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**LOCAL NEWS**

## Ste. Agathe Faces Dike Decision

Residents of Ste. Agathe are taking part in an involved consultation process to determine the future look of its riverfront. At an open house last month, a presentation was made featuring a number of preliminary dike designs. In addition to offering protection, the dike will be an opportunity to update the town's overall aesthetic.

Details on Page 8

**LOCAL NEWS**

## Almond Nail Bar Coming to Niverville Soon

Another franchise will be opening its doors in Niverville later this year, as Almond Nail Bar looks to set down roots.

Details on Page 21

**SPORTS & REC**

## Nighthawks Make Big Moves at Draft

The 2023 MJHL draft is now behind us, and the future is looking bright for the Niverville Nighthawks in year two.

Details on Page 25

**ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT**

## Debut Novelist Wins Big Literary Prize

Author K.R. Byggdin, formerly of Niverville, has landed a major literary prize for their debut novel, *Wonder World*.

Details on Page 27



# Class of 2023 Makes Grand Debut

» READ MORE ON PAGES 12-17

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A recent meeting with parents at Gab-Roy in IDC.

STÉPHANIE DESJARDINS

# DSFM Briefs Parents on Next Steps for New French Schools

**By Brenda Sawatzky**

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER  
 bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Approximately 40 francophone parents from Niverville and Ritchot gathered at École Régionale Gabrielle-Roy in Île-des-Chênes (IDC) for a special meeting on May 30 hosted by the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine (DSFM).

Guiding the meeting were the DSFM general director Alain Laberge and DSFM chairperson Bernard Lesage. On the agenda were discussion items surrounding the division's decision to include new schools for Niverville and IDC in their five-year capital plan.

Currently, they said, École Gab-Roy is the only DSFM school in the region.

Gab-Roy caters to 15 feeder schools from surrounding communities. But with 522 students in this school, which was built for 400, and with the addition of the eighth portable classroom this coming September, Gab-Roy has moved well beyond its capacity to offer an adequate learning environment and daycare facility.

When determining where a new school should be located, DSFM trustees take certain criteria into consideration: population growth statistics, bus routes, stakeholders living in the area, and parental requests for a French school.

Based on their findings, Niverville rose to the top of the list, partially due to the fact that the community saw a 29 percent growth in population between 2016 and 2021. As well, census data suggests that there could be as many as 500

francophone students living there. The fact that only 78 of these students attend École Gab-Roy likely has more to do with proximity than interest, suggesting that attendance would naturally increase for a more local school.

According to DSFM trustees, a new K-8 school in IDC comes in as a close second priority. If that were to happen, the plan would be to transition the existing École Gab-Roy into a regional high school.

With a new DSFM school underway in Winnipeg's Sage Creek neighbourhood, consideration is also being given to changing the boundaries for francophone students of Grande Pointe, giving them the option of attending in Sage Creek instead of IDC.

Stéphanie Desjardins is a Niverville mom with two preschool children. She's one of four local parents who submitted a letter to the DSFM in April of this year, asking for consideration of a Niverville school in their five-year capital plan.

They also collected a petition with 67 signatures, a number that impressed Lesage and Laberge.

Desjardins says that she was told it was the biggest petition the DSFM had ever seen for a new school request. She was also told it was the reason that Niverville was bumped to the top of the list.

Desjardins attended the May 30 meeting at Gab-Roy and was surprised to learn that students from Niverville have a one-hour ride on the bus to get from their homes to Gab-Roy. The same trip would be a ten-minute drive by car.

For the DSFM, these long-haul bus trips are among the factors that

help determine when a community should have its own school.

"They said they like to have schools within the neighbourhood to help minimize the transport time, as some families will send their kids to English school just to avoid the transportation time involved if they choose a French school," Desjardins says.

She was pleased to hear that the DSFM plans to use their schools for integrated programming, which would benefit the entire French community of the area, not just the students.

Desjardins has enrolled her son in a full-time preschool program at Gab-Roy this coming fall. She feels fortunate to be among the parents selected for this program.

