before making an offer. Chief among these is making sure a rental unit is permitted under municipal zoning by-laws.

If the property being considered already contains one or more rental units, that does not mean that use is legal, and can be continued. The municipality could later take action to stop the use, which would force the new owner to either convert the property back to a single-family home

or seek a costly and time-consuming by-law amendment.

It is often assumed that continued use will be “grandfathered,” but that is often not the case. The Planning Act (Ontario) does protect continued use of a property from future zoning by-law changes. For example, I own a single-family home in a zone that allows for a duplex, I renovate my house to add an additional unit and rent it out to a tenant. If the municipality passes a new zoning by-law that no longer allows duplexes on my property, I am entitled to continue my use as a duplex. The duplex would be considered a “legal non-conforming use” and would be protected under the Planning Act from retroactive application of the new zoning by-law.

Of course, this is not al-

ways the case. It is quite possible that a property has been converted to include multiple units contrary to the existing zoning by-laws, and nothing has happened to alert the municipality to such use. In this instance, there is nothing preventing the municipality from enforcing the existing by-laws.

The best protection for a potential purchaser is to ensure the offer includes a warranty from the seller that the existing use can be continued, this allows your lawyer to insist on proof from the seller that the use can be continued prior to closing. If the seller won't agree to that, then the next best option is to make the offer conditional on the buyer completing their due diligence in this regard.

Once you've been satisfied that the rental unit is legal, and you've closed on your new home, there is still work to be done. Renting out a portion of your house makes you a landlord and subject to the Residential Tenancies Act (Ontario). The landlord and tenant relationship can be a tumultuous one if you are not careful at the beginning



of the relationship. Following a few simple guidelines when selecting a tenant will help avoid future issues.

**Ask for references and check them:** Taking a few minutes to speak with a previous landlord can provide valuable insight into the tenant's behaviour and the reason they are leaving their previous apartment. It's reasonable to assume behaviours, whether good or bad, will continue with you.

**Put it in writing:** The Ontario government has recently developed a standard residen-

tial lease which is required for all residential tenancies. You can find the form online, and it contains all the necessary provisions under the legislation. The standard lease can and should be supplemented with the specific terms of your agreement. Anything that is not contrary to the Residential Tenancies Act can be added. Putting your agreement in writing will avoid any debate if the relationship goes south.

**Act quickly:** whether it is a request from the tenant, or a missed rent payment,

don't put it off. Responding promptly to tenant concerns will help avoid any complaints to the Landlord and Tenant Board. Similarly, if your tenant misses a rent payment, don't accept excuses, serve them with an N4 (Notice to End a Tenancy Early for Non-payment of Rent). This form can be found on the Board's website. The Landlord is not required to proceed with an eviction if the tenant later pays up, but it will start the clock in case an eviction becomes necessary.



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# EDITORIAL

## May 2022 bring the good news we hope to hear

A look through the 2021 editions of The Local quickly showed a theme emerging.

The year in review shows how little we knew and how naive we were as we followed the trajectory of COVID. It felt like *deja vu*, with the news we're hearing today, and wondering what 2022 will bring.

The headlines even in the beginning days of the pandemic begged for some good news; talked about "trying to make sense of what doesn't make sense," and when vaccinations were on the horizon, asked for patience. The vaccine roll-out was deemed a race to prevent a spike in cases — something we've heard daily for the last year, it seems, only the race was for first doses, then second, followed by getting it to children. And now similar headlines refer to our booster shots, likely to be

repeated by fourth doses.

We were told the control of COVID was in our hands; mask-wearing and physical distancing became part of our lives, and any events or activities that weren't cancelled were virtual.

And yesterday, with more than 8,825 new cases in Ontario, 491 people hospitalized with COVID-19, and 187 in intensive care, we expected to hear more of the same, however the scheduled media conference was cancelled.

Dr. Kieran Moore, Ontario's chief medical officer of health, was expected to update guidance around testing and contact tracing, and some disease control experts were thinking there might be stronger restrictions announced, but that has been postponed until later this week. CBC is reporting it's to allow time for a review of U.S.

guidelines shortening the recommended isolation and quarantine period.

Meanwhile, Ontario Science Table's director Dr. Peter Juni said Monday vaccinations are like snow melting in the sun — the efficacy of two doses is diminishing quickly, down to about 15 per cent, from about 90 per cent a month ago, making the booster shot vital. He expects the omicron variant to be very aggressive over the next few weeks, "and then the world will have changed, quite dramatically, everywhere."

By yesterday's numbers, Niagara-on-the-Lake had the fourth-highest number of cases per 10,000 people in the region, at 53.5. It had 101 cases, a lot for this small town. Niagara Long Term Care was listed as having a COVID-19 outbreak that started yesterday, according to the

region's website, heart-breaking news which might have something to do with the number of cases in town.

Once again, we're in a race to get booster shots, and although it's not likely to help prevent the expected spike, we're told it will keep most people out of the hospital and intensive care — we might just experience mild cold symptoms.

On that note, thank you to the Niagara North Family Health Team for offering a vaccination clinic last Thursday at the former hospital.

The decision to do this was made after some emails from the College of Family Physicians and Niagara public health encouraging primary care to help with the third dose vaccination effort, said Dr. Karen Berti. Given the health team had done it before during the

pandemic, it was not that difficult to implement, she said. They turned it around within a week, thanks to staff and colleagues at the NNFHT, and were able to administer almost 200 vaccines over four hours to those 50 and older. They may do it again, although there are no clinics scheduled at this point, she said Tuesday.

With appointments through the Ontario booking system still hard to come by, watch social media for pop-up clinics, not requiring appointments, and if you see anything available close by, let your friends and family members know — it seems the best we can do at the moment.

The headline in last New Year's edition of The Local was "We're almost there, but we need to pull together." The eternal optimists had the finish line in sight.

Another case of *deja vu*, although we're all pretty worn out by the effort to pull together.

However, we really have no choice but to stay positive, remain cautious, and be grateful for all those health care workers who are still standing after two years of exhaustive, never-ending work. Let's continue to do our part in reducing the risk for ourselves, our family, our health care system and all those still working to keep it running, in whatever way we're asked, primarily by reducing our contact with others.

Oh, and happy New Year. Let's all hope to hear that good news we're still waiting for. It seems safe to say, again being optimistic, that this year can only get better.

Penny Coles  
The Local

## Winter night hikes a surprise gift to yourself



Owen Bjorgan  
Special to The Local

With snow season just around the corner, whether we like it or not, I would like to offer you up a new perspective on how to enjoy it.

There is a certain magic

with a winter night hike. Yes, you read that correctly — at night time. Your only job is to bundle up your body, and open up your senses to a completely different world. A world that many of us haven't given a chance before.

If you find the time in your schedule that correlates with the timing of mother nature, try to get outside once the sun goes down and the moon is out. Add a white coating of snow to the mix, and you have

a pleasantly surprising navigable world on your hands.

The white snow reflects light, and ironically, it even does so at night with whatever residual light is floating around. Your eyes will take a few moments to adjust, but a clarity will eventually wash over. The first theme that becomes clear is how well you can see at night at this time of year.

