

The Citizen

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LOCAL NEWS

DSEFM Bans Cell Phones

Manitoba's francophone school division has banned the use of cell phones in the classroom, having instituted the division-wide policy when students returned in the fall.

Details on Page 9



LOCAL NEWS

RCMP Services: Who Pays?

When it comes to protective services in our local communities, who pays? And how much? In this edition of *The Citizen*, we tackle the question of how the RCMP are funded in towns and RMs across Manitoba.

Details on Pages 7-8

NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS

Nighthawks Flying High

After their first full month on the ice, the Niverville Nighthawks have quickly established themselves as a force to be reckoned with in the MJHL.

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SPORTS & REC

The Force Finish Season in Second Place

The Niverville Force have wrapped up another year on the soccer pitch, finishing up in second place overall.

Details on Page 20

TOWN OF NIVERVILLE

Niverville Land Annexation Goes to Public Hearing

» READ MORE ON PAGE 17

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PROVINCIAL RESULTS

	2023	2019	2016
34 	SEATS: 34	18	14
	POPULAR VOTE: 46.2%	31.3%	25.6%
	VOTES: 221,695	149,868	109,905
22 	SEATS: 22	36	40
	POPULAR VOTE: 42.3%	46.5%	53.4%
	VOTES: 203,350	222,366	229,518
1 	SEATS: 1	3	3
	POPULAR VOTE: 10.8%	14.5%	14.2%
	VOTES: 51,634	69,417	60,905
0 	SEATS: 0	0	0
	POPULAR VOTE: 0.7%	6.3%	5.2%
	VOTES: 3,584	30,266	22,123

SPRINGFIELD-RITCHOT RESULTS

 RON SCHULER 54.9% 5,752 VOTES	 TAMMY IVANCO 36.5% 3,827 VOTES	 TREVOR KIRCZENOW 8.6% 900 VOTES
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NDP Win Majority Government

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Manitoba has a new government, and a new premier. On October 3, Wab Kinew led the New Democratic Party to victory. The NDP dealt the incumbent Progressive Conservatives a crushing electoral blow, particularly in suburban Winnipeg.

According to the official results, the NDP won 34 seats in the Legislature while the PCs were reduced to 22 seats. The Liberal retain one seat.

Closer to home, PC Ron Schuler has returned for another term as MLA for Springfield-Ritchot.

"I would like to thank the voters of Springfield, Ritchot, and Niverville

for once again electing me as their MLA," says Schuler. "I will continue to serve my constituents with the same enthusiasm that I did the past four years."

In other nearby rural constituencies, the PCs won by predictable margins in their usual strongholds.

Advance voting broke records this year, leading many to anticipate high voter turnout on election day.

These forecasts did not pan out. Overall, turnout was 55 percent, matching the 2019 election.

LEADERS STEP DOWN

As votes rolled in late in the evening and the NDP victory became clear, two of the major party leaders announced that they would step down.

Liberal leader Dougald Lamont suffered a stinging loss in his St. Boniface riding, falling to Robert Loiselle of the NDP. In his remarks, Lamont lamented the wave of strategic voting that resulted in his party's sharp downturn.

"Sometimes you get caught in a wave, and it doesn't seem to matter what you do," Lamont said.

Heather Stefanson, who served as the province's first woman premier, having taken over from Brian Pallister after his resignation in 2021, held her head high.

"I have been a candidate for seven elections and I respect the will of the voters," Stefanson said.

(continued on page 4)

The Citizen

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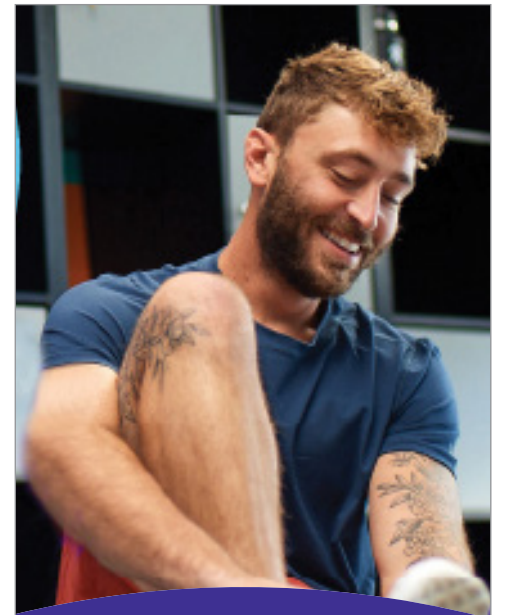
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(continued from page 3)

“And today, the voters have spoken. The historic nature of Mr. Kinew’s victory must be acknowledged here this evening.”

Stefanson will continue to serve in the Legislature but intends to step down as leader as soon as a replacement is chosen by party members.

“Wab, I hope that your win here tonight inspires a future generation of Indigenous youth to get involved in our democratic process, not just here in Manitoba but right across the country,” Stefanson said.

In remarking on the accomplishments of her government, she pointed to the PCs’ success in implementing the largest personal income tax cuts in the province’s history, as well as bringing the budget to balance.

“Our Progressive Conservative government has set up our province for great success,” she said. “As we head to the other side of the House, I can tell Manitobans that the team of PC MLAs that you have elected tonight will keep fighting for you and we will hold the new government’s feet to the fire.”

MAKING HISTORY

Kinew made history with this election. Days later, he was sworn in as the first First Nations premier of Manitoba. More than that, Manitoba becomes the first province in Canada to ever elect a First Nations premier.

“Manitoba—my dear, sweet Manitoba—look at what we’ve done here tonight,” Kinew said to the raucous crowd of supporters who gathered at the Fort Garry Hotel. “We’ve elected a strong team of New Democrats to fix healthcare and make your life more affordable.”

He went on to reiterate many planks of the NDP platform, including pledges to reopen three new emergency rooms in Winnipeg and build a new cancer care facility to rival the best in the world.

The new premier then took time to personally address young Indigenous voters, many of whom have felt generationally disenfranchised.

“I want to speak to the young neechies out there,” he said, using a term that translates to friends. “I was given a second chance in life and I would like to think that I’ve made



Premier Wab Kinew at the swearing-in ceremony.

GOVERNMENT OF MANITOBA

good on that opportunity. And you can do the same.”

His life was immensely improved, he said, when he stopped making excuses and started looking for a reason to live. For Kinew, his reasons were found in his family, his community, his province, and his country.

He encouraged Indigenous youth to pursue a better life. While a government can’t make that decision for them, Kinew pledged that his government would come alongside them by providing addictions recovery assistance, job training, and healthcare solutions close to home.

Kinew also addressed his rural audience, a part of Manitoba where PC support continues to be entrenched.

“For people in rural Manitoba that haven’t voted for us yet, I would ask you to keep an open mind,” said Kinew. “And if our team delivers, if after a few years we have improved your healthcare and we’ve made your life a bit more affordable, I would humbly ask that in four years’ time you send more people from your communities to sit with our team in the Manitoba Legislature.”

Kinew closed his remarks by introducing his mother Kathi, who stood with him at the podium. The crowd responded with a song to celebrate her birthday on the day of her son’s election win.

THE SWEARING IN

The new government was sworn in at The Leaf in Winnipeg’s Assinibo-

ine Park on October 18.

Kinew took the opportunity to introduce his new 14-person cabinet as they took their oaths of office.

“I have every confidence in the team of skilled and passionate individuals who have answered the call to serve in cabinet. I am grateful for their commitment to working diligently and collaboratively on the issues that matter most to Manitobans. I look forward to the varied perspectives they will bring to the cabinet table, representing the diversity of our province as a whole.”

The two-hour ceremony resonated with Indigenous flavour, culture, and regalia, true to Kinew’s roots. Representatives from Manitoba’s seven Indigenous nations participated.

The Norman Chief Memorial Dancers added a Métis dynamic with their fiddle music and dancing. Music of the traditional Indigenous drum circle was provided by the Dakota Hotain Singers.

Early in the ceremony, Kinew was honoured with a presentation of the war bonnet, a headdress he proudly donned.

Kinew was quick to point towards the cultural diversity now on display in government.

“Today, Manitoba has a Jewish lieutenant governor, an Anishanaabe premier, a gender-balanced cabinet, and a government MLA team that represents many walks of life from so many regions of this great province.”

This includes a cabinet where

women and gender-diverse individuals represent 50 percent of the team.

In addition, at least three other newly appointed ministers are of Indigenous descent.

This sets a precedent, Kinew said, showing young people of all walks of life that the road to success can be theirs if they’re willing to walk it.

One prominent example of this diversity is the deputy premier and minister of health, Uzoma Asagwara. Asagwara is a member of the Canadian Nigerian community and identifies as queer and non-binary.

“You as Manitobans have elected to the team a trans person and many members of the 2SLGBTQ+ communities,” Kinew said. “And I want to say, at this time of increasingly harmful rhetoric, [the 2SLGBTQ+ community] has many voices around the government table and you have an entire team of allies in government.”

With healthcare at the top of the new government’s agenda, Kinew reassured Manitobans that Asagwara will serve them well with the health portfolio.

Asagwara has worked for many years in the field as a registered psychiatric nurse and unwavering healthcare advocate.

With a clear understanding of the enormity of the task, Kinew went on to reassure Manitobans that his government will also work towards balancing the books while still making life more affordable.

He says they will prioritize

affordable housing while ensuring ongoing strength and growth in the agriculture and manufacturing sectors.

Environmental issues, too, are top of mind.

“We have to be responsible stewards of the lands, of the water, of the air we breathe, and we must take action to confront the existential crisis that is climate change.”

This government has also added a new ministry: Housing, Addictions and Homelessness.

“We want to end chronic homelessness in this province within the next eight years,” said Kinew. “And as a first step today, we are announcing that the services necessary to get people off the street and into housing, and then the wraparound services that are necessary to ensure them staying there, will now be under one government department and under one roof.”

Also new with this government is the appointment of a third branch of responsibility to the premier’s intermunicipal relations portfolio. Not only will Kinew act as liaison between the province and the federal government, but he will liaise between the provincial government and local Indigenous governments.

“Starting today, I am also appointing myself the minister responsible for Indigenous reconciliation,” Kinew said. “And the message that I am sending is simple, and it is to the leaders of Indigenous governments across Manitoba: our government will recognize you for what you are—the leaders of governments.”

The Honourable Murray Sinclair presided over the signing of the oaths.

