

# The Niagara-on-the-Lake Local

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[notllocal.com](http://notllocal.com) FEBRUARY 28, 2024 Volume 6 • Issue 9

## SOUVENIR EDITION



### Saying goodbye to print, welcoming another beginning

Front row (left to right): Joy Sanguedolce, Jane Andres, Julia Coles, Rosie Gowsell. Back row: Mike Balsom, Where's Ben? Right there! Ben Foster, Penny Coles, Dave Gilchrist and Owen Bjorgan.



Karen Skeoch



Sharon Burns & Poppy



Donald Combe & Maggie



Kris Dube



Carrie Gleason (left)



Maria Klassen

## A few words from each of us at The Local

### Mike Balsom

As we move on to this next, exciting phase of The Niagara-on-the-Lake Local, we collectively decided to tell you a little bit about ourselves for this last printed issue. But after last week's front page story, there's very little left for me to say.

This Western Hill-born-and-raised guy, though, pinches himself every day when he wakes up in NOTL.

I've been living in the same Old Town home since 1999. I was fortunate enough to meet the love of my life and now wife and life partner Mishka that year. At the time she was renting the little white house in front of the barn on Fred and Jackie Sentineal's Anne Street property.

When we decided to take

our next step, she wanted to be close to the horses, which she foolishly taught me how to ride in those early days. So we bought a place just a couple of blocks away and have been here ever since.

Along the way, I soon realized that it meant something to be a "local" here. And with each passing year that I thought I was earning my stripes, it became clear that it took more than time to earn that distinction.

We had our children Sebastian and Victoria in 2000 and 2003 respectively. Immediately, they were true locals, but alas, that wasn't enough for me to use the honorific. I thought I was on my way there a couple of years later with my first visit to council to complain about a development across the

street from us. But that wasn't enough either.

Then in 2019, as a member of the board of the NOTL Soccer Club, I called Penny Coles and asked her if she could interview our president for an article about soccer registration. With her deadline approaching, she asked me if I would mind writing the article myself.

Over five years, hundreds of articles and countless conversations with true locals later, have I reached that status yet? I'm not sure what the answer is — you would have to tell me. But I know that every time I write an article and type the words "said to The Local", I chuckle a bit knowing that it's me I'm referring to. And I continue to thank Penny for the opportunity to type those words.

I plan to continue to type them over and over again as we shift to this online version of our newspaper. I hope you join us by visiting our website at [notllocal.com](http://notllocal.com) regularly and signing up for our daily newsletter at the bottom of the page.

And when you have a story that needs to be told, don't be afraid to reach out to this "Local" at [balsomm@gmail.com](mailto:balsomm@gmail.com), because I would love to be the one to tell it.

### Jane Andres

My husband Brian and I have deep roots in Niagara. We bought our property in 1994 with the vision to create a tranquil space that would be a refuge, not only for our bed and breakfast guests but for the 100-plus species of birds

and wildlife that inhabit the forested portion of our property. Recognizing the fragile ecosystem of the watershed, we were determined to be good stewards, to restore, respect and protect what had been entrusted to us.

In 2005 I was invited to help with music at the CWOP (Caribbean Workers Outreach Project) church services in May and June.

I began to meet not just the farmworkers in my neighbourhood but also people who proved to be mentors to me as the years went on.

Neighbours like Anneliese Pankratz, a retired school bus driver, who converted part of her barn into a shop where

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# Region preps for Niagara Week at Queen’s Park

**Kris Dube**  
The Local  
Local Journalism  
Initiative Reporter

Niagara-on-the-Lake Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa believes regional staff have come up with a “really good strategy” going into Niagara Week at Queen’s Park in a couple of months.

Slated to start in mid-May, the event is considered an advocacy tool that allows regional councillors and senior staff to meet one-on-one with provincial leaders for up to 60 minutes, unlike other opportunities to meet with provincial ministers, such as the Association of Municipalities Ontario



Lord Mayor Gary Zalepa during last Thursday’s regional council meeting. (Screenshot)

conference. Last Thursday, regional council received a report highlighting what is planned to be brought forward.

The Region has four priorities listed in a staff report approved last week by regional

council.

A \$400-million South Niagara wastewater solutions project that already has financial commitment, in principle, from the province, but also requires funds from the federal government, is one of the four priorities.

The Region is requesting that the province provide one third of the cost, “irrespective of a matching federal commitment, and that the province continue to advocate for a national infrastructure program.”

A housing project on Geneva Street in St. Catharines that will increase the supply of affordable, supportive, bridge and market-rate units is also one of the Region’s planned asks at Niagara Week — with hopes the province will support the project.

The third request is that the province reintroduce its municipal modernization program with a renewed focus on shared service implementation between two-tier municipalities.

The fourth angle staff says those who attend should be working is that the province increase funding for provincially-mandated programs to account for inflation and growing service demand.

Zalepa said he likes that the plan is to zero in on specific projects that the province can assist Niagara municipalities and the regional municipality with.

“I think you have to be careful not to focus too much on items that are outside either the regional or local government’s lane,” said Zalepa during the meeting.

“We really have to focus on making it germane to something that we can move the needle on,” he added.

He’s hopeful provincial representatives will take action on the four items expected to be at the forefront when councillors and staff head to Toronto for the week-long event.

“We have a good plan already — we just need parties to step up to the plate,” he said.

The province merged a number of communities in the 1970s, such as ones in the Cambridge and Thunder Bay areas. While Zalepa didn’t name any communities in his remarks about the changes back then, he called that era of amalgamation a “colossal failure,” and said he’s pleased that shared services between regional and lower-tier municipalities will be a top priority at Niagara Week.

Last year, Zalepa’s council and the Region agreed that Niagara-on-the-Lake will have access to regional expertise the town currently doesn’t have, as well as access to additional planners when work is piling up.

This is a result of the approval of Bill 23, creating significant changes to the Planning Act, with specific impacts involving the removal of upper-tier planning responsibilities.

Previously, Zalepa has said it’s vital that municipal councils, including NOTL’s, play a role in ongoing steps being taken across the region for shared services.

“It is incumbent on elected people to continue to push for this to modernize government to allow us to be more responsible with taxpayer resources,” he said in October, adding that if proven to be effective, it may cause the province to “think twice about amalgamation,” a path the lord mayor has already shared concerns about publicly.

In the report before regional council on Thursday, staff said they will continue to prepare for both the Niagara Week reception and associated Minister delegations. Further updates will be given closer to the event, and briefing sessions will be scheduled in early May for councillors and staff participating in delegations.

## NOTL doctor addresses regional doctor shortage

**Sharon Burns**  
The Local

Seventy-three thousand Niagara Region residents do not have access to a family doctor, and this number could double within the next two years unless changes are made at the provincial level, said Dr. Iram Ahmed of the Niagara North Family Health Team.

A family doctor, explained Dr. Ahmed, “is someone who has the privilege of staying with you from birth or childhood to adulthood.” They help to navigate the healthcare system and help address changing healthcare needs.

Unlike traditional walk-in clinics where “there is no continuity of care,” she added, “a family physician has all your medical information in one place and understands your health history.”

The Ontario College of Family Physicians (OCFP) is calling on the Ontario government to “cut the paperwork” and support better, more efficient ways of doing things, such as eliminating employer-mandated sick notes and modernizing outdated referral systems, according to a press release from the OCFP.

Nineteen hours of administrative work per week is “time that we could be seeing a patient face to face and providing care,” Dr. Ahmed said.

The OCFP also advocates for more team support alongside family doctors. “It’s a team of healthcare professionals who work together with the family

physician, so the patient can receive the right care they need at the right time by the right provider,” explained Dr. Ahmed. “For example, a dietician, a social worker or a psychotherapist could be part of that healthcare team, or a nurse practitioner and a registered nurse.”

OCFP would like the government to ensure fair compensation. “Compensation has not kept pace with inflation and does not reflect the complex care family doctors provide,” said OCFP.

“We are, at the end of the day, small business owners,” said Dr. Ahmed. “We have the rising cost that all small business owners are facing: increasing rent, increasing utilities, increasing cost of supplies, increasing staff salaries. When your compensation is

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# International doctors appeal to regional council

**Kris Dube**  
The Local  
Local Journalism  
Initiative Reporter

A shortage of physicians is an issue being felt across the country, including Niagara.

During last week's regional council meeting, a presentation was delivered by three individuals from the International Medical Graduates Support Group, who say they have a potential remedy in Niagara, a place where there are 81 fewer doctors than there should be, according to recent data from the Region.

Two of the presenters, Moises Vasquez and Daisy Rivadeneria, are both physicians. They are from Colombia and each has about 10 years of experience in their home country.

Today, they call Niagara home — but are faced with obstacles when it comes to putting their expertise to work.

Vasquez said the main challenges are not being able to find a residency of practice and a lack of experience in the Canadian healthcare world. Even though he has shadowed other doctors here, it doesn't count as experience, he told regional councillors last week.

The purpose of their delegation was to request that the regional government, which oversees Niagara Region Public Health, investigate the possibility of helping them enter the local medical workforce somehow.

"We strongly believe we can be part of the solution to overcome this challenge," he said, adding the Region could play a role in an inventory of international doctors available locally and create a systemic review of how their knowledge could be integrated.

Bryan Blue, a former Niag-

ara Region economic development officer, has helped people like Vasquez and Rivadeneria form the group, and has advocated for their cause.

"Can we help them help us?" he asked council and staff, hoping they don't head to the U.S. or are recruited to another province.

"I don't want to see these members of our community, healthcare professionals, leave and go somewhere else when we could've found a way to retain them," said Blue.

During the meeting, Niagara-on-the-Lake Regional Coun. Andrea Kaiser said the struggles explained by the presenters reminded her of her father, also an educated immigrant who was unable to use his education to find employment when he arrived in Canada.

Her father, Karl J. Kaiser, before he co-founded one of Niagara-on-the-Lake's best-known wineries in 1975, Inniskillin Wines, was a math teacher and professor in Austria, she explained to The Local in an interview after last week's regional council meeting.

"His education was not recognized, so he had to return to university," said Kaiser, explaining that he worked hard to develop his English language skills while also pursuing a chemistry degree at Brock University.

"I think that was acknowledged by the presenters," she said.

"That's part of the journey — the language barrier," she added.

He also pumped gas to feed his family when he wasn't in school, she explained, adding he "got a little sidetracked" when he decided to start making wine, which ended up being the "leap of faith" he went ahead with.

He later received an honorary degree from Brock University.

Asked whether she thinks the Region should move forward with some of the ideas given in last week's presentation, Kaiser said she knows the Ontario College of Physicians has a "very rigorous process, as it should," when it comes to allowing people to practice.

But she did find their presentation intriguing.

"It's an interesting perspective for sure — but it's complicated, too," she said.

"Exploring how members of a community can contribute to the betterment of our health is obviously never a bad thing," said Kaiser.

Jill Croteau, the Region's physician recruitment retention coordinator, delivered a presentation to the public health and social services committee on Feb. 6, where it was explained that 69 per cent of Niagara's population has a family doctor.

The minutes of that meeting were up for approval on Thursday's council agenda.

Two challenges Croteau highlighted in her presentation are that a supply of physicians coming from Canadian programs is just over 400 every year, which is "significantly short."

Less Canadian medical students are choosing family medicine and fewer family medicine graduates are choosing family practice, she wrote in her presentation.

Opportunities that could be taken advantage of, she said, are additional medical school and residency spots, changes to family physician licensing in Ontario, and a quicker immigration process.

International physicians no longer need to write the Medical Council of Canada Qualifying Exams if they have already written their board certification exams in the United States,

United Kingdom, Ireland or Australia to apply for a licence in Ontario.

There were 19 new physicians brought to Niagara in 2023 — 61 per cent of them from those countries.

Croteau explained why those nations are where recruitment has been taking place, and not from other countries as well.

"Our focus is currently repatriating or attracting doctors from those jurisdictions that are licence eligible without having to re-write board exams, as determined by the College of Physicians and Surgeons, including the U.K., Ireland, U.S. and Australia," she wrote in a statement.

Regional staff are considering some of the ideas brought forward in last week's presentation.

"We're still evaluating some of the proposals made at the meeting, and will be discussing how the Region might be able to contribute," she said, adding that the responsibility for certifying international healthcare professionals rests with the province, and with the College of Family Physicians of Canada and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.

She also said healthcare professionals outside those jurisdictions may be eligible for Ontario's Practice Readiness Assessment which would place them in one of Ontario's rural communities for three years.

"Unfortunately, none of the communities in Niagara qualify as a rural community for this program based on our Rurality Index," she explained.

There are six medical schools in Ireland, more than 25 in the United Kingdom, more than 20 in Australia, and about 175 in the U.S. There are 60 in the Caribbean that are



Moises Vasquez, front left, Daisy Rivadeneria, and Bryan Blue presented to regional council last week, asking the government to assist in an effort to put doctors from other countries already living in Niagara to work. (Screenshot)

linked to American schools, and 17 schools in Canada where potential doctors can eventually come from under the current model, Croteau said in her presentation earlier this month.

In an interview Monday, Niagara Falls MPP Wayne Gates said he had a conversation on the weekend with Premier Doug Ford about healthcare issues in Niagara — specifically the pending closure of Fort Erie's urgent care centre and the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake's ongoing waiting game related to a nurse practitioner that local officials have been urging the province for.

Asked about whether he feels the province could step up and find a way to increase its inventory of doctors, such as through what was pitched to regional council, he said a closer look needs to be taken at Ontario's immigration nominee program, adding he has heard of instances where doctors already practicing in Niagara are being told to shut down by the federal government due

to immigration issues.

