

# The Citizen

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## LOCAL NEWS

### Provincial Election 2023

■ If you're still deciding who to support in the provincial election, to be held on October 3, *The Citizen* has you covered with a slate of in-depth candidate profiles.

Details on Pages 8-9

## LOCAL NEWS

### Parent Raises Concern About Food Allergies

■ What should be done in local schools to accommodate students with food allergies? This month, we examine the issue.

Details on Pages 10-11



## SPORTS & RECREATION

### Local Hockey Player Off to Fast Start in Sweden

■ Hayden Fast moved to Sweden to play another year of junior hockey. He's already been pumped up to the pros.

Details on Page 23

## ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

### Author's Books Focus on Good Storytelling

■ Robert Stermscheg of Niverville has published a half-dozen books to date, with the latest out this summer.

Details on Pages 26-27



# Evaluating the Safety of the Power-Assisted Scooter

▶▶ READ MORE ON PAGE 6

BY BRENDA SAWATZKY

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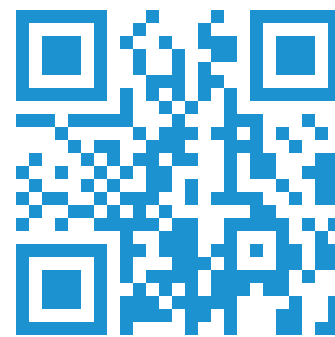
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**WHAT'S INSIDE**

- Naturopath and Acupuncturist Opens Niverville Practice **4**
- Manitobans Head Back to the Polls **4**
- Feds Reinstate Carbon Tax Rebate for Niverville Residents **5**
- Benefits and Hazards of the Power-Assisted Scooter **6**
- Provincial Election 2023: The Candidates in Springfield-Ritchot **8**
- Parent Raises Food Allergy Concerns with Local Schools **10**
- Ready for the 2023-24 Campaign **13**
- Nighthawks Undeclared After Thrilling Opening Weekend **14**
- Show Your Colours: Nighthawks Merchandise Makes Big Impression **16**
- Niverville Council Approves Film Studio Plans Despite Some Objection **17**
- Ritchot Assesses Housing Needs in the RM **18**
- Family-Run Food Truck Serves Up Fresh Smash Burgers **19**
- Heritage Centre Looks to Donors for Help with Aging Infrastructure **20**
- Gender Ideology vs. Gender Science: What the Brain Is Telling Us **21**
- CRRC Announces Floor Repairs and Fall Programs for All Ages **22**
- Niverville's Hayden Fast Off to Fast Start in Sweden **23**
- Local Author and Illustrator Team Up to Share Faith in New Children's Book **24**
- Local Author's Books Focus on Personal, Meaningful Storytelling **26**



The Open Health medical clinic in Niverville.

JOEY VILLANUEVA

# Open Health Clinic Beneficiary of Major Private Donation

**By Brenda Sawatzky**

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER  
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Niverville's town council was pleased to announce the receipt of a major private donation at their regularly scheduled September 19 public meeting.

A cheque of over \$97,000 was made out to Niverville Health Services Inc. (NHSI), the oversight body for Open Health Niverville.

The donation was provided by a family on behalf of a loved one who recently passed on.

The message accompanying the donation indicated a desire to see the funds used in the operation of the medical clinic and, more specifically, for something practical in nature that fits with the clinic's

needs.

Mayor Myron Dyck said that the family has declined public recognition of any kind. However, he did allude to the fact that they are very appreciative of the care that was provided by the professional staff at Open Health in recent years.

"On behalf of all of council, we want to say a huge thank you to this family," said Dyck. "It's much appreciated."

Councillor Nathan Dueck is the acting council representative for NHSI.

"It's an incredible honour to have Niverville Health Services receive that money and it's definitely going to be put to good use over the coming years," said Dueck.

According to Sheyna Andries, business manager of Open Health, the clinic has been on the

receiving end of some very generous donations before—but, to her knowledge, nothing of quite this magnitude.

"I am grateful and extremely touched," Andries says. "I would like to thank them for their generosity and confidence in the work that Open Health Niverville does."

The full amount will be placed into a savings account, Andries explains, and interest collected will help cover the costs of equipment that the resident doctors deem beneficial in terms of enhancing patient care.

"Every donation received by Open Health Niverville makes a tremendous impact on the advances and services the clinic can make in serving the community and the surrounding area's medical needs now and into the future," says Andries.

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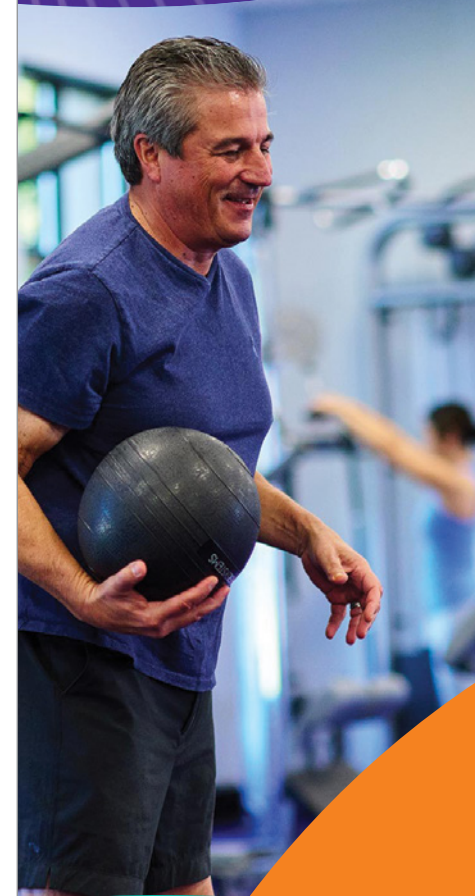
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## IN BRIEF

## Manitobans Head Back to the Polls

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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On October 3, Manitobans will be going to the polls for the province's forty-third general election.

The official campaign period kicked off on September 5, with Premier Heather Stefanson requesting the issuance of a writ of election from Lieutenant-Governor Anita Neville.

However, for anyone paying attention, the unofficial election cycle was already well underway by mid-August, with the NDP in particular making frequent campaign announcements.

The party leaders are Heather Stefanson of the Progressive Conservatives (PC), Wab Kinew of the New Democratic Party (NDP), Dougald Lamont of the Manitoba Liberal Party (MLP), and Janine Gibson of Green Party of Manitoba (GPM).

Elsewhere in this edition, *The Citizen* has published detailed profiles featuring the candidates on the ballot in Springfield-Ritchot.

Should the PCs come out on top this fall, it will be their third consecutive term in office. However, recent polls have shown an advantage for the NDP.

The 2016 election was a historic win by the PCs, in which the party took 40 out of the 57 seats in the Legislative Assembly.

In 2019, Pallister's PC won by only a slightly smaller margin, winning 36 seats. However, Pallister resigned in 2021 and Stefanson was chosen to succeed him in the premiership.

# Naturopath and Acupuncturist Opens Niverville Practice

By Brenda Sawatzky

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A new naturopath and acupuncture specialist is taking patients in Niverville. Starting in early September, Azza ElBakry started practicing from the Niverville Family Chiropractic clinic at least one day per week.

ElBakry currently operates from two other locations, including Via Natural Medicine in St. Boniface as well as her home in south Winnipeg. She and her husband, Khaled Zohni, moved to Montreal from Egypt in 2007 to allow Zohni to pursue his PhD in gynaecology.

ElBakry was practicing as a conventional medical doctor at the time, with a specialty in parasitology. She found employment at McGill University's malaria lab, where she trained lab technologists and members of the Canadian army.

Upon completion of his degree, Zohni began a fellowship in Toronto and ElBakry followed him there. It was here that she decided to shift her medical trajectory.

"I worked for years and years in public health, and at some point you just feel like maybe there is something else waiting," ElBakry says. "I wanted to explore what's out there and then I discovered the beautiful program at the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine."

Two years later, with her new certifications in naturopathy and acupuncture, ElBakry joined her family in Winnipeg where Zohni was now working in the field of reproduction at the Heartland Fertility Clinic.

"I practice a very interesting method of acupuncture called Balanced Method," says ElBakry. "It actually gives quick results and I find a lot of benefits with that method. At the same time, I still do practice the traditional method in addition to naturopathic medicine."

Her desire to take her practice outside city limits first led her



Azza ElBakry has brought her practice to Niverville.

BRENDA SAWATZKY

to Winkler, where she says the residents were exceptionally open to alternative medical practices.

Unfortunately, after 18 months, she determined that the commute was unsustainable.

One of her clients, who hailed from Niverville, told her about the growing community and she drove herself out to have a first-hand look.

"When I came I thought, 'This is a very nice place,' and I fell in love," she says. "The people are amazing. That's number one. Number two is that the drive is sustainable."

ElBakry is fluent in English, Arabic, and French, which will go a long way as she serves patients in an increasingly multicultural region.

Determined to start small while she builds a clientele, the clinic room at Niverville Family Chiropractic will meet her needs for now. If all goes well, ElBakry hopes to eventually expand her practice to a larger space and offer more appointments.

If that should happen, she'll look to add IV therapy.

"We use intravenous therapy for different things like cancer, with high-dose vitamin C," ElBakry says. "We also do glutathione. It's an antioxidant for autoimmune diseases and things like that."

Trained in both conventional medicine and naturopathy, ElBakry believes that the two can and should be viewed as complementary. She has made

a commitment to try, whenever possible, to work together with family doctors.

Because of her background, she understands medications and recognizes the conventional ways of doing things.

"In naturopathic medicine, you have to be willing to do the work," says ElBakry. "If you are willing, naturopathic medicine is for you. There are people who are not willing. They want to live their lives the way they want—and for those people, conventional medicine is for them."

By work, ElBakry explains that her treatment may require big changes, including dietary ones, but also lifestyle changes to reduce stress, encourage activity, and develop mindfulness.

Where people are willing to be patient and do the work, ElBakry says that she's seen amazing results. In many cases, alongside a family doctor, she's managed to reduce a patient's dependency on pharmaceuticals.

Some may suffer from high blood pressure or diabetes, while others have chronic fatigue or debilitating depression. When people take charge of their health and see results, she says, it affects every part of their lives in positive ways.

"Sometimes I feel like I need to take a before and after [photo]," ElBakry says. "You can see the difference in every detail of their life, and I love it."

ElBakry explains that part of the problem with western medicine today, despite its incredible advancements in diagnostics and treatments, is that it is responsible for looking at the human body as a variety of independently functioning components. Practitioners can lose sight of how the proper function of each part affects the whole.

"In naturopathic medicine, the person is a whole," she says. "We don't treat the patient as a disease. If you have one organ that is suffering, all the organs are suffering. So when the person improves, they improve on every level."

Taking that one step further, naturopathic medicine recognizes that the mind and spirit, along with the body, make up the human triad.

Most people today, she says, are not experiencing harmony between the three. And they've forgotten about the body's innate ability to heal itself if given the right tools.

Even as a conventional medical practitioner, Zohni is a firm believer in the important role that naturopathy can play in the human condition. He looks forward to a day when conventional and naturopathic practitioners regularly work side by side towards the same goal: healing the patient.

The encouragement to do so, he says, may need to come from the patient.

"It's so sad that we are kind of standing on different sides of this river while we should be saving [the drowning patient] together," Zohni says. "It's very important to team up for the sake of the patient because each one of us can add something to their care. [After all], we don't want them to be a patient anymore."

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# Feds Reinstate Carbon Tax Rebate for Niverville Residents

**By Brenda Sawatzky**  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER  
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In June, *The Citizen* reported on the federal government's clawback of carbon tax rebates for residents living in Niverville.

As of this month, that tax rebate has been reinstated.

Since the summer of 2022, Canadian residents have been receiving rebate cheques on a quarterly basis as part of the federal government's Climate Action Incentive plan. The rebates are intended to give back to Canadians some of the taxes they pay on fuel surcharges at the pumps and on their home heating bills.

For Manitoba residents, this equates to a rebate of \$132 for a single adult or up to \$264 for a family of four, every three months.

But if you're a rural resident living outside the Winnipeg census area, additional rebates of 10 percent are available, presumably due to the

lack of public transit options beyond city limits.

Until spring of this year, Niverville was on that list.

Then everything changed when the census area map was redrafted to include Niverville.

According to Henry Friesen, a chartered accountant with Blue River Group in Niverville, the loss of that 10 percent rebate would have meant a loss of around \$200,000 in total for Niverville residents.

That number would be expected to rise as the federal carbon tax continues to climb.

However, Friesen was recently pleased to discover an update on the federal government's website stating that the clawback was made in error.