Sinclair previously served as Manitoba’s first Indigenous judge and is the former chief commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

“This really is Manitoba’s true act of reconciliation,” Sinclair said. “We are now entering a new phase. That phase ultimately is going to lead to a relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in which we are able to show true respect... because for too long now, the situation of oppression that has occurred in this province has resulted in our people being belittled... and feeling denied of their rights.”

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IN BRIEF

Niverville Marks Truth and Reconciliation

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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Residents of Niverville marked the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation with a ceremony held at the Niverville Community Fellowship church.

Attendees heard from two keynote speakers, including Peter YellowQuill, a residential school survivor, and Wally McKay, chief organizer of Elijah Harper's Sacred Assembly in 1995.

Representing the Métis, Armand and Kelly Jerome attended as honoured guests. They are the builders of Niverville's authentic Métis Red River cart, on display next to the Centennial Arena.

Music was provided by Indigenous locals Howard and Joel Jolly. Niverville dance studio Prairie Soul Dance staged a moving performance choreographed to Inuit musician Susan Aglukark's song, "O Siem."

In his address, YellowQuill revisited a time in 1871 when a colonized Canada was governed by John A. Macdonald.

His own ancestor, Chief YellowQuill, was among the First Nations leaders to negotiate a deal for Treaty #1. That land encompassed a vast stretch of southeastern Manitoba.

For the First Nations people, the agreement was intended to foster a relationship of mutual respect between Canada's Indigenous peoples and European settlers.

If honoured, the agreement would have respected the Indigenous people's right to livelihood, self-government, and title to their own land.

Instead the deal was followed by a stream of broken promises and unresolved disputes that has continued for 150 years.

YGP Niverville Marks Grand Opening

By Sara Beth Dacombe

sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

On Friday, October 6, Your Grocery People (YGP) in Niverville celebrated their official grand opening with a community event that saw more than 2,000 people check out the store's new state-of-the-art features—and enjoy free pork on a bun, a kids bouncy castle, door-crasher deals, draws for \$5,000 in free groceries, Jets tickets, and more.

Previously called Niverville Bigway, YGP changed its name in spring 2023 and remained open during their renovations.

"Healthy communities need places for people to go shop, play, live, and rest. Congratulations, this is a magnificent place," said Ron Schuler, MLA for Springfield-Ritchoy.

"A grocery store is one of those anchors within the community that is so deeply needed," said Niverville mayor Myron Dyck, who had a previous career in grocery himself. "I got out of the business, but it has always been near and dear to my heart. Thank you to the community for supporting this."

NEW FEATURES

The store increased its square footage by 40 percent to create more room to serve Niverville's growing population.

Customers will notice the liquor section of the store is greatly expanded, creating the opportunity for YGP to bring in a wider selection of wine, beers, and spirits.

John Schmitke, owner of Niverville YGP, says that he's proud to now offer local and craft beer that not even Manitoba LCC locations offer.

He believes it's a good thing that Niverville residents no longer have to drive out of the community to shop for alcohol.

"This way more of the dollars stay local and it meets what our customers say they want," says Schmitke. "I'm excited about the selection. We have a unique complement of beers here now that enthusiasts will love."

Another feature Schmitke is excited about is the store's cutting-edge nebulization technology



Bonnie and Tom Schmitke, Ron Schuler, John Schmitke, Myron Dyck, and Nathan Dueck.

SARA BETH DACOMBE

which mists the fresh fruits and vegetables.

"It's the first of its kind in a Manitoba refrigeration case for produce," says Schmitke. "We brought it in from Montreal because nebulization is more eco-friendly, leaves less of a carbon footprint, and is more cost-effective."

Unlike traditional misting systems, nebulization expresses water molecules so small that they're absorbed swiftly and naturally through the skin of the produce instead of over-producing moisture which is inefficient and leaves fresh fruits and veggies at risk of premature rot due to excess wetness.

"We've also brought in new technology from Europe—refrigeration units with self-contained compressors," says Schmitke. "They do run on propane, but they are the most energy-efficient system you can currently get. We used to use 600 to 800 pounds of gas. The new refrigeration units, which we have installed in half of the store, require under 100."

Shoppers may not be able to directly see all the upgrades, including the in-floor concrete slab heating system, but Schmitke says that these choices were absolutely necessary to ensure the store's long-term commitment to serving the people of Niverville.

The investment in new technologies means the business has been able to cut energy consumption by nearly 60 percent.

"I just did a bill comparison

and we are paying the same as last year, but we now have double the amount of refrigeration."

HISTORY AND APPRECIATION

The store has evolved over the years from its original location on the west side of town next to the grain elevator.

Both that original building and the elevator are gone now, with the Bigway store relocating to the east side of town across from WM. Dyck & Sons.

"I was looking at pictures from 20 years ago and it's crazy," says Schmitke about the way his family's business has changed. "Sometimes you forget how long the road was to get to where you are, and all the people, and all the things and all the events that you got to do and the things you can shape there."

Schmitke thanks the critical investors in the expansion project, including the Niverville Credit Union and The Grocery People, the parent retailer for YGP. He also extends thanks to the fire department, his staff, the community at large, and his parents, Tom and Bonnie Schmitke, who started the business in Niverville more than 23 years ago.

"We've been a part of this business for over 20 years, for a long, long time anyway," he says. "The community of Niverville has been really good to our family, and me specifically. So I can't thank the community enough."

Local shoppers certainly seem

to appreciate the ability to access groceries without having to drive to Steinbach or Winnipeg.

"I shop here regularly," says YGP customer Lydia Hofer. "Especially if there's deals, like there are today. So I love it that I don't need to go somewhere else because it's right where I am. I love that it's here. This is awesome."

Hofer says that she doesn't plan to personally take advantage of the new expanded liquor section, but she appreciates it for her husband.

"My husband loves it. And it's good to have everything available in one place."

Jacelyn Boone of Niverville also says that she is a regular shopper and is extremely impressed with all the upgrades to the store.

Boone says that the way a grocery store is organized, including its lighting, aisle size, and product selection, are all important. She is more happy to shop in Niverville now than ever before.

"The way a store looks just helps with shopping, and they've done a really great job with their expansion," Boone says. "For me to shop when things just look good and look organized and there's lots of options, it's more appealing."

Before moving to Niverville, Boone lived in a town without a grocery store and says that even though a local store's prices might not always beat a bigger chain in a bigger city, the value cannot be overstated.

"For our town to have this, we need it," she says.



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The RCMP detachment in St. Pierre-Jolys.

BY BRENDA SAWATZKY

Manitoba RCMP Services: Who Pays and Who Doesn't?

By Brenda Sawatzky
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER
✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

You don't have to live in a town long before you begin to appreciate the importance of effective law enforcement. The primary function of any police service is to provide a sense of safety to all through crime prevention, investigation, and emergency response.

In Manitoba, every community or municipality has the right to police protections, but they don't pay equally for those public services.

It might surprise many to know that rural municipalities such as Ritchot pay nothing for their RCMP services. Conversely, urban municipalities like Niverville have no choice but to dish out hundreds of thousands of dollars.

According to the most recent census, the RM of Ritchot has approximately 3,500 more residents than the town of Niverville. Ritchot's residents are also spread out over a much larger area, giving the RCMP a much greater distance to cover.

Both Niverville and Ritchot fall under the jurisdiction of the St. Pierre-Jolys RCMP detachment.

THE FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL POLICING RELATIONSHIP

The Police Services Agreement is the contract between Manitoba and the federal government. It contains the criteria by which the RCMP functions in terms of finances, operations, and administration.

Throughout Canada, the RCMP operate as a cost-share initiative with a 70/30 split, the

greater portion being carried by the province or territory that contracts with the federal government on policing service.

This optional initiative dates back to 1906.

Instead of contracting the RCMP, the provinces of Ontario and Quebec have their own provincial police forces.

Newfoundland and Labrador has a dual policing system whereby the provincial police have authority in urban areas while the RCMP are contracted for the rest.

In recent years, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Nova Scotia have all explored the possibility of moving to their own provincial policing.

HOW THE PROVINCE DECIDES WHO PAYS

In Manitoba, the Police Services Act establishes how the costs associated with RCMP services are disbursed.

Rural and remote municipalities are not obligated to pay municipal taxes toward RCMP services. They may, however, supplement their existing RCMP services with private policing if they desire, at their own cost.

Close to home, the RM of Ritchot budgeted \$105,000 into their bylaw compliance and enforcement budget in 2023. This enables the RM to step up their law enforcement presence by hiring the services of the Commissionaires, a private security company.

An urban municipality falls under the same zero-cost rule as a rural municipality—but only until they reach a population of 750. At that point, they must pay a fee for RCMP services. The fee rises substantially when their population

surpasses 5,000.

According to Niverville CAO Eric King, public police services in 2022 cost Niverville just over \$200,000. As of April 1, 2023, those same services more than tripled in cost to almost \$668,000.

"All urban municipalities that went over 5,000 residents from the last census would have [lost] their provincial police service agreement and would be obligated to sign with Public Safety Canada," says King.

This is true even if a community already has an RCMP detachment of its own.

Alternatively, the Act states that an urban municipality that reaches 750 or more residents can choose to forego RCMP services altogether and instead establish its own police service or enter into a collaborative agreement with a neighbouring municipality to share police services.

Importantly, it should be noted that whatever direction an urban municipality like Niverville decides to go, the provincial government provides a policing grant to help offset those costs.

This grant can be applied towards anything the local council deems necessary to maintain and enhance community safety.

Niverville's 2023 policing grant came to \$855,000, surpassing their direct RCMP costs.

King says that the additional monies from the grant are helpful in terms of paying down expenses associated with the \$1 million RCMP detachment currently being built in Niverville.

(continued on page 8)

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(continued from page 7)

In previous years, he adds, the grant has provided for the installation of surveillance cameras in parts of town that have been particularly vulnerable to vandalism.

But as Niverville's security needs grow alongside its population, King says that the grant money likely won't keep up.

For example, Steinbach spent \$2.7 million in policing costs in 2019 while the offset grant only came to about \$1.8 million. Taxpayers were on the hook for the difference.

WHAT MAKES A MUNICIPALITY RURAL OR URBAN?

What exactly determines whether a municipality is assigned rural or urban status? According to Ritchot CAO Mitch Duval, population has nothing to do with it.

"Any urban centre that is basically known as 'town of,' 'village of,' or 'city of,' those are urban centres," says Duval.