But should the province be doing more?

"Absolutely," said Gates.

"There are a lot of things the province can do rather than just say 'well, we don't have enough doctors,'" Gates told The Local.

"I think we should be recruiting doctors from anywhere in the world to come here," said Gates, when asked about local efforts being focused on only four countries.

"We have a crisis in the number of doctors we have, but there are solutions," said Gates.

Referring to the presentation at regional council recently, Gates said the presenters are "obviously frustrated knowing they can provide a service we desperately need."

The Region's recruitment efforts have brought 174 physicians to Niagara since 2019.

There are 265 family physicians within the 12 lower-tier municipalities, which is 81 short of the 346 recommended based on population, said Croteau's presentation.

## Some physicians feeling strain, leave family care practice

Continued from page 2

not keeping up with that, then overall you're running a failing business model."

While two new doctors are currently accepting patients in the Niagara North Family Health Team at two Niagara-on-the-Lake sites, Dr. Ahmed does not see more physicians coming to NOTL to practice in the near future.

"We are a bit remote," said

Dr. Ahmed, "but the issue is much larger than regional."

She explained that "we have a population where patients are living longer and can have more complicated health histories. Family medicine itself is becoming more complex. Many physicians are retiring or close to retirement and mid-career physicians are burnt out by the systematic strains of administrative work and increasing financial pressures, and so they're leaving

family medicine for things that compensate better." Dr. Ahmed cites as an example a NOTL doctor who left family medicine to retrain as a dermatologist.

"Then our medical students are seeing what's happening to their senior colleagues, the struggles that we're facing, and they're choosing not to practice family medicine. They're choosing to go into other specialties."

A typical family physician carries 1,300 to 1,500 patients,

"but most carry more," she said.

Out-of-town residents can access doctors in other regions, but Dr. Ahmed does not suggest this practice because it isn't practical nor in the best interest of the patient, who may have to drive hours again to see a referred specialist.

OCFP reports that in a survey, 65 per cent of family doctors said they plan to leave or change their practice in the next five years.

Dr. Ahmed said that local residents can advocate to the government, their local MPs and MPPs about this issue. "That would be helpful. Sitting down with your family doctor and having a frank conversation about what you can do on a grassroots or in-the-weeds level would be great."

"It is clear that the profession is under enormous strain right now due to system-wide issues. We believe it's possible

to turn this crisis around and let family doctors get back to what they most want, which is to be there for their patients," said Dr. Mekalai Kumanan, President of OCFP. "By supporting family doctors now, we can ensure that Ontarians have access to the kind of quality care they expect for years to come."

To request access to one of the two new NOTL family doctors, call the Niagara North Family Health Team.

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# Newspaper staff thank NOTL Local co-founders

Continued from page 1

farmworkers could get work clothes and household items for free. She would drive by our house honking the horn, her van loaded with men from Jamaica or Mexican women en route to Niagara Falls or the shopping mall.

Connected communities thrive on the foundation of caring neighbours. From January to December 15 that also includes the farmworkers from the Caribbean and Mexico who are the backbone of our agricultural community.

In 2007 I began to organize annual concerts/picnics to welcome offshore farmworkers. These continued until the pandemic. At the last picnic in 2019, over 800 farmworkers enjoyed a free dinner with live music provided by enthusiastic coworkers and local professionals throughout the evening.

Months later, Penny Coles and I shared a conversation about the importance of building community in media rather than capitalizing on division. During her many years at The Advance she had earned her longstanding reputation for balanced reporting and commitment to our community. She invited me to write a piece for Black History month about Robert Jupiter, who had been enslaved by a prominent Loyalist family in the late 1700s.

Shortly after, I wrote a piece

about the inspiring story of Gilbert MacDonald's 40-year friendship with his former employer Gord Neufeld Sr. The enthusiastic response and genuine interest that followed prompted me to continue.

I learned that the writing process often parallels my experience in the garden.

Our property is a former regional dumpsite. We began composting before the ink had dried on the real estate transaction 30 years ago. Shovelling buckets of composted materials in a sifter is strenuous but gratifying as the fine soil loaded with nutrition is worked into the garden. It's a process that requires dedication and patience, but ultimately the rewards outweigh the sweat equity.

There's been some surprises along this path of transformation, as we often discovered rusted pieces of metal while digging holes. Once, after several hours of chipping and struggling, I finally heaved out an entire bumper, a remnant of a farm vehicle.

The discoveries during the digging and sifting process of writing have often challenged my own perceptions in unexpected ways. It's been humbling to become aware of long-held biases in my faith, social networks and Mennonite traditions that caused others harm or exclusion in our community.

Contributing to The Local is a responsibility I take seriously. Digging deeper has revealed

aspects of local history and our identity as a community that require more research as well as self-examination to better understand my place of privilege.

I am grateful for the opportunity to share stories of people we can learn from and aspire to the lessons they offer if we are humble enough and willing to listen wholeheartedly. Building bridges instead of barriers, and extending hands in friendship instead of being gatekeepers, we invite readers to become a part of a caring community.

**Owen Bjorgan**

It is with sincere gratitude to say that I have been providing a column for The NOTL Local's readers nearly every week since the paper's inception. What a privilege it has been.

When Penny Coles invited me to write an environmental piece that would engage the residents of NOTL, I was not only excited to share my knowledge, but also to work for a respected newspaper team. As the name of the paper implies, we are true locals who just want to deliver quality news and stories.

At the moment, I have published 197 articles for the newspaper. I have thoroughly enjoyed the experience of creating a discussion space for all things nature — stories of outdoor wonder, conservation issues, wild tangents about wild places, educational segments and what I call 'eco-politics.' Furthermore, the feedback

from you — the readers — has been an invaluable and fascinating experience for me.

As we say goodbye to print and hello to the online world, I will passionately continue to contribute to The NOTL Local as it evolves and continues to be NOTL's premier and premium source for news. Being part of a team that puts the locals first is something to be proud of, and makes me look forward to the growth that lies ahead.

**Sharon Burns**

My love of newspapers comes from my father. My earliest memories place him in his recliner in the corner of the front room of our home on Creek Road, holding a wide newspaper, with me laying on the floor in front of him. The noise he made when he snapped open a page was terrifying!

When dad finished reading a section, he floated it down to me, where I would spread it open on the floor and read the comic strips, look at photographs and captions, and read the headlines and sometimes even the first paragraph or two of the articles.

I didn't dare get to the newspaper first and not put it back in the right order, or worse, cut out an article for a school project.

Later, when I was 13, my letter to the editor of The St. Catharines Standard was published. I had read that there could be a chance of a third world war in less than 20 years, and I was advocating for a better way for countries to settle their differences. Because of that letter I received my first anonymous hate mail, calling me out for my immaturity. I decided to become a journalist.

The most famous person I interviewed happened while I was writing for my university student newspaper, Excalibur, and I was assigned to cover a Gloria Steinem talk. The editors wisely sent a co-author for this coup of a story, because it was a nerve wracking experience to put into 500 words the strength of her message.

After obtaining a degree in English and political science, I completed a print journalism

diploma at Niagara College and landed a short stint working for The Toronto Sun. Today, advertisements for journalism courses don't even mention the newspaper as a platform, saying that the "program prepares you for a career in television, radio, the newsroom and emerging media platforms."

There was about a 20 year period when I clipped newspaper articles to place inside my meticulously curated photo albums:

- A stepsister's rowing championship,
- The car accident of a work friend during my time at Julio's Gatehouse,
- Luke and Laura's wedding (if you know, you know),
- The birth announcement of an old boyfriend's baby.

I put my journalism career on hold for nearly 35 years to concentrate on teaching, but I never stopped reading newspapers, and, when Penny advertised for a journalist six months after my retirement, I knew things had come full circle. What a great decision. Penny and the staff are wonderful people who really care about this community and quality journalism.

I still get The Standard delivered to my home Mondays through Saturdays. The Globe and Mail is included on Saturdays, mostly for the cryptic crossword. I used to subscribe to the New York Times, but found that I had too much to read on a Sunday. I now read the Times online. Often, I read The Local online before it even lands in my rural mailbox.

I no longer use photo albums, and have no need to clip, label and save newspaper articles.

This next stage of my unexpected journalism career is exciting for me and I will continue to provide The Local with stories about the venerable members of our community.

Not much has changed with my dad. He still loves The Local. Only now, he has to read it online. I guess sometimes you can teach an old dog new tricks.

corporations but with different publications, never really crossing paths but marginally aware of each other. It's a small world when you share the same last name with one of them, but are in no way related. Maybe we should be.

When I found out they started their own paper at the encouragement of many NOTL business owners and community-minded citizens, I saw an opportunity to contribute and approached them seeing if I could help. Coming from generations of family-owned small businesses, it has always been a passion for me to help those who put everything on the line to fulfill a dream, fill a niche and create employment for others. They are the risk-takers and should be applauded for it.

From the moment I started in January of 2019, I have loved every minute of helping business to advertise their products/services to the community. It wasn't about me — it was about them. And their success. I had mega amounts of experience to help, over 30 years in newspapers in Niagara. Key to their getting results was my knowledge of their business — always looking at who their customers are and how to secure them. And I shared the belief of rate card integrity — where advertisers get the rate they earn, not what they try to negotiate.

Additionally, for the past couple of years I took on the responsibility of being the contact person for obituaries and in memoriams. To be trusted and welcomed to share people's sentiments when they are hurting most is a daunting task but I hope I was a person to rely on. I always strived to be a calming effect in the midst of the mayhem. I felt I earned the respect of many funeral directors over the years. I enjoyed hearing from the same citizens year after year when it came upon the anniversary of a loved one lost. I felt truly honored and it built a loyalty to a publication that was about people first and foremost.

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April 2, 2024 to July 20, 2024, Walker Room Gallery

Meadows and Mountains: Cheryl Bailey

May 1 to 26, 2024, Joyner Gallery

Opening Reception: May 5, 2024, 2:00 - 4:00 pm

Garden Stories: Michael Black

May 29 to June 23, 2024, Joyner Gallery

Opening Reception: June 2, 2024, 2:00 - 4:00 pm

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EDITORIAL

Farewell to print, hope to see you all online

This is it, our final printed edition of The Niagara-on-the-Lake Local, dated February 28, 2024, Volume 6, Issue 9.

We are just into our sixth year, and the years have gone by quickly. During that time, we feel we have fulfilled our goals of creating a voice for all in the community and earning the trust of our readers.

That will not change. The Local team, or what seems more like a family, will continue delivering the news we are confident our readers want to read, knowing they can always count on our integrity.

While the final forms for the post office have been filled out, the final print order sent to press, and by the end of this day, the final papers delivered, our team, every one of us committed

to continuing to do our best for all of you, will begin a different process, dedicating our focus 100 per cent to making what we believe is an already great Village Media website even better for our loyal readers by providing hourly news, instead of preparing to share it in the next week's print edition.

Our great reporters, columnists and photographers will be contributing to the website — you can still look for Ben, make a list of what you want to view from your couch, and watch for letters and editorials. And you can email us at [news@notllocal.com](mailto:news@notllocal.com) about anything you would like to share with us.

We hope you will continue to call on us to promote your schools, organizations, events and businesses.

We have been privileged to share your accomplishments with a community that celebrates with you, and to have been there for you in times of sorrow, knowing you will be in the hearts and prayers of a community that will wrap you in its arms and offer whatever help is needed.

None of that will change. We've had a year of partnering with Village Media, which to us feels like an expanded family of journalists — principled, professional, and as committed to integrity as we are.

The great folks at Village Media are as committed to building relationships and connecting to the community as we are, while also supporting us in sharing hard news, locally, across the province and the country, keeping our

readers informed with reliable, hyperlocal journalism you can trust, along with much more than we could ever deliver in a weekly community newspaper — including daily weather reports and gas prices our readers tell us they appreciate.

We thank you all for welcoming our print edition into your homes, getting to know us, trusting us and letting The Local be your way of keeping up with the community. We look forward to continuing that relationship at [notllocal.com](http://notllocal.com).

If you are not already reading The Local news online — and we know a growing number of you are — visit [notllocal.com](http://notllocal.com) and scroll to the bottom to sign up for our free newsletter. It will show up in your inbox at 3 p.m. Or visit [notllocal.com/daily](http://notllocal.com/daily) directly to sign up.

Another opportunity if you like to read your news over a cup of coffee first thing in the morning is to receive the VillageReport Newsletter at 6 a.m. It's a daily roundup of Canadian news also delivered free to your inbox — sign up for it at [villagereport.ca/signup](http://villagereport.ca/signup).

And if you have any questions at all, any story ideas, anything you want to share with us, please email [penny@notllocal.com](mailto:penny@notllocal.com), or to let us help advertise your business or event, [joy@notllocal.com](mailto:joy@notllocal.com).

Thanks again for all your support.

On a personal note, as I spend the last week of The Local sitting on a beach with family, enjoying a vacation planned long before we knew there would be a last week, I would like to add a personal

and very heartfelt thank you to all who contributed to this newspaper over the years, right up to the creation of its final print edition. That includes everyone whose work went into getting it to the press each week and to your homes, who are featured on these pages. It also includes my husband Wayne, who got up at 3:30 a.m. to pick it up from the press and deliver it to the post offices in town, and everyone who contributed a letter, a column, a photo or even an idea in a text or phone call.

Every one of you has also helped to give voice to this community. For your involvement leading to this day, and for all the days to come as our endeavour continues, thank you.

**Penny Coles**  
The Local

Be aware of coyotes at this time of year

**David Gilchrist**  
The Local

Well, it's that time of year when concerns arise regarding the wildlife that live among us.