"An error was made with a recalculation of the Climate Action Incentive rural supplement for some communities in July 2023," the website states. "The issue is being resolved and a reconciliation

payment will be issued September 15."<sup>1</sup>

Niverville is the only community in Manitoba that was affected by this oversight. Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland also saw one community each affected in their provinces.

There were another two affected communities in Nova Scotia and a total of nine in Ontario.

The website doesn't indicate the reason for the error or how it was discovered.

Friesen says that this change affected many of his clients and he's watching with interest to see just how quickly the rebate finds its way back into their hands.

## REFERENCE

<sup>1</sup>"Climate Action Incentive Payment," Government of Canada. Date of access: September 19, 2023 (<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/child-family-benefits/cai-payment/qualify-for-the-supplement.html>).

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# Benefits and Hazards of the Power-Assisted Scooter

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER  
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It may not be quite as big a prize as the hoverboard, made famous by Marty McFly in *Back to the Future*, but today's power-assisted stand scooter is proving itself a close runner-up.

In the past few years, there's been a resurgence of interest in what most of us previously considered a children's toy. Adding an electric motor to the traditional stand scooter has made it appealing to all ages.

And in a time when the world is seeking ways to transition away from fossil fuels, electric scooters make a whole lot of sense.

But like so many new technologies breaking into the market, public adoption is advancing faster than the laws that regulate them. Right now, few laws govern the safe use of the power-assisted scooter.

First and foremost, questions have arisen as to where the e-scooter belongs—on the sidewalk with pedestrians or on the street in traffic. Also, should they be subject to the same traffic laws as a vehicle or bicycle?

Robert Girden of Niverville has seen e-scooter riders using both the sidewalks and streets to get around town. From his experience, some of the users are either unfamiliar with basic traffic laws or just don't care.

"Yesterday I witnessed, at the corner of Spruce and Fifth Avenue, a young woman blow right through a stop sign while there were already two cars stopped at two of the four stop signs at the intersection," Girden says. "If either of the two stopped cars had proceeded through the intersection, this young woman would have been seriously injured. She... did not even attempt to slow down at the stop sign."

RCMP Sergeant Paul Manaigre says that the proliferation of electronic bikes, scooters, and other motorized devices has the province taking a hard look at changes needed to the Highway Traffic Act.

As it stands, until there's regulation created specifically for the e-scooter, they fall under the same category as a bike or regular vehicle.

"RCMP officers are being advised that all of these devices are to be treated as vehicles under the Highway Traffic Act until we're told by the province otherwise," Manaigre says. "Technically, if you're on the roadway, you have to abide by the [traffic] rules. So if you blow through a stop sign, you could be charged."

## MANITOBA LAWS

As long as power-assisted devices are being treated like electric bi-



Chris Shvets, a 13-year-old e-scooter user from Niverville.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

cycles, the law is very specific.

According to the Manitoba Highway Traffic Act, power-assisted bicycles are only to be used by those 14 years of age or older.

Riders must also wear a helmet while operating a powered device and must drive in single file with other motorized devices occupying the same lane.

While there's no clear indication yet about the use of e-scooters on sidewalks, the law is clear about bicycles.

"No person shall operate on a sidewalk a bicycle with a rear wheel the diameter of which exceeds 410 mm," the Act states.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING ELSEWHERE

Most cities across Canada and the U.S. are working to create legislation that addresses the e-scooter independently of other electric devices.

In November 2022, Prince Edward Island developed a policy making it illegal to operate an e-scooter if you're under 16 years of age. Scooters must be equipped with lights and a bell or horn.

Speed restrictions apply, limiting top speeds to 24 kilometres per hour and only allowing e-scooters on roadways where the maximum posted speed is 60 kilometres per hour or less.

Under no circumstances are e-scooters allowed to be operated on sidewalks, nor on that province's

Confederation Trail.

Cities like Toronto and Oshawa initially threw open the doors to e-scooters. Since then, Toronto has put a temporary ban on them until more regulations are put in place.

Even so, so many residents use them that enforcement hasn't been all that effective.

In the meantime, people are getting hurt. In June of this year, a pedestrian was struck by a man on an e-scooter on a sidewalk in Toronto and knocked unconscious. She suffered a concussion and a broken collarbone in two places. It took months of physiotherapy before she could go back to work.

Oshawa is also considering a temporary suspension on e-scooters since an incident last spring in which a 20-year-old e-scooter rider was killed after she was struck by a pickup truck.

For many people in local government, it's becoming increasingly evident that better infrastructure, like dedicated bike and e-scooter lanes, need to be put in place before the device can be considered safe.

## DIFFERING OPINIONS

Chris Shvets is a 13-year-old Niverville resident who loves his e-scooter. The device's top speed is 25 kilometres per hour. It's also pretty simple to use, he says, with just an accelerator button and a handlebar braking system.

Shvets believes in practicing

caution. He wears a helmet and protective gear and follows the rules of the road.

But he doesn't think e-scooters should be restricted to the street.

"I would argue that if there is a dangerous amount of traffic on the road, the sidewalk is a safe option," Shvets says.

He agrees that high-speed e-scooters don't belong in the hands of kids. He knows of another e-scooter owner in Niverville whose vehicle can reach speeds of up to 60 kilometres per hour.

Shvets purchased his scooter at Best Buy. That retailer offers models that range in price from \$300 to \$3,000. Their top speed capabilities vary between 20 and 60 kilometres per hour.

Lee Hee is a sales rep at Scooter City in Winnipeg, a company that specializes in electric scooters and mopeds of almost every variety.

Hee says that she carries mostly low-speed scooters because, generally speaking, that's where the market demand is.

She says that the majority of her customers are looking for e-scooters that don't need to be registered and insured, like the higher-speed models.

"Something like that would have to be registered as a moped," she says. "So anything over the 32 kilometre an hour threshold would require a driver's license in Manitoba."

Hee says that she makes it her job

to know the restrictions that apply to the products she sells so she can help her customers make informed choices.

According to Hee, you have to be 14 years of age or older to drive an e-bike. If the top speed of the bike exceeds 32 kilometres an hour, a license and registration are required.

The lower-speed e-scooters that have top speeds below 30 kilometres an hour can be legally used by anyone over 12 years of age without a license.

As for whether e-scooters belong on the street, Hee says it's a matter of opinion.

"I don't believe e-scooters belong on the sidewalk, but it depends," she says. "If it's a stand scooter that does 25 kilometres an hour, they are allowed on the sidewalk because they're considered not a bicycle. Those are just kind of a toy, in a sense."

## WHAT'S BEHIND THE POPULARITY

Putting the obvious environmental benefit aside, Hee says that there's a lot of great reasons to own one.

"[I sell them] to people with DUIs or no license at all, or people who don't want to ride the bus anymore," says Hee. "I had a gentleman here who said he was paying \$200 per month in taxi fare so something like this was just super for him."

Hee caters to clients who work in Winnipeg's downtown core who are tired of paying for parking. For others, it's about the high cost of fuel. Some of her customers drive their e-scooters right through the coldest winter months.

"The battery is really the only expense you'll have in terms of maintenance," says Hee. "There's no tune-ups, no oil changes, no gas, no insurance, and no parking [costs]."

The lifespan of the battery is about five to eight years and a replacement battery comes in at around \$400 to \$500.

## HISTORY OF THE POWER ASSISTED SCOOTER

It's tempting to believe that technology like self-propelled scooters are a sign of advanced times.

In reality, though, records reveal that these vehicles are nothing new. They go back as far as the early 1900s.

Originally known as autopedes, the self-propelled scooters had small gas-powered motors located near the front or back.

Apart from that, the historical models look remarkably similar to the stand scooters that are being sold in 2023.

Amelia Earhart owned one and a U.S. postal service was known to use them for city mail delivery.



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# Provincial Election 2023

## The Candidates in Springfield-Ritchot

By **Brenda Sawatzky**  
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER  
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### TAMMY IVANCO, NDP

With a provincial election looming on October 3, many voters in Springfield-Ritchot will by now have noticed a new candidate on the scene. Tammy Ivanco is hoping to sway their votes in favour of the New Democratic Party (NDP).

Ivanco may be new to the political arena, but she comes with years of experience and administrative involvement in various unions and committees in university settings. She is currently employed by the University of Manitoba as a professor of psychology and neuroscience.

One of the primary driving forces sending Ivanco into provincial politics, she says, is her passion to help find practical solutions to Manitoba's broken healthcare and education systems.

"I was really watching what's happening with healthcare," Ivanco says. "I have MS and I had two neurologists ten years ago. Now I have no neurologist assigned to me. And I know that many Manitobans are in a much worse position. Looking at things like wait times for diagnostics and a bunch of different things going on in healthcare, I became very concerned."

The NDP's platform on healthcare reform convinced her that the party was right for her. She's buoyed by the

fact that some frontline healthcare workers have also joined the NDP team in order to try and make a difference.

"One of the first things [our party] did in May was make an announcement on a rural healthcare initiative which included getting more doctors and doing things to actually keep them in rural locations by giving them a bit of a pay bump if they didn't move to the city," she says.

Ivanco believes that a healthy system would be built around attracting and retaining healthcare professionals on an ongoing basis in order to prevent them from looking for greener pastures within the private system or outside the province or country.

"Part of how the healthcare system got to where it is today is a result of austerity and cuts," Ivanco says. "Trying to manage money as opposed to thinking about people. I think the Manitoba NDP are far more concerned about what happens to Manitobans."

Part of Ivanco's earlier career training took her to Illinois, where she gained a firsthand view of the privatized healthcare system south of the border.

"Living in the States was a really big eye-opener on a lot of things related to healthcare. I had access to doctors and specialists, but other people did not. That is very much what made me want to come back to Canada, and it makes me very protective of our universal access to healthcare."

In her mind, universal healthcare epitomizes the Canadian philosophy of taking care of one another rather than simply looking out for number one.

Ivanco's campaign is also focusing on making life more affordable for Manitoba families. First and foremost, she stands behind the NDP's promise to cut the 14 cent per litre carbon tax on fuel in the first year if they're elected.

Representing a constituency

where many of the ratepayers commute to work daily, it's important to recognize how the extra gas tax hurts rural resident more than most.

"Getting that added bit of relief is really important to try and get people to a better place of lifestyle affordability," Ivanco says. "We certainly have platforms in terms of green cars and EV chargers and rebates, and those are great, but for rural people right now, giving them a bit of a break will probably make them a little bit more receptive to [green technology]."

As long as people are struggling to make ends meet, she explains, environmental issues may not take top priority. Addressing their needs on the homefront first may be the catalyst to refocus people's attention to the needs of the planet.

Growing up in a coal mining community in British Columbia as a child, Ivanco also knows firsthand the importance of protecting the rights of blue-collar workers, ensuring safe workplaces and an honest wage.

"The unions were really important to ensure the safety of miners," Ivanco says. "My family is only here because somebody stood up for them and said, 'Those people have to be safe.'"

Ivanco now lives on a small rural acreage in Springfield. Here, she runs a sideline business breeding a European dog known as the Norrbottenspets. Her love for animals once saw her raising sheep and pigs on the farm too.

So when a recent debate ensued regarding whether to allow an Albertan drilling company, Sio Silica, to explore the extraction of silica from the aquifer in the Springfield region, Ivanco followed developments with keen interest. Like others, she felt that her drinking water could be at risk.

If elected, Ivanco says that she trusts her party to make sound decisions on the matter based on recommendations made by the

Manitoba Clean Environment Commission's report that was recently released.

In her mind, residents should be concerned about the powers granted to the Manitoba Municipal Board (MMB) by the governing PCs, powers which give the MMB authority to direct and override municipal government decisions.

Bill 37, she says, was one such bill that was not supported by the Manitoba NDP. This bill gave the MMB the authority to force the hand of Springfield's municipal council, allowing Sio Silica to develop a processing plant in Vivian.

This election period, Ivanco hopes that residents of Springfield-Ritchot will choose to roll the dice on a new government.

"Going door to door, one of the things that's really clear to me is that people are wanting change," she says. "What I'm hoping for is that I can help bring some of that change to residents. That's really important to me."

That change, she assures, won't come in the way of further tax increases. Instead, the NDP budget plan will show Manitobans that big change is possible by simply managing existing funds in a whole new way.

As for her own campaign strategy, Ivanco realizes that the sheer size of her electoral area means that it would be impossible to meet every voter on their front step.

But those whom she has met face to face have been both enthusiastic and kind.

"I have a very flexible life right now," Ivanco concludes. "Part of it is because I don't have children and my job allows me to take leave to do certain things. So I am lucky enough to be in a position where I can fight for other people, and that is something that is very close to my heart."

Voters should watch for leaflets in their mailbox, and she encourages them to reach out to her on a personal level if they'd like to chat.