Urban centres, he adds, are incorporated and have governing councils that operate autonomously, such as Niverville and Steinbach.

At present, Ritchot's four main population centres are all unincorporated and governed by one RM council. As long as they remain this way, they will never pay municipal fees for police services, regardless of how much their population grows.

At the same time, RMs such as Ritchot aren't eligible for policing offset grants from the province. Any policing or security costs outside of the RCMP must come from the municipal budget.

HOW DID NIVERVILLE BECOME URBAN?

The change in Niverville took place on January 6, 1969, a day which has gone down in local history. On that day, the village of 660 residents separated from the RM of Hanover and elected its first independent council.

This move towards incorporation was the result of years of frustration, with residents of Niverville feeling like their growing community, situated on the far edge of a large municipality, was both overlooked and underfunded.

Basic services such as snow-clearing and weed control were slow to arrive. Requests for badly needed infrastructure such as sewer lines and street lighting were turned down outright.

Within a few short years of going urban, Niverville's pioneering council had undertaken the work of renewing the community's infrastructure and establishing its own services.

Niverville's current mayor, Myron Dyck, says that those early visionaries likely never dreamed that becoming an urban municipality would result in such high policing costs down the road.

But Dyck isn't sorry they

saw the vision and ran with it. If not for incorporation, he says, Niverville would not be the vibrant and progressive community it is today.

NEW RCMP DETACHMENT

According to King, Niverville's new RCMP detachment, soon to be located in the town administrative building, is only months from completion.

The decision to build the detachment came after council commissioned a study to review the pros and cons of operating an RCMP office versus establishing a private police force.

"Cost is the main reason [we went this route], but also access to additional services that are tied to the RCMP and their national network, such as drug investigation and the database of information they have on a variety of topics," says Mayor Dyck.

According to RCMP Sergeant Paul Manaigre, one corporal and three constables have been assigned to the Niverville detachment. They currently work out of the St. Pierre-Jolys office until the Niverville office opens. They have been working on files related to Niverville since April 1.

Once stationed in Niverville, the staff will continue to take their direction from the staff sergeant in St. Pierre-Jolys.

Manaigre anticipates the addition of a sergeant to the St. Pierre-Jolys staff in the near

future to help with operations between the two detachments.

RCMP officers eventually working from the Niverville office may or may not be bilingual.

"St. Pierre is a bilingual detachment and there were officers there that weren't bilingual," says Manaigre. "So those ones got moved directly to [the Niverville] positions to satisfy the language requirements in St. Pierre."

He adds that St. Pierre-Jolys is the only detachment in Manitoba that has a requirement for fully bilingual staff. He believes it was a requirement laid out by the community years ago when the detachment was first established.

Manaigre is unsure whether any of the four officers currently assigned to Niverville live in the town, but he's confident that at least some of them will choose to do so.

"Niverville has been quite the draw," says Manaigre. "Once the office opens up, I'm assuming next year some time, then you'll see more police presence in the community."

Even so, it's necessary to be reminded that the existence of a local detachment and the housing of RCMP officers does not mean that Niverville has exclusive access to these police services. According to federal law, they have a mandate to respond to calls wherever they may take them within the larger jurisdiction of the St. Pierre-Jolys detachment.

CITIZEN POLL

Should a cell phone ban like the one enforced in DSFM schools be extended to other schools in this province?

- Yes. Cell phones are disruptive and distracting to the learning environment.
- No. Students should be able to manage their own cell phone use without interference.

Have a more nuanced opinion? Leave us a comment online.



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LAST MONTH'S RESULTS:

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. **39%**

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. **61%**

YOUR COMMENTS:

The idea that schools, parents, and divisions should be responsible is unrealistic. Beyond the many different roles that a teacher has in school, they should not be required to enforce allergy specific diets classroom wide. If you do it for one you have to do it for all. The main goal schools should be focusing on is "allergy awareness." This means teaching concepts like washing hands before and after activities. As mentioned, students have a variety of allergies that can range well beyond just food related ones. By focusing on allergy awareness rather than adaptations, students with and without allergies can learn how to keep themselves and others safe, without needing to change systems. "Peanut free" is an example that is commonly used to explain this. First and foremost, unless you inspect every person who enters a building, it is impossible to declare your school peanut free. Secondly, society as a whole can not adapt to live to this request either. Therefore, if schools are to prepare students for life/the real world, it needs to be clear that they live in the world, not the other way around.

There needs to be a happy medium. The all or nothing mentality only alienates the child with the allergy. "I can't have this because of you" is very real. Education is one step, but that starts at home. Teach your child early that they will have to go without certain items, teach them what that looks like, because when they hit the real world they may not be mollycoddled. Co-workers are going to bring donuts and cupcakes to the break room. They need to know if they are safe to eat or not.



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Manitoba's Francophone Schools Hand Out Cell Phone Suspensions

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

It's been four weeks since Manitoba's francophone school division, the division scolaire Franco-Manitobaine (DSFM), banned student cell phones. So far, the division is happy with how the policy is being implemented.

In Ritchot, DSFM schools include École Sainte-Agathe and École Régional Gabrielle-Roy.

The policy took effect in September when students returned from summer break. According to the DSFM, student cell phones are absolutely restricted from being brought into any Kindergarten to Grade 8 school.

At the high school level, cell phones and earbuds aren't allowed to be taken into classrooms. Students can use their phones during lunch breaks and spares.

It's a tough stance to take with a generation of young people who view their cell phone as an extension of themselves. But after consulting with administrators, teachers, staff, union representatives, and even a few students, the division decided it was worth a try.

"A few years ago, cell phones were used as a pedagogical tool," says Alain Laberge, division superintendent. "We've noticed that nowadays cell phones are used to surf the web, exchange non-school-related text messages, watch TikTok, and even cheat. It is also a distraction, as many students would listen to music, with wireless earbuds, while teachers were teaching."

Since the classrooms are already equipped with laptops for research, the division determined that cell phones provided little to no value in the classroom anymore.

Laberge says that administrators were grateful for the division's decision to step in.



The DSFM division offices in Lorette.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

"I would say that a few people were afraid of the students' and parents' reactions and did not want to make waves," Laberge says. "I sat with them, I heard their concerns, but it was important for me to let them know that, while nobody wants to be the bad guy, we need to take responsibility and be accountable for our decision. As educators, we sometimes need to make difficult decisions, but if they are based on improving students' success, we could rarely go wrong."

Teachers, likewise, were relieved to have a universal policy in place.

"While some teachers already had a code of conduct in their classrooms asking students to store their devices, we had noticed an increase in the use of cell phones during classes where teachers did not have such policy. We wanted to standardize the practice so schools are homogenous."

When the policy was introduced, Laberge said most students were understanding. Parents were receptive to the plan. Many emailed the division indicating their support.

A number of parents did air concerns about access to their student in case of emergency. Laberge says that they were reassured that the situation would revert to the previous way of doing things, with school receptionists acting as the liaison between parent and student.

About four weeks into the new

directive, Laberge says that the schools have had no issue with enforcement so far.

But should the need arise, the cell phone policy includes details on certain punitive measures that teachers and administrators are welcome to put into effect.

Depending on the situation, the teacher can either warn the student to put the device out of reach or, if necessary, they can confiscate the device and deliver it into the hands of the principal.

Once a device is confiscated, parents are contacted and advised to pick it up at the end of the school day.

Laberge says that the policy will be monitored closely and reviewed on an annual basis.

"In education, [nothing] should ever be a permanent fixture, as this would mean we are static and that we are not open to hear and learn from our environment."

OTHER SCHOOL DIVISIONS

As far as Laberge is aware, the DSFM is the first school division in Manitoba to take this tough stance on cell phones.

In other divisions, varying positions are taken. Some divisions have policies in place to guide the use of cell phones, while others rely on school administrators in their division to make such determinations.

Ryan Anderson serves as the

superintendent and CEO of the Seine River School Division (SRSD), which oversees governance of Ritchot's two French immersion Kindergarten to Grade 8 schools: École St. Adolphe and École Île-des-Chênes.

According to Anderson, the SRSD does not have a division policy specific to cell phones.

"There are a range of approaches to student cell phone use in SRSD schools," says Anderson. "These approaches are often reflected in a school's parent handbook and/or student code of conduct. Principals will often use those materials to address the use of cell phones at school."

In the case of École St. Adolphe, for example, the parent handbook states: "It is expected that all electronic equipment, including cell phones, iPods, cameras, etc. remain at home. They are expensive devices and the school will not be responsible for lost, broken, or stolen items. Unauthorized use of such devices may result in the item being confiscated until the end of the school day. Only our divisional iPad project classes should have electronics at school."

Consequences for the misuse of cell phones or other devices are the same as they would be for any other code of conduct violation, he says, and based on a school's policies and procedures manual.

In all circumstances, though, SRSD

insists that students are to be treated with dignity and respect and circumstances when correction is needed. These can be used as teaching and learning opportunities.

The Hanover School Division (HSD), which oversees three schools in Niverville, does have a cell phone policy in place which emphasizes their responsible use in the school setting.

In the early years—Kindergarten through Grade 4—student cell phones are not permitted on school premises without explicit permission from the principal.

For Grades 5 to 6, personal technology devices may enter the school but must remain in a student's locker.

By the time a student reaches Grades 7 and 8, HSD believes that providing limited use of devices to students can be, in and of itself, a teaching tool.

"Students [at this level] are at the age where it is important to start preparing for how to effectively and respectfully use cell phones at school," the policy states. "This is a critical step in preparing students for Grades 9 to 12, where greater independence with personal devices is provided."

As expected, high school students in HSD must follow the protocols set out by their school administration. The policy created by the division at this stage is intended to govern the use of devices for the purpose of taking videos, photos, or voice recordings of students or adults without their express permission.

Unless permitted by the teacher, personal devices containing cameras are also prohibited during tests and assessments.

The division policy does take a hard stance in one very specific circumstance: "Recordings made secretly and/or used maliciously will result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion and a police report."

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Niverville Foundation Gets New Look, Honours Community Champions

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

The Niverville Foundation's inaugural wine and cheese event was held on October 20 at the Heritage Centre. Guests included community and foundation supporters of all stripes, there to hear about some big changes.

The event was also held in celebration of the years of dedicated service provided by two retiring directors, George Sawatzky and Aaron Redekop.

These longtime community champions were honoured with a plaque and a tree that will be planted in Hespeler Park.