Recently, an article from our parent company, Village Media, tells the story of the loss of a pet dog, which was eaten by coyotes in an area near Hamilton. It was let out into its fenced yard by its owner, who was shocked to find that it had been attacked and eaten by coyotes in the yard.

There are occasionally articles about frightening incidents with coyotes, most often with small pets, reminding all of us that especially at this time of year, care has to be taken, even when in residential neighbourhoods.

As a photographer, I enjoy the opportunity to photograph coyotes in their natural element — the rural fields or forested areas of the town. Unfortunately, these areas are disappearing with development and this

pushes the coyotes closer to the residential areas. I was fortunate one morning to witness two very healthy looking coyotes out in a large field, hunting mice. It was interesting to see one slowly approach and jump on its prey.

Earlier this month I, along with a Parks Canada employee and workers at Fort Mississauga, witnessed a pet dog chasing a coyote across the NOTL Golf Course. The dog's owner was left at the far side of the

golf course, perhaps oblivious to what their dog was chasing. Now, if that coyote had turned around and attacked the dog, think of the uproar that would probably have ensued. Fortunately for this dog, the coyote

was alone. It has been known for a lone coyote to entice dogs to chase them towards their pack who lie in wait.

Coyote Watch Canada has on its website ([coyotewatchcanada.com](http://coyotewatchcanada.com)) a number of things to consider during February and March, the coyotes' breeding periods. These can be reviewed on their website. With the warmer weather we have been experiencing, it certainly is more likely for us to have our pets in the yard or smaller children playing outside on some of these wonderful sunny days. However, they should not be left unattended as coyotes can be opportunistic. This is especially important if your home is located near wooded areas or ravines.

The town has, on its website, an online coyote sighting form ([notl.com/node/1388](http://notl.com/node/1388)) that can be completed to report coyote encounters. This helps the town to monitor activity, and, if necessary, take appropriate actions to deal with any coyote problems.

Let's continue to enjoy this mild winter but take the necessary precautions to avoid problems with the coyotes who share the town with us.



David Gilchrist captured these photographs of coyotes locally.

View from the couch

**Donald Combe**  
Special to The Local

In *Something from Tiffany's* (Prime, 2022), two Christmas gifts bought at Tiffany's and placed in identical Tiffany blue bags

end up in the wrong hands, which by the end of this fairy tale are the correct hands. This is exactly the kind of love story that our much jaded world needs. Delightful.

*Donald Combe is a re-*

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

The Niagara-on-the-Lake

Local

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Financé par le gouvernement du Canada

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Where's Ben?

Eden student Ben Foster continues to discover new locations in NOTL, wondering how familiar others may be with them. If you know where this photo was taken, email [penny@notllocal.com](mailto:penny@notllocal.com). Last week, Ben was on Niven Road, as Kathy Neufeld told us, "my old stomping grounds where we used to put our cows for them to graze. It's where they have the community veggie gardens now." Watch for Ben online at [notllocal.com](http://notllocal.com) on Wednesdays.



# COMMENT

## Better with age — oldest Niagara ‘forests’ are top tier



Owen Bjorgan  
Special to The Local

When discussing the forests of Niagara, and of the world, age matters. With humans, we as-

sociate older age with wiseness, and a physical decline. The middle aged group can be thought of as the hum of the hive, and the youth are inevitably next in line. In a forest, the youth are seen as shrubby fields with small trees taking a stand in a newly cleared world. In that case, there are plenty of youth in Ni-

agara. Moving along with father time, a middle-aged forest contributes more to the ecological economy than a young one, as larger trees and longer established molecular processes provide stability to the region’s soil and air quality.

The young and middle aged forests are technically called secondary growth forests. With 90 per cent of Niagara Peninsula’s original forest coverage gone, this is what the vast majority of the region’s remaining forests are labelled as. The trees generally grow densely together and with less diversity than the older surviving woodlots. Regardless, they help us in terms of urban cooling, flood control, and sucking up carbon from the air while providing modest yet locally important habitat.

An old-growth forest is a loosely defined term and varies depending on which jurisdiction you’re learning from. Many definitions of an old-growth forest agree that the forest has been permitted to develop for a considerably long period, but what that length of time is, is a little ambiguous.

One definition suggests that an old-growth forest is any stand of woods where the average largest trees are 100 to 150 years old. Another definition implies that the forest has been logged only once prior, and the trees you see today make them the oldest around, and there-

fore an old-growth forest. Old-growth forests also show evidence of other large trees that have previously fallen down and now present themselves as relic logs.

If we were to put these descriptions on the chopping block, Niagara is fortunate to have some noteworthy stands of old-growth forest in places like the Niagara Gorge, Niagara Shores Conservation Park, Heartland Forest and Balls Falls, just to name a few.

In some instances, you’ll see ‘old-growth forest’ as the term being applied to a virgin forest — an incredibly rare ecosystem that has truly never been influenced by humankind. Also referred to as primary forests, these woods are next to non-existent in Niagara and are also precariously rare in their global coverage. Most of the world’s remaining virgin forests reside in Canada, Russia and Brazil, with smaller pockets located elsewhere.

We’re talking about forest ecosystems whose largest trees have never faced the axe, a tool whose handle is ironically cut from the same cloth. Besides a hiking trail at most, they have never been tainted by the impacts of humanity. They are the matriarchal forces of the world, existing as truly ancient landscapes with truly irreplaceable traits. Only nature and time can make a forest like this.

By technicality and a

stretch to call it a forest, the cedars and other tree species clinging to life on the bare rock faces of the Niagara Escarpment and the Niagara Gorge are the last of virgin forests on the Niagara Peninsula.

Virgin forests are at the top of their class in sequestering carbon, showcasing unparalleled species richness, sheltering rare wild-

life, and acting as invaluable genetic storehouses of world-class DNA. Not only are they old, but they are fantastic at what they do. If only some politicians were like that!

However, the human experience will never be like that of an aging forest, and we must always respect the wisdom of our elders in both regards.



Old-growth forest in Heartland Forest, Niagara Falls. Although not a virgin or primary forest, it is one of Niagara Peninsula’s best examples of a healthy old-growth ecosystem. (Owen Bjorgan)

## — Local LETTERS — Thank you, Bjorgans, for all that you do

Having just read Owen Bjorgan’s article on the Welland River, I would like to thank Steffanie and Moe for having such a nice son. I had the pleasure of sitting with Steffanie and her husband and their younger son Isaac, and Ward Simpson and the latest Member of the Board for Red Roof Retreat at the Super Bowl Event at Sandtrap. The way

in which this family gives back to our community is nothing short of phenomenal and I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to congratulate Ward on his Award in person. Shout out to Paul and Matt and their staff, they always go above and beyond.

Debb Hodgkinson  
NOTL

## Ricky Rap

Ricky Rap is a list of 10 thoughts and offerings from Niagara’s own Rick Mills. Retired from more than 30 years of management in the steel

industry, he continues pastoral ministry here in town. Ricky Rap, he says, is intended to help us to believe in and laugh at ourselves.

1. My little sister Kim hopes I die first.
2. Says she has so many silly pictures of me saved that it’d be a waste not to use them at a funeral.
3. In my mom’s last weeks of life four years ago, I was sitting with her late one night in hospital.
4. Getting ready to leave, I noticed Kim’s iPad there for mom to use.
5. Got into it, took a selfie, changing her background picture.
6. Looking at it and imagining Kim’s reaction come morning, I belly laughed.
7. Mom started to laugh.
8. At me laughing.
9. It was the last time Mom and I laughed together.
10. Time may be measured in minutes, life is measured in moments.



Rick Mills (Supplied)



### STAY IN THE LOOP

If you haven’t already signed up for our daily newsletter, with all the latest headlines from Niagara-on-the-Lake, you’re missing out!

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# NOTL couple trade greenhouses for boat life

Sharon Burns  
The Local

A few weeks ago, Gill Deacon, host of CBC Radio's Gill's Jukebox, read an email written by a couple from Niagara-on-the-Lake. This Local reporter turned up the volume to hear Maureen and Colin Dodd request a song to go with the theme 'breaking up with January.' Here is their travel story.

It was, according to Maureen Dodd, a "moody day here in Dominica," when The Local caught up with her and her husband, Colin Dodd, while they were sitting on the boat they call home for six months each year.

"We might have some serious rain clouds coming over any minute," she said. And sure enough, 20 minutes into the conversation, the Dodds escaped the rain to the interior cabin of their Lagoon Catamaran, the Island Drifter II.

It wasn't too long ago, though, that the couple were owners/operators for 40 years of Dodd's Greenhouses on Concession 2. After they sold the business in 2021, and their beloved Great Dane, Miles, passed away, they were able to make their retirement dream of living on a boat in the Caribbean come true.

The greenhouses took a lot of their time and energy. "You always had to be there because

it's a living plant. It was a real hands-on business," said Colin. "To walk away from that all of a sudden, it's like, wow, that's freedom."

The Dodds have been sailors since 1997 and belong to the Niagara-on-the-Lake Yacht Club, spending the summer months sailing around the Great Lakes.

In 2005, the couple boarded an airboat charter from Saint Lucia to Grenada, and "were sold right away." Since then, "it was our dream to buy a boat in the Caribbean and sail around in the winter time," said Colin.

Upon retirement they moved to a small home in Old Town, and bought the Catamaran during COVID. They spend the winter months exploring the islands between Grenada and Saint Lucia, known as the Lesser Antilles, and they store the boat on land, in Grenada, during the hurricane season.

While they have had no damage to their boat from hurricanes, just these past few weeks many boats in their area have been damaged by what is known as a swell that comes up from the ocean floor. Maureen said that unusual weather patterns are causing "bigger and bigger swells" to come into the bay. They feel it was luck of the draw that they chose to anchor in a spot that was protected by these swells.

"If you're fairly close to

shore," said Colin, "the waves start to break, and it grabs the keel and kind of picks the boat up or breaks your anchor loose, and then you're just headed to shore." There is not much to do in those types of situations, explained Colin, "some get lucky and land up on a sandy beach, but others go up against rocks."

In bad weather, the pair take turns on anchor watch. "You're basically taking turns sleeping and staying up to just keep an eye on your position during the night so that if you do start to slip, you pull up the anchor and you motor away," said Maureen.

The Dodds were coming off of two nights of anchor watch and were "just dead dog tired," said Maureen, "but then you have the times when it's so calm and it's so beautiful and the water is crystal clear blue all around your boat and that's your backyard."

Marine life is abundant from the Island Drifter II. Whales, dolphins, turtles and stingrays swim by and "you can jump in the water and snorkel with any type of marine life at any given time," said Maureen.

The combination of the culture and the environment of the islands is also a highlight. Using a dinghy to bring them ashore, Colin and Maureen explore waterfalls, local markets and get to know the locals.

Even so, they have found a



The Dodds at Mt Peggy, Bequia. (Supplied)

"huge community of Canadians, especially in Grenada, for some reason," Maureen said.

While Colin admits that sometimes he misses the greenhouse business, they realize that, for them, life has really slowed down. "It's a cliché that I didn't understand until we started doing this," explained Maureen. "It takes longer to do everything, like when we get groceries, that's all we did for the day."

They keep busy on the boat with knitting, reading, snorkeling, and "then we're just chilling," and being mindful and taking the time to prepare a meal, for instance.

"When we bought this boat

we wanted to have a boat big enough that if family or friends wanted to come down, that we could host them and that brings us a lot of joy," said Colin.

Next year they are thinking of heading south to sail around San Blas Islands, an archipelago comprising approximately 365 islands and cays in Panama.

"We probably wouldn't go through the Panama Canal," said Maureen. Colin explained that "pretty much everybody goes from east to west, because you go with the trade winds and the currents." If they were to go through the canal, they would have to sail "all the way around or make the tough trek

back (through the canal) into pounding headwinds."

They also have no interest in sailing across the ocean. "We're just happy floating around here right now," said Colin. "We are fulfilling our need for adventure," added Maureen.

The song that the Dodds submitted to Gill's Jukebox? *We Just Disagree* by Dave Mason. "Okay, maybe not so fair that I'm sending in a breakup song because we've had a really awesome January," said Maureen, but "I just love that song. It's the best breakup song ever."

If you have a breaking up with winter story, please email [news@notllocal.com](mailto:news@notllocal.com).

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# Friends of the Forgotten still raising funds for burial ground

Mike Balsom  
The Local

The Friends of the Forgotten fundraising campaign to support a memorial at the Mississauga Street Baptist Church Burial Ground is nearing the \$20,000 mark.

As funds continue to be collected, committee chair George Webber tells The Local that the committee is still looking at possible options for the right way to recognize a significant era in Niagara-on-the-Lake's early Black history.

The group paid for a Stage 1 archaeological assessment of the site last year and received approval to raise \$60,000 for the follow-up Stages 2 and 3.

But Webber says the committee has no plans to dig up any of the graves on this important site.

"It's too complicated," says Webber. "We would have to involve the Bereavement Authority of Ontario and get permission from descendants of all the people buried there. So we asked ourselves what are other things that we can do that would be less disturbing to the property?"