The beauty with the winter months, as I described in a recent article for The Local, has to do with observing the true lay of the land. Suddenly, you notice how the the landscape is truly shaped, and which monolithic trees have been hiding in the crowd of their forest community.

I have safely walked the rim of the Niagara Escarpment on a winter's night. I love seeing the quietly speckled quilt of NOTL down below. Dark squares separated by twinkling facets of life in St. Davids below and Virgil in the distance. This is also an excellent quiet time to hear owls in their nocturnal prime. I often hear eastern screech owls



Winter night hikes showcase great viewpoints in a new and interesting setting, thanks to snow and moonlight, as Owen Bjorgan demonstrates, in a photo he took of himself. (Photo supplied)

and great horned owls sending their haunting hoots through the forest. The sound travels wonderfully without any foliage, and a quiet, crisp winter evening. I have had success calling back to them and having a little chit chat.

I have wandered the icy chasms of the Niagara Gorge on a wintry eve. Hearing the growl of the Niagara River slumber its way through the trees is an unforgettable acoustic experience. I found fascinating boulders, bigger than a car, that were always hiding in plain sight. Now, they are opaque blotches in a landscape of white.

The stillness of such environments can be pleasantly interrupted by the blur of deer, coyote, or perhaps a fox cruising across the landscape. It is a wel-

come sight, as the kinetic movements break the static world of winter. You can also spot the forest's mammal dwellers from a great distance away.

I encourage you to try out your own winter night walk! With your significant other, with your kids, or even while catching up with a friend from out of town. Kids love the textures and sounds of icy puddles, frozen mud, and snow under their boots.

In particular, Niagara-on-the-Lake is a perfect location to give this a go for the first time. The Commons and the associated Paradise Grove trails are a peaceful and safe winter experience, complete with that sense of being close to home, and an abundance of epic trees and wildlife.

Likewise, checking out Niagara Shores park on a moonlit winter night is also a mysterious and enchanting experience. There is something to be said about Lake Ontario's mood influencing the cool body language of the mainland.

A walk in the local park or a trek along the Bruce Trail on a winter night is a free gift to the mind, body and soul this holiday season. Of course, just make sure you are dressed appropriately, and don't go alone.

On that note, I want to wish all the community of NOTL and the readers of The Local healthy and happy times with family, friends, and the great outdoors as we make our way into 2022. And, if you get out on a winter night hike, I'd love to hear about your experience with it.

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<b>MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS ACCESS</b> (Toll Free) <b>1-866-550-5205</b>	<b>ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS</b> Meetings every Wednesday evening 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. St. Mark's Parish Hall 41 Byron St., NOTL or find a meeting <b>905-682-2140</b>	<b>CRIME STOPPERS</b> <b>1-800-222-8477</b> (TIPS) niagaratips.com Text 274637 (CRIMES), keyword: Niagara, then your tip
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**Local**  
The Trusted Voice of Our Community

P.O. Box 430, 1596 Four Mile Creek Road, Virgil, L0S 1T0

Editor:  
**Penny Coles**  
penny@notllocal.com  
905-246-5878

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**Rosie Gowsell**  
composing@notllocal.com

Advertising Sales:  
**Karen Skeoch**  
karen@notllocal.com • 905-641-5335

**Julia Coles**  
julia@notllocal.com • 905-934-1040

**Helen Arsenault**  
Local Business Directory,  
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### View from the couch

**Donald Combe**  
Special to The Local

Only the British could wind together nine highly improbable love stories and make it all believable, as in *Love Actually* (Netflix, 2003); leaving the

audience dancing all the way home. However, having Hugh Grant, Laura Linney, Bill Nighy, Liam Neeson, Colin Firth and Emma Thompson certainly helps. It is the optimism of love we all sorely need.

Donald Combe is a re-

tired English teacher who loves to go to movies. Until he resumes going to theatres, he has graciously agreed to share his opinions, through "short and sweet" exclusives, of Netflix series and movies for The Local.



# The *Local* looks back at 2021



## It's volunteer week!

The week of April 18, many organizations in town recognized their volunteers, but with no in-person events allowed, it was difficult to do that. The Local used the opportunity to say thank you to all the volunteers who make our town such a great place to live and work. Still able to do their important job were the Newark Neighbours food bank volunteers, Cindy Grant, Pat Hicks, Marilyn Rickard, Genevieve Lawrence, Susan Sparrow-Mace, Frencyne Chenier, and Marion Ollerhead.



A Niagara College program, the birth of her son Eli and a job with a Niagara-based Indigenous arts consulting company helped change directions for the life of Claudette Cort, a young Indigenous mother.



**The kids are back!**  
Students headed back to St. Michael Catholic School in September, after a long absence.



Brian King, Mike King, Lisa Wall, Tonie Mori, Mary Krahn, Joanne Mantini and Miguel Mori were at Mori Gardens to help empty out the decades-old business. It was sold, and some, although not all of the structures on the Niagara Stone Road property have been bulldozed.



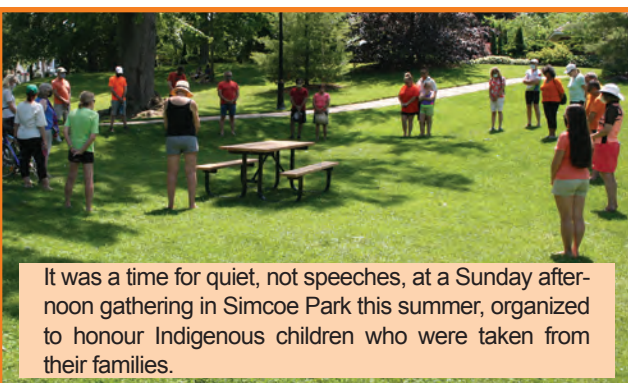
Twelve-year-old friends Leila Ridesic, Eliana McManus and Ruby Eltoft, on the steps of the former hospital steps July 1, now used by Royal Oak Community School. The girls, all very knowledgeable, used the occasion to talk about Indigenous children, residential schools, and their feelings about what they have learned. (Penny Coles)



Gary Burroughs, Lord Mayor Betty Disero and Rick Mills lift a beach towel to unveil a plaque to honour long-time swimming instructor Vi Mills at the Memorial Park pool in August. She died in February, 2020.



Lisa Laughton, a registered nurse at the St. Catharines hospital, created this sign for her Lakeshore Road fence, hoping it would send a positive message and maybe make people smile. She saw a similar sign advertising a fitness centre, and realizing it had helped lift her spirits and made her smile, felt the message might do the same for those in the community where she has lived for the last 25 years. Work was going well, the health system "has a good handle on things," she said, she was feeling optimistic about the future, and "it's a big fence," she joked. The sign was up over the family day long weekend, and she planned to leave it as long as it remained in good shape. The sign, which gained attention on social media, was taken down by a town staff member on the way to work.



It was a time for quiet, not speeches, at a Sunday afternoon gathering in Simcoe Park this summer, organized to honour Indigenous children who were taken from their families.