The goal of the Niverville Foundation's directors in recent years has been to bring the nonprofit organization some new vitality.

Formerly known as the Niverville Health and Community Foundation, the name has since been trimmed to match its more all-encompassing purpose. Three new board members have been added to replace the retiring two, bringing with them fresh focus.

The board has also hired international graphic and web

design company Chez Koop to rebrand the foundation's look.

"We didn't have a website," says board member Annette Fast. "We had a logo, but it was very outdated. It was a circular elevator, which has been overused."

Since then, an attractive and user-friendly website has been developed along with an improved logo depicting a tree with roots. The logo has been designed to go alongside the foundation's new catchphrase: "rooted in community."

The board's hope is that the foundation will be seen as a program that invests in people, not just the place.

Finally, the Niverville Foundation has partnered with experts in the field of philanthropic investment, Cardinal Capital Management Inc. Its vice president, Dewayne Osborn, has delivered sound investment advice to help strengthen the foundation.

HISTORY OF THE NIVERVILLE FOUNDATION

The Niverville Health and Community Foundation was born in 1992 when Norman Wittick approached George Sawatzky with a request. Wittick dreamed of Niverville



George Sawatzky, Annette Fast, and Aaron Redekop. © BRENDA SAWATZKY

someday providing amenities that allowed seniors to live out their final years in the community. Wittick had already been forced to move away.

Sawatzky, then manager of the Niverville Credit Union, set to work to form an incorporated nonprofit whose goal would be to receipt donations.

Wittick provided the initial seed money to get the foundation off the ground.

"The foundation was started with a grant from Norman Wittick for \$25,000," Sawatzky said. "And later, in his will, he allocated another \$75,000. That \$100,000 has risen to approximately \$1.3 million. Where did that come from? That came from you."

Sawatzky formed the board

of directors, which included an assembly of other like-minded residents: Abe Goertzen, Alex Fast Sr., Jack Stott, Ben W. Hiebert, and Fred Kaita.

Today, the past and present members can be proud to say they've accomplished Wittick's dream. The foundation has had a hand in the construction of the Silver Courts seniors living complex, the Niverville Credit Union Manor, and the Heritage Life Personal Care Home.

Niverville now enjoys a full array of aging-in-place amenities and services. In fact, the town has become a model for other communities.

But it's not just seniors projects that have benefited over the years. The foundation

has funded scholarships and supplied countless dollars in training and equipment for the town's emergency medical services and firefighters team.

Fast, a six-year board member, says they've been approached by individual requests for help over the years as well. These usually include requests for financial support for medications and other basic life needs.

"We had a request last year from a doctor in town saying that his clients were of low income and they needed an outlet to go and get physically active," Fast says. "He said, 'Can you fund five passes to a swimming pool?' So we did that."

The board addresses each request as it comes in to determine whether, and to what degree, they will get behind it.

DONATING TO THE FOUNDATION

According to Fast, the foundation doesn't just rely on people doing estate-planning. Someone selling capital, for instance, may be interested in donating the proceeds. Others may look to ease their tax burden by making a charitable donation.

By investing these dollars in the Niverville Foundation, donors can receive an instant tax receipt for the entire amount upfront. The donation can then be doled out to projects or organizations as the donor sees fit, over an indefinite period of time. Or they can leave the disbursement decisions entirely up to the board.

Another benefit, according to Osborn, is that individuals or families can create their own personal foundation within the Niverville Foundation without having to jump through any of the legal hoops to do so. They can name their personal foundation and receive recognition for their donations, or choose to remain anonymous as donations are made on their behalf.

In the end, the Niverville Foundation provides all of the administrative work and reporting to the Canada Revenue Agency so the donor doesn't have to.

"[Our directors] see to a foundation that makes sure that Niverville is a place of growth," Fast says. "A place where people feel welcome. A place where people are rooted."

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Nighthawks Flying High

By Ty Dilello

tdilello@nivervillecitizen.com

In the first full month of the 2023–2024 season, the Nighthawks have established themselves as a force to be reckoned with, consistently hanging in with the top teams of the league.

SEPTEMBER 29

(SWAN VALLEY STAMPEDERS, AWAY)

Having opened the season with two wins, the Nighthawks improved their record to 3–0–0 after a big victory over the Swan Valley Stampeders.

They gave up the first goal midway through the first period, then tied the game off a counter from defenceman Eric Martin.

In the second period, 17-year-old Nathan Brown scored his second goal of the year on a solo effort to put the Nighthawks up 2–1.

Although Swan Valley tied the game late in the second frame, the Nighthawks pulled ahead early in the third with a goal from Michael Debrito. This held up as the game winner.

SEPTEMBER 30

(OCN BLIZZARD, AWAY)

The Nighthawks wrapped up their weekend road trip with a 3–2 overtime loss versus the OCN Blizzard.

The Blizzard opened the scoring midway through the first period to take a 1–0 lead. After a scoreless second period, Debrito got the Nighthawks on the board just 11 seconds into the final frame.

OCN replied with a goal one minute later.

However, Matthew Healey responded to tie the game at 2–2 and send it to overtime.

It wasn't meant to be. The Blizzard scored at the 2:41 mark of the extra frame to win the game. As a consolation, Niverville earned a point in the standings for the overtime loss.

Nighthawks coach Kelvin Cech was pleased with his team's effort in this first road trip, with his club picking up three of a possible four points.

"We're happy with points in every game for sure," said Cech. "Every game is competitive as both games were hard-fought."

He pointed to the contributions of first-year forward Debrito. Through his first four games, Debrito had tallied three goals and two assists.

"Mike has been getting better every game," said Cech. "It's a new league and a new country for him, and now that he's getting more comfortable, his confidence is building. I like our game for sure as everyone is contributing in different ways which is crucial. I've noticed changes with



The Nighthawks take on the Waywayseecappo Wolverines on home ice at the CRRC.

EVAN BRAUN

the system and the style we play."

OCTOBER 6

(OCN BLIZZARD, HOME)

It was a Saturday night to forget at the CRRC as the Nighthawks were blown out 5–0 by the OCN Blizzard.

Right from the opening puck drop, the Blizzard were quick to pounce. A pair of first-period goals from OCN set the tone for the rest of the game.

OCN scored another pair of goals in the second period, to which the Nighthawks could find no answer. The Blizzard scored once more in the third, putting the game out of reach.

"I think part of it was self-inflicted, but they were also very fast and hard on the forecheck," said Cech. "We just couldn't handle it early in the game, so we were chasing. We didn't get through the neutral zone much because we weren't in the neutral zone to begin with. And by the time we figured it out, it was too late."

Cech noted that his club wasn't surprised by OCN's strong play.

"We knew they were going to be fast," said Cech. "We watched their forecheck all week in preparation, and that's the aggravating thing, as we weren't surprised and knew how to beat it. But they were just faster than us, and that was the difference."

OCTOBER 7

(NEEPAWA TITANS, AWAY)

The Nighthawks got back in the win column with a 3–2 road victory over the Neepawa Titans.

In this back-and-forth affair, Mighton Johnson got the Nighthawks on the board five minutes in.

Neepawa tied it early in the second period before the Nighthawks replied with Ty Kennett's first goal of the season. The Titans would once again tie the game with a power play marker late in the period.

In the third period, Debrito broke the deadlock—just 17 seconds into

the final frame. His fourth goal of the season came on the power play and turned out to be the game-winner.

"You could see it in the first five minutes that the guys were taking it very seriously and were pretty embarrassed from getting beat last night," said Cech. "So they came out and we just got back to our identity and stuck to our habits."

Raiden LeGall was outstanding in goal, stopping 40 shots.

"Raiden tonight was outstanding in net," said Cech. "Everything was sticking to him without him having to move his arm too much, as he's always in good position because he's so smart and reads the play well. We have a really good tandem of goalies that gives the guys a boost every game."

The Nighthawks also had a pair of rookies making their MJHL debuts this weekend in Adam Vigfusson and Liam Foley.

"Vigfusson is a local kid that we got back from the SJHL a few weeks ago. He had a good start tonight. And then Foley is filling in for Eric Martin, who is out with an injury. Foley had no practice or nothing, he just hopped on the bus with us and came and played some key minutes tonight."

OCTOBER 11

(WAYWAYSEECAPPO WOLVERINES, HOME)

The team continued their winning ways on Wednesday night at the CRRC with a 3–2 win over the Waywayseecappo Wolverines.

Kaycee Coyle got the Nighthawks on the board in the first period with a pair of early goals that set the tone.

Kyle Bocek scored just two minutes into the second period for Niverville, extending the lead to 3–0, before the Wolverines clawed back with a couple of goals to get it to 3–2 heading into the final frame.

The Nighthawks played a mature

third period and held down the fort well to hold on and win the game.

"We made some poor decisions and got into penalty trouble in the second period, and that's how Waywayseecappo got back in the game," said Cech. "There were some choice words said at the second intermission, but the guys rallied and played a very mature third period to shut it down and get the win."

Cech was quick to compliment Coyle's game, as his two-goal night was good for Player of the Game honours.

"Kaycee competes hard and does everything from killing penalties to running the powerplay," said Cech. "The goals were nice, but he just competes a ton, and we're happy to have him."

At this point in the season, it had become clear that the Nighthawks were among the hottest Junior A clubs in Canada.

"We just have more players that have done it before," said Cech. "We're not a bunch of rookies anymore, and we as coaches know where people fit better and where they will best help the team. The guys are really confident. And we're getting amazing goaltender from Legall and Gordon. Everyone's contributing. That's the biggest part of our success."

OCTOBER 13

(WINNIPEG FREEZE, AWAY)

The Nighthawks extended their win streak to three wins in a row after blasting the Winnipeg Freeze 6–0 on the road on Friday evening.

After a scoreless first period, the Nighthawks broke through in a big way with four unanswered goals from Debrito, Michael Tanchak, Carson Teckenburg, and Martin.

The Nighthawks added two more goals in the third period from Brett Tataryn and Debrito, making

Niverville a big winner.

"It's always nice to score a couple," said Cech. "It was a tight game early on, and they had some chances, but fortunately we were able to break through and get the two points. We had some great offensive production tonight that we're happy about."

The Nighthawks had a new player making his debut for the team: recently acquired forward Teckenburg from the Oklahoma Warriors of the NAHL. He was slotted in on Niverville's first line and promptly scored in his first game.