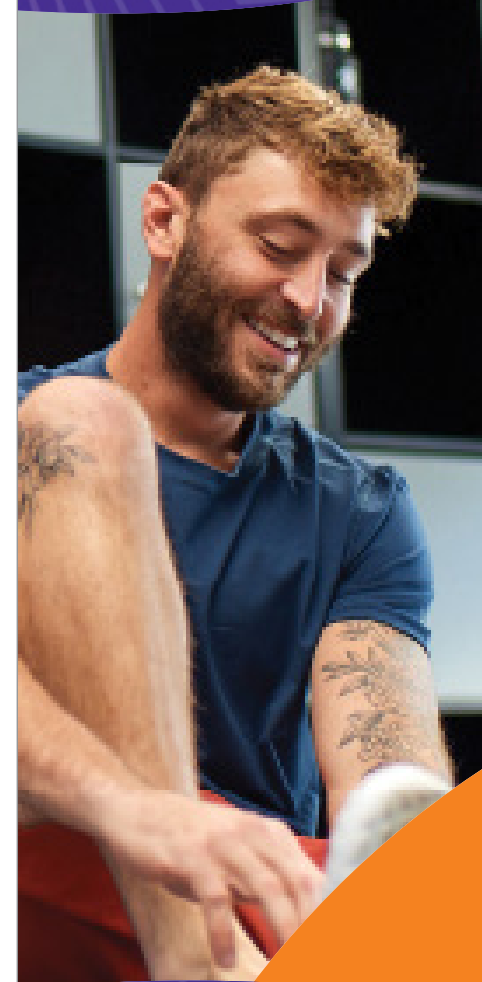
Her conversation with Lesage at the end of Tuesday's meeting left her feeling hopeful for a Niverville school, even though she knows it needs to first be approved by the province.

"He mentioned that... the chances of this project not happening are very low," Desjardins says. "The need for this new school is there and the data proves it. It's just a matter of time to see how long it might take before the project becomes a reality. Both of [my kids] will definitely benefit from having a DSFM school in town. They might have to start their education at Gabrielle-Roy, but if this new school is built within the next three to five years, both my kids will have the chance to attend. And knowing that I had a big part to play in bringing this school to our community makes it so special. I'm really excited to see how this project develops."

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## IN BRIEF

## New Crosswalks for Fifth Avenue South

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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Two of Niverville's busiest intersections will see the addition of new safety measures.

Workers are prepping sidewalks for the installation of two crosswalks to be located on Fifth Avenue at Hampton North, next to the Niverville Middle School, and Hampton South at the entrance to Hespeler Park.

"We need to ensure that there are curb ramps to make the crossings accessible," says Daniel Wiebe, civil engineer for the town of Niverville. "And we will be aligning the sidewalk to allow for the shortest crossing distance possible."

Total costs for the sidewalk upgrades will come to around \$100,000. A grant for \$24,000 was received from the Federal Active Transportation Fund.

As to the level of signage and lights being installed, that will be up to Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure (MTI).

"You may have seen MTI representatives doing traffic counting at these locations to determine the appropriate signage to provide," Wiebe says. "MTI will determine [this] based on their vehicular and pedestrian traffic counts, whether that is simply a regular crosswalk sign, painting, or crosswalk lights."

Wiebe adds that even if MTI decides against adding flashing light signals, vehicles will be required to stop for pedestrians at these crosswalks.

# Providence College Denied Official University Status, for Now

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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On May 30, a group of 30 faculty members and staff from Providence University College attended the Manitoba Legislative Assembly in the hopes of witnessing their school's official inclusion on the province's list of recognized universities.

Unfortunately, they left empty-handed, as the third and final reading of the private member's bill was denied process by the NDP opposition.

This was the last legislative assembly of the season before MLAs head out for their summer break. For the Providence administration, it means they will have to start the process over again after the Legislature reconvenes in the fall.

"Despite passing literally every other private member's bill, it is curious for the NDP to stop Providence from receiving the recognition it deserves," said Andrew Micklefield, MLA for Rossmere, in a press release issued by Providence. "Providence is a premier post-secondary institute in Manitoba and our province has been enriched by their graduates, whose talents are evident in their dedicated service to communities across various fields including healthcare, social work, outreach centres, businesses, humanitarian efforts and more."

According to Providence president Dr. Kenton Anderson, the institute has long referred to itself as a university. However, until they are officially recognized by the government as such, they will remain in the "other" category set out by the Advanced Education Administration Act.

"Right now, there are certain grants that our faculty can't apply for," Anderson told *The Citizen*.



Providence University College in Otterburne.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

"There's certain meetings that we don't get invited to and communication loops that we are not a part of because we don't have that official listing... and so it's just not an equal playing field for us."

According to Anderson, the idea of petitioning the government for official university status has been on the table for quite some time. When the bill was finally brought before the Legislature this year, it passed the first and second reading.