Maanak Gandhi and sister Maansi Gandhi of St. Davids sit with their memorial to the 215 children whose remains were found at a residential school in Kamloops, B.C. Their mother, Shriti Gandhi, wanted to be sure that as young as they are, they understand what we have learned about our Indigenous children.



Joan King was given the Council Appreciation Award by the town, an award created specifically for her.



Resident Alan Montgomery received the first pharmacy vaccination in Virgil, from pharmacist Martina Schubert.

# 2022

**Wishing you a safe, healthy, and prosperous new year!**

The Niagara-on-the-Lake  
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# New Legion president committed to helping veterans

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

Victor Packard is the first to admit he hasn't had much experience to prepare him for the job of president of the local branch of the Royal Canadian Legion, but he is determined to fulfill the legion mandate of serving veterans, community and country, and he knows he has help he can rely on when needed.

He is committed to ensuring the legion continues to be more than "just a sports bar and a social club," he says, and although it is proving difficult during COVID restrictions, he aims to carry on with service programs in place to look after its members.

Packard became president in an appointment that was unusual and unexpected.

When former president Paul Eramian resigned on July 1, Moe Pam, then first vice-president, was expected to assume that role. However he resigned a week later, before he could be formally installed, due to family issues that made him unable to assume the job.

Packard, who had been appointed second vice-president by Eramian just a few weeks earlier, found himself vaulting from awards chair on the board to the role of president, a position confirmed in a fall election.

He's not a veteran, he quickly adds, his only "military" experience being an Able-bodied Seaman in the Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corp in St. Catharines in 1960. He spent some time in Sydney, N.S. as a 14-year-old, on a training base in a naval encampment, and enjoyed it. "I was at an age when most of the boys were saying, 'if only there was a war. But looking back, I know we were fortunate there was no war.'"

He continues to be a strong supporter and volunteer of organizations connected to the military, including serving on the boards of the Friends of Fort



Victor Packard says running the Legion is much more complex than running a business. (Penny Coles)

George, the Niagara Military Museum, which preserves the history of veterans, and as a member of the 57th Artillery Association, Lundy's Lane Historical Society, the Niagara Historical Society and as a Master Mason. He's also a member of the Niagara Military Institute, "which is rather similar to the Legion. I'm quite honoured to be a member of that."

He spent most of his career as an industrial metallurgist, in a local plant that got taken over by an American company. "I was in my mid-forties, with a job that paid well enough, and life was really good," he said.

But due to disagreements over some of the company policies, which he felt led to unsafe products going to market, he found himself out of a job and without a lot of prospects, as most manufacturing jobs were being cut back.

So he, his wife and 12-year-old daughter went to Germany, where his wife was from, planning on staying six months. Once again, life was good, and included

lots of travel throughout Europe, but after about a decade, they decided to come home, and settled in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Packard, a handyman, started up a home renovation business, from which he is now "mostly retired, except for a couple of people I still look after."

That gives him time to devote to the Legion.

Its focus over the last year has been an outreach program designed to help those suffering from social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly veterans and seniors, thanks to a government grant of \$23,200 from the New Horizons Seniors Program. It's coming to an end in March, but has supported home visits and wellness checks, digital connectivity with family through the purchase and distribution of tablets, as well as instruction on how to use them, and the purchase of a refrigerator for Newark Neighbours, so they could store more fresh, healthy food for those in need, says Packard.

The Legion's service rep-

resentative Jackie Dickieson "is a champion," he adds, checking in with veterans and making sure they have any help they need. Some of the elderly members have little or no family nearby, and limited contact with the outside world, and really appreciate her visits. "She does a marvellous job with them."

Amongst legion members, what is so important to Packard is the camaraderie, and that has been difficult to maintain during COVID.

"It's affected us in so many ways, including our finances. We had to shut down the fish fry, and that's our biggest fundraiser, pretty much our sole source of revenue. Without it, we couldn't exist."

It also made it difficult to plan any of the usual events, from Remembrance Day services, curtailed for two years, to an annual dinner and their New Year's Levee, "which is really important to us. Every time we tried to plan an event it was a major, major problem. Whatever we did plan, we had to cancel."

Being president of the Legion "is far more time than I

ever imagined. It could easily be turned into a full-time job. I'm here four days a week," he says. "It's different from anything I've ever done before. Running a company is much more simple than running the Legion. Dealing with the membership, the executive, paid employees and volunteers makes it a much more complex organization, and then you're dealing with the public on top of that, as well as day-to-day changes during COVID making everything that much more difficult."

He goes back to restrictions that impact the camaraderie, "the real devastation of COVID." Traditionally, the executive involves the membership in its decisions at regular meetings. There are more than 300 members, and about 40 of them might show up to those meetings, which have not been held in more than a year and a half.

Because of that, "all decisions have been executive decisions."

Although they try to keep members up-to-date through a newsletter, "they're not as involved as they should be.

It's separated us from the membership. We're hoping to have our first general meeting since COVID on Jan. 26, and really wondering what is going to happen. It's going to be an interesting meeting."

When he took over the presidency, he adds, "in my naive state I thought I could make everybody happy, but I've learned that doesn't happen."

The major concerns have involved the cancellation of normal activities, such as darts, card-playing and shuffleboard, he says, as well as the volunteer and awards dinners.

Some of the sports have recently resumed for members, but not for leagues. That is expected to be a conversation during the general meeting. "That's my feeling, the disruption of our social programs, and the financial decisions will be the big issues. The executive can only approve certain financial matters — beyond that the membership has to be involved, for issues such as renovations, and outreach programs."

As a board member, Packard says he had no idea what the executive did, and has relied heavily on Marg Boldt, who has been president three times, for help. "Without her I couldn't have made it past the first two weeks."

Amber Holiday, the president before Eramian, has also been a huge help, he says. "I have definitely relied on both of them."

Before Christmas, Packard was looking forward to being able to plan the resumption of the many cancelled events, and hoping to get back to normal, "maintaining what the Legion stands for, being in service to the veterans. That's my objective, to see that does happen."

And if not next month, with COVID cases rising, he'll be chomping at the bit and looking for ways to make it happen as soon as possible — for the veterans, and for the seniors of the community.





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**ERICA A. BLYTHE**  
(VAN DE LAAR)

*Wishing you all a safe, healthy and happy New Year!*

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# NOTL Rotary sponsors art program for kids

Local Staff

Christmas came early for children served by the Healing Arts for Kids (HAK) program this year. Thanks to the support of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Rotary

Club, the Niagara Pump-house Arts Centre's HAK program returns in 2022. Coming up on its fourth year, HAK offers free in-studio and virtual summer art programs for disadvantaged children and youth in the Niagara Region.

Jeannie Manning, local service committee lead of the NOTL Rotary Club, recently presented a cheque for \$4,000 to the Pumphouse to fund the program. "Thank you to the Niagara-on-the-Lake Rotary Club, for your support

in allowing us to send deserving children to summer camp through the Healing Arts for Kids program," said art centre director Rima Boles. "The Niagara Pump-house Arts Centre is very appreciative of everything they do for our community."