### RON SCHULER, PC

Progressive Conservative candidate Ron Schuler is back on the campaign trail hoping to regain his seat in the Manitoba Legislature, representing Springfield-Ritchot.

Regardless of his track record in the region, Schuler says that he's not taking anything for granted. He and his campaign team have been knocking on doors and attending public events virtually every day.

It's a pace that he describes as gruelling.

But that's the kind of hard work Schuler attributes to his wins over the past six elections.

"I always run my campaign as if I'm two points behind but gaining," says Schuler. "Also, I work very hard between elections. We've now sent out between 80,000 and 85,000 pieces of mail from last year. We are always at events and I've brought \$296 million dollars to my constituency in the last four years."

Schuler first became an MLA in the 1999 election and has served his constituents ever since. His district has seen three boundary changes over those years. Most recently, Niverville and the RM of Ritchot joined Springfield in 2019.

According to Schuler, though, the Electoral Division Boundaries Commission (EDBC) may not have considered the scope of the area when making that boundary decision.

"This constituency is far too big

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geographically," Schuler says. "We have really different communities. But it's also a very big population. There are some seats which have 9,000 voters and we have over 17,000."

That's not the only issue for Schuler and his fellow candidates in this election.

He says that the RM of Springfield's municipal council has become badly divided in recent months, creating a dysfunctional situation. It began over the debate about whether to allow an Albertan company, Sio Silica, to drill into an underground aquifer for the purpose of silica extraction.

Schuler says that the fear, anger, and hate he's seen throughout the RM is disheartening, and he worries that these deep-set emotions could cause people to exercise poor judgment at the polls.

"I am perturbed because I have represented my communities very well," Schuler says. "I've invested my life, my heart, and my soul. So it hurts me to see the fighting. Have your differences, but then go out and build your community."

This same division, he says, has created roadblocks to some important projects that were underway in Springfield and have now been indefinitely stalled.

"Never be a politician that divides people," he says. "Always be the unifier. And that's what I try to be. Nobody ever elected me to go fight with the other levels of government."

Schuler wasn't representing Ritchot during the years when their council underwent similar dysfunction, but he's buoyed by the outcome which resulted in a complete council shakeup there.

Working with both the Ritchot and Niverville councils over the past four years, he says, has been a joy.

While there are many differences between the various RMs he represents, there is one commonality: steady upward growth. This is true for Niverville as well as the two main urban centres in Springfield, Dugald and Oakbank.

Ritchot is in some ways unique, having a population distribution that's a little less focused.

"You have, in Ritchot, four or five different centres and they're all growing to some degree, so they all have different needs, but they're still all growth needs," he explains. "There are other groups of communities across Manitoba where they have declining populations and that brings a totally different dynamic to the region. That's not my communities. Here, it's all about, 'We need more services!'"

And these are services Schuler is proud to have had a hand in delivering.

Among his proudest moments this term, Schuler says, was the opening of Niverville High School and the CRRC, both made possible through provincial aid. Other projects soon to be realized include Jette Studios, the

rebuilding of Highway 311 on the west side of Niverville, and the creation of a \$110 million wastewater treatment plant to serve up to 70,000 residents in four municipalities.

Apart from new sports facilities and a community centre in Grande Pointe, Schuler says that provincial funding in Ritchot has been more focused on upgrading the aging infrastructure.

Much of the funding for these projects has come from the Arts, Culture, Sports and Community (ACSC) fund, which cost-shares with municipalities on approved projects.

Schuler and his government believe that every community's needs are unique to them, so assessing those needs is best initiated by residents who see the gaps and are willing to do the work to fill them.

Schuler says that he can help bring local dream projects one step closer to reality by assessing individual funding applications that come across his desk and provide advice to the applicant on how to make the application present to the government as viable and well-backed.

And once the application reaches the province, Schuler can step in to help lobby on its behalf.

Schuler says he is also deeply appreciative of the vast agricultural component that comprises so much of his district.

"It never grows thin on me, and I'm always aware, that there's probably some child somewhere in the world that wakes up and is hungry," he says. "They will sit down and there will hopefully be something nutritious in front of them. And, in part, that may come from Springfield, Ritchot, and Niverville because we export more than we consume here."

He says that the PC government has demonstrated support for farmers in recent years by providing farmland tax rebates, among other things.

And what about environmental issues? To a large degree, Schuler says, his party has already put some work into helping rural communities begin the transition towards EV technology.

But almost more importantly, he adds, are the government's efforts to get phosphorous out of waste management systems.

"If you want to talk about the pollution of Lake Winnipeg, it's because of phosphates. Under the NDP, they would always pivot to blaming the four-legged pigs when it was actually the two-legged people that were polluting the lake. We are now putting substantive money into that because our lakes are a natural resource."

As for CO<sup>2</sup> emissions, Schuler says that a lot more emphasis could be put on carbon-capturing through tree-planting and other such initiatives. He says that the carbon tax is a narrow-minded approach.

"There are a lot of things that we can do," Schuler says. "But first of all

you need to have a reasonable plan. What the federal government did is just one thing, and it was to punish everybody who uses a fossil fuel... You talk about what is important to us as a province, and it is affordability. And we're hearing that at the doors."

Over the next four years, he hopes to be in a position to continue helping local communities flourish and grow.

"I would say to individuals who move here from the city, 'Leave your city behind.' In the city, you have neighbourhoods. Leave your neighbourhood and feel welcomed to community. Because there's a difference between neighbourhood and community. Community is where we take care of each other."



#### TREVOR KIRCZENOW, MLP

Trevor Kirczenow is not new on the political landscape, but he's a novel face when it comes to running for provincial office. Kirczenow ran as the Liberal candidate for Provencher in both the 2019 and 2021 federal elections.

On October 3, his will be one of three names on the ballot in Springfield-Ritchot.

Kirczenow holds a degree in political science, but his career path over the years has been varied.

He first came to Manitoba to play with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra. Since then, he's become a published author and advocate for diabetes sufferers.

He's also an animal lover who works with horses using a science-based method of positive reinforcement to help calm them when at the vet or farrier.

While the riding has long been dominated by Conservatives, Kirczenow isn't daunted.

He points to the last provincial byelection in Fort Whyte, where Manitoba Liberal candidate Willard Reaves lost to the PC candidate Obby Khan by a very narrow margin.

That, too, is a riding that's been dominated by the PCs since 1999.

"You just never know," Kirczenow says. "I think there's a lot of frustration right now with the PCs in a lot of different ways."

The primary catalyst that pulled him back into the political arena, he says, is the argument going on right now over the right to mine for silica

sand in his home RM of Springfield.

"I am opposed to it," says Kirczenow. "I was clear about that already in the 2021 election. From the start, the Manitoba Liberal Party has been vocal and speaking up for the residents in this area. It's something that people feel really strongly about and it's under the realm of the province to make the [final] decision on that."

From his farm near Dugald where he lives with his partner, two children, and a slew of animals, he says that grave concerns arise when it comes to trusting the safety of their drinking water to an experimental technology carried out by a corporation from outside Manitoba.

"There are other deposits of silica that do not require going into our aquifer," he says. "I realize that there's this great temptation when there's a lot of money and a lot of jobs, but that's worth nothing if we don't have clean water."

Kirczenow also stands with his party on taking a tough stance with other issues of environmental concern, such as climate change.

"Climate change is happening, and we need to address it. We're experiencing this record-breaking year with wildfires and something needs to change. The carbon tax works. It's been studied and it has changed people's behaviour."

For Kirczenow, that behavioural change is reflected in the movement towards alternatively powered vehicles.

As well, people are beginning to look more seriously at carpooling options and reducing their trips to the city to save on gas.

But it's not just the environment where he believes the PCs have gotten a failing grade. He says they've driven the education and healthcare systems into a state of crisis, and the only solution at this point is for a complete shakeup of government.

"We actually have had two decades of education budgets that did not keep up with inflation," he says. "That is not just the PCs. That is also the NDP. I think we need to do something different and invest properly in education and healthcare."

In terms of healthcare, Kirczenow sees some major issues with our current system, where life-saving medications are often not funded through pharmacare, giving people one more cause to struggle under the heavy burden of debt, just to survive.

He's seen this firsthand as the parent of a child who suffers with type-1 diabetes.

Until very recently, Kirczenow says that Manitoba was in last place in all of Canada for pharmacare coverage of vital diabetes supplies.

Thanks to an advocacy group he became involved with, these supplies are now being covered and Manitoba has moved to the top position in terms of diabetes coverage.

"There's still a lot of problems [with the system]," he says. "Pharmacare deductibles are super high in Manitoba. A lot of people are still paying out of pocket."

As for whether taxes should be raised to fix some of these issues, Kirczenow says that it depends.

"Providing some tax relief for low- and middle-income earners, that is critical. The cost of living right now is super high and people are struggling. But I don't think that the most wealthy Manitobans need tax relief."

He suggests that a lot can be done to create a more equitable tax system for all.

Since the beginning of his foray into seeking public service, Kirczenow has been very open and transparent about his life as a transgender male.

In recent months, anti-LGBTQ2S sentiments have been on the rise thanks to a movement whose mandate is to eliminate any discussion of sexual orientation and gender identity in school curriculum at all age levels.

Kirczenow finds this alarming. "When we look at what conservatives are doing in other provinces, like Saskatchewan and New Brunswick, that is what [they could do here]," he says. "And I hate to think that anyone is trying to claw our rights away."

Kirczenow refers to new legislation in these provinces which requires teachers or others in positions of authority to inform a parent if their underage child expresses unease with their gender identity or a desire to use a different name or pronoun.

"I was exactly that kid that this proposed legislation would have affected."

Kirczenow recalls, as a teenager some 20 years ago, his own struggle with gender identity. At the time, he was thankful to find adult figures to talk to when he felt that his parents were unapproachable on the delicate subject.

And if he is accused of running for politics in order to push an agenda, then so be it, he says.

"If it's an agenda that LGBTQ2S people want to exist and to survive, okay, fine. But this is about different issues. It's about depression and suicidality in our youth and when you take away safe spaces and a child's ability to speak to someone about what they're going through, you're taking away protections."

With time running out before election day, Kirczenow is doing his best to get his message out.

But you won't be seeing his signs by the roadsides.

"It's a very frustrating environmental issue. They're not recyclable and you put them up and people take them down."

During a recent federal election, he says, someone pilfered his signs and dropped them into a wetland, creating a fiasco for him and conservation officers as they attempted to remove them.

# Parent Raises Food Allergy Concerns with Local Schools

By Sara Beth Dacombe

✉ sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

Food allergies in schools can be a life-threatening matter, and one local parent is wondering why it's so hard to protect her kids.

Jen Gower of Île-des-Chênes has two children under the age of seven with anaphylactic reactions to certain foods. She removed her kids from Seine River School Division this year after learning that the school still hadn't improved its allergy policies.

"The policies in the majority of schools are lacking," says Gower. "We can educate more, and the problem is how we interpret and enforce these policies."

Her family's experience last year showed that her children's school wasn't able to provide a safe atmosphere for them to consume food.

One of her children had a reaction to a food item and came home sick. Gower says that she's thankful the situation wasn't worse and that her child recovered.

"We were lucky that it was mild, but there is something lacking when the [school official] argues with me about whether or not my kid had an allergic reaction or not," she says. "We tried all last year to find a solution. We're being pitted against other parents in the community and negatively stereotyped as being against other people."

## FOOD ALLERGIES STUDY

In June 2022, the official journal of the Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (CSACI) published a study entitled "It Takes a Village."

The study gathered information about perceptions of Winnipeg parents, students, teachers, and school staff regarding the impact of food allergies on school-age students and their families.

According to the study, food allergies are estimated to affect at least



DEPOSITPHOTOS

six percent of children. Kids with these allergies and their teachers require the support and cooperation of parents and classmates with and without food allergies to prevent life-threatening reactions.

"Food allergy education is necessary for the entire school community and should include parents of school-aged children with and without food allergy, students with and without food allergy, and teachers and school staff," the CSACI study found.

## STUDENTS "OTHERED"

When Gower found that her children were eating lunch in the hallway, away from other students, she tried to work with administrators and parent volunteer groups to improve the situation, such as by introducing a supervised lunch program or a paid lunch program.

When no new measures were in place by this September, and having been told that nothing more could be done, she made the decision to homeschool.

"Yes, policy review takes time, but nothing has changed for me in

over a year," says Gower. "The school admitted that supervision is an issue, but the school says their hands are tied. Nobody is saying they have the jurisdiction on this. There is no enforcement. I pulled my kids from school because I don't want my seven-year-old responsible for watching my five-year-old as they eat together in the hallway."

Gower says that this experience made her children feel othered, which had mental health ramifications.