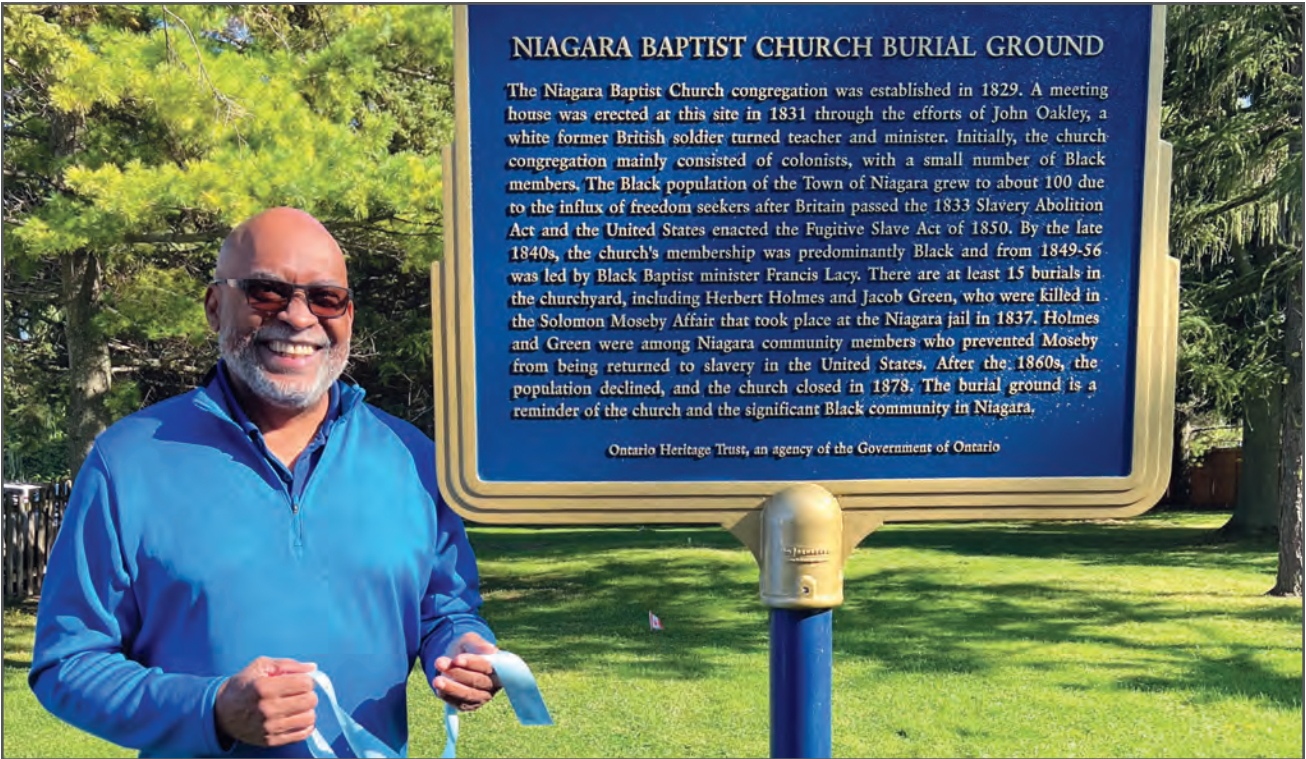
The recent departures of both town CAO Marnie Cluckie and Operations Manager Rome D'Angelo for Hamilton have thrown a bit of a wrench into the group's decision-making process.

"With the town in the process of replacing both of them right now," Webber laments, "the Negro Burial Ground (the site's previous name) is not a priority for them. We totally understand that. We are waiting for the appropriate time to talk to the town about some of our ideas."

The erection of a memorial wall to recognize the names of the 15 members of the community who have been identified as likely buried on the site, with the help of the NOTL Museum, remains part of the plan.

"It would be along the fenceline between the property itself and the plaza," says Webber. "The fence itself is on the burial ground. Another idea is to also put a fence along the entire property. We envision using that additional fencing to put up pictures and graphics that shed light on early Black life here."

Webber also suggests that some kind of signage on the berm between the



George Webber in September, during the ribbon cutting for the new plaque at the Baptist Church Burial Ground. (Sharon Burns)

sidewalk and the road would be a great idea to get people's attention to the significance of the site as they head toward the Queen Street Heritage District.

"Right now you have to be walking on the sidewalk to be able to read the sign," he adds.

And one more item that has been discussed is to hold a public ceremony to reconsecrate the ground on which those early Black settlers are buried.

As they await a chance to discuss these options with town staff, the Friends of the Forgotten have not yet fully priced out their potential plans.

As well, a visit to the committee's website reveals a list of 10 other burial grounds in NOTL as well as one active site. Those include the Clement Cemetery in St. Davids, the Sterling Cemetery on Line 6 and the Homer Cemetery near the

Welland Canal.

"It's been our position all along that whatever progress we make with the Negro Burial Ground, we would be prepared to do the same kind of planning for the other sites in town," Webber insists. "Some of them need clear identification about who's buried there and when they lived in the community."

With all the sites in question, including the Baptist Church Burial

Ground, Webber adds that public input will indeed be a part of the process.

"It's important that whatever goes there is appropriate to our residents," he says. "We want everyone to be able to take pride in what is there."

In the meantime, the Friends of the Forgotten continue to raise funds with the support of the town. Donations to the cause can be made at [friendsoftheforgotten.ca](http://friendsoftheforgotten.ca).

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# Celebrate Seniors Golden Years Guide

## Are you eligible for the new Canadian Dental Care Plan?

(NC) In December 2023, the Government of Canada began rolling out the new Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP) to help make oral healthcare accessible to residents without dental insurance. The plan, which will benefit up to 9 million Canadians once fully implemented, will help ensure more people can afford to take care of their oral health. Are you one of them?

### Who is eligible?

To qualify for the plan, you must meet the following criteria:

- be a Canadian resident with no access to dental insurance;
- have an annual family income under \$90,000; and
- have filed your tax return for the previous year.

### When can you apply?

The application process is opening in phases, starting with seniors.

- Applications opened

in December 2023 for seniors aged 87 and older.

- Applications for 77 to 86-year-olds opened in January 2024.
- Applications for 72 to 76-year-olds opened in February 2024.
- Beginning in March those aged 70 to 71 can apply.
- Seniors aged 65 to 69 can apply for the plan in May.

Canadians with a valid Disability Tax Credit certificate, and children under the age of 18 will be able to start applying online as of June.

All other eligible residents will be able to apply in 2025.

### How can you apply?

By the end of March 2024, seniors aged 70 and older who may qualify for the plan will receive a letter from the federal government inviting them to apply. The invitation will include instructions on how to confirm their eligibility and apply by tele-



phone. If you think you are eligible and haven't re-

ceived a letter, or you have lost your letter, you can contact Service Canada in person or online, or by phone at 1-833-537-4342.

In May 2024, applications will shift to an online portal and will open for eligible seniors 65 and older. More information on that portal will be available closer to its launch date.

### What's covered under the program?

The CDCP will help cover the cost of most basic oral health care services, including check-ups, x-rays, cleanings, fillings, root canal treatments and dentures.

Members will be reim-

bursed a percentage of the cost at the plan's established fees. These depend on the members' income level, and some people may have to pay the rest of the expense amount out of pocket. For example:

- if you have a family income under \$70,000, you can have 100 per cent of eligible costs covered;
- if your family income is between \$70,000 and \$79,999, 60 per cent of eligible costs can be covered; and
- with a family income between \$80,000 and \$89,999, 40 per cent of eligible costs can be covered.

Oral health providers may charge a higher price than the established plan fees. In these instances, the patient will be required to pay the balance between these two amounts.

### When will coverage start?

Once enrolled in the plan, seniors who are covered will be able to start seeing an oral health provider as early as May. Coverage start dates will vary based on when you can apply, when the application is received and when enrolment is completed.

To find out if you are eligible and when you can apply, visit [canada.ca/dental](https://canada.ca/dental).



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# *Celebrate Seniors* Golden Years Guide

## A Voyage to Canada & New England

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# Never lose hope — an obituary

Jane Andres  
The Local

It was the video clip of a young boy dancing that gutted me. He was wearing a jacket that was way too big, hands waving in the air, while the band played his father's favourite old-time Jamaican gospel music.

Jamar should have been celebrating his tenth birthday. Instead, he was wrapped in his daddy's favourite suit jacket surrounded by family and friends at his father's wake. It will be the closest thing he will ever feel to his father's hug now.

His father was Jeleel Stewart, born on July 25, 1974, in St. Catherine, Jamaica.

Jeleel was the oldest of five children in a close-knit family. His father worked in the sugar cane fields in Florida for several months of the year until that day when the family received the news that he would not be coming home. On the farm program he was simply another casualty, a faceless statistic.

Up until then, it had been a typical childhood for 13-year-old Jeleel — attending school, caring for younger siblings, doing chores, playing soccer with friends and attending church. Instead of attending school, he now had to find a way to help support the family.

He began to get up at 4 a.m. and scan the surrounding hills



Jeleel Stewart (File photo)

for the distant glow of fires to guide him. He rode his battered bike for two hours in the pitch black of the rural countryside to the burning cane fields where he would work with the men all day, often arriving home in the dark.

Despite the hardship, his capacity for caring and nurturing continued into his adult life. After he and his wife Suzan married, they created a home that, although modest, was welcoming to everyone. If any

neighbourhood child was hungry, they knew that there would always be an extra plate set out for them. No one ever left the Stewart home without a hug and a full belly.

In 2007, now with children of his own, Jeleel applied for the Seasonal Agricultural Work Program and was sent to work at a nursery in Niagara-on-the-Lake. We met on a Sunday night at the Caribbean Workers Outreach Project (CWOP) church service. He

joined the music team for a post-service singalong, enthusiastically raising his arms and lifting up his voice in song. Before he returned home in November he invited us to meet his family in Jamaica.

In February my friend Jodie Godwin and I travelled to Jamaica and took him up on his invitation. We received a warm welcome, with extended family and neighbours joining in on the feast and the lively music that followed. The respect and affection for Jeleel in his community was obvious. A man of large stature with an even bigger heart, he was known for his compassion and care for his neighbours.

We could never have imagined what would unfold only a few months later. After his return to Niagara, a forklift slipped and crushed Jeleel's hand at work, severing his nerves and tendons. He was fully conscious during the three-hour surgery that followed.

The following weeks were agony, with the pain medication providing little relief. He had no money for food or necessities the following eight weeks. After four months he was sent home with assurance from the Jamaican Liaison that WSIB would provide physiotherapy and sick benefits.

The sick benefits were sporadic and not enough to feed the family, but there was hope that

the physiotherapy would restore at least partial use of his hand.

In 2010 WSIB informed him that because the damage to his hand was considered permanent by the assessing doctor, the benefits and therapy would be discontinued because of a new policy known as "deeming." WSIB stated that because there was a cashier job available at a gas bar in Niagara that he could perform with one hand, he would no longer qualify for assistance or physio.

In disbelief, Jodie and I assured the family of our support while we attempted to find answers from WSIB.

Instead, it was to be the beginning of a nightmare, witnessing firsthand the damning impact the deeming policy had on the entire family. Trying to communicate with WSIB was a quagmire of misinformation.

When we connected with IAVGO (Industrial Accident Victims Groups of Ontario) we discovered that Jeleel was just one of thousands of injured farmworkers who had been cut off because of the new deeming policy. Repatriated to their home countries because of their injuries or work-related illness, they were abandoned by the system, forced to pay for their own medical bills.

We have visited his family in Jamaica on four occasions since 2010.

At the close of our 2014 visit, he emphasized that we "never lose hope."

Airissa Gemma and David Arruda, his caseworkers at IAVGO, have worked tirelessly on his behalf, dealing with bureaucratic roadblocks and contrived complications the past 14 years.

We are immensely grateful for locals who have contributed generously over the years.

Despite our best efforts, Jeleel and Suzan had to make hard choices between keeping the children in school or providing the proper nutrition for the family. This combined with the ongoing pain and stress of the past 16 years led to a serious deterioration of Jeleel's overall health and the onset of diabetes in recent years.

In 2022 WSIB issued a press release boasting of their \$1.5 billion surplus. Jeleel is one of many seriously injured

farmworkers whose suffering has allowed others to benefit from the resulting rebates.

By 2023 Jeleel was in the hospital more than he was at home. His wife struggled to keep up with the demands of home in addition to travelling to the seriously understaffed hospital to provide daily meals and care.

In September 2023, WSI-AT (Workers Safety Insurance Appeal Tribunal) ruled that WSIB's policy of deeming was racist and illegal. Jeleel would now have the opportunity to appeal the 2010 decision.

He was admitted again to hospital in November and IAVGO requested that his appeal date be moved up. We dared to hope that Jeleel would live long enough to have his appeal heard.

On January 24 we received a message from his distraught and exhausted wife that he had passed away.

Jeleel Stewart, who was a hero not only to his family but the humble community he cared for, is gone. He was just 49 years old and a few weeks away from having his appeal heard.

The site of the accident has been bulldozed, but Jeleel's story will not be erased.

The system is not broken, it was designed to work this way.

It works out well that Canadians do not have to witness the workplace-related trauma and suffering that impacts workers and their families after they have been abandoned by our system.

WSIB is counting on the fact that injured men and women will give up or die before they will ever know justice. The story of Jeleel Stewart is just one more example.

The system was designed by Canadians. Canadians alone are the ones responsible, who hold the power to bring change. This is our story, whether we choose to own it or not.

We refuse to lose hope. As a community we need to stand for justice. Email your local MPP. Your voice is important. Ask for justice for Jeleel Stewart.

Donations are needed to help cover the upcoming funeral expenses. For more information or to send an eTransfer contact [niagaraworkerswelcome@gmail.com](mailto:niagaraworkerswelcome@gmail.com). Please include your email address if sending an eTransfer.



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# NOTL community stronger because of Penny Coles

Continued from page 4

My biggest reward is the sentiments expressed by my advertising clients and the newspaper's founders — that they will miss me and thank me for being always on top of my game. My life is richer for this experience and making new friends along the way. As John Lennon sang "Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans." Thank you to each and every one of you.