During the summer break, the Pumphouse offers art camp programs to children and youth, ages six to 12. Students explore different art mediums through projects in drawing, painting, sculpture,

and more. Organizations, schools, teachers, or principals who would like to nominate a child to participate in the Healing Arts program are encouraged to contact [office@niagarapumphouse.ca](mailto:office@niagarapumphouse.ca).



Rotary member Jeannie Manning (centre) had good news to share with Lise Andreana (left), Pumphouse board chair, and Rima Boles (right), art centre director. (Photo submitted)

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# St. Davids mourns Bob Gill

Penny Coles  
The Local

If you have been to a St. Davids Lions Carnival, chances are you have run into Bob Gill, for years one of the club members who served in the food barn he helped to build.

Gill, who moved from St. Davids to Fort Erie with his wife Dianne about seven years ago, died Tuesday, Dec. 21, at the age of 80.

He was well-known for his work in the St. Davids community, where he lived for about four decades, and was an active Lions club member.

Steve Burrows, club president during the year before Gill moved from the community and left the club, describes him as “fiercely dedicated and hardworking, and someone I liked as a friend. Whatever Bob’s goal was, it was always what he thought was best for the club and the community.”

Gill’s career was as a St. Catharines firefighter, where he was known as a mentor to many, retiring after 37 years as platoon chief.

He was also known for being handy at building or fixing just about anything.

That made him the perfect person to be chair of the Lions housing committee, looking after the upkeep of the grounds and buildings. “He was someone you could count on to fix what needed to be fixed,” says Burrows. “There is no doubt that he was headstrong towards setting a goal, and then making sure it got done.”

When he moved to Fort Erie he again became involved in the community, as a member of the town’s property standards committee, which he really enjoyed, says his son Brian.

He was also a devoted family man, says Brian, who was one of four brothers. In 1994, Todd, one of his brothers, died in a car crash, in which he was a passenger, leaving the three siblings, Brian, Bob and Greg. Bob and Dianne also raised TJ, Todd’s son, born four months



Bob Gill (Photo supplied)

after his father’s death.

He was “definitely close to his sons,” says Brian. “He was an amazing man and father, always making sure we were safe, and heading in the right direction. He could be strict, but he allowed us to make our own mistakes and learn from them. He also taught us, ‘never settle for anything less than you want, and do the best you can.’”

He was a man with a million stories, says Brian, as did all who knew him — everyone has their favourite ‘Bob’ story, showing he could be headstrong, but always for the right reasons, for the benefit of his family and his community.

With four grandchildren and four great-grandchildren, he was surrounded by family, and acted as both a mentor and father to all, but had a particularly strong bond with his four-year-old granddaughter Makenzie, says Brian. He loved spending time with her, taking her to soccer games, piano or dance lessons. “The two of them bonded in a way I’d never seen in my dad. He was a great man, but he was an even greater man when he was around her. Something in her changed him.”

Pat Darte has considered Bob a good friend for decades, and saw first-hand his love for his community.


“He was always the guy who wanted to be doing the work, whatever needed to be done. Nothing stood in his way — he would just go ahead and do it. He was also a pretty funny dude — a guy who had as many stories as I did. He also knew the right way to do things, with pretty much everything. He was a great St. Davids guy, a very talented guy.”

Bob had been battling leukemia from his days as a firefighter, when he, Brian and Makenzie all contracted COVID. “The two of us had no underlying conditions,” says Brian, “but his lungs were badly damaged.” He was in the hospital for about a week, and died with Brian, Bob and Greg with him at the end.

Friends and family will be received at the Hulse & English Funeral Home & Chapel at 75 Church St. in St. Catharines Thursday, Jan. 6, from 2 to 4 p.m. and 7 to 9 p.m. Proof of full vaccination will be required. A graveside service for Bob will be held at the St. Davids-Queenston United Church Cemetery on Friday, Jan. 7, at 12 p.m.

In lieu of flowers, donations to a local brain injury charity, CNIB or to the Canadian Cancer Society for leukemia would be appreciated by the family.

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# Known best as Angelo the barber, and loving family man

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

Angelo DelVecchio has put away his scissors for the last time.

The well-known Virgil barber died early Monday morning at the Welland hospital site at the age of 87.

Although he and his wife Angela brought up their five children in the rooms over the barbershop, which he purchased in the mid-1960s, the couple moved down the road to a new home about 30 years ago, with family continuing to live above the shop.

At the age of 81, he sold it and retired at the urging of his family, who wanted him to have some time to relax, but he could still be seen strolling through Virgil most mornings, stopping to pick up breakfast at Silks for his grandchildren before they left for school.

His was the last remaining barbershop in town, and after he sold it, he was forever telling his family, even when he was in the hospital, how much he missed the work he loved, his many regular customers, and talking to people every day. Some of his customers were the fourth generation, says his daughter Rita DelVecchio and many had become his friends.

DelVecchio arrived in Canada from his native Italy in 1957, just months after leaving the army, where he had served with the military police. He had met the love of his life, Angela, just once in Italy before she came to Canada, and he followed her and married her two months after arriving in Welland.

He took a job with a barber in Thorold, says Rita, and then walked to Virgil one day to ask about a job at a barbershop on the corner of Four Mile Creek Road and Niagara Stone Road, now a coffee shop. While he worked there, he and Angela lived over the shop, where their two oldest children



Angelo DelVecchio relaxing with his wife Angela at Sherkston Shores. (Photo supplied)

were born, and after seven years of saving enough money — he was earning \$50 a month — he was able to purchase the building across the street.

In addition to his five children, all of whom have stayed close by, he felt very fortunate to have 12 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.

“He loved all the kids, and worried about them all — his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren,” says Rita.

“He left Italy to come to Canada to make a better life for himself, his wife and his family, and he did that. He had a good life here. He always felt so blessed to keep everybody close by. He loved Virgil, and he loved Canada.”

His health had been failing in recent years. He was diabetic, and every other day one of his kids would drive him to the St. Catharines hospital site for dialysis. He also loved to go to the casino — he liked the dinner buffet — and to be taken shopping,

or to go out for dinner with family, says Rita.

He was recently hospitalized with a blood infection, and seemed to be improving, but after being moved to the Welland hospital, his organs began to fail.

Right up to the end, he was worried about his family, afraid of leaving his wife

and kids, Rita says.

“He loved his family so much. He was really a generous, kind and giving man. And we were blessed to have him with us for so long.”

His funeral will begin Thursday morning at Morse & Son Funeral Home on Main Street in Niagara Falls. Because of capacity limits,

those who wish to attend must reserve a spot at [www.morseandson.com](http://www.morseandson.com).

The funeral will continue to St. Vincent de Paul Roman Catholic Church in NOTL for the funeral mass, which will be celebrated at 11 a.m., with interment to follow in the Niagara Lakeshore Cemetery.

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# Outstanding minor hockey volunteer dies at 53

**Mike Balsom**  
**Special to The Local**

The Niagara-on-the-Lake minor hockey community is mourning the loss of former club president James Berg, who passed away late last week.

Current NOTL Minor Hockey Club vice-president Peter Flynn says it's impossible to overestimate how important the 53-year-old was to the organization.

In 2010, Flynn says he and James became members of the club's executive at a time when the organization had sunk into financial disarray.