Anderson admits there were some hiccups when it came to the second reading, but he felt that Providence had answered all concerns.

Days before the vote on a third and final reading, however, he was warned that the NDP may stand in the way.

"Basically, the NDP opposition didn't allow for a vote," Anderson says. "They didn't even allow for debate. They just shut it down before it could get started, so that was disappointing."

Apart from the NDP's use of "procedural rules" as an excuse, Anderson says that it's unclear to him what the party will need in order to accept Providence's request in the future.

"This bill is completely dead,"

says Anderson. "However, our conversation with the Ministry is ongoing and they will know that it's our full intention to come back to the table and work with whoever is in power to see this through. We're not going away."

Jamie Moses is the NDP Critic for Advanced Education and Training. He says that the procedural rules cited by his party at the May 30 assembly refers to the fact that, in their opinion, this should never have been introduced as a private members bill to begin with.

Instead, Moses explains, they want to see the Progressive Conservatives return with a bill brought in by a government minister, which would assure that it is properly structured.

"We support Providence College in the important work they do," Moses told *The Citizen*. "We've had good conversations with them about this process. It's important that all institutions seeking university status do this through a proper governance process to ensure corporate structure, bylaws, and governance are enshrined in legislation. This is how other faith-based institutions, like CMU, have successfully achieved status in the past, which

we were proud to support."

As to why the NDP voted in favour of accepting the bill during the first and second reading, Moses says that these are less formal readings where the bill is introduced and debate is welcomed.

In principle, he says, the NDP support the bill. It's only the process they disagree with.

In 2025, Providence University College and Theological Seminary will celebrate its centennial anniversary. In light of this, official university status would be a significant milestone to achieve.

"It would bolster Providence's reputation not only across the province but also on national and international levels," states the Providence press release.

According to Anderson, even if the province does decide to recognize Providence as a university, it won't change the values that the institution holds dear.

"We are not compromising [our faith-based approach] at all," Anderson says. "We have no interest in changing or watering down our faith commitments or Christian values. Those are rock solid and always will be."

Anderson wishes to express gratitude to the Providence supporters through this process, including MLA Micklefield, Minister of Advanced Education and Training Sarah Guillemard, and Minister of Justice Kelvin Goertzen.

He also thanks the NDP's Jamie Moses, who was helpful and encouraging along the way.

"We believe that Providence is making a tremendous contribution to the people of our province," Anderson concludes. "Providence is growing, we have a lot to offer, and we will continue to pursue this initiative and are confident that we'll eventually achieve it."



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# Providence Partnership Creates Inuit Pilot Training Program

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER  
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This September, Providence University College will extend their long-standing aviation program to include a unique pilot training program that caters to Inuit students.

Partnering with Canadian North Airlines, the new program will emphasize training students from the north who will return to serve the north.

"We're at a time now where we're facing a fairly severe pilot shortage in this country and right around the world," says Providence president Dr. Kenton Anderson. "So we're excited to help meet that need. It's one thing for some of us to hear about a pilot shortage and think about how it might affect our vacation. But it's a completely different thing when we're talking about a lifeline, as it affects... things like supply chain resource availability."

Canadian North is an Inuit-owned airline that has been connecting people of the north with essential goods and services for 70 years. They service 25 communities in the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and the Nunavik territory in northern Quebec.

In this region, two percent of Canada's population is spread out across 40 percent of the country's landmass.

For the most part, these communities have no road or rail access. The residents rely on air service for the movement of people, food, and goods. Flight is often the only way to access medical care and government services.

The goal of Canadian North is to equip these people with education and career



Representatives from Providence College, Harv's Air Service, and Canadian North Airlines. BRENDA SAWATZKY

opportunities that haven't been readily available before.

"What is not lost on me is the fact that, while we are a 100 percent Inuit-owned airline committed to Inuit and Indigenous self-reliance, for the most part, the men and women that are [flying the planes] into our communities are not Inuit," says Shelley De Caria of Canadian North. "I hope this will be the first major step in changing that."

The aviation program at Providence, which spans nearly 40 years, is unique to any other flight school in Manitoba in that students can gain a degree in business management while working to attain their pilot license.

"I started my career many years ago and I can tell you that... sometimes pilots are in high demand and sometimes they're not in high demand," says Canadian North president and CEO Michael Rodnyuk. "And I can tell you that having a broad educational background is what carried me through."

The Providence program is unique as well in its ability to equip students with aviation skills specifically required for northern flying.