**Donald Combe**

My association with Penny Coles started when the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre began its life as an art centre and I was charged with organizing programs and publicity. Penny was supportive of the Pumphouse and its activities and encouraged my many articles about the place and its activities. Later The Niagara Advance printed hundreds of articles that I submitted on behalf of St. Mark's Church and its rich history. More recently The Local welcomed my weekly reviews of films.

I am an historian, and therefore a storyteller. Stories are to be shared and Penny, as editor of The Advance and lately of The Local, has shared

much of my writing in her weekly newspaper.

It is my belief that Niagara-on-the-Lake is a special place. From our beginnings in the 1780s we have been a place and a people of dreams, generosity and hospitality. I consider it a privilege to be part of this community and I likewise consider it a privilege to be encouraged to share ideas via The Advance and now via The Local. As we move forward, a new chapter is beginning where the facts, ideas and opinions will no longer be shared in print format, but via The Local's website.

We resist change because we are basically set in our ways; however, it is positive and good to be flexible and open to what is new. Many of us will miss holding the newspaper in our hands, but I will not miss the cutting down of trees to create that newspaper. I am already happier to read the newspaper on the large computer screen, it is easier on my old eyes and I am helping save a few trees.

Even though we will miss a printed copy of the newspaper we will be reading it online and it will, hopefully be more convenient for us to communicate our ideas and responses to the editor of the newspaper via the ease of email.

Change is inevitable. This is

a change that we should try to understand, accept and celebrate.

**Kris Dube**

Every municipality in the region has its own charms that are a key part of their identity — and Niagara-on-the-Lake is certainly one that stands out the most when applying this opinion.

It's a place with rich history and so many attractions for the millions of tourists who visit annually, but it's also a place that residents are proud to call home because of its quaintness and uniqueness.

I've lived elsewhere in the region my entire life but have worked as a journalist in several Niagara towns and cities. Every time I make the drive to Niagara-on-the-Lake from Fort Erie (my hometown), I usually have to make at least one stop to take advantage of being in this lovely town.

In the summer, stopping at a local fruit stand is always on my list — as is occasionally popping into a local brewery to pick up a growler of some tasty craft beer (consumed when I'm done with work for the day, of course).

There have been times when I'm required to head into town for work on a weekend — which means I bring

the whole family along. We go our separate ways by me doing what I need to do on Queen Street — while my wife and kids hang out at the wading pool at Simcoe Park. We usually grab lunch at one of the many amazing spots in the Old Town and have a picnic at the park.

I'm always amazed by the work town staff put into the local flower beds, and in general, how clean and tidy the downtown core is.

My career as a reporter in Niagara spans more than 15 years and my one-year contract with The Local, which started last July, isn't my first stint in Niagara-on-the-Lake — as I previously worked as a freelancer for a few months with The Niagara Advance, also alongside The Local's trusted editor Penny Coles.

My main beat this time around has been covering council and committee meetings, and there are a few things that stand out about the current batch of elected officials making decisions for the community.

The last council I covered regularly was in Welland, also a great city with plenty to offer.

But like a couple of other councils I've experienced on a weekly basis in my career — it wasn't rare for a meeting to be

taken over by one member.

Shouting, animosity and an obvious dislike between some members was something that could occasionally derail a meeting and shift the focus away from the business before the local government on the evening's agenda.

It didn't happen all the time — I'm not saying that — but this is something I've never seen in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

There will always be differences of opinion because that's what politics is all about. But when councillors here aren't on the same page about an issue, the debate is always conducted with respect and decorum.

Niagara-on-the-Lake council has a great mix of personalities, men and women, of varying age groups and experience.

Every member has their own unique perspective they bring to the table through their own previous political careers, personal lives as lifelong residents and members of the business community.

Nothing is perfect, but local residents are in good hands when it comes to their local government, for the most part.

**Ben Foster**

When I started at The Local for my school co-op placement I didn't really know what to expect.

I had had a really hard time finding a workplace in Niagara-on-the-Lake. I was so lucky that The Local's editor, Penny Coles, took me in. I am hoping that when other employers have read about my experience and have seen I have added positively to The Local that more employers in the area will consider taking in young people who are looking for work experiences.

At The Local I started a weekly picture of Where's Ben? and I have really enjoyed doing this. I have met people along the way who have called out to me, "I know where Ben is!" And I have really appreciated the positive comments about the weekly photo.

I have learned so much about NOTL that I did not know before. It is full of history, quirky spots and really beautiful places. I am going to continue with Where's Ben? online, so I hope to bring some other spaces that perhaps remind you of special places, places you do not know about or getting the satisfaction of guessing it right.

I also got the opportunity to spend some Friday evenings at The Meridian Credit Union Arena to take some hockey pictures for the paper. This was really fun to do, especially when

Continued on page 17

## Renovating NOTL

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# The redcoats are coming (and some greencoats too)

**Mike Balsom**  
The Local

History buffs gathered at Navy Hall last Friday to learn about the soldiers clad in green who fought for Upper Canada during the War of 1812.

The session, led by husband-and-wife Parks Canada employees Peter Martin and Elizabeth LeBlanc, presented *It's Not Easy Being Green: The Canadian Regiments of the War of 1812*, the final event in the Fireside Fridays speaker series offered for March.

The common perception, admitted Martin, is that the British army all wore red uniforms back then.

"Of the 116 numbered British regiments that existed during that period," a green-clad Martin explained, "114 of them wore red. When I walk around Fort George people will come to me and ask 'what are you?' That's one of the reasons I wear this (officer's) uniform, because it's a story not often told."

Martin explained that two of the main reasons that some soldiers wore green were the availability of green dyes and for camouflage purposes.

Despite the accompanying display of intricate examples of the uniforms in question, the session turned out to be about much more than military fashion, as Martin and LeBlanc regaled the audience

with the history of two specific regiments that wore the darker colour — the Glengarry Light Infantry and Caldwell's Western Rangers.

Lieutenant Colonel John MacDonnell proposed the assembly of the Glengarry Light Infantry as early as 1806. His goal was to have a small band of soldiers in Glengarry County (the Kingston-Cornwall area) with Scottish heritage. The Glengarrys finally came together as a unit once the threat of war became more imminent in late 1811 or early 1812.

The regiment recruited from other units across both Upper and Lower Canada, said Martin, with about 800 soldiers part of the unit in the first year. Although they were a light infantry regiment, they worked closely with First Nations units and did a lot of scouting, like the Rangers did.

"As for their weaponry, there is some debate as to what they carried into battle," Martin explained. "They may have had a few rifles, but what we know for the most part is that they carried regular, standard, smooth-ball muskets."

Originally, the regiment was supposed to be dressed in full Highland attire, including kilts. As Martin pointed out, it was soon evident that with Canada's climate, that would have been very inconvenient.

"I don't mean just the winter," Martin laughed, "but also

the summer, when you have flies and mosquitoes that are so big. And diseases borne by black flies and mosquitoes were a big problem."

Because of the job the infantry was expected to do, he added, green made more sense for their uniform due to the camouflage element.

Locally, the Glengarry Light Infantry fought in battles at both Fort George and Lundy's Lane, both of which resulted in many casualties.

Out of 376 who fought at Lundy's Lane, three were killed, 31 wounded, eight went missing and 17 were captured by the enemy. Out of 90 Glengarrys at Fort George, 27 died, 31 were either wounded or captured, and 26 went missing. It was the single most costly engagement for the Glengarrys, who were disbanded in Kingston in June 1816.

One American attendee, Mark Hersee, a former staff member at Fort Niagara in the 1990s, was wearing a Glengarry Light Infantry sweatshirt.

"I think I bought this in 1993 or 1994," he said. "I bought it at Fort Erie because I thought it looked cool. We used to come over to participate in events here and I've always maintained an interest in the period. Those days were a lot of fun."

Matt Lanteigne, an 1812 re-enactor from Smithville, was drawn to Friday's event because

of his interest in the Glengarrys but was pleasantly surprised that the session presented by Martin and LeBlanc also shed light on Caldwell's Western Rangers.

"They played a huge part in the War of 1812 but few people know about them," said Lanteigne, a former member of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment. "I was surprised that Elizabeth talked about them. There's very little literature about them, so it was nice to hear from an expert on them."

Lanteigne has assembled his own Rangers uniform, in green of course, and was appreciative of the chance to learn he was on the right track.

LeBlanc took over for the Caldwell's Rangers portion of the talk. The unit was named for William Caldwell Sr., who had been a captain with Butler's Rangers in Niagara and Detroit during the Revolutionary War and settled near Amherstburg.

After the Battle of the River Basin in Frenchtown (near Detroit), where the British and Canadian militia and Indigenous warriors fought seamlessly together to push back the Americans, Major General Henry Procter called on Caldwell to assemble the special corp.

"It was to be formed of as many fit men that could be raised in the western district who did not belong to the militia of any other district," explained LeBlanc. "A bit of a difference from the Glengarry Light Infantry, who poached left, right and centre."

According to LeBlanc, Caldwell insisted that his elite force be paid double the regular rate of usual forces. The plan was to have between 200 and 500 men divided into 60-men companies that would show the military's commitment to working with Indigenous allies.

LeBlanc brought along examples of both muskets and rifles used by soldiers during the War of 1812, taking a moment



Elizabeth LeBlanc explained the difference between muskets and rifles used in the War of 1812. (Photos by Mike Balsom)



Peter Martin talks about the uniforms worn by the Glengarry Light Infantry.

to explain the differences.

"It's hard to nail down exactly what it was that they were carrying," she said of the Caldwells. "It was so fluid and flexible. And they captured over 1,200 American muskets when they seized Fort Detroit."

The Caldwells, said LeBlanc, were involved in many battles during the war, and were in Niagara for the re-capture of Newark, the capture of Fort Niagara and the Battle of Lundy's Lane. They were disbanded in 1815 and have since been thought of as little more than a

footnote in Canadian history.

"Their battle honours are associated with, and they continue to live on in the Essex and Kent Scottish Regiment," concluded LeBlanc.

For the fourth straight February Friday, the fireside chat, a fundraiser for the Fort George National Historic Site, was sold out.

"I love it," Fort George manager Dan Laroche told The Local Friday. "This is the second straight year. You can expect the same thing to happen next year, too. We're thrilled."

## Legion raising funds for Juno Beach flag

**Sharon Burns**  
The Local

The General Nelles Branch #124 of the Royal Canadian Legion is hosting fundraiser events to purchase a Canadian flag that was once flown in Normandy, France, on a beach where 45,000 Canadians lost their lives during the Second World War.

Regardless of weather conditions, a Canadian flag perpetually flies over the Juno Beach Centre, Canada's Second World War museum and cultural centre. To keep these flags in acceptable condition, they are replaced regularly at a cost to the museum.

The previously flown flags can be purchased for a \$500

donation.

"The goal is to have a tangible item — a Canadian flag and certificate — that we can refer to when talking about WW2, and as a displayed item, it can draw attention to veterans," said Branch 124 president Al Howse.

The donation to the Juno Beach Centre supports their goal of teaching the Canadian contribution to the Second World War and, through contemporary exhibits, demonstrates Canadian values.

Branch 124 will use "the flag as a reminder of our international reach. We may fly it occasionally, on special occasions, and display it in our clubroom other times," said Howse.

The first fundraising event will be Country Queens, a one

woman show at the Legion March 9. Vancouver's Bonnie Kilroe will bring her considerable talent to entertain in the guise of Patsy Cline, Dolly Parton, Reba McEntire and others. Tickets can be purchased online for \$30 at brownpapertickets.com, or at the King Street Branch, Wednesday to Sunday after 2 p.m.

The branch continues its Thursday nights fish fry from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., and they host a variety of musicians on Fridays, including Julie and Mike on March 1, and Derek Abell on March 8. They also provide opportunities to play euchre, and an open mic hosted by Buzz Hummer. Follow Royal Cdn Legion on Facebook to learn more.

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# Meyers a stalwart in tender fruit, greenhouse industries

**Mike Balsom**  
The Local

Niagara has lost one of the pillars of its tender fruit and greenhouse industry with the February 13 passing of Alfred “Fred” Meyers. The 69-year-old president of operations at Meyers Farms died while surrounded by family and friends after a short battle with leukemia.

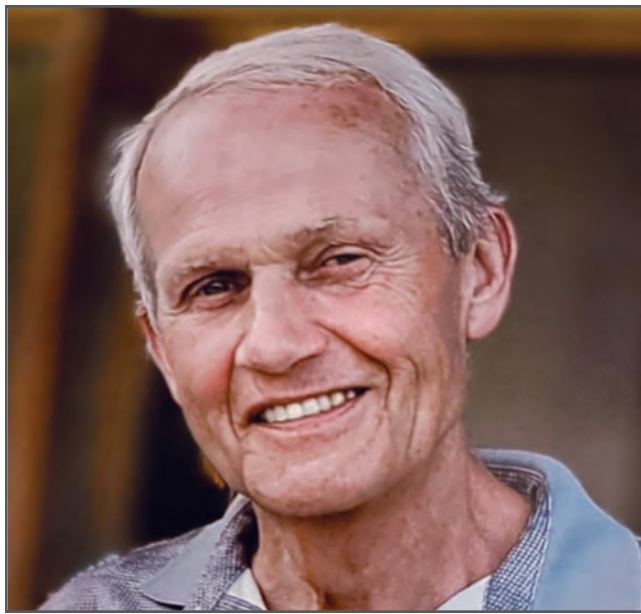
Fred was the son of Dutch immigrants Jim and Clazina Meyers, who established the Meyers Farm in 1955 in Niagara-on-the-Lake. At the age of 18, after a year studying horticulture at the University of Guelph, Fred became a partner in the business with his father.