According to the club's constitution, one custodial member of each family registered with NOTL Hockey receives one vote at membership meetings.

"We flooded the room that night (of the annual general meeting)," Flynn recalls, "and we were able to get those (board members) out. James became secretary, then, a year later (summer, 2011) I talked James into putting his name in as president because as secretary, he knew everything that was going on with the club."

Flynn says the first order of business under Berg's presidency was to dig out of the financial morass, and then came the reorganization of the AAA hockey organizations in the Niagara Region.

"The OMHA (Ontario Minor Hockey Association) wanted to have two zones for AAA," Flynn says, "one run out of St. Catharines, and one in Niagara Falls. They wanted us and Fort Erie to join with Niagara Falls, but they wanted to control the board. We went to meetings with them for two years before we decided to go elsewhere for AAA."

In a Facebook post on the NOTL 4 All page Sunday, Flynn credited Berg for his years of work to save hockey in NOTL, making the town a better place in which to live. A number of tributes poured in from other members of the community.

"It's heartfelt to read them," says James' wife Carolyn Berg. "There were so many people he impacted. We have friends who visit us regularly from out of town. We would go for walks, and we'd run into people and James would always stop and talk. They joked that he was the unofficial mayor of the town."

Carolyn and James met as students at Niagara District Secondary School. James was a year ahead of her, and she remembers him being in one of her classes. But the quiet student didn't speak much to her until the day he called to invite her to his Grade 13 prom. They've been together ever since.

Following high school, James spent a year at the University of Guelph, then moved on to Brock to take some business courses. He left Brock to begin a commercial painting business with a friend, also taking on some large-scale fence installations with Ontario Power Generation.

From there, he moved into real estate, then decided to return to school to earn a designation to become a purchaser. He caught on with Bosch Rexroth in Welland as purchasing agent, and then left to take on the role of quartermaster with the Niagara Regional Police Services a few years ago.

"He was involved in the building committees for both new detachments (in Niagara Falls and St. Catharines)," remembers Carolyn. "They were big projects,

and he won some sort of recognition award."

In fact, James received a Chief of Police Commendation in 2017. According to Chief Bryan McCulloch, it was for "his role in the monumental task of coordinating the furniture, equipment procurement and movement into the new headquarters while ensuring critical police operations were maintained."

The youngest of five children who grew up on Four Mile Creek Road, James was not an athlete and, according to his brother Brian, he never set foot on an ice rink or played any ball.

That may have had something to do with his diagnosis of Crohn's Disease at age 16. James underwent surgery for the malady twice, most recently this past year.

"He started with hockey when his kids started playing," Brian says. "He was a trainer at times, as well as his involvement on the board. He was really close to his kids. He coached them along in sports, gave them constructive criticism, always in a kindly manner, and he was very generous with his time."

In 2018-2019, Berg served as the Bantam Rep team's trainer under head coach Dave Rotella. In a season in which the team had a record of 2-30-3, Rotella says Berg always stayed positive.

"He's probably the whole reason I wanted to coach there," the Niagara Falls resident says. "He wasn't just our trainer, he was my right-hand guy. He kept me sane. We got along so well. He was always calm, always positive. Everyone liked him, and the kids felt comfortable around him."

Rotella says despite the fact Berg never stepped

onto the ice during their time working together, he knew the game extremely well. He also admired Berg's dedication to his family.

"He was a great father, and they're just a great family," says Rotella. "Three wonderful kids. I think that aspect came out in his coaching."

James loved to cook and bake, says Carolyn, and he willingly took on multiple housing renovations over the years.

"We built our first two homes, too," she adds, "and he managed both of those builds. The latest thing he did was an outdoor kitchen this past summer. And we did a major reno at his dad's cottage (in South River, near Algonquin Park), and he spearheaded that one, too."

Family vacations were a regular occurrence, many of them taking place at South River, where they enjoyed boating and water-skiing. Carolyn says his family was the most important thing in her husband's life, and they all loved to travel together.

James was active and seemingly healthy when he came home from work last week complaining of stomach and back pain. He passed away at home just a couple of hours later.

"He did so much for the community," Flynn added. "Anyone who encountered James Berg always said great things about him. He did it all in such a silent way."

As of press time there had yet to be a determination as to the cause of James' death. Besides his wife Carolyn, he leaves behind his three children, Mackenzie (22), Madison (20) and Mitchell (17), as well as his father Henry, four siblings, and a number of nieces and nephews.



James Berg with his wife Carolyn. (Photos supplied)



James Berg attended his son Mackenzie's graduation from the Brock University kinesiology program.



James Berg loved being involved in minor hockey with his boys. This was taken at a hockey tournament with his son Mitchell.



James Berg celebrates with his daughter Madison on her 19th birthday.

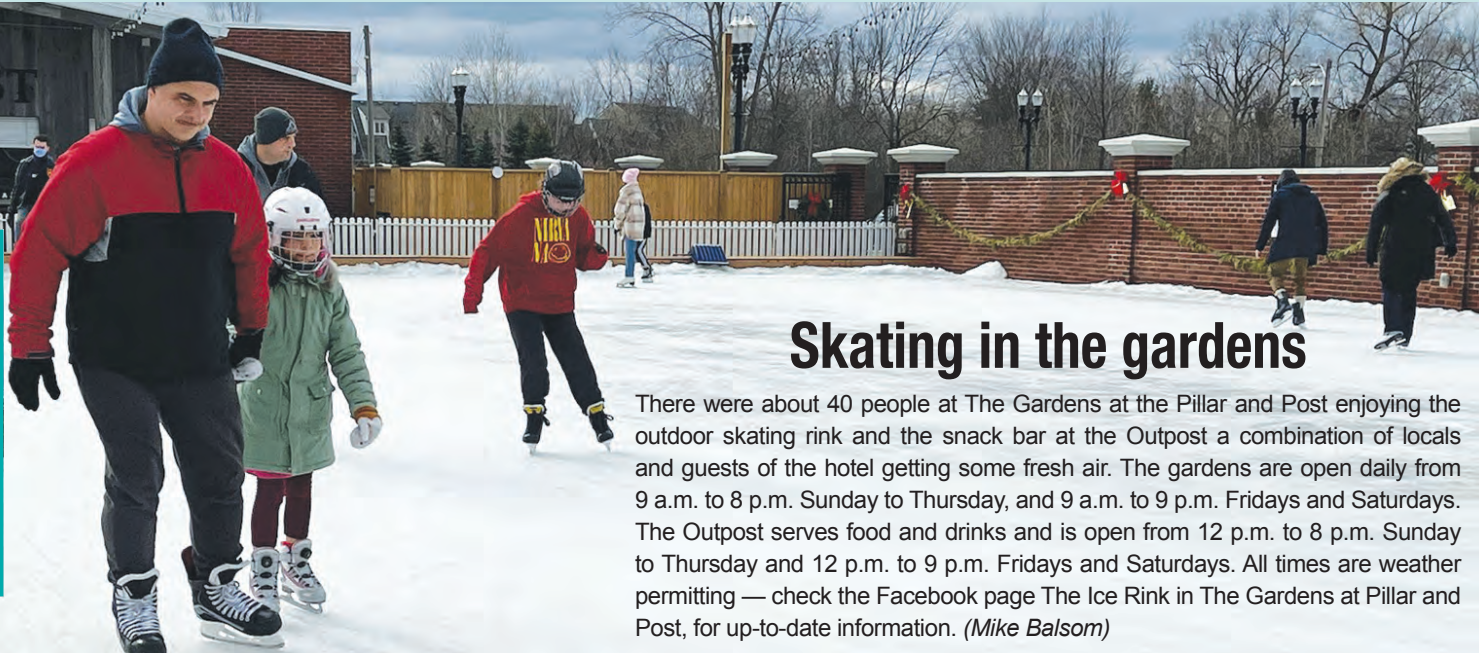


James Berg liked boating and waterskiing with his kids at the family cottage.