"For these kids, they are already scared, though they don't want to be," Gower says of her children's experience. "So when they are treated as different, you're socially outcasting them. They begin to question, is this atmosphere safe? Are the adults going to protect me? My kid has suffered from anxiety, but not because of having an allergy, but because she has been excluded. She doesn't want to eat in the hallway. Kids want to be together. They want to be kids."

Anxiety and bullying are common experiences for those with food allergies. Participants in the CSACI study

reported that children with food allergies were bullied, that children who accidentally brought banned foods to school were also bullied, and that parents could recognize that bullying around the issue was occurring.

## AVOIDING EMOTION

Gower acknowledges that no one wants to be told what they can and cannot eat at school, but she wants to see parents and children without allergies play a vital role in keeping everyone safe.

"We don't want to police anyone else's lunch," she says. "We don't want to deprive anyone of what they can eat."

She wants to keep the conversation open—and keep emotion out of it.

One recent Facebook discussion, she says, turned negative after a local radio show host presented to the public a letter that had been sent home to parents from a Winnipeg school.

"The letter said that beef, chicken, mutton, and pork couldn't be sent to the classroom. Parents were in an

uproar," says Gower. "That's not helpful, and I'm not advocating beyond reason. People have to be given time to adjust and realize they will need to prepare lunch differently. They need time to alter their shopping habits. There's stress when it comes to what groceries to buy to provide lunch for our kids... We're not trying to be the Karens of the world. We just want our kids upright and breathing, just like you do."

## SCHOOL POLICIES

In many school divisions, food allergy policies are not readily available. On websites for the Hanover School Division and Seine River School Division, the information can be hard to find.

After a request by *The Citizen*, the HSD did not supply their food allergy policy. Parents of students in the division have said they have to ask individual teachers for information because it's not readily supplied at the beginning of the school year.

"Individual schools manage the operational aspects in adherence with the Canada Food Allergy guidelines," says Shelley Amos, HSD superintendent. "They discuss with individual parents upon registration, once an allergy has been identified."

SRSD could not be reached for comment and did not supply an allergy policy.

The Sunrise School Division, which neighbours SRSD, has an extensive document entitled Student Health Services Requirements Process (Anaphylaxis) available on their website. The document establishes safe lunchroom and eating area procedures.

The provincial government produced a school nutrition handbook in 2005 which includes a mention of managing food allergens and pointing educators to five sources of information on asthma, allergens, and keeping kids with food allergies safe.

A booklet on provincial nutrition

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guidelines for schools, published in 2014, included a disclaimer stating that it didn't contain information on food allergy management.

**NEED FOR EDUCATION**

In the 2022 CSACI study, parents of children with and without food allergies, as well as school staff, all reported the overall need for more food allergy education in schools.

Parents of children without food allergies cited in the study recognized their own need for more education to prevent cross contact between foods, recognizing reactions, the seriousness of food allergy, and bullying around food allergies.

Teachers rated themselves and their students with and without food allergies as needing education in how to recognize a reaction and administering the epinephrine auto-injector.

More than that, the study's participants said that they wanted to learn.

One hundred percent of students with food allergies and two-thirds of students without food allergy surveyed were interested in learning more.

In Gower's experience, this is true.

"Kids are open to it," she says. "We've seen that there's nothing fiercer than when kids decide to protect each other. The kids are on board. We just need adults to get more on board, too."

**WHAT WOULD HELP?**

Gower says that parents of children with anaphylactic food allergies realize that no school will achieve the same level of protection that a family can achieve at home, but empathy, communication, and education would help.

She believes that a classroom-by-classroom policy may not cut it and some complete omissions may be needed schoolwide, especially until young kids grow

lacking in rural schools.

"In rural communities, how many adults supervise? Sometimes none. Sometimes it's an older child. And they're not in the classroom for the entire time of eating. They float from room to room."

At bare minimum, Gower suggests that allergy information with pictures be visibly posted to encourage awareness of any accommodations that are needed at school. Also, letters with comprehensive information

their child's birthday, she would recommend stickers, pencils, or fun erasers. With a teacher's help, parents could donate a book or a game which the child could present to the class. A short class activity, like planting a tree, bush, or flowers, could be enjoyed by all without involving food.

Lastly, Gower says that information is better received, and social change is more successful, if parents model empathy at home.

The CSACI study backs this up, asserting that "parents influence the belief system of their children and food allergy education for parents of children without food allergy will contribute to the education of children without food allergy."

Gower is asking educators and parents to realize that food allergies can be made into a friendly yet important conversation topic.

And she hopes that systemic change is coming in local school divisions.

"There's been top-down leadership, which is not communicative about this issue," she says about the current situation she's faced. "Leadership dismisses this and says to us, 'Get comfortable with being uncomfortable.' This is not okay. If we can't lead with empathy, it results in unsafe environments. We are asking for the same thing every other parent wants: our kids to be alive and breathing. We can do this. As a community, we can do this."

*"We've seen that there's nothing fiercer than when kids decide to protect each other. The kids are on board. We just need adults to get more on board, too."*

*Jen Gower | Local Parent*

old enough to govern themselves reliably.

"When you have younger-years children... and when there's low supervision, accidents happen," Gower says. "Not just peanuts and peanut butter, but dairy is really hard to navigate. We need people to realize that it's not just a milk carton or yogurt or cheese strings, but it's muffins or cupcakes. And some things you can clean up or throw away, but smearable items leave residue behind."

Supervision, she argues, is

should be both sent home and presented to the classes where allergies are present.

In this way, teachers and volunteers would receive the education they're interested in. They can then be proactive with their students.

Gower also believes that there are other ways to celebrate student milestones or holidays besides pizza and cake.

"Food should not be a reward in general," she says.

If parents want to send shareables to the class for



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**CITIZEN POLL**

**Is it reasonable for a parent to expect school divisions, schools, and other parents to work collectively to protect students in the school system who suffer from food allergies?**

- Yes. If one student is at risk, it should be everyone's concern, especially when education may be all that's required to mitigate that risk.
- No. It is unrealistic to expect teachers, students, and parents in a school to change their habits for the sake of a few individual children with allergies.

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**YOUR COMMENTS:**

Let's do it!

Absolutely, if it was done properly. Unfortunately, like most things that governments get involved with, they add so much bureaucracy, rules, regulations and obstructions that it becomes unfeasible and turns into a giant waste of money. I would just hope that they do it properly. It could be a great benefit.

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OCT. 21 @ 7:00 P.M.  
VS. PORTAGE TERRIERS

OCT. 23 @ 7:00 P.M.  
VS. DAUPHIN KINGS

OCT. 27 @ 7:00 P.M.  
VS. WINNIPEG FREEZE

# Ready for the 2023-24 Campaign

By Ty Dilello

tdilello@nivervillecitizen.com

The Niverville Nighthawks are geared up and ready to take on another MJHL season as the team looks forward to hit the ice for another season.

"I don't think I got everything accomplished, as it's a work in progress. Every day is a new day, and there are things we need to improve on," says head coach Kelvin Cech. "We changed the way we played in the past. The guys are adapting to our new ways that we're attacking. Our defending needs a little work at this point, so we're going to try and keep getting better."

Cech notes that the club had some clear goals over the summer for being a little heavier, a little faster, in particular on the walls, and winning those key battles.

"We recruited some powerful young wingers up front who are doing a great job on the wall and winning the bluelines," he adds.

The Nighthawks had a pretty good preseason, as they won three games and lost twice. The first game was particularly interesting because it was against the Kam River Fighting Walleye, a team out of northern Ontario that play in a different Junior A league, the SIJHL.

"That was arranged mainly by Mike McAulay, who has many connections in several leagues," says Cech, referring to the team's assistant general manager. "He



The Nighthawks get ready to take the ice at the home opener.

CRYSTAL STOTT

worked on that in the beginning of summer and to bring that together was pretty cool. It was a real competitive game and a ton of fun."

Niverville defeated Kam River 3-1 that night. Their other preseason results included 4-2 and 4-3 wins over the Selkirk Steelers and 6-5 and 3-1 losses to the Steinbach Pistons.

There are a lot of new Nighthawks this season, and Cech is excited about them. In particular, the club has two new stud goaltenders who are sure to stop a lot

of pucks this season.

"The biggest thing is we wanted to put a stop to the carousel in net, as we had five different goalies play for us last season because of injuries and whatnot," says Cech. "Raïden LeGall is dynamic, as his habits are awesome. Keegan Gordon is just a phenomenal kid and battles so hard and works. They're both going to be fan favourites for sure in town."

The Nighthawks had a lot of players at training camp who were forced to come and go in order for

the team to get down to a 23-man roster for the season opener. There were some tough decisions involved, but Cech endeavoured to go about it as delicately as possible.

"Cutting players is always tough. Some are going back to their U18 teams, and some guys are traded and going to different leagues. The last couple of cuts are really terrible, as they're the guys who started to get comfortable in town. It's not fun, but our job is to build the best possible team for our town."

As the Nighthawks get ready for the first game of the season, the biggest thing for Cech this week is to just get his troops organized in certain situations, like special teams and faceoffs.

"There are so many little details that people don't see behind the scenes, so we have to take care of some stuff before we take the ice."

The Nighthawks kicked off their season with a pair of games on the weekend of September 22-23. They now have a busy schedule through the rest of the fall. Next up: an away game versus the Swan Valley Stampeders.

They next play at home on Friday, October 6 against the OCN Blizzard. Puck drop will be at 7:00 p.m.

"Energy and emotion won't be a problem, as we know what our fans will be like," says Cech. "Especially now that they know what to expect. We're excited and can't wait to get going."

## STANDINGS

\*\* AS OF NOVEMBER 1\*\*

### WEST DIVISION

TEAM	GP	W	L	OTL	SOL	PTS
1 DAUPHIN KINGS	2	2	0	0	0	4
2 WAYWAYSEECAPPO WOLVERINES	2	1	1	0	0	2
3 NEEPAWA TITANS	2	1	1	0	0	2
4 SWAN VALLEY STAMPEDERS	2	1	1	0	0	2
5 VIRDEN OIL CAPITALS	2	0	2	0	0	0
6 OCN BLIZZARD	2	0	2	0	0	0

### EAST DIVISION

TEAM	GP	W	L	OTL	SOL	PTS
1 WINKLER FLYERS	2	2	0	0	0	4
2 NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	2	2	0	0	0	4
3 STEINBACH PISTONS	2	2	0	0	0	4
4 WINNIPEG BLUES	2	1	1	0	0	2
5 PORTAGE TERRIERS	2	1	1	0	0	2
6 SELKIRK STEELERS	2	0	2	0	0	0
7 WINNIPEG FREEZE	2	0	2	0	0	0

### MJHL POINTS LEADERS

GOALIE	TEAM	GP	G	A	PTS
1 Kirk Mullen	STN	2	4	0	4
2 Dawson Zeller	WPB	2	3	1	4
3 Lucas Desousa	WPB	2	2	2	4
4 Josh Lehto	VIR	2	2	2	4
5 Slade Stanick	POR	2	1	3	4
6 Dalton Andrew	WNL	2	3	0	3
7 Blake Boudreau	DAU	2	3	0	3
8 Bryce Bryant	VIR	2	2	1	3
9 Neo Kiemeney	WAY	2	2	1	3
10 Parker Korman	POR	2	2	1	3
11 Alex Walicki	SVS	2	2	1	3
12 Kaycee Coyle	NIV	2	1	2	3
13 Michael Debito	NIV	2	1	2	3
14 Naaman Hofer	DAU	2	1	2	3
15 Brett Tataryn	NIV	2	1	2	3
16 David Bielick	VIR	2	0	3	3
17 Ty Kennett	NIV	2	0	3	3
18 Connor Paronuzzi	STN	2	0	3	3
19 Gavin Nemis	DAU	1	2	0	2
20 Mathieu Catellier	SEL	2	2	0	2

### MJHL GOALIE LEADERS

GOALIE	TEAM	GP	GA	SV%	GAA
1 Raïden Legall	NIV	1	1	0.974	1.00
2 Cole Sheffield	DAU	2	2	0.957	1.00
3 Malachi Klassen	WNL	1	1	0.955	1.00
4 Marek Andres	WAY	2	4	0.947	2.06
5 Liam Ernst	WNL	1	1	0.944	1.00
6 Beck Liden	STN	1	2	0.941	2.00
7 River Leslie-Toogood	WPB	1	3	0.935	3.05
8 Mason Lobreau	NEE	2	5	0.931	2.53
9 Jayden Catellier	POR	2	7	0.916	3.50
10 Cole Plowman	STN	1	3	0.906	3.00
11 Keegan Gordon	NIV	1	3	0.900	3.00
12 Eric Reid	VIR	1	4	0.889	4.17
13 Elias Giaccari-Dimitriou	SVS	2	10	0.875	5.00
14 Loïc Morin	OCN	2	6	0.875	3.00
15 Jeff Dreger	WPB	1	3	0.870	3.00
16 Joshua Kirtan	SEL	1	4	0.867	4.11
17 Nicolas Rempel	WPF	2	10	0.859	5.00
18 Noel Olsonawski	SEL	1	3	0.842	3.03
19 Owen LaRocque	VIR	1	5	0.773	5.11
20 Liam Vanderkooi	SVS	0	0	0.000	0.00

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It was a wild opening weekend for the Nighthawks, resulting in back-to-back wins.