Keegan Gordon stopped 22 shots in goal to pick up the shutout for the Nighthawks. Playing against his old team, Gordon earned just the second shutout in Nighthawks team history, after Ethan Kadatz recorded the first last season.

"That was a conscious plan that we made, to swap the rotation to have Raiden play Waywayseecappo," said Cech. "We knew that Keegan would have a big night against his old team. It was a good team, of course, but the guys knew what was at stake for him. So full marks for the goose egg."

OCTOBER 14

(PORTAGE TERRIERS, AWAY)

The Nighthawks gave it a good show but ultimately fell short in a 7–4 loss to the Portage Terriers on the road Saturday evening.

Niverville opened the game strong with a couple of early first period goals from Carter Spirig and Caleb Lepitre.

Portage then scored a couple of their own late in the period to tie the score at two apiece.

In the second frame, Vigfusson put the Nighthawks up a goal before Portage once again tied it up. The next go-ahead goal came from Colin Whaley of Niverville, but it was the Terriers who responded with the equalizer.

It was anyone's game in the third period, but ultimately Portage broke through with a flurry of late goals in the final five minutes of the contest to win and end the Nighthawks' three-game winning streak.

"I thought it was a sloppy game from both teams and kind of a last-goal-wins type of game," said Cech. "We weren't nearly good enough with the puck in our zone. We jumped out to a lead and thought we were going to cruise from there, but it didn't turn out that way. They brought heavy pressure for sure, and we didn't deal with it very well. We just didn't manage the puck well and turned it over too much in our



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Cech Earns Hockey Canada Coaching Opportunity

By Ty Dilello

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Last week, Niverville Nighthawks head coach and general manager Kelvin Cech was announced by Hockey Canada as one of eight Canadian Junior Hockey League (CJHL) coaches who have been selected to lead Team Canada East and Team Canada West at the 2023 World Junior A Hockey Challenge in Truro, Nova Scotia this December.

Cech will join Team Canada West as an assistant coach, making his international coaching debut.

“The coaches selected to lead Team Canada East and Team Canada West are an excellent representation of the level of talent within the coaching ranks of Junior A hockey in Canada,” says Andy Harkness, president of the CJHL. “All eight of these individuals bring a wealth of coaching and playing experience both internationally and in Canada.”

Scott Salmond, senior vice-president of hockey operations with Hockey Canada, is similarly enthusiastic about the event.

“We are excited about the quality of coaches that will lead two teams of highly skilled players from across the country as they compete for a gold medal,” says Salmond. “We look forward to showcasing the talent from across the CJHL, and we know fans in Truro and across Nova Scotia will be treated to an exciting week of hockey.”

The 2023 World Junior A Hockey Challenge represents a partnership between Hockey



SCOTT STROH

Canada, the CJHL, NHL Central Scouting, and Hockey Nova Scotia. The international showcase features two Canadian teams along with Slovakia, Sweden, and the United States.

Cech was thrilled when he got the call.

“I applied in the summer and was shortlisted and went through a couple of interviews,” Cech says. “It’s an in-depth process, and I was grilled pretty good. But I was fortunate to get the job. To go in as an assistant coach, with some other really smart hockey people on the coaching staff, I’m very excited for the opportunity.”

It’s certainly a feather in the cap for the Nighthawks organization that the club’s head coach has not only found his way onto Hockey Canada’s radar but earned a job coaching Canada at an international event in the process.

“Taking a step back from my day job, these are the kind of events that coaches work towards to get these opportunities,” he says. “It’s something I wanted to experience at this point in my career. And if it leads to other opportunities, then that’s cool. But for now,

I’m 100 percent focused on the Nighthawks and bringing glory to Niverville.”

At the World Junior A Hockey Challenge, Cech will hopefully have some familiarity with some of the players on Team Canada West. The squad will likely include some MJHL players, including potentially one or two from his own Nighthawks team.

“There’s a large pool of players to select from out of B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. There are guys from our Nighthawks team who are certainly on the radars of the coaching staff. Our job is to make the best possible team. And if one of our current players is fortunate to be one of those guys, then that would be awesome. It means the team will be strong.”

In other Nighthawks news, the organization has two new hires to announce. Justin Braun and Edge Creative & Design have been hired to handle the team’s social media, photography, visual, digital marketing, and website maintenance.

The Nighthawks are also excited to announce that Sarah Hunt has been hired as the new director of administration and communication. Hunt has worked for a decade as the general manager for the local company GORP and is eager to join the team in this role.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about Hockey Canada and the 2023 World Junior A Hockey Challenge, visit www.hockeycanada.ca, or follow along via social media on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.



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Hanover School Division EAs Vote to Strike

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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The Hanover School Division's (HSD) nearly 300 educational assistants took to the picket lines on Wednesday, November 1.

In late October, the unionized EAs had overwhelmingly voted in favour of going on strike if a deal could not be reached.

Represented by the education, service, and healthcare union CLAC Local 306, EAs began negotiations with HSD in March. Cost of living wage increases, retroactive to 2022, are the primary focus of their request.

The two parties held their final pre-strike negotiations on October 30-31 but could not reach a deal.

The union's regional director, Geoff Dueck Thiessen, says that it's rare for strike actions to be needed in CLAC negotiations.

"People should understand that this is not a strike-happy union," Thiessen says. "What we are doing is sending a message that HSD support staff are critical members of the division's educational team and that we care enough about this issue to take a stand. And if we end up having to picket, you're going to see positive people who want to get back to the work they love."

HANOVER SCHOOL DIVISION'S POSITION

On October 26, HSD released a statement regarding the impending strike.

"The division recognizes the valuable work that educational assistants perform with our students," the statement says. "The division remains committed to reaching a mutually agreeable settlement."

Should a strike ensue, HSD says they will take proactive steps to ensure that students' needs are met.

So why have staff wages not increased? The division's statement points to a lack of provincial funding as well as taxation restraints.

With only a 1.8 percent increase in provincial funding this year, the budget, released in spring, mandated

almost \$2.7 million in cuts.

Fifty percent of those budget cuts were applied to staff wages, resulting in the loss of 10.5 teacher positions.

JUSTIFYING AN EA WAGE INCREASE

Thiessen says there's no question that the entire educational system has been struggling under the financial pressures they face, especially as their role in society changes and schools pivot to providing overall childhood wellness as opposed to simply offering an education.

Indeed, the provincial funding model has changed in recent years, removing the flexibility that divisions once had to charge more in municipal taxes to manage their budgets.

This has affected every school division in Manitoba, not just HSD.

"Hanover School Division has had the lowest admin cost per student of any school division for a lot of years," Thiessen says. "That is not new because of the recent change in educational funding. That's a long-standing [fact]."

For this reason, he says, it may be time for HSD to consider how they prioritize the funding they do receive.

"What we don't talk about are the priorities in the school division, the things that our money is spent on. Hanover has very nice facilities. They've made it a priority to give technological resources to all of their students, and that's great."

But, he adds, these facilities shouldn't come at the expense of the division's staff.

One may also choose to look at administrative salaries.

According to InfoMB, a government database for public sector compensation disclosure, HSD superintendent Shelley Amos' salary jumped from \$152,832.00 in 2021 to \$183,875 in 2022. That's an increase of more than 20 percent in one year.¹

"Certainly, HSD didn't get a very large increase to their operating budget, but Seine River did not get an enormous increase either. Borderland School Division gave their support staff a 7.8 percent increase

this year retroactive to last year and they only got a small increase to their budget too," says Thiessen.

Even so, he adds, school divisions that feel they can't make ends meet have been known to raise their property tax mill rates in spite of provincial legislation against doing so.

"Seven Oaks School Division raised their property taxes and endured a penalty for it. So it's doable. We can't wait around for HSD to get some sort of funding boost and just kick this down the road for years. The consequences are happening now."

COMPARING EA WAGES

According to Thiessen, \$16.78 per hour is HSD's going rate for an incoming EA with no formal education or accreditation.

This exceeds the province's minimum wage by \$1.48 and has been the rate in Hanover since 2021.

"We actually have EAs supporting high school students who have part-time jobs and are making more than the EA that's helping them graduate," he says.

If an EA comes to the table with formal certification or something similar, their wage in Hanover jumps by 95 cents per hour, to \$17.73.

The top rate in Hanover for someone who's been an EA in the system for many years is \$20.87.

The Borderland School Division covers much of southern Manitoba, including towns like Piney, Altona, and Gretna. Here, the EAs don't belong to a union. Even so, Thiessen says they make almost \$3 more per hour than HSD EAs.

The Seine River School Division, with schools in St. Adolphe, Île-des-Chênes, and Lorette, recently reached an agreement with their EAs the night before they were to go on strike.

"They had very comparable wages to Hanover's wages, but now they're more similar to Sunrise in Winnipeg," Thiessen says. "[Their increase makes for a] \$3 to \$4 per hour difference. Seine River's going to get another significant wage increase in 2024 that they've negotiated. So if we don't get an increase now, then in 2024 we'd

be more like \$5 or \$6 behind them."

Thiessen says there's no fair comparison to make between a teacher's wages and an EA's because teachers work on salary, not an hourly rate.

Regardless, for the first time ever, the Manitoba Teachers' Society will be bargaining for the wage of every teacher based on a provincial standard rather than bargaining with each school division separately.

"We're soon going to see teachers who already make a decent living wage get adjustments that we know are going to be probably pretty significant. But support staff, some of whom make less than their own students, are not getting increases," Thiessen says. "So we just don't think that the [HSD] budget has had those folks in mind."

THE ROLE OF SUPPORT STAFF

Apart from teachers who benefit from supporting EAs, and parents whose children are directly supported by an EA, few may realize just how important the role of the EA is to the school system.

The job of the EA is to provide support to the teacher in the classroom. Oftentimes they are assisting students who require additional help.

But these days many EAs are also expected to perform more specialized one-on-one support for students dealing with disabilities or special needs. They might be tasked with healthcare requirements, such as installing feeding tubes and catheters, giving injections, or dealing with colostomy bags.

For many, the job extends into the psychology field as well.

"There's been a shift in education over the past years in how to interact with students who have disabilities," Thiessen says. "For example, autism. We've seen education moving away from hands-on restraints, for example, to rather focusing on behavioural adjustments. [In other words,] how you help a student to regulate their own emotional state and behaviour, in a school setting, so that they can return to a calm state. So the EA's job is becoming increasingly

complex."

Despite this, Hanover EAs do not receive paid breaks or rest times. According to Thiessen, this is unique to HSD.