James Berg with former NRP Chief Jeffrey McGuire. He was given a commendation from the NRPS in 2017.





## Skating in the gardens

There were about 40 people at The Gardens at the Pillar and Post enjoying the outdoor skating rink and the snack bar at the Outpost a combination of locals and guests of the hotel getting some fresh air. The gardens are open daily from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Sunday to Thursday, and 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays. The Outpost serves food and drinks and is open from 12 p.m. to 8 p.m. Sunday to Thursday and 12 p.m. to 9 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays. All times are weather permitting — check the Facebook page The Ice Rink in The Gardens at Pillar and Post, for up-to-date information. (Mike Balsom)

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# LocalSPORTS

## Predators management pleased with mid-season results

**Mike Balsom**  
Special to The Local

Though a little past the half-way point, with 24 games down and 17 more to go in their Greater Metro Junior A Hockey League season, the holiday break is as good a time as any for the Niagara Predators to conduct an informal mid-season assessment.

With a record of 19 wins and five losses, the team is currently tied with the Durham Roadrunners for third place in the GMHL's South Division, though Durham has three games in hand after COVID-19 forced the postponement of three of their games. The rival St. George Ravens are a point ahead of Niagara, but the Predators have two games in hand on them, while the North York Renegades sit atop the division

only four points ahead of Niagara.

"This team right now has exceeded my expectations," owner and head coach Robert Turnbull says. "Playing shorthanded at the beginning of the season, not having enough defencemen, it's evolved into a great group of young men who are willing to learn and to work hard enough to get there."

The Preds also survived an early-season coaching change, when Andrew Whalen resigned for family reasons only six games into the season. After a brief search for another coach, Turnbull made the decision to take on the role for the remainder of the campaign, with 22-year-old Connor Shipton as his assistant.

As well, their number one goaltender, Oscar

Spinnars Nordin, left the Predators for the Bismarck Bobcats of the North American Hockey League in late November. At the time, he was at or near the top in the GMHL in goals against average, saves, and save percentage stats.

Through all these issues, they've managed to string together winning streaks of five and 11 games, the longer one coming to an end on Dec. 19 in their last game before the break, when they suffered a 5-3 loss at the hands of the Renegades in North York.

"There were a couple of games where we had a lot of adversity," says Turnbull about the recent winning streak, "but we managed to find a way to win. With the Renegades, we came up against a team that played better than we did. That's it. As it turned out, we out-

shot them (42-37), and we definitely outworked them in the third period. Do I think we can beat them? Yes I do. You can't question your ability when you've won 11 in a row."

A glance at the Predators' schedule shows a season clearly divided into two very different almost-halves.

Of the 24 games already under their belts, 18 of them have been against teams in the lower end of the South Division standings, such as the Plattsville Lakers. That team trails the Predators in the standings, sitting in fifth place 18 points behind Niagara. The Tottenham Thunder, whom the Preds have swept in four games, have won only two games this season.

In contrast, eight of the 17 games remaining

for the Predators see them facing the teams they are fighting with for South Division bragging rights. They'll open the second half of their schedule with a home-and-home against the Turnbull-owned St. George Ravens Jan. 7 and 9. The Predators have split the season series with St. George 2-2 so far. In less than a month they will face Durham four times, and their final weekend in February gives them two more cracks at their first win against the Renegades.

While the GMHL schedule is on hiatus, many of the Predators have returned to their homes for the holidays to visit family and friends. For some, those homes are in Sweden and the U.S. With omicron variant spreading quickly all over the world, there is a bit of uncertainty as to

when some of these players may be available to return to the ice.

"Hopefully the guys that have gone home are back," Turnbull says, "but if they're not, win or lose, when the playoffs come around, we will be ready. I prefer to play a large percentage of tough teams coming up. We have two wins against the Ravens, and we outshot the Renegades both times. Provided we get good goaltending, I believe we can come out of the South."

The Predators will need to make it out of the South Division to win the Russell Cup. To make it to the finals, they must win three playoff rounds against familiar teams to earn the opportunity to take on the cream of the North Division.

Continued on page 16

### Meet the Predators

Name:  
**Emil Eriksson**  
Jersey number: 24  
Age: 21  
Birthdate:  
**December 8, 2000**  
Hometown:  
**Eskiltuna, Sweden**  
Nickname:  
**Emil**  
Favourite hockey player:  
**Connor McDavid**  
Favourite 'hype' song:  
**Son of Ulster**  
by Young Spencer  
Hockey highlight:  
**Winning a tournament with my youth team**  
Other sports you play:  
**Golf and padel**  
Favourite "cheat" meal:  
**Burgers**  
Secret talent:  
**I can sing in the shower**



### Let's call them both winners



The Santa 5K Run held last weekend resulted in some confusion over who won the race. Jessey the Elf was declared the winner at the end of the run, but when awards were presented, organizer Kelly Arnott (right) decided she had made an error, and gave the gold medal to teenager Fenway Breckels (left) during the ceremony at The Irish Harp. He ran the fastest race according to the chip time, by six-tenths of a second, but because he left the start a little later, the clock showed Jessey (centre) the winner. Typically, says Arnott, the win goes to the fastest clock or mat time in a road race, and they both ran a great race, but Breckels deserved the win. She hopes The Irish Harp will be involved again next year — everyone loved the NOTL location — and she expects she could have 2,000 runners in 2022 instead of the 200 who participated this year. (Photo supplied)