"There's some unique

radio navigation aids and training that has to happen," Rodnyuk says. "You can imagine when you get close to the north pole that your magnetic compass doesn't work anymore so we have to have what's called true north directional indication."

Other phenomena like the northern lights can also wreak havoc with radio instrumentation, he adds.

The partnership will entrust Canadian North with the obligation of selecting high-potential Inuit students for the program. Successful graduates will then have a guaranteed offer of employment with Canadian North.

For the past 40 years, Providence has partnered with Harv's Air Service of Steinbach to deliver aviation training. For the average student, tuition and flight training together comes with a \$120,000 pricetag.

For Inuit students, federal grant funding will cover approximately 70 percent of tuition, accommodation, and supply costs. According to De Caria, other funding is available to help subsidize the rest.

Inuit students will find housing on the Providence campus as well as resources

such as an English language program, if needed, although De Caria says that most Inuit students with a high school degree have a good working knowledge of English.

De Caria, herself of Inuit descent, says that Canadian North will ensure that Inuit students will be looked after when it comes to flying home between semesters. Once a student studying in Montreal, she keenly recalls the culture shock and struggles she faced when she was disconnected from family and friends throughout college.

While the backbone of education at Providence places a strong emphasis on the Christian faith, students of any faith, culture, or background are welcome.

"All of the students that come in do take a certain number of courses that are biblically and theologically based, but that's only a small part of their requirements," says Providence professor Nicholas Greco.

Rodnyuk says that these ideals align with those of Canadian North, making the partnership a good one.

"This is not the most threatening campus that you're going to find," Anderson says. "It's not as large as some others, and I think we're a friendly place that students can quickly adapt to."

For Rodnyuk, bringing the Inuit culture to the south will also have its merits.

"One of the great things is not so much the spreading of the southern life experience to our Inuit students, but more so the Inuit students sharing their cultural background and the rich history that they have with the southern folks."

## IN BRIEF



## Niverville's Oldest Resident Celebrates Birthday in Style

By Jennifer Lavin

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Niverville's oldest resident, Jacob Falk, turned 103 on June 26 and his family marked the occasion by throwing him a party worthy of a man celebrating more than a century of life.

The extended Falk clan gathered at Whitetail Meadow on his birthday, with all his children in attendance as well as most of his grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Falk's daughter-in-law Anne Falk says that Jacob loves celebrations like one. Over the past year, he's also been able to join in the fun at the weddings of two of his great-granddaughters.

As if that wasn't enough excitement for the centenarian, he has participated in the Niverville Olde Tyme Country Fair parade for the last two years as the oldest man in town.

Celebrating at Whitetail Meadow was especially thrilling for Falk, as his original barn now forms the main structure of the event venue.

Falk is very proud that his barn has been repurposed in this way.

He was very pleased when Dave Neufeld, one of the owners of Whitetail Meadow, personally came by to wish him a happy birthday.

Falk was born in Russia in 1920. By the time he was nine years old, his father had passed away and Falk, his siblings, and his mother decided

to emigrate to Canada. The Mennonite Central Committee sponsored the Falk family, which allowed them to settle on a farm near Niverville.

Falk grew up in this area and stayed here for his entire life. He wed Elnora (née Rempel) and the couple began their family. The Falks had been married for 48 years at the time of Elnora's passing in 1994.

Jacob and Elnora had five children. Those children collectively have blessed Jacob with 13 grandchildren and 25 great-grandchildren.

Falk now resides at the Heritage Life Personal Care Home and Anne says that he feels loved and cared for by the staff there.

It is noteworthy that only .03 percent of Canadians survive past their one hundredth birthday—and of those, a recent report reveals that only 17.25 percent of them are male.<sup>1</sup>

Currently, there are estimated to be 2,619 centenarian men in all of the country, according to Stats Canada, and only 104 in Manitoba.

This puts Falk in rarefied company!

### REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Lynn Chaya, "Canada Ranks Among Nation's Where People Are Most Likely to Live Beyond 100: Report," National Post, August 9, 2022 (<https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/canada-ranks-among-nations-where-people-are-most-likely-to-live-beyond-100-report>).

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If you do not receive a copy of the bill, please feel free to contact the Town Office for a copy (email taxes@wheretheyoubelong.ca or call 204-388-4600 ext. 1209).

New property owners are reminded that they are responsible for the payment of the taxes whether or not they have received a tax notice in their name.