His love of agriculture, balanced with an astute business mind, was instrumental in Meyers Farms’ success first in growing fruit and then in the floral industry.

The business began with the purchase of 46 acres, 26 of which comprised peach orchards and the remainder holding smaller crops of cherries, pears, plums, prunes and grapes.

The family business built its first greenhouses in the 1960s and began cultivating both vegetables and flowers indoors. During that decade they also began growing peaches, nectarines, strawberries, pumpkins, carrots and zucchini.

By 1986, Fred had assumed the role of operations manager, overseeing 10 acres of greenhouses and 300 acres of orchards. During the 1980s, Meyers Farms expanded its grape growing capacity as well, as they moved into wine grapes. In 2003, he strategically



Fred Meyers joined the family business as an owner at 18 years old. (Photos supplied)

pushed the business forward by expanding the sale of its greenhouse crops into U.S. markets. Just three years ago, Meyers Farms cut the ribbon on a new 10-acre greenhouse on Stewart Road, ramping up Meyers’ production of potted plants, including kalanchoes, Easter lilies, chrysanthemums and poinsettias. The company now operates 40 acres of greenhouse space.

Fred’s son Jim, Meyers Farms’ vice president of sales and logistics, says his dad was a jack-of-all-trades who loved being a grower and also thrived in all business aspects of the operation, from sales to finance to operations.

“My oma (Clazina) had worked in banking before immigrating,” Jim tells The Local. “And my opa was passionate about growing. He was a natural, and he had a passion for business. My dad was some-

where in between, which allowed him to be a great business operator in both the farm and greenhouse industries.”

Fred’s sister Elly Hoff, vice president of human resources and administration and her son Aron, vice-president of production, have rounded out the Meyers Farms administration team for the past few years. Jim’s brother Blake joined the team just two years ago.

“It’s been a collaborative effort between all of us,” Jim says about the organization’s continued growth. “Dad has always supported our goals as future owners as well. He had the same passion and appetite for the next step in the business. Being a multi-generational business, we always found a way to make things work, we always agreed on the big decisions.”

Away from the business, Jim says Fred always made life fun for him and his brothers

Blake and Jordan and their mother Sandy.

“He was adventurous, and he loved to play pranks around the house,” Jim says. “He had a great sense of humour, and he had this humorous way of giving us advice. It made those conversations stick in our brains a little more than a normal textbook conversation. He did a great job of explaining things to us as a dad.”

Fred took great joy in vacationing with the family. Whether it was hitting the ski slopes or a trip to Disney. Jim says his father was always the first one up and the last one to bed.

“He was always able to keep up with us kids,” Jim laughs, “and sometimes we were the ones who had to try to keep up with him.”

The golf course was Fred’s great place to escape and get his mind off business. He had a group of friends with whom he would hit the links every Tuesday night. The winner each week would be the one responsible for booking the following week’s tee times at a course of his choosing.

Through the years Fred contributed to the advancement of the Niagara tender fruit industry. He was active with organizations such as Flowers Canada, the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers’ Association, the Ontario Tender Fruit Growers, and the Grape Growers of Ontario.

In addition, he was a strong supporter of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers and Temporary Foreign Workers programs. He developed long-lasting friendships with

workers from Jamaica and Mexico who to this day return to the farm due to the supportive environment he cultivated.

“He was passionate and dedicated to the farm and its employees,” says Jim, “and also about helping individuals in need. He worked with various local organizations to assist those with disabilities, financial hardship and addiction. And he was always willing to give a hand to any neighbour, fellow farmer or friend.”

Fred survived a previous bout with stomach cancer a few years ago. As Jim remembers, his father never complained during that time and made the battle look a lot easier than it probably was.

The fight with leukemia took a toll on him the past 18 months, forcing him to slow down and pull himself away from the day-to-day operation of Meyers Farms.

“But we spent a lot of quality time together one-on-one and as a family,” Jim says. “Having the time together this past

year, although very tough, it was pretty special. We made the best of it, and I’m very grateful for that.”

Jim believes his father is a true role model in how a family business, now in its third generation, can successfully develop and grow.

“One of the best things I think you can do is to work with your family,” he insists, “because you get to share some amazing time together. He never pressured us to come into the business. He encouraged all of his children and his nieces and nephews to follow their passions.”

Fred is survived by his wife Sandy, his sons Jim, Blake and Jordan, his daughters-in-law Patricia, Rebecca and Ann, and his grandchildren Jarvis, Theo and Robin.

A funeral mass was held Saturday, February 24 at Covenant Christian Reformed Church on Parnell Road in St. Catharines, followed by a celebration of Fred’s life at Meyers Fruit Farms on Stewart Road in NOTL.



Fred Meyers guided Meyers Farm through massive growth over the years.

## Museum’s Doc Club discussion to honour women’s history

### Local Staff

Though Canada celebrates Women’s History Month in October, our neighbours to the south declared in 1987 that they would do so every March.

More timely, though, is the fact that International Women’s Day is Friday, March 8. With that in mind, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum celebrates women’s history with its Doc Club on March 1.

Two films from the National Film Board of Canada are the centre of the online discussion to be held that day at 10 a.m.

In the 1982 short film *Portrait of the Artist — As an Old Lady*, director Gail Singer focuses her lens on Paraskeva

Clark, an artist, socialist and feminist who is her own woman at her own cost.

The film is a cameo of an irascible and sometimes touching artist whose work won her a place in exhibitions and private collections. Born in Russia in 1898, she eventually married a Canadian and moved to Toronto. Because her canvases reflect a strong social conscience, she had to struggle hard to earn a place in the nation’s ultra-conservative galleries.

The second film board film is Helene Klodowsky’s *No More Tears Sister — Anatomy of Hope and Betrayal* from 2004.

It’s described as a story of love, revolution and betrayal. Klodowsky explores the price

of truth in times of war. Set during the violent ethnic conflict that has enveloped Sri Lanka for decades, the documentary re-creates the courageous life of renowned human rights activist Dr. Rajani Thiranagama. Mother, anatomy professor and symbol of hope, Rajani was assassinated at the age of 35. Stunningly photographed, using rare archival footage, intimate correspondence and re-creations, the story of Rajani and her family is one of a revolutionary woman and a dangerous pursuit of justice.

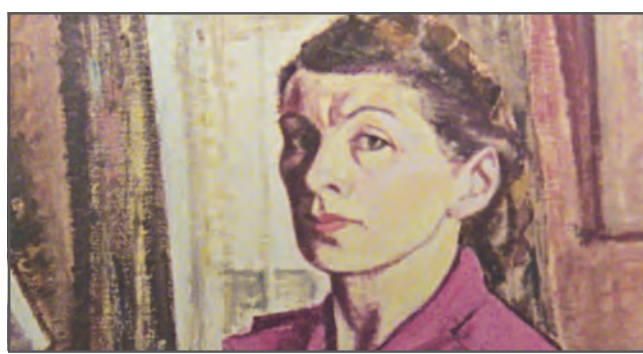
Both films can be viewed for free on the National Film Board website (nfb.ca) by participants on their own time before gathering on Zoom for an enriching discussion. To get

the link for the online discussion, held in partnership with RiverBrink Art Museum, send an email to [bworthy@nhsm.ca](mailto:bworthy@nhsm.ca).

As well, the museum is hosting a special lecture about the upcoming solar eclipse on March 21.

Dr. Brian Pihack, longtime president of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada — Niagara Centre, presents an evening of information, explaining how best and safely to experience the April 8 event.

Dr. Pihack has been presenting lectures for over two decades on astronomy, geology and paleontology. He is a former national representative to the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, who presented him



A still from *Portrait of the Artist — As an Old Lady*, one of two films to be discussed during the NOTL Museum’s Doc Club meeting March 1. (Screenshot)

with their Award of Merit Medal. In 2021 during a conference of the International Association of Astronomers in France, a newly discovered asteroid was named in his honour.

Admission is free for NOTL

Museum members or \$10 for non-members. Participants will receive a free pair of viewing glasses with their attendance. Registration is required as space is limited. Register by contacting the museum.



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# The NOTL Local staff shows its 'local love'

Continued from page 13

I managed to catch the puck in mid air or get a shot of a fantastic goal going in!

I also had the opportunity to write about the local area and about the larger world, and how it related to here in NOTL. Readers might remember my Remembrance Day story or the articles about the environment, different festivities people celebrate around winter time, finding places to play pickleball for youth, or the piece about the World Cup! I really enjoyed writing during my co-op placement with the Local and hope to write again in the future, about things that are happening in NOTL or how our lives here relate to the stories and things happening elsewhere.

I hope when The Local goes totally online you open it up and keep up to date with what is happening in the place where you live. Us younger people already read the local news online, so make sure you help the people who are more used to the paper! It's so easy and nothing to be afraid of!

It's important that we continue to read The Local news, the reporting is real and reliable and relates to where we live. There is a team of people who have a common aim to bring news to you in NOTL, writing from different perspectives about stories that matter and offering a wider range of local journalism. I hope my small part has offered a glimpse of a youth's thoughts and ideas, and will continue to.

## David Gilchrist

My wife's family had moved to Niagara-on-the-Lake in the late 1960s after purchasing a tumble down old place on Riccardo Street. Her mother and father, over a period of several years, completely rebuilt the house from the basement up. We were married at Grace United Church in 1975 and bought our first home in town in 1979 when we were expecting our first child. During our early years in Niagara-on-the-Lake, The Niagara Advance was an invaluable source of community news and of course Penny Coles was its hard working editor. Her coverage of every aspect of the community was outstanding, keeping us informed of all activities in town.

We feel most blessed that we were able to raise our two sons in town. We have wonderful memories of them attending, Parliament Oak and later Niagara District, playing on NOTL sports teams, playing golf at our golf course, sailing lessons and much involvement at Fort George. It has been a great experience, and now we enjoy our retirement here in town as well.

I came to know Penny more when our sons played hockey on the same NOTL hockey team for a few years. My only real contact with the paper at that time, besides reading it

weekly, was contributing photos periodically from church events etc. or to promote upcoming events. Penny was always great at allowing space for community groups to do this and that was so important for a community newspaper.

After The Niagara Advance closed in 2017, I was pleased to see that Penny and her loyal group of supporters were intent on carrying on producing a newspaper that incorporated the same values that were so important in a community newspaper. Thus, The Niagara-on-the-Lake Local was born. Penny had been aware that I was an avid photographer and asked me to contribute photos periodically for the print edition and, being retired, I was excited to do so. Later, when an association with Village Media began, it allowed the opportunity for more photographs and articles both in print and online. I'm an early bird and am often out in the morning looking for subjects and enjoy contributing to Good Morning, Niagara-on-the-Lake

With the ongoing decline of printed newspapers and advertising to support them, the association developed with Village Media has allowed Penny and her team to transition comfortably into an online source of valuable community news on a daily basis. I will be pleased to continue my association in the future. All members of the team are excited with this development and they will continue to provide up-to-date coverage of community events and developments online.

## Carrie Gleason

What I enjoyed the most about proofreading The Local for the past year and a half has been getting to know all the wonderful people who make up this community. Editor Penny Coles has created a community paper that reflects the various passions of NOTLers, from those concerned about development and maintaining NOTL's unique heritage and character, to those who go above and beyond to help others less fortunate in the community, and still others who strive to protect its natural environment. This passion is also reflected in the voices of The Local's reporters, whether it be Mike Balsom writing about sports and the arts, Kris Dube writing about local politics, Maria and Sharon keeping us to-date on community events, Owen and David informing us on nature and the environment, and Penny bringing the community closer together with her heartfelt stories about the people who live here. Although this is the end of my time as proofreader for The Local, I am comforted that its stories will still be appearing online, so that I can stay current with the spirited, community-minded folks of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

## Rosie Gowsell

I met Penny and Karen in 1996 when I began my first job in graphic design in the composing department of The Niagara Advance. Penny was my first boss and subsequently, the boss I would compare all bosses to in the future. Kind, fair, always there to listen, but most of all, and like Karen, her sales counterpart, just unbelievably amazing at what they do.

Penny and Karen's dedication and encyclopedic knowledge of NOTL was staggering to watch week after week. This wasn't just a job for them, it was, literally, a labour of love. They were both personally invested in the stories that were written and the people behind the ads that were placed.

Eventually I moved on, but we were able to keep in virtual touch (thank you, Facebook) and both held a special place in my heart. When Penny called to tell me her and Karen's plan for starting The Local and would I like to join them as a designer, I didn't think twice.

I remember the moment; I was parked in my son's elementary school parking lot waiting to pick him up. I was working for myself and thought, "sure, I can take them on as a weekly client, how much time can this take up?" I was so proud of what the two of them were doing and with their solid reputation in the community, I had no doubt they could make a go of it.

In January 2019 we began, and over the years I designed most of the ads and laid out almost every single edition of The Local. If I was sick or took a week off, I still had a hand in it in some way. Control issues? Possibly. But I had come

to think of this paper as 'my baby'. In fact, the week my best friend died unexpectedly, I still worked on the paper when I came home from the viewing because it was my stable bit of normalcy in an otherwise turbulent time. My constant. In short, it became my labour of love too.

So fast forward five years. My son is now almost finished high school and going to university next year, a time of massive change and 'moving on'. I mention it because that's where I feel The Local is at as well: an exciting time of change, growth and moving on. But alas, there is no need for a graphic designer with an online edition, so this is where my journey ends with my beloved newspaper.