TY DILELLO

# Nighthawks Undefeated After Thrilling Opening Weekend

By Ty Dilello

tdilello@nivervillecitizen.com

It was an opening weekend to remember for the Niverville Nighthawks, going 2-0 in a pair of tough contests that show this team is looking to make a statement in the MJHL this year.

Local fans will be buzzing all week in anticipation of next weekend's first road trip.

## HEAD-SPINNING COMEBACK

The weekend started on a winning note in front of a packed CRRC crowd.

The Nighthawks kicked off their season by dispatching the Selkirk Steelers in a dramatic fashion.

Indeed, the fans were treated to quite the show. The Nighthawks once again did what they did so often last season: they rallied from a 3-1 deficit, in this case roaring back to score four unanswered goals in the third period to win the game in regulation.

After a scoreless opening period, Nighthawks captain Brett Tataryn got the team on the board early in the second period.

Following that first goal, Selkirk outplayed Niverville the rest of the period and scored a trio of goals to lead 3-1.

The Nighthawks came to play in the final frame—and it was the new players on the team taking over. Mighton Johnson, Nathan Brown, Michael Debrito, and Caleb Lepitre all scored their first goals for the club on their way to securing victory.

Keegan Gordon made 27 saves in goal for the Nighthawks.

The game was also notable for a large number of penalty minutes, a result of the teams seeming eager to mix it up, especially in the second and third periods.

Head coach Kelvin Cech was pleased with his team's efforts on this first night of the season.

"I thought we played fine the first two periods, but it was not quite enough offensive zone time," said Cech of the team's on-ice performance. "The game turned on that first goal in the third period to get the game to 3-2, and then skill took over with Nathan Brown and Michael Debrito's big goals with their wicked shot. It's fun and exciting, and it was a great first night for sure in Niverville."

The Brown and Debrito goals were each highlight reel scores, and both identical top-corner snipes that the Steelers goalie had no chance on.

"They come in as first-year guys, and you're not sure where they're

going to fit in," said Cech of the pair of rookies. "Brown is a Division 1 college player next season for a reason, and Debrito comes with a lot of skill, too. Goal scorers want to score, and we got two points because of it."

Nathan Brown was also named player of the game.

But the weekend was only getting started. The Nighthawks had to get right back to work on Saturday night at the CRRC, where they next faced an even stiffer test from the Waywayseecappo Wolverines.

This time around, 17-year-old Raiden LeGall got the call to take his first start in net for the Nighthawks.

"The biggest thing at this point of the year is to worry about us," said Cech. "So we'll come back Saturday morning and hopefully clean up a few things defensively. We know it's going to be another big game, and we're excited to get back at it."

## BRILLIANT VERSES WOLVERINES

The Nighthawks must have slept well, because they gave an impressive performance from start to finish.

Niverville came out strong, prevailing over the Waywayseecappo Wolverines 3-1 and giving themselves the best possible start in the 2023-24 campaign.

Lorette's Merik Boles opened the scoring for Niverville just five minutes into the game. Kaycee Coyle then scored his first of the year in the dying moments of the opening frame to extend the lead.

Waywayseecappo would get one back late in the second period, but that's as close as they came. Kyle Bocek scored for Niverville in the third period to seal the win for the home side.

For the second night in a row, Nighthawks head coach Kelvin Cech was very happy with his team's performance.

"We were relaxed the whole game. Whether we were on the penalty kill or the power play, the guys did their job," said Kelvin Cech. "Our penalty kill was awesome and didn't allow a power play goal, which is great. And then the power play scored a big one, so it was just a professional effort. We just locked it down. It was an impressive and mature game from our players."

Raiden LeGall stopped 38 shots in goal for the Nighthawks.

"Raiden came in and did exactly what Mike McAulay and I thought that he could do," said Cech. "We've got two really good goalies that feel like luxuries to us. So he was

awesome tonight, and we're very proud of him."

Cech was also quick to give credit to Merik Boles, the winner of the team's Fan Favourite award last season. The coach says that Boles does a lot of things right on the ice and was rewarded with his first goal of the season tonight.

"Boles is a coach's favourite as well. He's on the ice with a minute left protecting the lead, and he kills penalties. He's a professor and could coach this team if he wanted to, as he's a very highly intelligent player. So it's great that he was rewarded and scored a goal tonight, and I hope he keeps it going for us."

The Nighthawks are back in action for a pair of road games next weekend, starting on Friday, September 29 against the Swan Valley Stampeders and then on Saturday, September 30 versus the OCN Blizzard.

"The guys will enjoy this one and have a day off on Sunday and then get back to work Monday," said Cech. "We'll have practices during the week and then hit the road. The weather should be okay, hopefully on the road, and the guys are excited to get back in action after this weekend's games!"

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## 2023/2024 SEASON SCHEDULE

SEP. 22	SELKIRK STEELERS @  NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	NOV. 15	NEEPAWA TITANS @  NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	JAN. 26	SELKIRK STEELERS @  NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS
SEP. 23	WAYWAYSEECAPPO WOLVERINES @  NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	NOV. 18	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @  NEEPAWA TITANS	FEB. 3	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @  WAYWAYSEECAPPO WOLVERINES
SEP. 29	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @  SWAN VALLEY STAMPEDERS	NOV. 22	NEEPAWA TITANS @  NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	FEB. 7	WINNIPEG FREEZE @  NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS
SEP. 30	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @  OCN BLIZZARD	NOV. 24	WINNIPEG BLUES @  NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	FEB. 9	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @  VIRDEN OIL CAPITALS
OCT. 6	OCN BLIZZARD @  NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	NOV. 25	DAUPHIN KINGS @  NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	FEB. 14	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @  WINKLER FLYERS
OCT. 7	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @  NEEPAWA TITANS	NOV. 29	WINKLER FLYERS @  NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	FEB. 16	OCN BLIZZARD @  NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS
OCT. 11	WAYWAYSEECAPPO WOLVERINES @  NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	DEC. 6	WINNIPEG BLUES @  NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	FEB. 17	VIRDEN OIL CAPITALS @  NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS
OCT. 13	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @  WINNIPEG FREEZE	DEC. 9	SWAN VALLEY STAMPEDERS @  NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	FEB. 19	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @  PORTAGE TERRIERS
OCT. 14	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @  PORTAGE TERRIERS	DEC. 10	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @  WINNIPEG BLUES	FEB. 24	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @  DAUPHIN KINGS
OCT. 20	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @  STEINBACH PISTONS	DEC. 13	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @  STEINBACH PISTONS	FEB. 25	WINNIPEG FREEZE @  NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS
OCT. 21	PORTAGE TERRIERS @  NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	DEC. 15	WINKLER FLYERS @  NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	FEB. 27	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @  WINNIPEG BLUES
OCT. 23	DAUPHIN KINGS @  NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	DEC. 16	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @  SELKIRK STEELERS	MAR. 1	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @  WINNIPEG BLUES
OCT. 24	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @  OCN BLIZZARD	DEC. 20	PORTAGE TERRIERS @  NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	MAR. 2	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @  STEINBACH PISTONS
OCT. 27	WINNIPEG FREEZE @  NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	JAN. 5	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @  WINKLER FLYERS	MAR. 5	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @  WAYWAYSEECAPPO WOLVERINES
OCT. 29	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @  WINKLER FLYERS	JAN. 6	WINKLER FLYERS @  NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	MAR. 8	SELKIRK STEELERS @  NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS
NOV. 3	PORTAGE TERRIERS @  NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	JAN. 13	WINNIPEG BLUES @  NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	MAR. 9	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @  WINNIPEG FREEZE
NOV. 4	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @  SELKIRK STEELERS	JAN. 14	STEINBACH PISTONS @  NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	MAR. 15	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @  VIRDEN OIL CAPITALS
NOV. 8	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @  PORTAGE TERRIERS	JAN. 19	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @  SWAN VALLEY STAMPEDERS	MAR. 16	SWAN VALLEY STAMPEDERS @  NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS
NOV. 10	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @  WINNIPEG FREEZE	JAN. 20	NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS @  DAUPHIN KINGS		
NOV. 11	VIRDEN OIL CAPITALS @  NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS	JAN. 24	STEINBACH PISTONS @  NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS		

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CRYSTAL STOTT

# Show Your Colours: Nighthawks Merchandise Makes Big Impression

By Ty Dilello

tdilello@nivervillecitizen.com

If you attended a Niverville Nighthawks game last season, you may have taken a look around the stands and noticed that nearly every fan in attendance was decked out in Nighthawks gear.

That's not by accident.

The Nighthawks organization did a fantastic job of getting their

team merchandise out quickly to the masses throughout the team's inaugural year on the ice.

"Merchandise for the Nighthawks' opening season was extremely well received," says merchandise organizer Sherisse Fast. "Sales started off strong, with a small dip in sales after Christmas as expected, and then it picked up again for the playoffs."

Historically, Niverville and the surrounding communities have rallied

hard around their sports teams, and they did not disappoint where the Nighthawks are concerned. Fans of all ages can be seen proudly wearing the team's merchandise, both in and out of the barn on game days.

The organization says they are extremely thankful to the fans and community for their continued support of the team in buying—and, of course, wearing!—the official Nighthawks merchandise.

"One highlight that put a smile on my face was when a young fan from another local team insisted that his dad buy him a Nighthawks sweater because he liked the logo so much more than his hometown team. His dad bought him the gear," says Fast. "Our team colours and logo are often described as classic, classy, and professional. The people who were involved in that process did a great job."

Regarding the new season, the plan with the merchandise is to go with what worked last season, with a few differences in logo layout.

"Our first order will be pretty much the same, and then we will add pieces as we can work within our budgets."

Nighthawks merchandise is available for purchase at the merch kiosk at every home game at the CRRC in Niverville throughout the 2023-24 campaign.



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# Niverville Council Approves Film Studio Plans Despite Some Objection

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

On September 5, Niverville's council resumed their monthly morning public meetings after a short summer break.

Among the first items on the agenda were two applications made by movie production company Jette Studios, which, if approved, would provide the green light for construction to begin at the corner of Wallace Road and Highway 311 in October of this year.

In response to the applications, a petition of objection was received by council on behalf of a collection of residents living in the nearby Highlands development.

The first application submitted by Jette Studios included a request to construct two soundstage warehouses on the site.

The second application asked for a zoning variation which would allow for at least one of the buildings to be constructed to a height of 50 feet.

In terms of traditional standards for commercial buildings, this would equate to a four-storey building.

Niverville resident Kyle Bially attended the meeting as a representative of Jette Studios' proprietor, Juliette Hagopian. Bially has been contracted by Hagopian to serve as a local consultant and liaison for the Niverville venture.

The petition of objection was signed by a total of 11 residents all with west-facing properties and whose views, they believed, would be adversely affected by the proposed warehouses.

CAO Eric King told council that two of the petition signatures could not be officially accepted due to their late inclusion on the petition, preventing town staff from verifying them in time for



Niverville's town council at a recent public meeting.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

the meeting.

A letter from local resident Shaun Macsymic accompanied the petition.

"To put this [proposal] into perspective, the average hydro pole is 40 feet tall and this is ten feet higher," the letter read. "This will make our residential neighbourhood feel more like an industrial zone."

According to Macsymic, other concerns shared by the petitioners included the potential for light pollution and an unsightly skyline to the west. It would also be precedent-setting for other similar-sized highrises in the community's future.

"We thought the intentions were to build a studio... that utilizes a large screen to shoot movies rather than having to support large movie sets," the letter continued. "So why the need for a large warehouse? Yes, the movie industry will bring economic spin-offs to the area, but keep in mind who was here first."

Bially was glad to add some clarity to the studio's need for a 50-foot clearance.

"The movie screen itself is a minimum of 30 feet high," Bially told council. "In order to successfully produce movies in this building, we need a 50-foot clearance height to be able to get in props and things. This is kind of crucial to the [studio's] development."

Because of the height requirement, Bially felt confident that the outside perimeter of town was the most strategic location for such an endeavour.