### LocalHAPPENINGS



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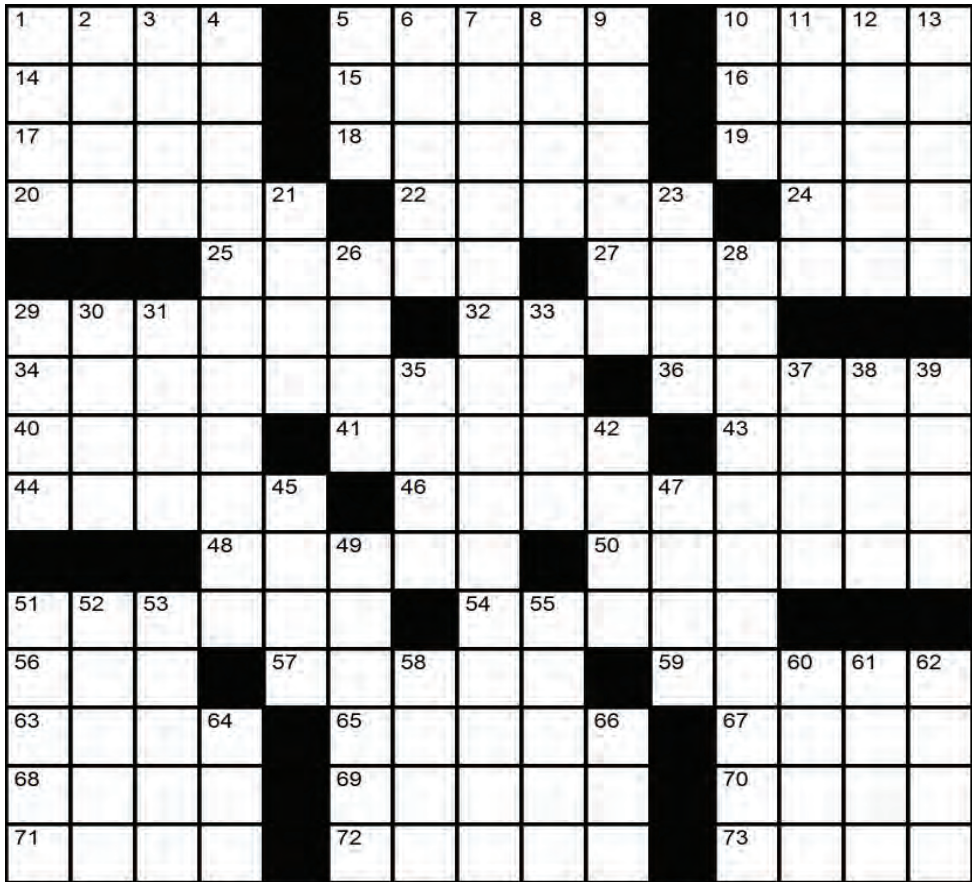
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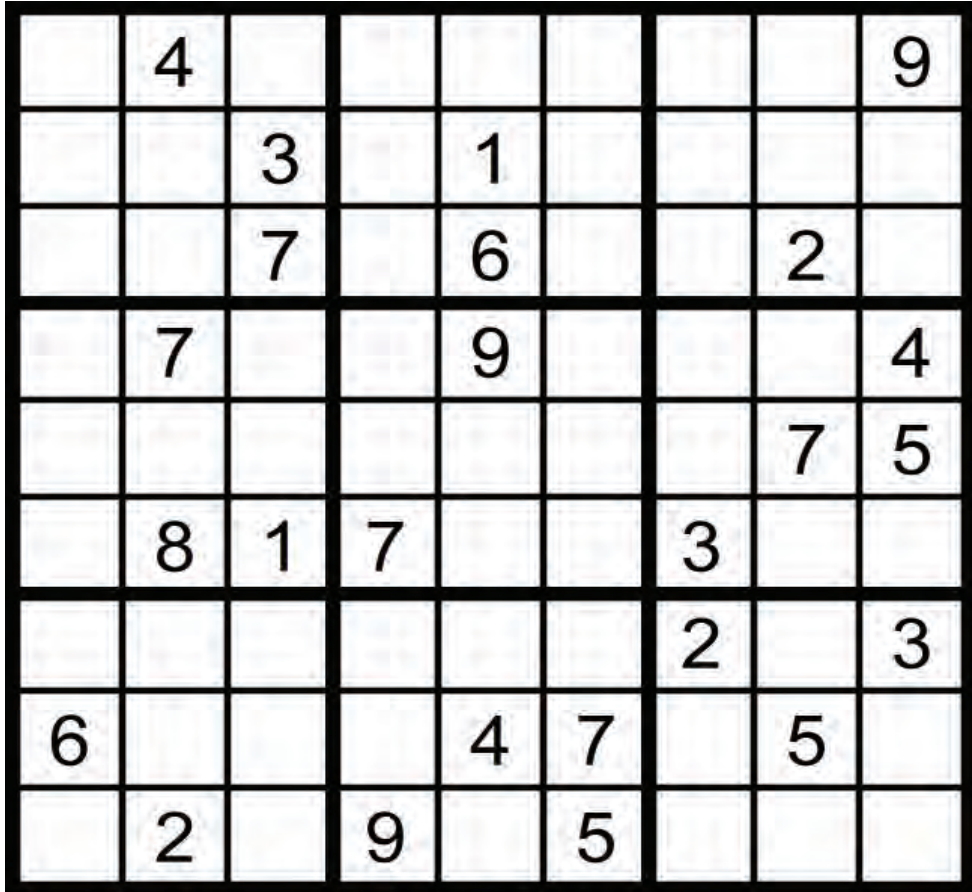


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## CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU



- Across:**
- 1 Arabian ruler
  - 5 Following
  - 10 Some providers of wood for furniture
  - 14 Prepare
  - 15 Larry --- in "The Iceman Cometh"
  - 16 Largest island in the Marianas
  - 17 Stage accessory
  - 18 Fire prodger
  - 19 A single time
  - 20 Abandon
  - 22 Overhaul
  - 24 Aeronautics group.
  - 25 --- Lama
  - 27 Round Table leader
  - 29 Baseball official
  - 32 Lowest of the low
  - 34 Eye defects
  - 36 Notes
  - 40 Heel
  - 41 Sheltered spots
  - 43 Short written reminder
  - 44 Ethiopian capital --- Ababa
  - 46 "The --- Dancers" (Jean Thesman)
  - 48 About the eye
  - 50 Did, once
  - 51 "--- and her Sisters" (Woody Allen movie)
- Down:**
- 1 Smartphone programs
  - 2 Brandy made from pressed fruit
  - 3 Matinee idol --- Novello (d. 1951)
  - 4 Disavowal
  - 5 Egyptian cobra
  - 6 Roman flower goddess
  - 7 Consider
  - 8 Garden west of Nod
  - 9 Go over again
  - 10 Self-esteem
  - 11 Middle meal
  - 12 Former Portuguese territory in China
  - 13 Slander
- Across:**
- 54 Intriguing group
  - 56 --- Annie ("Oklahoma!")
  - 57 Battalion XO, often
  - 59 Moves cautiously forward
  - 63 Names
  - 65 Author Evelyn ---
  - 67 It replaced the French franc
  - 68 Noted scat singer --- Fitzgerald
  - 69 Boredom
  - 70 Former Mrs David Bowie
  - 71 Move
  - 72 Palm tree fruit
  - 73 Sports defeat
- Down:**
- 21 Comedian Roseanne ---
  - 23 Warrant
  - 26 Bony
  - 28 Deceptive decorative paintwork
  - 29 Where the Wizard of Westwood coached
  - 30 One of three in "The Mikado"
  - 31 Formerly known as shell-shock
  - 33 Inquires
  - 35 Escherichia ---, potentially dangerous bacterium
  - 37 Dweeb
  - 38 Give off
  - 39 Alone
  - 42 Counterfoil
  - 45 Irritating email
  - 47 Straight --- arrow
  - 49 Melted
  - 51 Underworld
  - 52 No longer a minor
  - 53 Type of metal or gas
  - 55 Debate
  - 58 Country singer and actress --- Kramer
  - 60 Japanese heavyweight contest
  - 61 Subdivisions of eons
  - 62 Male heirs
  - 64 Plant juice
  - 66 Not hers