Penny, Karen and I will continue to be friends, which I cherish more than any job. I'm so very proud of what they created, and to have been part of the most fantastic team of salespeople and journalists (both as humans and in their respective positions) and what I got to be a part of for the last five years. I'm so very happy for everyone, but sadly, I'm waving at the school bus from the corner while everyone drives off without me. Good luck to all in this next phase.

## Maria Klassen

I have always wanted to write — anything. As an elementary school teacher my writing consisted of report cards and weekly class letters. Teaching art was my favourite subject.

After I retired, I moved to St. Catharines. I began writing a monthly article about the Niagara Region for a Canadian Mennonite paper. A friend

suggested I submit an article to Penny Coles of The Local. She printed the article, and a few emails later, I was writing articles about the art scene in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

For the last couple of years I have been focusing on the exhibits at the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre. I have met fascinating people with incredible talent. I have learned so much about the local art scene. The Pumphouse sets up amazing displays of the work of local artists, including the work of instructors at the Arts Centre. The NOTL Arts Collective produces a wide and diverse array of work, which can regularly be seen at the Arts Centre.

The Pumphouse sponsors many activities. There are classes for a wide range of ages and interests. These include art classes using different techniques, and art history lectures, available for all ages from young children to seniors. Art camps are offered for children. Art classes are provided to seniors in long-term care. There are in-studio activities and online programs. The Pumphouse Arts Centre also actively fosters community involvement in beautifying public spaces. An example is the hydro box beautification competition.

It has been rich and rewarding writing about some of the activities of the art scene in the Niagara region for the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre.

## Joy Sanguedolce

What an adventure it's been! Thank you Niagara-on-the-Lake businesses, services, the town, theatre, restaurants, galleries, hotels and everyone else who has said 'yes' to supporting our weekly

newspaper with your precious ad dollars. I've never hesitated to recommend an ad space in The Local because I was confident in our readership. You know you have a great product when people know Penny, Mike, Owen, Sharon and David (plus many more) by first name! Behind the scenes Rosie was making the magic happen by making your ads beautiful.

In return my family has found our dentist, optometrist (Hello Dr. Hopkins!), celebration night spots, spa, pharmacy, grocery specials, wineries, foodie gifts, real estate agent and the best fish fry in town (well actually there are three — thanks to the Legion and Lions!) all thanks to the pages of the NOTL Local. My motto has always been to support the family businesses that support our work family at The Local.

Nothing will change about this as we move forward in the next chapter of this story. In fact the growth of our digital platform is something we should all be excited about. The opportunities for creative storytelling, news gathering and collaboration with the community are endless. On the marketing side, ad spaces can now include video, photo galleries, time of day creative ad units (breakfast specials in the morning, cocktail after five!) site takeovers, surveys etc. etc. . . . Not to mention the bright, bold colour reproduction that comes along with digital. I look forward to continuing partnerships with all our loyal advertisers. I look forward to telling your brand story as Penny and her team continue telling the beautiful story of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

## 24 hours on the 24th to mark 24 years and help charities

### Mike Balsom The Local

When Virgil's Bliss Aveda Salon marked its 20th anniversary in 2020, owner Sandra Cocetti wanted to do something special. So she committed to

being in the salon for 20 hours that day and donated the proceeds from all of her services to Red Roof Retreat.

She had hoped it could turn into an annual event, but COVID put a dent in those plans. Last Saturday, though,

Cocetti turned the key at 12 a.m. to open the door for 24 hours of raising funds for both Red Roof Retreat and Community Crew.

"It was wonderful," says Cocetti. "We had clients coming in through the night, and a lot of friends and family visited near

the end of the night. And it was great that Steffanie (Bjorgan, Red Roof Retreat) and Bobbie and Katy (Corcoran and Heron, Community Crew), both came in at the same time for their haircuts. It was such an amazing, warm feeling."

As of press time, Cocetti didn't have final numbers for the funds raised. Part of the day included a draw for some prizes, and that will continue for another week or two. Ballots for the draw are available at Bliss.



From left to right: Sandra Cocetti, Katy Herron, Bobbie Corcoran, Steffanie Bjorgan (Supplied)

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# Predators eliminated in shootout thriller

Mike Balsom  
The Local

The Niagara Predators 2023-2024 season came to an end in front of an appreciative home crowd with a 2-1 shootout loss to the Durham Roadrunners Friday night.

Despite being eliminated from the Greater Metro Junior

A Hockey League's Russell Cup playoffs in two straight games, the Preds played their most complete, most confident game of the season against Durham.

"To lose in this fashion, it's tough," an emotional head coach Kevin Taylor said after the game. "Everything we've been asking them to do all year, they did it tonight. You can't

fault them. They made no mistakes tonight."

Unfortunately for Niagara, their recent scoring woes continued. Despite their most potent offensive attack all season, only Luca Fernandez was able to solve Durham goaltender Leonid Putilov during regulation time.

After a hard-fought scoreless first period during which Niagara outshot Durham 13-8, the Roadrunners struck first 58 seconds into the second. Joshua Risk stole the puck at the Durham blueline, skated across centre toward the Niagara net, and fed a pass beyond Niagara defender Tyler DeCoff's outstretched stick to teammate Jackson Kaplan near the goalpost. Kaplan tucked it in past goalie Zane Clausen to give the Roadrunners the lead.

Just over three minutes later, the Preds' Declan Fogarty chased down a loose puck in the Durham end and took a shot on Putilov. The goaltender kicked it away, but Fogarty picked it up and centred it to teammate Luca Fernandez, who unleashed a low wrist shot past Putilov to tie it up.

Later in the second, Clausen made what had to have been his most spectacular save of the season. Yenny Jibb skated in on Clausen's left and the goaltender set himself for a shot from Jibb. But the forward passed it across the point to teammate Jaden Smith who one-timed it at the net. Somehow Clausen

was able to stretch his 6'4" frame over to the other side in a split second to rob Smith of the go-ahead marker.

Clausen continued his strong play throughout the third as Durham outshot the Preds 14-10 in the period. Despite continued pressure from the Preds on Putilov, the period ended scoreless and a five-minute three-on-three overtime followed.

Both teams had chances in the extra frame but the two goalies continued their dominance, forcing the game into a shootout.

Niagara's second shooter, forward Reece Bisci, skated in on Putilov, faked a shot, then slipped the puck through the goalie's legs and into the net for the first shootout goal. But Durham's next shooter, Smith, deked around Clausen's left side to tie it up.

Clausen and Putilov continued to come up with big saves and the Predators hit the post twice, until Brandon Ste. Croix, the Roadrunners' ninth shooter, beat Clausen with a wrist shot. That left it up to the Preds' Shane Kaplan to force a tenth shooter, but Putilov stopped him with his pad to seal the victory.

A few tears were flowing post-game from some of the players but especially from a few of their parents, who were loath to leave the arena and scrambling to take photos with some of the boys and their teammates.

"I'm proud of how this

team has finished off," Taylor said. "They played with a lot of pride, and both games against Durham were exciting to watch. I guess if you don't win a championship this is a good way to end it."

In an interview with The Local Saturday, an effusive team president and owner Robert Turnbull expressed his appreciation and gratitude to the fans, the rink staff, billet families, sponsors, the broadcast streaming team, and his coaching staff and their support staff for a great season.

"You're only as good as the people you have around you," Turnbull said.

Looking back on the season, Turnbull lamented the injuries to some key players, including Clausen, who missed almost two full months with a knee problem.

"Overall, the guys really developed nicely," Turnbull added. "Some of the guys brought their game up to a much higher level. I thought we should have won both of these games against Durham. It's tough to lose a game that way. But can you imagine if they played this way all year long?"

The Predators announced their team award winners on Monday. Team captain Logan Baillie was named the Predators' Most Sportsmanlike Player and also won the Juliana Marie Edwards Award, given to the player who best exemplifies the qualities of perseverance,

sportsmanship and dedication to the game.

Luca Fernandez captured the team's scoring title and was named Most Valuable Player. Shane Kaplan also took two awards, one for Rookie of the Year and the other for the Best Defensive Forward.

Rounding out the awards were Aidan Jones as Most Improved Player, Nicholas Savoie as Best Defenseman and Thomas McGrath, with the Best Teammate Award.

Up next for Turnbull and Taylor are exit interviews with each of the players. Clausen, Bisci, Fogarty, DeCoff, and NOTL native Josh Frena, all 21-year-olds, have aged out of the league, while Turnbull hopes the rest of the team will be committing to another year with the Predators.

"It was a great honour to play for the Predators in my hometown," Frena said Monday. "Not a lot of people can say they played junior hockey in their hometown and I was very grateful for the opportunity. Every Friday home game was such a thrill, to be able to play on the rink I grew up on in front of my family and friends."

He continued, "I learned to always play hard and keep moving forward as there are great things ahead for those who put the work and effort in each day. From the bus rides to practices and games and team bonding after games and on weekends, I absolutely loved it."



Mike, Josh and Michael Frena (Mike Balsom)

## LocalHAPPENINGS

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## Morrison mulls next steps for game

Mike Balsom  
The Local

Though he fell short of his Kickstarter fundraising target of \$125,000 by his February 18 deadline, Billy Morrison is declaring his campaign in support of his original new strategy game Hockey Hardware a big success.

Over 32 days, Morrison raised pledges of more than \$35,350 from 182 backers, reaching 28 percent of his goal.

"It was a learning experience for us," Morrison told The Local Monday. "Everything from setting the funding goal to setting the duration, and the promotional aspect of it, and raising the pledges. It's disappointing we didn't reach the funding goal. But the success of the campaign was the promotional element."

To build buzz for his creation, Morrison and his wife Katherine held Hockey Hardware events at board game cafes in Ottawa, Guelph and St. Catharines. They also spent several days in Toronto during the NHL All-Star Week, where they partnered with the Carnegie Initiative Summit.

Named in honour of Herb

Carnegie, generally considered the best Black hockey player to never play in the NHL, the Carnegie Initiative Summit is dedicated to bringing diversity to the sport and working to ensure that hockey is inclusive, supportive and welcoming to all. In 2022, Carnegie was honoured posthumously by being inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in the Builders category.

"More than just a tabletop game, I believe Hockey Hardware can help grow the sport of hockey," said 32-year-old Morrison, who grew up in Niagara-on-the-Lake. "We share a lot of the same values with the Carnegie Initiative. I believe Hockey Hardware can increase interest and accessibility to hockey by bringing people closer to the sport through this tabletop game medium and create new fans."

Hockey Hardware can be played by up to four people, who draw cards and roll seven specialized dice to accumulate points in the form of goals, assists, hits and other hockey statistics. Players participate in three sets of five rounds, representing the three periods of a hockey game, to use those

points to capture trophies at the end of the game.

"Anyone can play it," Morrison added. "While it's made with hockey fans in mind, players don't need any hockey knowledge or experience to have fun or win."

During the time spent in Toronto, Morrison rubbed shoulders with hockey executive Brian Burke, broadcaster Elliotte Friedman and NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly. NHL pros Anthony Stewart, Mark Fraser, Mats Sundin and Curtis Joseph were also introduced to the game.

"It was great exposure for Hockey Hardware," said Morrison. We also handed out hundreds of promotional cards to hockey fans as well. It was very encouraging and very motivating to us to see that great feedback about this game."

Last month Morrison outlined to The Local why his Kickstarter goal was set at \$125,000. He is adamant that other than the dice, which have to be imported, Hockey Hardware is to be manufactured, packaged and shipped via a company that operates out of Montreal, Quebec, making it "authentically Canadian."

Having not reached his goal, Morrison is mulling over other options to get the game onto card tables across the country.

Those options could include making modifications to the game itself, relaunching another Kickstarter campaign, taking in investors to help with the costs or even making an appearance on CBC Television's *Dragon's Den*.

"We're reviewing everything, and considering everything," he said. "All options are on the table. It's still early at this point, so anything is possible."

In the meantime, Morrison is hoping those who are interested in following the next steps in the development of Hockey Hardware will sign up for his newsletter at hockeyhardware.com.

Looking back on what he calls his "32-day sprint of action and travel," he has nothing but positive things to say.

"Thousands of people now know about Hockey Hardware," Morrison stated. "I can confirm there is a lot of interest and a lot of excitement. It's my full intention and determination to bring this game to life one way or another."