The current collective agreement between HSD and their EAs also provides a guaranteed minimum of only six hours of paid training and professional development.

But the extensive training needed to manage both the physical and mental special needs of children just can't be learned in a few short hours. Many of them, Thiessen adds, are just learning on the fly.

"They're basically just practicing on the job and being told when they're getting it wrong."

Recently, the federal government introduced Jordan's Principle, a financial aid program that helps school divisions hire more support staff to ensure Indigenous children aren't left behind.

According to Thiessen, Hanover will need to increase their workforce by roughly 90 people to accommodate this program.

"So they're needing to recruit a lot of EAs and I think the concern is, who are you hiring for \$16.78 an hour? What kinds of qualifications are you getting in the door for students that have significant needs? Whether they're Indigenous or not, that's not the point. All of the students getting EA support need the support, whether it's physical disabilities or learning or behavioural challenges."

Staff retention, too, is something all employers should consider when developing their pay scales.

"You want people who are willing to do this for a career and not just for a year or two until they're doing their next thing. Because our seasoned people are incredible. The things they understand and can do and tolerate, through practice, it's just inspiring."

REFERENCE

¹ "Proactive Disclosure," Government of Manitoba. Date of access: October 28, 2023 (<https://www.gov.mb.ca/openmb/infomb/pscd.html>)



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Keeping Remembrance Day Alive in Our Hearts

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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For decades now, Remembrance Day has been an occasion of special significance in Niverville, largely due to a team of dedicated volunteers who has sought to convey the timeless message, “lest we forget,” in a vibrant and meaningful way.

After many ceremonies held at the Niverville Heritage Centre, this year’s event on November 11 is going back to the cenotaph on Main Street at 10:30 a.m.

“The ceremony will be a step back from what we have done over the years,” says volunteer Donald Stott. “We will have a more traditional ceremony with songs, a bagpiper, the act of remembrance, and wreath laying.”

In fact, it’s a big step back from what the Remembrance Day committee has taken on in previous years, which grew to include wartime stories from special guest speakers and a full luncheon.

Those two elements will be skipped this year with the hope that they might return again in 2024.

There are no guarantees, though, as some members of the eight-person committee are aging out while others are getting tired.

Committee work is not a huge undertaking, they say, but at some point any group of this type needs fresh faces and ideas—and that’s exactly what they’re looking for: five or six fresh faces who they hope will take an interest before next year’s Remembrance Day event.

“The time commitment is not onerous,” Stott says. “We only meet six to eight times per year. We believe the key to success, however, is to have at least one well-organized, energetic, enthusiastic person to make sure that everyone is working in the same direction, but not stepping on each other’s toes.”



Back row: Wes Bonkowski, Natalie Batkis, and Louise Hiebert. Front row: Randy MacDonald & Chance, Laurie Stott, Elaine Krahn, and Lora Wachtendorf. Missing: Donald Stott and Jason Kehler.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

Stott, who’s been on the committee for 25 years, wants to assure newcomers that he will not be stepping away, just moving to the sidelines. The current committee will continue to provide mentorship in terms of relationships forged and connections made from their many years of experience.

Because if one thing is certain to Stott and the others, Canadians cannot afford to forget the past.

“9/11 woke people up around the country and around the world,” Stott says. “It reminded us all that we are one small step away from an event that could spiral out of control and be worse than anything in our history. The past 20 years of conflicts around the world, the situations in the Ukraine and Israel/Gaza as the most current examples, continue to remind us of the fragility of peace.”

Stott’s father was a WWII veteran.

Growing up in his childhood home meant Stott was constantly reminded that peace is a gift that has been purchased through the sacrifices of many men and women who never lived to experience it themselves.

“A promise was made a long time ago, by the survivors of some of the worst conflicts the world has ever seen,” says Stott. “And that promise was to never forget the atrocities, destruction, and sacrifices that people had to live and die through. I think that if we fail to learn from history, we may be destined to repeat it.”

When Stott took the helm to continue the annual Remembrance Day ceremony a quarter-century ago, the event was compact and traditional.

Stott and the committee set out to bring a local perspective to the event, to make it more meaningful for the next generation. There were still a few remaining veterans and war brides

among us to share their stories.

One such Niverville war bride was Cicely Wallace, who relived her wartime memories for an attentive Niverville audience. Her rendition of “We’ll Meet Again,” a song made famous by Vera Lynn in 1942, has continued to be an integral part of the Niverville ceremony ever since, now performed by Melanie Bergen.

Niverville resident Fred Kaita also told his story, recalling the Japanese internment of 1942, when 21,000 Japanese Canadians, his family included, were stripped of their British Columbia land holdings and subjected to a forced relocation.

Attendees to these local services have paid rapt attention to tales of concentration camp survivors, mothers who feared for their military child’s safety in wartime countries, and, most recently, by a family who found refuge in Canada after fleeing

the conflict in Ukraine.

“I think this is especially unique for the Niverville ceremony,” Stott says. “Each of these people had a story to tell that we all wanted to hear.”

Over the years, the event evolved to focus attention on the present-day peacekeepers and military men and women among us. Two of those military vets now sit on the committee.

“Niverville’s Remembrance Day is still about remembering the past,” Stott says. “But it has now grown to recognize the present, too. And the number of current veterans attending the ceremony is awe-inspiring.”

Over the years, as the committee continued to find creative ways to keep the message current and relevant, the attendance grew. In the last few years, the ceremony has averaged around 800 people.

“The number one highlight through the years has been the response and support of the people of Niverville. Every year we are moved by the number of people who show up and support this effort to remember. It has been our privilege to host this gathering of people who want to honour the past and present veterans of Niverville.”

With the simpler event planned for this year’s ceremony, Stott and his committee are still hopeful that people will take the time to come out and stand in solidarity, commemorating those who have paid and continue to pay the price so the rest of us can know freedom.

And if things go as hoped, a whole new generation of committee members will step up to the plate to keep the annual tradition alive and strong, well into the future.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you are interested in volunteering on the Remembrance Day committee, contact Louise Hiebert at 204-371-4873.

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Major Niverville Annexation in Limbo While Public Opinion Sought

By **Brenda Sawatzky**

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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It's been almost a year since Niverville's council announced its intent to annex almost 2,600 acres from the neighbouring RM of Hanover.

The area in question includes a swath of property on both sides of the two-mile stretch of Highway 311 from Niverville to Highway 59.

Since open houses last December, a lot has happened at the local and municipal levels. This week, council received feedback from the Manitoba Municipal Board (MMB), who make the final call.

According to Niverville mayor Myron Dyck, the MMB has decided to take the matter to a public hearing to allow the affected landowners a chance to voice their opinions.

"The letter said that there were questions and some concerns noted by a few [government] departments: agriculture, infrastructure, and community planning," Dyck says, who is not surprised at this turn of events.

It's the job of the Department of Agriculture to protect rural land for ag purposes, Dyck explains, and they are in the habit of objecting to every annexation proposal at first.

"Annexations still happen, but they would not be doing their job if they didn't raise concerns any time land use changes from ag to other," Dyck says. "It's important to note here that the land [we're asking to annex] can be farmed forever and will only change if a landowner or ag producer sells to a developer. The landowner controls this, not the Town of Niverville."

However, once ag land changes to commercial or residential zoning, it can't go back again.

GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDERS

As for Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure's (MTI) stake in this, Dyck says that adequate highway access, service roads, and intersection improvements will need to be considered.

"What will be interesting here

is to see if they have anything to say about a Highway 59 twinning," Dyck says. "They said they have a plan, and perhaps this hearing will have them say what they are planning."

In terms of the community planning division of the government, Dyck says that their interests will lie in seeking clarification on what is being proposed for future residential and commercial development.

Again, only time will tell what happens next. It's the landowners west of Niverville who hold all the cards in this situation.

LANDOWNER STAKEHOLDERS

In 2022, Niverville's council contracted the community planning firm Urban Systems to perform initial research and meet with the 45 landowners in the proposed annexation area.

Their goal was to mitigate concerns before presenting the proposal to the province.

It was important at that time to clarify the distinction between annexation and expropriation.

Annexation involves a basic land transfer, meaning that newly acquired land would fall under the umbrella of the new jurisdiction. In this case, the affected landowners would answer to and pay taxes to the Town of Niverville instead of the RM of Hanover.

The short-term result is a change in taxation, which Niverville's council hopes to make appealing by offering a plan to offset the additional tax load.

In turn, the landowners would benefit from the services that Niverville provides in terms of road maintenance, garbage and recycling collection, and sewer and water hookups.

Each of the landowner stakeholders was provided with the option to object to the annexation proposal via the MMB.

According to the MMB's procedures manual, if 25 or more stakeholders object to the proposal, a public hearing could be called.

Even so, Dyck says that Niverville's council hoped for a public hearing anyway.

"As mayor and our council, we had requested a hearing so as to be transparent and allow all concerned to have their questions and concerns noted by the Municipal Board [so it could be] considered in their final decision."

Dyck wouldn't be surprised to learn that some of the affected landowners have raised some objections.

"This constitutes a potential change," says Dyck. "Change in whom they would pay tax to, concern about how their land may be affected, and what bylaws they would be subject to now. Change often causes uncertainty that can lead to fear and even anger, thus leading one to want to object. It's a very common response to change of any kind."

WHY THE ANNEXATION IS IMPORTANT

There are relatively high stakes in this game for both the Town of Niverville and the RM of Hanover.

For Niverville's council, it's about long-term planning for continued growth. In the past 25 years, the community has experienced a whopping 343 percent increase in population.

Should this growth continue, planners at Urban Systems estimate that Niverville's population in 25 years will reach 30,000 under moderate growth conditions, and 40,000 if the currently high growth rate doesn't taper off.

Regardless of the magnitude of the growth rate, the Town of Niverville is expected to completely exhaust its current supply of developable land within the next 15 to 20 years.

The ramifications for annexation are also significant for the RM of Hanover.

Hanover reeve Jim Funk says that the economic benefit to creating a commercial corridor that borders his RM cannot be overlooked. And with Niverville being the closest urban centre, delivering

services to this corridor is much more feasible under the town's governance.

Even so, he adds that the RM of Hanover is fully prepared to work out a cost-share deal with Niverville to make those services happen.

"We're just trying to work together with Niverville so that we can both benefit out of this deal," Funk says.

Government processes aside, Urban System's Jeff Palmer says that a significant commercial corridor with access from major highways has the potential to provide huge benefits to residents of the whole region.