Deputy mayor Chris Wiebe queried Bially on plans for the exterior façade of the building, which is expected to be of concrete construction.

"It is the entrance to our town," Wiebe told Bially. "It's going to be one big billboard and so the aesthetics... are very important."

Councillor Maegan Beasant echoed that concern.

"While Niverville is growing and we're all excited about it, we also really like our small-town charm," Beasant said. "So the best way to try and keep that [aesthetic] is what we're all looking for."

Bially indicated that the pre-cast design of the building will

lend itself well to a painted exterior, which should help mitigate the appearance of what could otherwise look like a giant concrete block on the prairies.

"It is a large box, but it can be done aesthetically," said Bially.

He further suggested that there is an interest in considering recommendations from locals on the building's finish.

Councillor Nathan Dueck added that he'd been fielding similar complaints from residents of The Highlands for some time now. He recommended to Bially that Jette Studios plan to make direct contact with the affected residents in order to help allay their concerns.

"Not knowing what's going on in their backyard creates a lot of anxiety and concerns that potentially might have been mitigated by having a conversation with them ahead of time," Dueck told Bially.

Bially agreed but acknowledged the difficulty of offering reassurances to residents until this point, since the whole project had run into some critical roadblocks which made its very existence at times seem untenable.

"There was some risk to the movie studio not coming to Niverville, so we were trying to [err on the side] of caution," Bially said frankly.

Council passed both the conditional use and variance applications with a majority vote with the exception of Mayor Myron Dyck, who was not present at the meeting.

Following the meeting, Bially told *The Citizen* that the newest plan for a pre-cast concrete warehouse will replace Jette Studios' initial proposal for an inflatable tent-like popup. The popup, he said, just isn't a viable option in Manitoba's harsh winter climate.

## IN BRIEF

### Parties Talk Environmental Policy

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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Candidates from Manitoba's four major political parties gathered on August 29 to discuss their climate commitments leading up to the provincial election.

On the panel were the PCs' Kevin Klein, current Minister of the Environment, and the NDP's Lisa Naylor, environment critic, filling in for Wab Kinew. Joining them were Dougald Lamont, leader of the Manitoba Liberals, and Janine Gibson, leader of the Manitoba Green Party.

They answered questions regarding the development of policy, meeting our obligations under the Paris Agreement, and each party's intentions for the ag sector.

All the candidates assumed different approaches to climate change action.

"An NDP government will use nature-based approaches to help mitigate climate change," Naylor said. "We've committed to protecting 30 percent of Manitoba by 2030, and this includes protecting wetlands."

Lamont said that the carbon tax in Manitoba is all stick and no carrot.

"We would create a \$300 million green fund [every year] to be administered by Efficiency Manitoba," he said.

As for the PCs, Klein says he is confident the current government is on the right track.

"Our PC government's allegiance to sustainable practices is unshakable and we recognize the importance of the green economy," Klein said.

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# Ritchot Assesses Housing Needs in the RM

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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Following the results of a professional housing needs assessment, Ritchot's economic development officer, Ryan Faucher, will soon be applying for federal funding in the hopes of filling gaps in the municipality's housing options.

The Housing Accelerator Fund, available to municipal governments, is there to encourage housing growth to aid in the development of affordable, inclusive, and diverse communities that are low-carbon and climate-resilient.

The fund is a part of the \$82-billion National Housing Strategy, carried out by the federal government through the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC).

The strategy's end goal is to strengthen the middle-class sector, cut chronic homelessness in half, and help fuel an ailing economy.

The housing needs assessment is a prerequisite for applying for funding.

Ritchot hired Winnipeg-based consulting firm WSP to complete the study. Details needed to be compiled on the region's demographics, income mixes, and current housing supply.

Using 2021 data from Statistics Canada, WSP also looked at the municipality's historic growth rate in order to project future growth.

Together, this data allowed WSP to develop a community profile which is helpful in terms of determining where the region is going and the gaps that will need to be filled in



DEPOSITPHOTOS

order to get there.

"Ritchot has a very high ratio of single-family [homes] versus multi-family," Faucher says. "The municipality is also having an influx of younger families, so that does change our demographic a little bit, which supports the idea of affordable housing within the RM. And comparing us to the national average, we are below average on multi-family housing. [The report] also identifies the seniors' living perspective, in that we could use some of that."

In the first stages, the application for funding approval requires no

specifics on what types of housing are being sought.

If approved, the government promises to provide between \$20,000 and \$51,000 per building complex.

At that point, Faucher will need to provide details on specific projects and submit them to the CMHC.

Once received, funds don't need to go directly to the building itself. They can be put to use on infrastructure which paves the way for that building.

This could mean adding water or sewer lines, completing street

repairs, or beefing up essential services, such as fire and emergency, which support the growth incurred by an increase in population.

"[The funding] can also be applied as direct incentives to the developers or the builders," Faucher says. "That's at the discretion of the government body that applies for the fund."

The catch to receiving the funding, Faucher adds, is the requirement that the land already be zoned for the specific use. As well, a guarantee must be made that the specific projects proposed could be completed in a one- to three-year

window. The quicker the project can be completed, the more funding is guaranteed.

"So if you come with a project that is a 'green field build'—that is, three or four years in the future—we're not eligible for that," says Faucher. "[The proposed site] has to be properly zoned and shovel-ready. We have Tourond Creek and we have Cobblestone in Grande Pointe, so there's a lot of areas that have already been subdivided and identified for development."

Faucher says that some of this development may currently be stalled because of high interest rates and the tough economic times.

In a situation like this, the Housing Accelerator Fund might be exactly what council needs to encourage developers to move ahead.

The fund could also help the RM better accommodate seniors and keep them in the community.

"In Ritchot, we don't have any seniors living [options], so that would be a gap within our communities," says Faucher. "So the government may offer incentives to the municipality in order to add that type of housing to our mix."

But it's not just housing complexes that could benefit local seniors. Funding is also available for other seniors' housing initiatives, such as secondary suites or "granny flats."

"[The government] views that as a way to add capacity to the housing market. It's a societal benefit because keeping your family groups together provides support to the seniors and they provide support to the other family members."

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# Family-Run Food Truck Serves Up Fresh Smash Burgers

By Sara Beth Dacombe

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A new family-run business is serving up smash burgers like you've never had them before. Duke's Burger Company opened on August 27 on Highway 59 about one and a half miles north of the Highway 311 intersection.

It's the realization of a long-standing dream for Josh Darlington, who wanted to open a restaurant out of a food trailer located on his family's 4.5-acre property close to Niverville.

Leaving a corporate career in sales, Darlington bought a trailer in April 2023, renovated to serve food, then brought it up to code and opened for business in late summer.

Now all he needs to do is sell burgers—and make his father proud.

## HOTDOG CART OWNER TO BURGER LEGEND

Darlington always seemed to have an interest in street food, but it wasn't always burgers that caught his attention.

"Seeing hotdog carts outside of arenas, hockey events, many different events I'd go to as a young adult, they just became a huge interest of mine," Darlington says. "I just thought they were really cool. In 2012, I took the plunge and my wife and I bought one. We started running one in downtown Winnipeg part-time. We branched out from there and did different events all around rural Manitoba, like the Gimli Icelandic Festival and the Morden Corn and Apple Festival. We were busy, too. In fact, we got too busy and we just couldn't do it anymore."

The couple ended up relinquishing their hotdog cart. They both had full-time jobs, but the fever never went away.

"I always said I had the most fun doing that work," he says. "You get to meet people and talk to people. I always say, it takes many types of people to make this world go round, and you meet them all at the hotdog cart. It's fantastic! I never had so much fun doing a job than doing that type of work. I knew at some point I'd



Owner Josh Darlington with new business named after his dad.

✉ SARA BETH DACOMBE

get back to it. Fast-forward to 2023 and here we are, we took the plunge."

A few friends and mentors picked up on his yearning for something new and gave him some encouragement, pointing out that you only live once.

It was the push Darlington needed to make the leap.

The name of the business, Duke's Burger Company, came from Darlington's late father, nicknamed Duke. A portrait in his honour is featured on the side of the trailer.

"He always wanted to have something of his own. My dad would've been tickled. He would've loved this. I thought, this could be something to work for. If I put my father's name on the side of this thing, and put him on it, I can't fail. Every day I wake up and have to look my father in the eye."

He also views his business as a family venture. Being right on his home property, his seven-year-old son is often out at the trailer and enjoys being involved however he can.

Rather than pressure, Darlington derives inspiration from both his dad and the legacy he hopes to pass on to his son.

## THE DUKE

Despite not having formal training in the kitchen, Darlington felt his homemade burger would be a strong

enough product to support the business. So he put it on the menu and called it "the Duke."

"It's a smash-style burger," he says. "It's something I've been working on for years and years, cooking at home."

A smash burger uses a beef hamburger patty that has no fillers or binders and is cooked by pressing the meat firmly down onto a hot griddle. The fat from the meat provides all the flavour and the caramelization from the cooking process holds the patty together.

The style has been trending in North America. Darlington points out that many fast food restaurants in the United States have been serving this style of burger for years, but it's been slower to catch on in Canada.

"For whatever reason, there's not a lot of places here exclusively doing smash burgers," he says. "It's all beef. No spices even in the meat or anything. No breadcrumbs, no eggs, no oats like some people do. I do straight beef. I put it straight on the grill, I smash it, and I put salt and pepper on it. That's it. That's what people want. Straight beef. And we've had a lot of good feedback on that so far."

Then there's the Duke Sauce.

"That's kind of the big ticket on the burger. I don't know anyone else who

makes it like I do, and I guess that's what makes it mine... So we make a great burger, we put the sauce on it, and it tastes pretty darn good. I'd say. I think people are liking it!"

Darlington says that freshness and quality are really important—and it's true for everything on the menu from the beef to the veggies, chicken, and turkey.

Other menu options at the trailer include a chicken-smash burger, and a classic-style hotdog.

"The hot dog is called the Gordo, named after one of my best friends who's a hotdog lover," Darlington explains. "I'm not going to beat around the bush. It's my take on the old 'whistle dog' from A&W. It's the same kind of deal. It's got bacon, relish, and cheese on it, but I put green onions on mine. That's been a pretty good seller so far."

## BUSY HIGHWAY

Duke's Burger Company is located directly off Highway 59 via a shared private driveway, number 2300.

At a Ritcho council meeting earlier this year, there were some concerns about the business's location due to heavy traffic on that stretch of road. There is no turning lane or paved shoulder before the entrance and it's important for the public to be aware of the dangers of the turn.

When asked about this, Darlington readily admits that the location does come with its challenges.

"I actually respect that," he says. "I mean, people who are aware of how busy the highway is are going to be looking out for their own and everybody else's safety. They're aware it's a dangerous highway. Someone did tell me, 'You know, I wanted to turn in and it was a little bit too busy, so I didn't'. And I say, good on you. You're aware."

Darlington also contends that there are other businesses located on Highway 59. He says that adding one more isn't going to change how people drive.

"There's a chicken farm with multiple vehicles pulling in every day," he says. "There's a wedding venue, antiques shop, mechanics."

Darlington asks any customers coming and going to practice awareness to help keep everyone safe.

## OPENING CHALLENGES

There is no grand opening event planned, but Darlington is open to planning one in the future.

Their first week open saw a large volume of customers most days. One day, they even sold out.

The business will be closed Mondays and Tuesdays and may change their hours to accommodate demand. Customers are asked to check social media before heading out to ensure that the trailer is open.

Also, being a trailer, the business is uniquely mobile and may go out to events. But Darlington is open about how many venues they'll make the effort to attend.

"Being a stop on the 59 and having great signage that says burgers, we do get people stopping in. So we don't want to maybe be gone too often. We will honour local connections with places we've become committed to going to. We want to keep those commitments, but we will not be gone too often."

He adds that the business has a presence on Instagram and Facebook. Those are good places to check before heading out, to ensure that no one makes the trip on a closed day.

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The Heritage Life Personal Care Home in Niverville.

BY BRENDA SAWATZKY

# Heritage Centre Looks to Donors for Help with Aging Infrastructure

**By Brenda Sawatzky**  
 LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER  
 ✉ [bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com](mailto:bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com)

The board of directors of Niverville Heritage Holdings Inc. (NHHI) is daring to dream big this year. They've set a lofty fundraising goal to help restore some of the aging infrastructure at the Heritage Centre.

The ask is for just over \$151,000, with the wish list focused on improving the life of seniors in the Heritage Life Personal Care Home (HLPCH) and Niverville Credit Union Manor.

"The PCH is ten years old this year," says Anne Eastman, director of the NHHI. "The Manor is 16 years old. There's a lot of capital expenditure replacements that we want to undertake."