■

# Local

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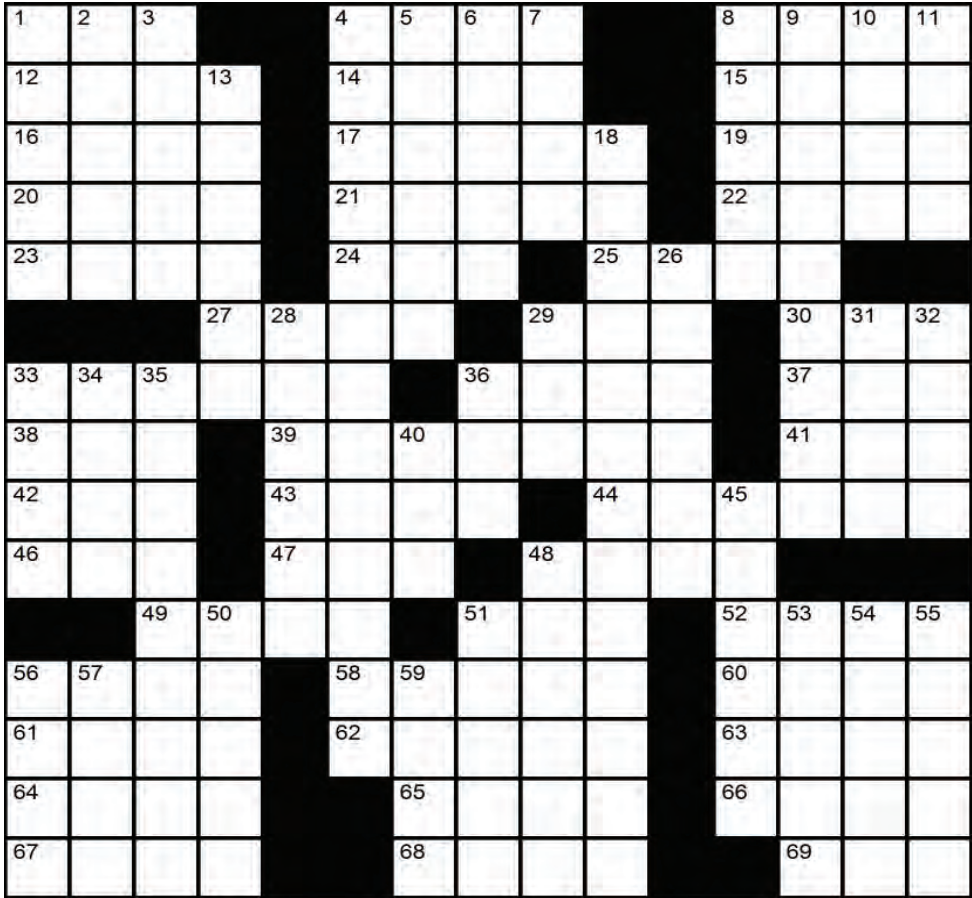
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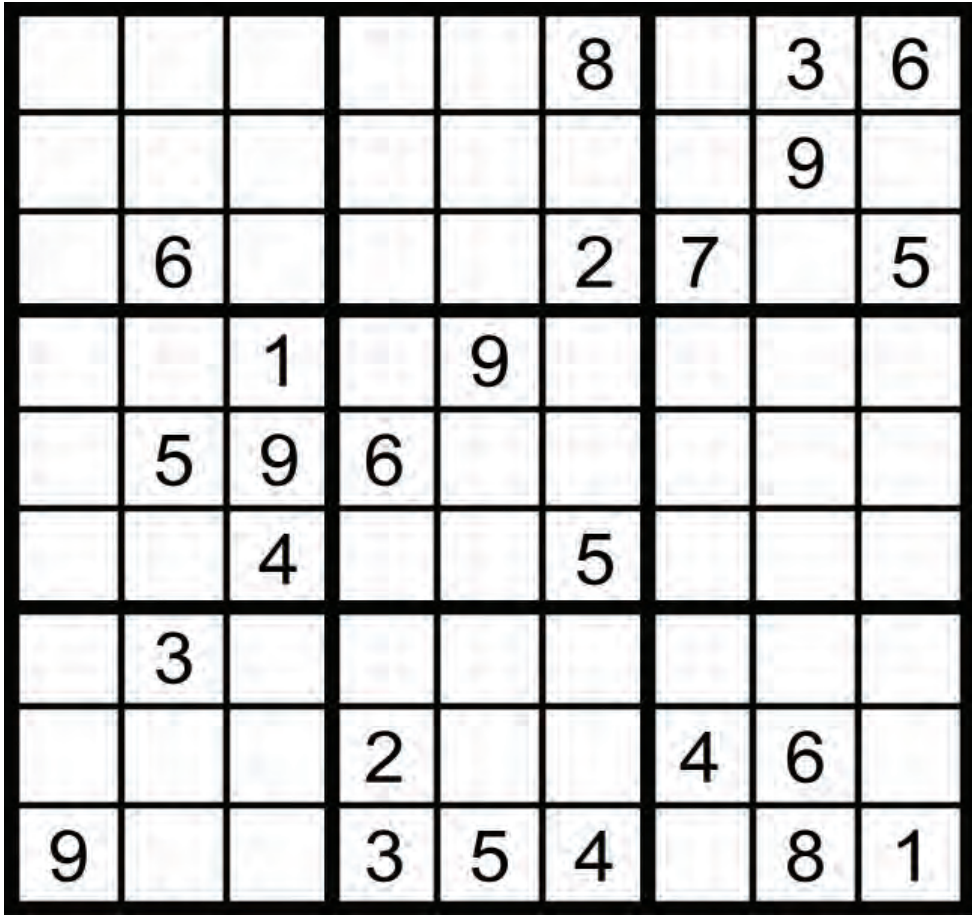


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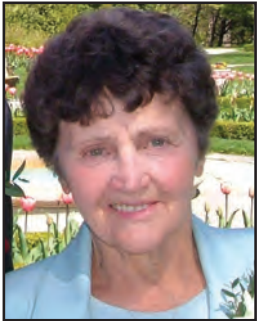
CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU



- Across:  
1 Raises  
4 1 G  
8 Strikebreaker  
12 Siestas  
14 Egg layers  
15 Father of a leveret  
16 Superstar  
17 Wanes  
19 Old Peruvian native  
20 Aligned  
21 Open  
22 Enormous  
23 Abominable snowman  
24 Scrutinize  
25 Study  
27 Mardi ---  
29 Evil  
30 E.g. A O L  
33 Four pecks  
36 Secret Chinese society  
37 Bingo!  
38 Time in Boston  
39 Merchant ship's capacity  
41 Immediately  
42 Dentists' grp.  
43 "Death --- Expert Witness" (P D James)  
44 Is adjacent to  
46 Homo sapiens
- 47 Frequently, poetically  
48 Mailed  
49 Specialty food store  
51 Contemptuous exclamation  
52 Mantle  
56 State of constant change  
58 Lily Munster actress Yvonne De ---  
60 Not his  
61 Captain Jack Sparrow actor  
62 Online missives  
63 Senses of self-importance  
64 Wild about  
65 Look after  
66 Seedy joint  
67 Talks lovingly  
68 Singles  
69 Could be bobby, red or white
- Down:  
1 One  
2 Army chaplain  
3 Gush forth  
4 Presidential workplace  
5 Chucks  
6 Outbreak  
7 Junkie  
8 Destructive Hindu deity  
9 Those north of the 49th  
10 Curves  
11 Police officer's patrol route  
13 Snow carriage  
18 Wrestling maneuvers  
26 Enter stealthily  
28 Provide new equipment  
29 Long feathery scarf  
31 Get lost!  
32 Minor chessman  
33 Smile  
34 Federal farming regulator  
35 Confront  
36 Channel revived as Heartland  
40 --- King Cole  
45 Engraved with acid  
48 Salty  
50 Montreal ---, now the Washington Nationals  
51 Gray matter  
53 Breastplate of Zeus or Athena  
54 Brigham Young University city  
55 Antique auto  
56 Depositors' protective grp.  
57 Longtime "Tonight Show" host Jay  
59 Rounds



OBITUARY



**Andres, Eva** — Passed away peacefully at Willoughby Manor on February 19, 2024 at the age of 97. Beloved wife of the late William (2010). Dear mother of Rick (Anna), Elsie (Wallace) Clement, Reg (Cheryl), Fred (Patricia), and Sandra Hildebrandt. Proud grandmother of 17 grandchildren and 30 great-grandchildren, and another on the way. Survived by many nieces and nephews. Predeceased by her siblings Tina, John, Susan, and Vera and son-in-law Peter Hildebrandt.

Visitation was held at Bethany Mennonite Church, 572 East & West Line, Niagara-on-the-Lake on Friday, February 23, 6-8 pm. Funeral Service was held at Bethany at 11 am on Saturday, February 24. Interment at Niagara Lakeshore Cemetery followed.

Memorial donations may be made to MCC or charity of your choice. Online condolences at [tallmanfuneralhomes.ca](http://tallmanfuneralhomes.ca).

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SUDOKU ANSWERS

Sudoku solution from  
February 21, 2024

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

Sudoku solution from  
February 28, 2024

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

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PUZZLE ANSWERS

Across: 1 Ups, 4 Thou, 8 Scab, 12 Naps, 14 Hens, 15 Hare, 16 Idol, 17 Eases, 19 Inca, 20 True, 21 Over, 22 Vast, 23 Yeti, 24 Vet, 25 Read, 27 Gras, 29 Bad, 30 I S P, 33 Bushel, 36 Tong, 37 Aha, 38 E S T, 39 Tomnage, 41 Now, 42 A D A, 43 Of an, 44 Lies on, 46 Man, 47 Off, 48 Sent, 49 Dell, 51 Bah, 52 Cape, 56 Flux, 58 Carlo, 60 Hers, 61 Depp, 62 E-mail, 63 Egos, 64 Into, 65 Mind, 66 Dive, 67 Coos, 68 Ones, 69 Sox.

Down: 1 Unity, 2 Padre, 3 Spout, 4 The Oval Office, 5 Heaves, 6 Onset, 7 User, 8 Shiva, 9 Canadians, 10 Arcs, 11 Beat, 13 Sleigh, 18 Strangleholds, 26 Edge in, 28 Retool, 29 Boa, 31 Shoo, 32 Pawn, 33 Beam, 34 U S D A, 35 Stand up to, 36 T N N, 40 Nat, 45 Etched, 48 Salline, 50 Expos, 51 Brain, 53 Aegis, 54 Provo, 55 Essex, 56 F D I C, 57 Leno, 59 Ammo.



# Pillitteri tunes up for comedic debate on CBC radio

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

Joe Pillitteri, Niagara-on-the-Lake's very own home-grown comic, has been invited to perform on *The Debaters*, a popular CBC radio comedy show that features Canada's hottest comedians, hosted by Steve Patterson, two-time winner of Canada's Best Male Stand-Up.

Pillitteri will be performing before a live audience March 19 at the McIntyre Performing Arts Centre, located in Hamilton's Mohawk College, with seating for more than 1,000 people. When he spoke to The Local last week, the orchestra was almost completely sold out — his family and friends bought up most of the tickets, he jokes — with only a few left in the balcony.

It's a show he has wanted to do for a long time, he says, and he is particularly excited to be working with Patterson, "one of the best in Canada."

CBC's website describes the show, in its 18th season, as a "battle of laughs and logic," with a format that is "part stand-up, part quiz show and part comedy competition," with a live audience picking the winners.

While debating another comedian, "you're basically trying to land as many jokes as you can in favour of your topic,"



Joe Pillitteri and his wife, Rebecca, at a wedding. Pillitteri likes this photo because "it clearly illustrates how exceedingly hilarious my wife thinks I am," he says. (Supplied)

says Pillitteri, which in his case, is arguing for kids working at after-school jobs. Although he didn't get to pick the topic, he was able to choose which side he is on. And it's no accident he was invited to debate that particular topic, given his performances that include jokes about some of the jobs he had to do from the time he was a kid, working for his father on the family farm.

It seems the show's producers felt the same way. "They heard me on CBC's *Laugh out Loud*, and they thought it was a good fit," Pillitteri says, re-

ferring to a show that was recorded at the CBC Radio Gala at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Court House on the final night of this year's Icebreakers Comedy Festival.

"It wasn't a random choice. The producer felt my material would work with this topic." And Pillitteri says he felt it would be his strength to argue in favour.

He will be debating Courtney Gilmour, a Juno-nominated comedian, and a finalist on *Canada's Got Talent*. "I've seen her performing in festivals and on TV," he says.

"She's a great performer, and very funny. And I love the opportunity to do anything with somebody funny."

He explains that when two comics work together, "my experience is one plus one equals three," as they feed off of each other, "making the whole greater than the sum of the parts."

"Truthfully," Pillitteri adds, "I've wanted to be on this show for quite some time. I love the format. It's genuinely funny."

And host Steve Patterson "is hilarious in his own right. I've met him at corporate

events, and I've always said 'hey, if there's ever a chance to work with you . . .' but I think waiting your turn is the way to go, waiting for a topic that suits your material. I'm super excited to be doing that."

And with Patterson "a master moderator he will know how to make the debate better, and livelier."

The format for speaking "is pretty much down to the minute," he says, consisting of two rounds of two- to five-minute bursts, with an opening and closing, so by the end of the debate the two comics have had about 20 minutes each.

"You have to submit a draft of your jokes with a word count so they'll know it will fit into the allotted time for the show," he explains. "Some of it is improv, depending on the way it's going, or you can write it down, whatever you choose."

Pillitteri says he genuinely believes kids should work after school and learn the concept of earning money to buy what they want, but also sees that it's not the same as what he experienced growing up.

The jokes are going to be about "the expectations of our own kids," he says, and that "there are downfalls to not working for every single dime they spend, and not understanding why it's insane to have concert tickets priced at

\$800. I think there is a commonality these days, that kids today work less and get paid more when they do work, but they work in a different time than we did. I'm trying to get humour out of that."

The work he did on the family farm, especially alongside Jamaican farmworkers, contributed to the person he is and to his comedy, he says. "I feel like work for me was a gift."

"I'm also exceedingly conscientious when I'm performing outside of our town," he adds, "trying to really find ways that whoever I'm in front of, I can make my comedy relatable to them."

He says with a full-time business to run, rather than making comedy a career, he can look at it a little differently — it's more about having fun being able to do something he loves to do.

However, he's learned from his early years on stage that when he didn't take it seriously enough and didn't prepare enough, "that you only make those mistakes once or twice, until you realize if you have the opportunity to perform you have to prepare for it, with the goal of making people laugh. And if you succeed, it feels really good."

To buy tickets, if there are any left, visit [ci.ovationtix.com/36734/performance/11391703](https://ci.ovationtix.com/36734/performance/11391703).

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