"We're trying to diversify the land uses in Niverville and encourage more commercial and industrial development in order to offer jobs within the community," says Palmer. "There's a lot of people that live in Niverville [and its surrounding area] that go elsewhere to work. It's important that there be jobs in the community that people live in."

THE PROPOSED PUBLIC HEARING

According to Dyck, no date or location has been provided for the impending public hearing. He expects that all stakeholders will receive notices directly from the MMB.

The hearing will be officiated by representatives of the MMB along with representation by some of the governmental department heads, who will be there to hear and help field questions and concerns.

Members of the Niverville and Hanover councils will also be present along with team members from Urban Systems.

"They do not render a decision that night but instead compile a report and present it to the Minister of Municipal Affairs," says Dyck. "They then must sign off on the report for it to become official."

At this stage, the MMB will have final authority to deny the annexation request or approve it, either as it's presented or under specified conditions.

IN BRIEF

Prov Expands to Winnipeg Campus

By **Brenda Sawatzky**

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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Otterburne's Providence University College will soon expand into a new Winnipeg campus, located at 447 Webb Place. This is the former home of Booth University College.

The \$9.5-million purchase will enable Providence to establish a downtown footprint for students enrolled in business and management programming.

"We are excited to see Providence return to the city of Winnipeg, where it all started 98 years ago," says Providence's president, Dr. Kenton Anderson. "Our new 87,000-square-foot downtown campus will serve as a tremendous complement to our longstanding homebase in Otterburne."

Providence's history dates back to 1925 when it was known as the Winnipeg Bible Training School. It was located on Spence Street, just blocks from today's new campus.

By the fall of 2024, Providence anticipates that the new space will allow them to increase their enrolment to 700 students.

International student Simran Sahota says that studying in a foreign location brings a hardship that isn't always easy to overcome.

"While studying in Toronto, I became so depressed that I was doubting my decision to come to Canada," says Sahota. "Providence taught me the value of community as they encouraged us that doing things together can make a difference."

The long-time mantra of Providence University College has been to care for the entire person, not just the educational needs of their many international students, and this expansion will help them do just that.



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Random Act of Kindness Leads to Intercultural Bond

By Brenda Sawatzky

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

When Brent and Ellen Byggdin set out on their morning walk around Niverville on September 6, they had no idea that a small child would set them on a whole new course.

That same morning, as Abdul Baten and his partner Sumaia Parvin sent their two older children off on their first day of school, the couple had no idea how the two strangers would impact their world.

CHILD ON A MISSION

Jibran is a precocious five-year-old and the son of Abdul and Sumaia. That morning, he woke up too late to see his older siblings off to school.

He'd anxiously been awaiting the first day of Kindergarten. Unbeknownst to him, his first day of school wouldn't happen for two more days.

In Jibran's mind, if the bus had picked up his siblings that morning, it must have come for him too—only he'd missed his chance to get on it.

Sumaia was busy with her three-year-old and other chores when Jibran got out of bed, dressed, and fed himself breakfast.

Without a word, Jibran threw on his backpack, opened the garage door, mounted his tricycle, and headed down the street for school.

He made it four city blocks before being spotted.

It was 10:20 and the Byggdins were headed south along Fifth Avenue. Before turning into Hespeler Park, they witnessed the child on a tricycle in the middle of the busy roadway.

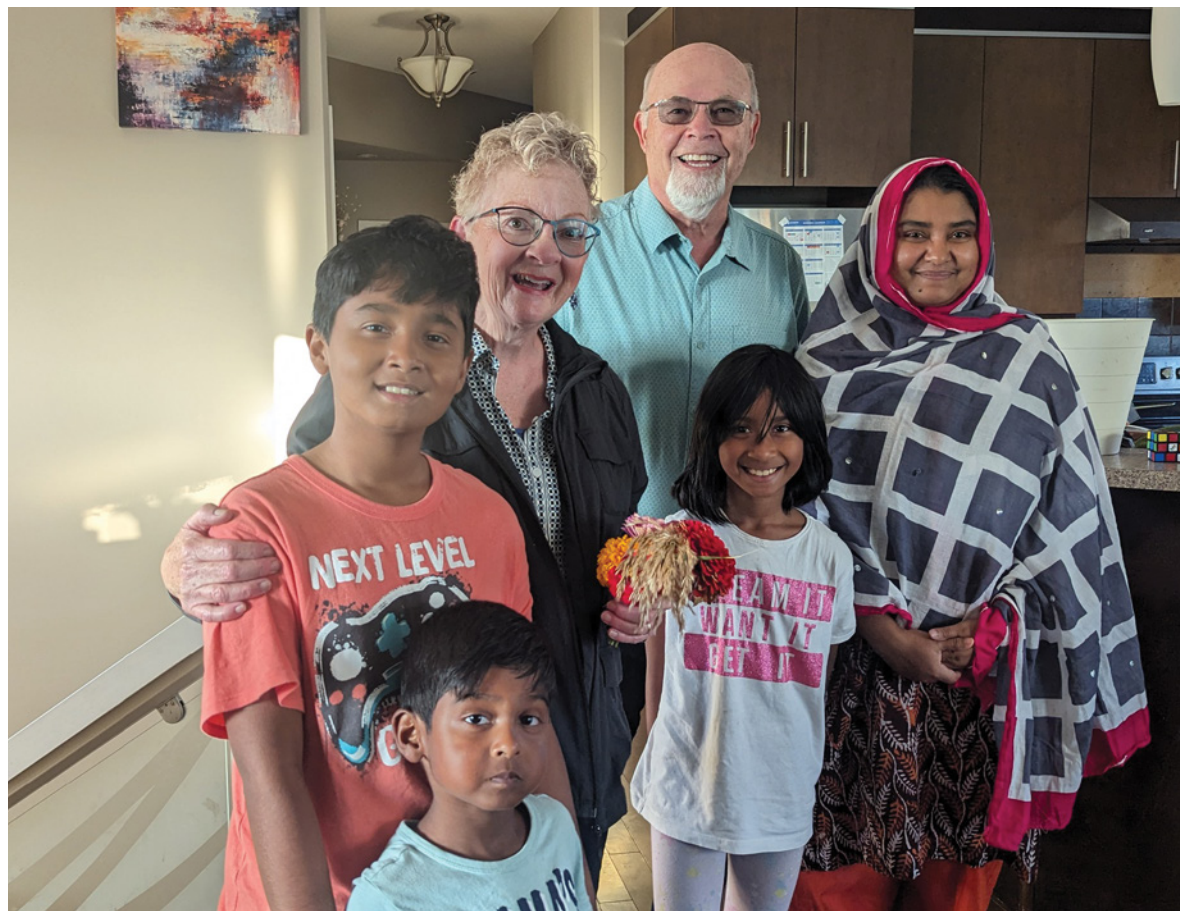
"What was fortuitous is that we were planning to walk earlier that morning, in which case we'd have missed him entirely," says Brent. "When we saw him crossing Fifth Avenue on a trike by himself, we just instinctively went to him."

The Byggdins guided Jibran safely across the street, then learned his first name and a partial home address: 16 Niverville. They also discovered that he was on his way to Kindergarten.

"I said, 'Is your mommy not walking with you?'" Ellen says. "He adamantly said, 'I don't need my mom.'"

Parents themselves, the Byggdins quickly clued in. Brent admits that he, too, had escaped home as a young child on a similar mission.

Little Jibran was agreeable when



The Byggdins meet Jibran and his entire family.

ABDUL BATEN

they asked his permission to accompany him.

"If it was a child who didn't know what he was doing and didn't know where he was going, we probably would have called 911," says Brent.

Brent walked on the child's right, keeping Jibran from peddling into the ditch or over the curb every time he spotted a passing school bus.

Ellen followed, noticing that Jibran occasionally pedalled with only one foot to silence an annoying squeak on his tricycle.

To speed along the tedious process, the Byggdins encouraged Jibran to stop as they passed by their own house on Fifth. Brent found a can of WD40 and went to work on the pedal.

In the meantime, Ellen contacted the principal of the school, letting her know they were on their way.

FRANTIC PARENTS

On the morning Jibran went missing, Abdul was in Vita where he'd dropped off a friend who needed a ride to work. He became aware of the situ-

ation when Sumaia, through frantic tears, called to ask if Jibran was with him.

Discovering the clues Jibran had left behind, the couple quickly surmised what had taken place. Abdul wasn't altogether surprised that his son was capable of such a feat.

"He's a very intelligent child," Abdul says. "We've never taught him math or anything, but he can read, he can multiply and divide. He's learned by himself."

Abdul says that Jibran also takes an active role around the house. He describes his son as a natural born leader.

Abdul's first response was to reach out to the Niverville Community Group on Facebook to see if anyone had seen their son. This same group, he says, had responded with more than 300 welcoming comments when the couple first moved to Niverville just seven months earlier.

He contacted the principal so she could watch for him.

Abdul later learned that the

principal, Tracy Beaudin, instructed the students heading out for recess to watch for and report back if they saw a small child with a backpack.

In the meantime, local residents jumped into action.

According to Abdul, some got into cars, scouring the streets. Others who'd spotted the boy earlier announced where they'd last seen him. Still another reported seeing the boy go by their home, accompanied by an older couple.

"I got almost a live broadcast of what was going on," says Abdul. "I'm thankful to the community. It is such a vibrant and helpful community and they champion each other."

A HAPPY REUNION

The Byggdins stayed the course with young Jibran, astounded at his ability to find his way. Had he been on his own, the only mistake he'd have made would have been to cross the four-lane Main Street at an area without a crosswalk.

Arriving at school, the principal

took over and thanked the Byggdins. "We did nothing any other caring adult, especially a parent, wouldn't do," Brent says.

In the end, the Byggdins estimate that the boy, both solo and chaperoned, would have pedalled that broken tricycle for about an hour.

Jibran was more disappointed about having to go home than he was fearful about his situation. Still, Abdul is proud that his son kept his composure throughout the ordeal.

He's also enormously thankful to the Byggdins for the role they played in keeping Jibran safe. As for the principal, Abdul says she followed all the right steps.

NEW BOND CREATED

Brent and Ellen received a call from Abdul later that day, inviting them for tea and traditional Bangladeshi food.

They were greeted at Abdul's door by the eldest son as he held out a bouquet of hand-picked flowers.

"Abdul said to us, 'I want you to be grandparents to the children,' and they immediately started calling us that," Ellen says.