For starters, she says, the shingles on one side of the assisted living manor are in need of replacement this year. That alone comes with a price tag of more than \$55,000.

Four personal care home beds have also seen better days. Their replacement comes to nearly \$11,000.

The priority list continues, including Hoyer lifts and blanket warmers for the personal care home as well as door

closers, laundry machine upgrades, paint, and repairs due at the Manor.

It's a long list, and if the fundraising goal proves overly optimistic, the board will apply what is received based on priority.

Indeed, it is more than double what was raised last year at \$66,000.

"This community is very generous and I think if you don't tell them what you need, they won't respond," Eastman says. "They will respond when they realize the need. At least that's my hope."

The majority of this generosity, they hope, will come to the fore at this year's Heritage Centre annual fundraising gala, planned for November 4.

The keynote speaker for this event is none other than Jon Montgomery, Canadian Olympic gold medallist and host of *The Amazing Race Canada*.

Eastman's thrilled at the prospect of Montgomery's attendance and describes him as an incredibly engaging speaker based on other events where she's heard him speak.

Eastman was also a visitor to the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver, where Montgomery took home a gold medal in skeleton. He won over the

crowd with his wit and charm even then, she says.

"When he won, he walked through Whistler Village with a [pitcher] of beer in his hand, celebrating," laughs Eastman. "He made his own parade."

Not long after that win, Montgomery made appearances on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* and the Juno Awards, where he used his vocal talents to auction off singer Justin Bieber's cell number.

Growing up in Russell, Manitoba, Montgomery now makes his home in Calgary.

Another highlight for the board this year is the anticipation of an exciting menu.

"We have a new Red Seal chef at the Heritage Centre and he's developed a wonderful meal for the gala," Eastman says, alluding only to the fact that the headliner of the dinner will be a delectable Berkshire pork.

The overriding theme for this year's gala is the phrase "at the centre of it all."

"That describes our residents, right?" says Eastman. "They are at the centre and it's why [the Heritage Centre] exists."

To purchase tickets or donate, contact: [gala@heritagecentre.ca](mailto:gala@heritagecentre.ca) or call 204.388.5000 ext. 210.

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# Commentary

## Gender Ideology vs. Gender Science: What the Brain Is Telling Us

By Daniel Dacombe

Recently, there has been an increase in dialogue and protests in Canada on the subject of “gender ideology” in schools. The opposing sides fall into two camps: those who think that discussing gender expression and sexual orientation is appropriate in school, and those who do not.

A catalyst for these conflicts is a recent political promise to require school staff to “out” transgender students to their parents, even in situations where the home may not be accepting or safe.

Both sides of this discussion are comprised of people who care deeply about the safety and well-being of children.

It’s safe to say that this is not a debate about one ideology; it’s a conflict between two competing ideologies, between two different ideas about what is right and safe and healthy for children to learn about in schools. This is presented as a conflict between the rights of transgender youths and the rights of parents to know what happens with their children while at school.

When the debate devolves into name-calling and vitriol, though, all opportunity for meaningful dialogue between these ideologies is lost. We gain little by yelling at each other across lines separated by the police.

One of the challenges put forth by the parental rights side goes like this: “Leave ideology out of the schools. Just focus on the things kids actually need to learn—math, science, and other subjects.”

In order to avoid the current conflict of competing ideologies, we may want to accept this challenge. What does science actually say about what

it means to be transgender?

Homosexuality was thought to be a mental illness until the 1970s when the American Psychiatric Association finally acknowledged what the evidence clearly revealed: homosexuality is part of the normal spectrum of human sexuality.

Being transgender, though, has not shared the same level of acceptance.

Many people believe the condition to be the result of mental illness, confusion, or even deception. Some parents are afraid that their children will be somehow tricked into becoming transgender. Frequently, claims are made about high rates of regret from people who changed genders.

For many, this is the question: is there something neurologically or biologically different about transgender individuals that makes them the way they are, or are their beliefs about their identity mistaken?

As this is a mental health column, it makes sense to look at the question from the perspective of what has been learned about brains and gender.

But before we do so, some basic definitions are in order.

In modern culture, the words “sex” and “gender” are often used interchangeably. For the purposes of this article, “gender” refers to a socially constructed identity associated with particular role expectations. “Sex” will refer to perceived biological sex at birth.

Historically, both popular culture and the science of psychology have maintained that gender role differences are as hardwired into our brains as biological sex. This can be seen in religious and cultural traditions—for example, the Christian

belief that God made males and females for distinct familial and societal roles.

Exactly how large of a difference exists between the sexes’ brains? We are still learning.

However, there are several areas in which we have found clear differences in both the function and structure of male and female brains.

**1. Brain function.** Male and female brains have been found to have different patterns in how they process information.

For example, processing smells. Males and females are sensitive to the smells of the opposite sex’s pheromones. When subjected to MRI scans, it has been found that transgendered brains align with their experienced gender, not their biological sex.

These are not unique results.

Multiple studies have found that both trans-males and trans-females respond to stimuli in ways closer to their experienced gender than biological sex. This can be seen in brain scans. The results cannot be faked by the individual being studied.

**2. Brain structure.** Groups of cells in the brain can look different in males versus females, such as being larger or smaller. There are many examples of this, including—forgive the jargon—the bed nucleus of the stria terminalis (BSTc), the sexually dimorphic nucleus of the preoptic area (SDN-POA), and the vasoactive intestinal polypeptide containing subnucleus of the suprachiasmatic nucleus (VIP-SCN).

These are just three areas of the brain which are shown to be different sizes in biological males and females.

In multiple studies, trans individuals have been consistently shown to

possess the brain structures of their experienced gender, not of their biological sex at birth.

These results are so reliable that a neurologist examining the brain of a trans-female would conclude that they were looking at a female brain.

It’s also critical to note that these differences occur even in individuals who have not had hormone or other gender reassignment therapy.

And again, these structural differences cannot be faked. They can’t be the result of a person’s confusion about their identity. They are physical realities. According to the best data we have available, we appear to be seeing female brains in male bodies, and vice versa.

This research only focuses on brains and barely scratches the surface of the neurological evidence. The issue gets more complex when genetics are involved.

Our high school biology textbooks break down sex in a very simple way. XY chromosomes equal male, XX chromosomes equal female.

That’s the rule.

However, the rule breaks down the closer one examines our wonderful species.

This writer won’t attempt to explain the genetic evidence. However, we can safely say with that there are individuals walking around us right now with XY chromosomes who look and act female, even to the point of being able to give birth, and people with XX chromosomes who look and act male, even to the point of being able to father children.

Biology is a descriptive science—a science that only tells us what is actually there in nature, not how things ought to be—and continues to delve deeper with ever greater

curiosity and excitement.

If there are any doubts about whether being trans is a real thing, then the neurological and biological evidence is clear.

It’s also clear that there is a mental health benefit when trans individuals are allowed to use their appropriate pronouns and transition after receiving proper counselling and medical care.

And as for the post-transition regrets we heard about earlier in this article? The most up-to-date evidence indicates that less than 0.5 percent of trans individuals who transition express regrets at having done so.

For comparison, knee replacement surgery regrets range from six percent all the way up to 30 percent. Ought we to ban discussion of knee surgeries at schools as well?

Teaching children the science about the human body in its many forms is not an evil ideology. If any disservice is being done to our children, it’s that there is not more science education being made available, and that it takes so many years for new discoveries to make their way into our education system.

This is something we can work on as a society. We can make a greater effort to encourage our schools to focus more on facts.

We might also remember that any decision to eliminate from our children’s education a perspective we don’t agree with is itself an ideology—and a shortsighted one, at that.

But the parental rights advocates are certainly right about this: we should take the opportunity to focus on the facts, which show that we are a much more diverse species than we could ever have dreamed.



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# Sports & Recreation

## CRRC Announces Floor Repairs and Fall Programs for All Ages

By Jennifer Lavin

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The Niverville Community Resource and Recreation Centre (CRRC) has been a centrepiece of its community for just over two years. As the facility enters its third year in operation, there are many changes, updates, and upgrades to be found throughout.

On the downside, the fieldhouse will be out of commission until approximately the end of October. A sprinkler head was broken during a futsal game earlier this year and two courts received significant water damage.

Despite months of effort by the CRRC staff, together with flood damage specialists, the floor of the fieldhouse could not be saved.

“Currently our fieldhouse is under major reconstruction to dry the subfloor and replace the entire floor surface,” says Teresa Mistelbacher, a Camps and Recreation Programmer. “Due to the extensive repairs, our fieldhouse will be unavailable for any recreation and sport use until later this fall.”

On the plus side, Mistelbacher says that she is grateful that the CRRC is a multiplex facility, with many other available spaces to host programs and events.

“While we have had to delay the start date of some of our court sport programs,” Mistelbacher says, “many



The floor in the CRRC fieldhouse is undergoing repairs.

TERESA MISTELBACHER

of our non-court programs will run in our additional spaces at the Niverville CRRC.”

The walking track above the fieldhouse was not damaged by the flooding and will remain open. And for the rest of the CRRC, business is running as usual—and with a host of new programs.

In mid-September, the CRRC team welcomed visitors for their Come Try It event. During this time, guests were able to view the facility, meet the staff, and try any regularly scheduled program at no charge.

Kids from between the ages of

seven and 11 had two options. They could check out a Cozy Craft class, unleashing their creativity, or the Lego Quest, which was both a social and educational gathering for kids who love Lego.

Guests between nine and 16 were able to experience a Youth Yoga and Mindfulness class, designed to produce in people a greater level of awareness of the importance of mental health and physical bodies.

Those 16 and over can get their hearts pumping at the Fit Club, held on Mondays and Thursdays this fall, or they can check out a Zumba class

on Thursdays. On Mondays and Wednesdays, they can wind down their day with Gentle Yoga. This class is suitable for beginners or those who want a more gentle yoga routine.

On Tuesdays, there’s an opportunity for adults to try the ancient exercise of Qigong (pronounced chee-gong). Qigong is somewhat similar to Tai Chi and uses gentle movements and breath control to relax the body and mind.

Finally, on Fridays, the whole family can come out and experience an evening of fun. There are games in the fieldhouse, free access to the

playground (don’t forget to wear socks), public skating, sticks and pucks, and sticks and rings, among other activities.

Friday evenings also offer an opportunity to meet the Niverville Nighthawks and get autographs from the team’s players.

New upcoming classes this fall include varied options as artistic blacksmithing, junk journaling, the stained-glass workshop, a ukulele class, 55+ chair fitness, and a sports nutrition workshop.

Returning programs include the ever-popular Canadian Red Cross babysitters course, the Canadian firearms safety course, a first aid/CPR class, and various group sports.

Another addition to the CRRC this year is the golf simulator, which will have different themes each evening throughout the autumn. Mondays will be devoted to Ladies League, with Wednesdays and Thursdays playing host to Men’s League. Tuesday evenings will be Pro Night, giving players an opportunity to receive guidance from golf experts.

On the weekends, the golf simulator will be all fun and games, with Friday Couples Night, Saturday Party Night, and Sunday Family Night.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about the CRRC facility or any of the programs, contact recreation@whereyoubelong.ca



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# Niverville's Hayden East Off to Fast Start in Sweden

By Ty Dilello

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Niverville's Hayden East is playing professional hockey this season in Sweden. The 20-year-old has signed on to play with the Söderhamn/Ljusne HC, a team which plays at the Division 2 level.

Fast decided to play in Sweden earlier this year after wrapping up a stellar junior season with the MMJHL's St. Vital Victorias, where he scored 59 points in 43 games and took home the league's Rookie of the Year honour.

"I honestly did not expect to be playing competitively after my last season with the Vics," Fast says. "But once I got a call, I figured I could not pass up the opportunity to travel and experience hockey overseas, which was the main reason for me."

Fast was originally coming to Sweden to play on the local junior team, and looking to hopefully get some games with the Division 2 pro team.

After his arrival, however, Fast was told that they were going to put him on the Division 2 team right away.

"The quality of hockey is very high," he says. "A lot of imports from all over Europe



Niverville's Hayden East has signed on to play with the Söderhamn/Ljusne HC that plays at the Division 2 level.

C/O HAYDEN EAST

have come out here ranging from 19 to 28 years old. So there's definitely some big men out here, which is great to be able to play with everyone. So far things are great, as the guys here are awesome and extremely understanding that the foreign players can't speak their language. They try to make us feel as welcome as possible."

Fast currently lives in

Ljusne, which is located 10 minutes away from Söderhamn, but the rink is in Ljusne and most of the Swedish players on the squad come from Soderhamn.

"It's a very small, quaint town with very few things to do, but within a week the restaurant owners knew my name, which is more of a Niverville atmosphere. That made it easy to adjust."