## OBITUARY



**DELVECCHIO, ANGELO (The Barber of Virgil)**— Passed away peacefully at the Welland General Hospital on Monday, December 27, 2021 at the age of 87. Beloved husband to Angela and loving father to Marcello (Cindy), Flora (Joe), Gino, Rita (Randy), and Mary (Dave). Nonni is adored by his loving grandchildren Angela, Sarah, Michael, Jonathan, Jeanette, Joe, Corey, Nicole, Julia, Jesse, Angelo, and Marissa. Bisnonni is

loved and missed by his great-grandchildren Angelina, Nico, Dylan, Isabella, Sophia, Aidan, Madisyn, Carter, Nicholas, Emma, Delilah and Ophelia. Angelo was predeceased by his parents Pasquale and Chiara, late siblings, and will be held dear in the hearts of many relatives and friends in Canada and in Italy.

Friends will be received at the Morse & Son Funeral Home, 5917 Main Street on Wednesday, December 29th from 5–9 pm. Under current pandemic conditions, provincial restrictions limit the number of guests at visitations, funerals and interments. All visitors must wear a face mask and practice physical distancing. Visit thebao.ca or call the funeral home for further information.

Those who wish to attend Angelo's funeral mass must RSVP online at [www.morseandson.com](http://www.morseandson.com) to reserve your spot in church (Limited to 70 guests minus immediate family members).

Angelo's funeral will begin on Thursday morning at 9 o'clock in the funeral home and then continue to St. Vincent de Paul Roman Catholic Church (Niagara-on-the-Lake) where his funeral mass will be celebrated at 11 o'clock. Interment will follow in the Niagara Lakeshore Cemetery. As an expression of sympathy, memorial donations may be made to Diabetes Canada or to the Kidney Foundation.

## NOTICES

**To place an Obituary or In Memoriam in our Classifieds, please contact Julia at:**  
**julia@notllocal.com or 905.934.1040**  
**Deadline is Tuesdays at 1 p.m.**

## PUZZLE ANSWERS

### Sudoku solution from December 22, 2021

8	2	1	6	4	9	7	5	3
4	7	6	3	5	2	9	8	1
3	9	5	7	1	8	6	4	2
9	1	3	4	7	5	2	6	8
5	8	2	1	9	6	4	3	7
6	4	7	2	8	3	5	1	9
2	6	4	8	3	7	1	9	5
7	3	9	5	6	1	8	2	4
1	5	8	9	2	4	3	7	6

**Across:** 1 Amir, 5 After, 10 Elms, 14 Pave, 15 Slade, 16 Guam, 17 Prop, 18 Poker, 19 Once, 20 Scrub, 22 Renew, 24 C A A, 25 Dalai, 27 Arthur, 29 Umpire, 32 Nadir, 34 Catapults, 36 Tones, 40 List, 41 Nooks, 43 Memo, 44 Addis, 46 Last April, 48 Optic, 50 Used to, 51 Hannah, 54 Cabal, 56 Ado, 57 Major, 59 Noses, 63 Dubs, 65 Waugh, 67 Euro, 68 Ella, 69 Ennu, 70 Iman, 71 Step, 72 Dates, 73 Loss.

**Down:** 1 Apps, 2 Marc, 3 Ivor, 4 Repudiation, 5 Asp, 6 Flora, 7 Take into account, 8 Eden, 9 Reread, 10 Ego, 11 Lunch, 12 Macau, 13 Smear, 21 Barr, 23 With, 26 Lean, 28 Trompe l'oeil, 29 U C L A, 30 Maid, 31 PT S D, 33 Asks, 35 Coll, 37 Nerd, 38 Emit, 39 Solo, 42 Stub, 45 Spam, 47 As an, 49 Thawed, 51 Hades, 52 Adult, 53 Noble, 55 Argue, 58 Jana, 60 Sumo, 61 Eras, 62 Sons, 64 Sep, 66 His.

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# LocalSPORTS

## First 2022 Predators home game Friday, Jan. 7

Continued from page 14

sion, which is currently topped by the 24-and-1 Temiscaming Titans. Teams from the two divisions do not face each other during the regular season.

The winner of the play-off between the North and South Divisions will move on to the first truly national GMHL Russell Cup. In previous years, the cup went to the North/South victor, while the West Division simply crowned its own champion. This year, the West champion, the North/South winner, and host city Temiscaming will face off in a three-team round robin.

A number of deals have been made by the Predators in recent weeks to add more depth and to stabilize their goaltending situation since the loss of Spinnars Nordin. Denver, Colorado native Iain Riordan is settling in as the number one goalie and Jason Humphries from Georgetown has brought more physicality to the team. New acquisitions Jaleel Adams and Mackenzie Okumura have yet to play their first

game for Niagara.

In addition, Henry-Pierre Jayet will return from an injury in January, and the middle of the month should also see captain Mario Zitella rejoin the Predators. All of this bodes well for their push to the playoffs, though Turnbull hints that more acquisitions may be forthcoming.

Besides the competition aspect, it's important to keep in perspective the reason many of the Predators are playing in the GMHL. The league prides itself on being a development league for young players, helping them to reach their hockey goals. On gmhl.net, they keep track of the 889 players (as of June, 2019) who have moved on to play for professional, minor professional and college or university hockey teams.

Spinnars Nordin's move to Bismarck gets him one step closer to realizing his goal of catching on with an NCAA school in the U.S..

"Oscar will get a commitment this year from a Division I school," believes Turnbull, "and Mario has already committed to one.

We have a few kids who are really good Division III material. The way I look at it, as long as we can get those players looking to get an extended education while playing hockey, that could mean ACHA (American Collegiate Hockey Association), and there are some fabulous ACHA Division I schools that pay a large percentage of the tuition."

Turnbull feels a majority of his current Predators who have the skill set and the work ethic will get the opportunities they are looking for in hockey, provided that they continue to do what they are doing both on and off the ice.

He gives a lot of credit to his staff, especially Shipton, who doubles as assistant general manager, 21-year-old trainer/assistant general manager Samantha Marson, equipment manager Nicholas Dunk and general manager Eriksson, for the team's success thus far.

Turnbull also says the town staff have been great to work with since day one, and the support shown by the fans for their home

games has been phenomenal.

Barring any COVID cancellations by the GMHL or the province, the Predators' next home game at Virgil's Meridian Credit Union Arena is Friday, Jan. 7 against the St. George Ravens. Game time is 7:30 p.m. Adult tickets are \$8, seniors and students get in for \$5, while children under 10 years old are admitted for free.



Brenden Morin, #12, and Max Breeding, #9, restrain Ravens players in a game earlier this month as Iain Riordan makes a save with Henry-Pierre Jayet looking on. Riordan is settling in as the number one goalie, and Jayet should be recovered from injuries in time to return in January. (Mike Balsom)



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