FROM BANGLADESH

Abdul and Sumaia found reasons to love Niverville even before this event. The rural lifestyle was tranquil compared to that of Winnipeg.

But it was Hespeler Park that ultimately convinced Abdul to make a home here.

He is active in the Bangladeshi and Muslim communities in Manitoba as well as an avid sports fan, organizing soccer, badminton, and cricket tournaments.

"I've organized many events in Hespeler Park," Abdul says. "It's a beautiful park."

Abdul is now hoping that council will allow cricket fields to be established in the park.

According to Abdul, cricket was Canada's national sport in the early twentieth century and Manitoba had its own cricket association in 1935.

Abroad, cricket surpassed soccer to become the number one sport in Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan in the late 1990s.

If Abdul has his way, Niverville will become the next big hub for cricket enthusiasts from across the province.

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Commentary

Right or Wrong? The Psychological Foundations of Morality

By Daniel Dacombe

Think of someone you have a minor difference of opinion with. These disagreements might be a matter of personal preference, with no clear right or wrong answer. For example, what's your favourite book? Which Jonas brother is best?

Other disagreements have an obviously wrong answer. Such as $1+1=3$, or the choice to put pineapple on pizza.

Whatever the disagreement, we all have them. Overlooking these differences is key to forging good relationships. We agree to disagree.

However, some disagreements aren't easy to overlook. These might be about things we hold dear, our deepest beliefs. Often these are disagreements, even conflicts, over moral values.

It's a struggle to just agree to disagree. The opposing values of the other side don't just upset us. They anger us, even disgust us. "How could anyone be so immoral?" we ask. "Isn't the moral side—my side—obviously in the right?"

Ironically, this idea, that the "correct" or "moral" position is so blatantly clear that the people who disagree with us must be bad people, is held by others across the religious, political, and social spectrums. Most people think their morality is right, and most also think the correct morality is obvious.

Clearly we can't all be right.

How do we know who is being moral? More to the point, how does each person seem to know intuitively what is right and wrong?

For most people, their religion tells them. Whether it comes in the form of a holy book, or the idea that God has written what is right or wrong on one's heart, the connection for many people is both clear and decisive: morality comes from God.

We may have trouble relying on this view for settling disagreements about morality, though, as there are a lot of religions in the world with a lot of holy books, and even more interpretations of those books.

"Well, sure, there are many religions," some may respond. "But mine happens to be the right one."



DEPOSITPHOTOS

Soon after someone makes that claim, everyone else follows suit and we're back where we started.

Plus, if a god has imbued humanity with morality, then he/she/it seems to have done so with a surprising amount of variation across cultures... and also appears to have at least partially done the same for several primate species who show signs of having their own moral codes, including altruism, reciprocity, and prosocial concern.

The last few years have brought our political, religious, and moral differences into stark relief. Small disagreements, especially about right and wrong, seem bigger than ever, and an increasing number of families find themselves divided.

With the winter holidays on the horizon, we face the prospect of once again sitting with family and friends with whom we might not share the same moral values.

It thus seems prudent to better understand where our moral intuition comes from, why our moral intuitions seem so different from person to person, and maybe even how to disagree in a healthier way. Before we start throwing Christmas decorations at each other.

Where do our moral intuitions

come from? As mentioned, many primate species show signs of rudimentary moral systems. They share, help, and care for each other when they suffer. More importantly, they also keep track of members of their group who don't behave in moral ways, and sometimes they punish them for their transgressions.

Simply put, acting in helpful and caring ways towards members of our group helps us all to survive.

Therefore, those who behave in altruistic ways—in moral ways—are more likely to pass on their genes to future generations.

When it comes to why our morals seem so intuitive to us, we can look to an explanation.

First proposed by social psychologist Dr. Jonathan Haidt, Moral Foundations Theory is built on research showing that human beings rarely stop and think about what is right and wrong; they simply "feel" it. In Haidt's words, "Intuitions come first, strategic reasoning second." This means that we feel these moral intuitions automatically and only try to explain why we feel that way after the fact.

Haidt's research presented ordinary people with morally ambiguous stories and tested their

reactions. Typically, people had an initial reaction as to the morality of the situation and then attempted to justify this reaction afterwards.

When researchers added information to make the test subjects' justification irrelevant, the subjects tended to maintain their moral judgment, even when they couldn't rationally explain it.

Most significantly, this was true for everyone they tested, no matter their religious, political, or cultural background. No one moral intuitive framework was shared by all so-called "good" people.

So why do our moral intuitions seem to differ so greatly across people and cultures? Moral Foundations Theory can account for this.

According to Haidt's research, people tended to base their moral intuitions on five main foundations that provide survival benefits: *care*, which helps us improve our group wellbeing and reduce suffering; *fairness*, which helps us cooperate for mutual benefit; *loyalty*, which helps us form groups that stick together; *authority*, which helps us create and maintain group structure; and *purity*, which helps us avoid disease or other harms.

These foundations are sometimes described differently, and occasionally a sixth foundation—liberty, or freedom—is included, but in essence these foundations run like programs in the back of our minds, automatically assessing situations. Only after this assessment occurs do we try to justify our feelings, to explain them to others and ourselves.

Haidt's research also showed that we assign different levels of importance to different foundations when it comes to making moral determinations, and this is informed by our cultures, religions, and worldviews.

For instance, when it comes to politics, researchers have found that people who are politically left-leaning are more likely to base their moral determinations on the foundations of care or fairness; by contrast, right-leaning individuals are more likely to rely on authority, loyalty, and purity.

For each group, then, the other side can seem like they are acting "without morals," because they're using different foundations to make their moral judgments.

Critically, none of these foundations are "more right." They all serve their purpose in different ways.

While an emphasis on the moral foundation of purity is theorized to be a source of bigotry in our world, it also helped our ancestors to scrutinize food or other possible sources of illness to ensure better health.

This is supported by a recent study showing that individuals with more conservative religious or political views are less likely to buy "misshapen" vegetables at the grocery store, even when those vegetables are discounted.

The other foundations have their advantages and drawbacks as well.

By understanding that we all make moral decisions, even when we might not understand what we're basing them on, we have a much better chance of seeking understanding without judgment. This can form the basis for healthier disagreements, rational discourse about morality, and maybe even the possibility of changing our minds.

Sports & Recreation

by SUE THOMPSON



The Force Finish Season in Second Place

By Jennifer Lavin

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After only three years of play, the Niverville Force men's soccer team has proven that it is indeed a force to be reckoned with.

The squad ended their 2023 season in second place, only one point behind first.

In July 2021, Force head coach and co-owner Andry Giesbrecht told *The Citizen* that his goal for the team was to climb from their original position in the Manitoba Major Soccer League (MMSL) third division up to division

one.

Three seasons later, they are already there.

"[With this] promotion, we are now a top 20 team in the entire province of Manitoba," says Giesbrecht. "And since we started only three years ago, this is something to be excited about. We have come a long way."

Team manager and co-owner Sue Thompson credits several factors to the Force's great success.

"Our team dynamic is definitely the best out of the entire MMSL, in my opinion," Thompson says. "Credit to the players for coming to practice

and working hard at games and the coaching/managing staff."

This year, Giesbrecht worked alongside two assistant coaches. They also had their own athletic therapist.

As always, Thompson is on hand to keep up with social media and the behind the scenes work of keeping the operation going.

Thompson says that even the weather cooperated with them this year. The Force finished earlier in the year than other teams because not a single game was rained out.

Giesbrecht and Thompson also give credit to their local team

sponsors for the success of the Force. Their sponsors supported them throughout the season, including at their annual golf tournament.

"Playing at home definitely is the best part for me," Thompson says. "It has nothing to do with travelling, but the pure excitement of watching our fans come out and support us [excites me]. Our guys are so pumped to play at home in front of large crowds. This year, we also had two home game days when we gave out ice cream sandwiches to the fans."

She says that each home game has drawn approximately 100 to 150

spectators.

Giesbrecht is full of pride for his athletes.

"It's a testament to the players and everyone involved," he says. "We thank them for their hard work and dedication to the team."

The Force is always looking to add to their squad and will soon be actively recruiting for next year.

"Anyone looking to join should keep a close eye on our social media about open training sessions during the winter, as we will start preparation for next season [in] early January," Giesbrecht adds.

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GRACE DRIEDGER

Prov Men and Women Headed to Soccer Semifinals

By Jennifer Lavin

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Both the men's and women's soccer teams at Providence College are headed for the Manitoba Colleges Athletic Conference (MCAC) championships after another season of success on the pitch.

On Sunday, October 22, the women's team played at home, facing the Brandon Bobcats with first place up for grabs.

At the 32-minute mark, defender Ava Temple delivered a perfect pass to midfielder Paige Heide, who was able to score her ninth goal of the season.

Five minutes later, the Bobcats evened the score.

Moments before the halftime

whistle, though, left-winger Laurianne Chiasson scored her second goal of the season to lift Providence to a 2-1 lead.

Brandon played hard in the second half but goalkeeper Isabella Geith stopped every shot, allowing the Pilots to end their season on a high.

That same day, the Providence athletics department recognized five Pilots seniors who had just played the final home match of their college careers: Jordyn Briggs, Ava Temple, Paige Heide, Julia Herperger, and Kayla Miller.

The men's team had an equally successful Sunday, defeating Brandon 5-2.

Pilots attacker Garreth Rayner began the scoring in minute 12

with his fifth goal of the season.

Nine minutes later, the Pilots were at it again as a freekick by midfielder Johannes Barnes gave attacker Joel Umeh a chance to score.

And five minutes later, it was Umeh who jumped on a loose ball and pushed the Pilots lead to 3-0.

The Bobcats closed the gap a little just before the break but weren't able to continue that momentum into the second half.

Twelve minutes after play resumed, Pilots attacker Rashard Hibbert scored.

After a counter from the Bobcats, with the score at 4-2, Umeh swept in with the hat trick, left-footing his team-leading eighth goal of the season and cementing

the win.

"This win was the perfect way to end a very successful regular season for rookie head coach Giovanni Benitez Friesen," says Russell Willms, Providence's Director of Athletics. "The captain-turned-manager has led the Pilots to a record of 9-1-2 and the program's first regular season title in well over a decade."

Next weekend, both the men's and women's teams will enter the MCAC semifinals in first place. They will face Les Rouges in the semifinals at Winnipeg's Ralph Cantafio Soccer Complex.

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