Fast's season with Soderhamn-Ljusne begins on October 6. Until then, the team has six preseason games.

"My goals for the upcoming season is to put myself in a spot to move up to Division 1 next year," says Fast of his aspirations. "To do that, I just have to keep going by playing my game, which is smart and skilled hockey."

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# Arts & Entertainment

## Local Author and Illustrator Team Up to Share Faith in New Children's Book

By Jennifer Lavin

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A local author and illustrator have collaborated on a new children's book that bring to life the biblical story of Jonah being swallowed by a whale and living to tell the tale.

Don Dewey, a teacher at Stonybrook Middle School in Steinbach, joined forces with Joel Harnett, an 18-year-old from Niverville, to share their talent, and their faith, in *God's Love Is Bigger than a Whale*.

Dewey was born and raised in the United States but moved to Canada 12 years ago with his wife Valerie and their two children, Amber and Micah.

As a young child, Valerie briefly went to school in Niverville and still had relatives there, helping the couple to feel confident that southeastern Manitoba would be a good place for them.

By now, the Dewey family includes three grandchildren. His desire to share his faith with those kids was part of what finally convinced him to fulfill his lifelong dream of writing a book.

He says that he can relate to the biblical story of Jonah, where God tells Jonah what to do even though Jonah isn't keen to do it.

Dewey hopes the book can remind its readers that we should all have grace and compassion for each other.

Harnett, the illustrator, graduated from Niverville High School this



Joel Harnett and Don Dewey have released an illustrated children's book.

JOYCE HARNETT

past June. Harnett and Dewey were introduced to one another last year by Tony Clark, an art teacher at NHS who knew that Dewey was searching for an illustrator.

Dewey says that he immediately

felt a kinship with Harnett and knew that he wanted to work with him.

Working together, the pair have created a charming book full of bold watercolour illustrations.

"It has been my dream since I was

a little kid to illustrate books," says Harnett. "I've always enjoyed drawing, creating stories and characters. I love imagining!"

This Little Light Artistry in Niverville was an important part of

Harnett's artistic journey. He took classes there throughout his elementary and middle school years and says that he acquired a great deal of knowledge through the program.

"I learned a lot of skills in watercolour painting, mixed media work, and just putting creative ideas on paper," he says. "As I grew older, I continued to create, draw, and illustrate. I made little comics for friends and family, progressing from pencil crayon drawings on looseleaf to scanned ink comics for home-made publishing. I also was able to illustrate for Focus on the Family's *Clubhouse Magazine* for several years, through an art contest."

Harnett has big plans for the future and hopes to pursue illustration as a career.

This fall, he will attend Columbia Bible College in Abbotsford, British Columbia to continue learning about art and music.

"After that," he says, "the sky is the limit!"

As for Dewey, he's already working on another book, this time focusing on the famous biblical story of Daniel in the lion's den. He hopes to collaborate with Harnett again.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

*God's Love Is Bigger than a Whale* is available to purchase through Amazon.ca. Readers can also reach out to Dewey directly at thejonahstory@yahoo.com. Joel Harnett invites people to follow his work on Instagram @jh\_artstudio.

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# Local Author's Books Focus on Personal, Meaningful Storytelling

By Sara Beth Dacombe

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Robert Stermscheg of Niverville has just released a new novel, although it's far from his first. Over the last 15 years, this local author has published a half-dozen books, of different types and genres.

But they all have something important in common: a deeply personal connection to his own life.

Stermscheg made a big move in June 2023, relocating from Winnipeg to Niverville to spend more time with his son's family and newborn granddaughter. Other important moves have corresponded with huge changes over the course of his life, such as immigrating to Canada at the age of 11 and retiring from the Winnipeg Police Service in 2006.

These moves have changed his life. But as an author, Stermscheg would say it's the stories we tell ourselves that have the greatest impact.

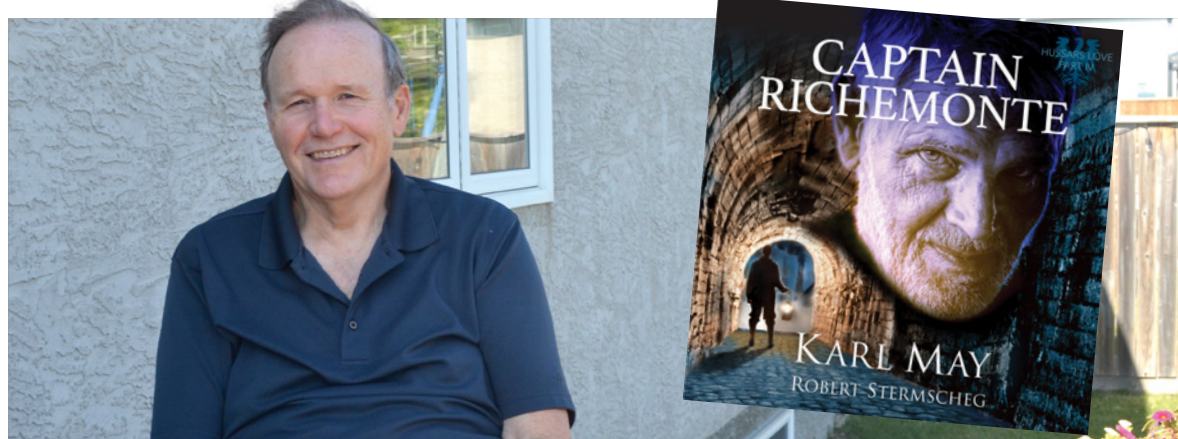
When Stermscheg's son moved to Niverville with his fiancée to start a family, he and his wife Toni decided to move as well. The pair already attended church in Niverville.

"Niverville is a great community, but we had lived in a condo. I mean, we had to buy a lawnmower again!" says Stermscheg. "But we love it here. The little one is seven months, so we are usually over there."

His journey to becoming an author took many turns.

After high school, he initially trained to become a commercial pilot, although it was the police force that eventually called up his application.

"Aside from the few police chases, a lot of it was report writing," Stermscheg says about his first career. "As



Local author Robert Stermscheg.

JOEY VILLANUEVA

computers advanced, there was more and more focus and emphasis on writing a good report. The crown attorney, the defence lawyer, and others would see the report. If it was poorly constructed, it would come back to haunt you. So that's where I got some of my writing established."

But his dream was always to write fiction.

When he knew it was time to retire in 2006, he also knew it wouldn't mean a life of relaxation. Rather, he intended to embark on a new endeavour.

"I wasn't just going to sit around at home," he says. "That's when I approached my wife and said, 'This is my dream.'"

## GERMAN TO ENGLISH

As an avid reader of adventure and mystery, he found himself drawn to the popular German writer Karl May, whose stories have always captivated him.

He also wanted to be able to share this interest with friends.

However, the books were written

in German and didn't have English translations.

"May's books are still hugely popular in Europe," Stermscheg explains. "The equivalent, I would say, is Alexandre Dumas. Same genre, same time period. Where Dumas wrote *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *The Three Musketeers*, May wrote about the American northwest, about cowboys... And my dream was to bring this author to a North American English-speaking audience."

May wrote more than 70 books before his death in 1912.

"It's wholesome, good-guy-versus-bad-guy stories," Stermscheg says. "It's all about conflict. It's plot-driven."

He learned that one of May's series, which was of particular interest to Stermscheg, was in the public domain. That meant it was available for any author to begin the work of translation from German to English.

It just hadn't been done before.

"I thought I could start with number one and see how that went," he

says. "I thought, 'This is my chance. I could get that published.'"

Finding a publisher for the translated work was a major obstacle.

However, through a network of other authors he learned of a publisher that was interested.

Another obstacle was the sheer length of the novel. Just the first installment in the series was 150,000 words, unabridged.

"Most people, they can handle about 100,000 words. Beyond that, unless it's Harry Potter or something like that, you start losing them, right? I wanted to be faithful to the original text. So I found the text in German and looked at it. I thought, 'I'll have to chop it up differently, into more palatable lengths.'"

Another obstacle, beyond translating the book word for word, was to take into account the way German idioms translate into common English phrases.

"You've got to work with context, and I believe you have to have a knack to understand the flow," he says. "So I just kind of pictured how

May envisioned it and how that would translate from German to English."

The challenge was to take a story written in the 1880s and filter it through not just the translation, but the imagination process of a crosscultural, trilingual writer in the early 2000s, and come out with a novel that was both cohesive and a pleasure to read.

Stermscheg took on the project and, together with the help of local editor Evan Braun, succeeded in having the first four of six books published over several years.

He plans to publish the final two volumes in the near future.

Stermscheg's first English translation in the series is called *The Prussian Lieutenant*. The fourth and most recent book, *Captain Riche Monte*, was released earlier this year.

## A FAMILY MEMOIR

While working with the German text, Stermscheg found himself drawing upon his father John for help.

"My dad was still alive at the time and he was invaluable," says Stermscheg. "I would say, 'Dad, does this make sense?' Because he could read the German and the English."

In 2007, while working on the second book, Stermscheg had an encounter with his father on a ski hill. They were sharing stories, just as Stermscheg could recall them doing countless times before, but this time something clicked.

"It was one of those Aha! moments. I said, 'Dad, you have a lot of these stories.' And the stories were true. He wasn't telling somebody else's; they were his. Some of them were of the war, others after the war. I said, 'We should write a memoir

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together.”

Stermscheg describes his father as being very technical, more enthusiastic about calculus and math than the details of what makes a good story. But the content of the family history was so compelling to Stermscheg that he knew it would be a worthwhile pursuit.

Despite his father's reluctance, Stermscheg collaborated with him to self-publish the memoir, entitled *POW* #74324.

The book details John's extraordinary experiences during World War II, including his imprisonment in a German stalag.

The book, which comes with a selection of family photos from the wartime era, is more than a collection of stories. It is a profound father-son achievement.

“That's the thing I'm most proud of,” says Stermscheg. “It has a personal connection. I wanted to share my dad's stories... He survived the Second World War. Well, he did more than survive.”

#### FROM FACT TO FICTION

In every sense of the word, John was Stermscheg's hero. And the opportunity to immerse himself in the history of the war enabled him to further grow as a writer.

But after the translation and memoir projects, he decided that his desire to breathe life into his own unique characters could no longer be put off. He was ready to embark on a new adventure.

Utilizing a hybrid model where both publisher and writer invest in the final product, Stermscheg was able to write his first wholly original novel, entitled *Stealth*.

For this book, he tapped

into his well-developed skill-set as historian and novelist to tell the tale of an American bomber pilot in World War II who is shot down in enemy territory.

The main character, Jack Swaggart, becomes separated from his crew and must decide whether to trust a beautiful German stranger.

Stermscheg's own knowledge of aircraft birthed an intriguing plot involving a new type of German warplane, a design unlike anything the Allies had seen before.

Stermscheg's next original novel is already in the works. It will feature a female main character who came to Stermscheg as he was writing *Stealth*. After his editor, Braun, recommended that he remove this character to streamline the book, Stermscheg realized that he had enough inspiration to create a prequel showcasing her.

“[Braun] gave me some really good advice,” he says. “There were a couple of scenes in there with a female heroine that I wanted to explore and I never got to finish. I chose to remove her, but now she is in the prequel. I realized there were several interesting stories to tell about her.”

#### “JUST WRITE”

Stermscheg's creativity may be flowing, but he admits that finding his way through the literary maze is a big challenge.

For one thing, there's the classic struggle of submitting pitch letters to which one never receives a response, which is disheartening.

Then there's self-publishing, an alternative route that is more common than ever albeit risky and more costly. As an author, marketing oneself places huge demands on

one's time and energy, often for very little return.

And since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person networking and marketing opportunities are harder than ever to come by.

“Everything's changed, right?” he says. “You try all these different things, and I have a certain following, but just because something worked two years ago doesn't mean it will work again today.”

Despite the challenges of writing professionally, Stermscheg wouldn't give it up for anything. He derives too much fulfillment from moving others with his storytelling, particularly when it comes from tapping into his own familial lore.

“Especially about the memoir, I said, ‘It doesn't matter what the end result is, really. Just write. Put it down on paper.’ Well, preferably on the computer, so you can save it! The main thing is to start writing.”

Stermscheg also encourages writers not to get discouraged. It's helpful to connect with other writers to meet with and share community.

But ultimately, he adds, it's okay to be your own target audience.

“You don't have to have it all polished,” he advises. “If you have a peer group, they can help you. And an editor is invaluable. But be comfortable with what you're writing, whether it's poetry, short stories, or a novel. Write for yourself.”

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Stermscheg's various books are available to purchase on Amazon, both as ebooks and print editions. *Stealth* is also available to order online through Indigo.ca.

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