**All payments must be received in the Town Office, 329 Bronstone Drive, Niverville by 5 p.m. on September 29, 2023.** Cheques may be post-dated to the due date (Sept. 29, 2023) but must be received by the Town Office **on or before September 29, 2023 by 5 p.m.** or they will be considered late and will be subject to a penalty. Receipts may be emailed upon request or picked up at the Town Office.

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Every year, 4-H clubs across Manitoba help keep our highways clean.

SHANNON CARVEY

# Meet the Volunteers Behind the 4-H Highway Clean-Up Program

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Every spring, in quiet humility, 4-H clubs from around Manitoba hit the rural roadways for their annual highway clean-up campaign.

In collaboration with Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure (MTI), these volunteer youth give up one Saturday every year to give back to their communities by collecting the refuse that litters the shoulders and ditches along our province's many miles of rural roadway.

"We had 13 clubs participating this year," says 4-H executive director Shannon Carvey. "We have clubs from Virden all the way up to The Pas and Portage down to Clearwater, so there's a really great representation from across the province."

Carvey has no idea how long Manitoba 4-H has been involved in the campaign, but she knows that it predates her childhood years in the program many decades ago.

Only a global pandemic was enough to derail the program for a time, but by 2022 4-H clubbers were back at it in full force.

Their work beautified more than 100 kilometres of highway last year.

4-H club members range in age from six to 25 years. The international youth organization has more than 130 chapters across Manitoba.

The mandate of the program is the same as it was in 1913 when the first club got started in Virden, Manitoba: to provide its young members with skill development, leadership, and citizenship training.

In 1947, the 4-H club established the Provincial Communications Competition to drive home the importance of public speaking skills, and this remains a cornerstone of the club to this day.

While the 4-H program still operates in partnership with Manitoba Agriculture, membership isn't restricted to rural kids with farm connections.

Believing in their motto, "Learn

to do by doing," the club offers options for kids of all backgrounds to get involved in more than 80 different skill-building projects such as photography, outdoor living, machines, woodworking, hands-on science, and equine, among many others.

The name 4-H represents the long-standing pledge uttered by many a clubber over the past 100 years: "I pledge my Head to clearer thinking, my Heart to greater loyalty, my Hands to larger service, my Health to better living, for my club, my community, my country, and my world."

Ashley Nolin and her family live just south of Niverville. Her two sons are enrolled in the Grunthal 4-H chapter. The boys' grandmother was also a member of 4-H many years prior and spoke highly of her experiences there.

"My husband and I both grew up in cities," Nolin says. "Now, with living in the country, we felt disconnected. A friend of our oldest son suggested the club in Grunthal for her son and ours to join together. We also have a

small hobby farm with sheep and chickens and thought it would be a great way for the boys to learn more about our animals."

After just three years of involvement with 4-H, she can already see the incredible values and skills instilled in her children.

"The communications component has helped them become better public speakers," says Nolin. "[They've learned] life skills such as sewing and navigating the wilderness with a compass."

It's also provided the boys with opportunities to tour farms and volunteer at the agricultural fair and in soup kitchens. They've built connections, comradery, and friendships with other kids from across the province.

When it comes to events like the highway clean-up campaign, it provides an opportunity for entire families to get involved in doing something good, together.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about the 4-H program, visit their website: <https://4h.mb.ca>

## IN BRIEF

### Two Youth Stabbed in Long Weekend Incident

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

On Monday, July 3, at approximately 10:35 p.m., the RCMP responded to an assault in progress in Niverville. Police were informed that a weapon was involved.

According to RCMP Corporal Julie Courchaine, an altercation took place between a group of youth at a location on Niverville's Main Street. It resulted in two male youths, ages 15 and 16, sustaining stab wounds.

Police responded immediately to the call and ambulances were mobilized. The STARS air ambulance touched down near the Heritage Centre before midnight.

Both of the injured youth were transported to hospital for treatment and have since been released.

"This doesn't appear to be a random incident at all," Courchaine says. "It seems like there was a group of young people and a fight broke out. I don't believe there's any threat to public safety. That would be more for a random type incident where there's no motive."

At this stage, all indications are that no gun was involved and no shots were fired. The gunshot noises heard are believed to have come from fireworks being set off.

"We had a whole group of kids that took off running and now we're trying to put the pieces together and we hope people will come forward and talk to us about what happened," says Courchaine. "It's going to take a bit of time to figure out who's to blame, is there an aggressor, is there sufficient evidence for charges and stuff like that. Obviously if there's enough [evidence] for charges they'll go in that direction."

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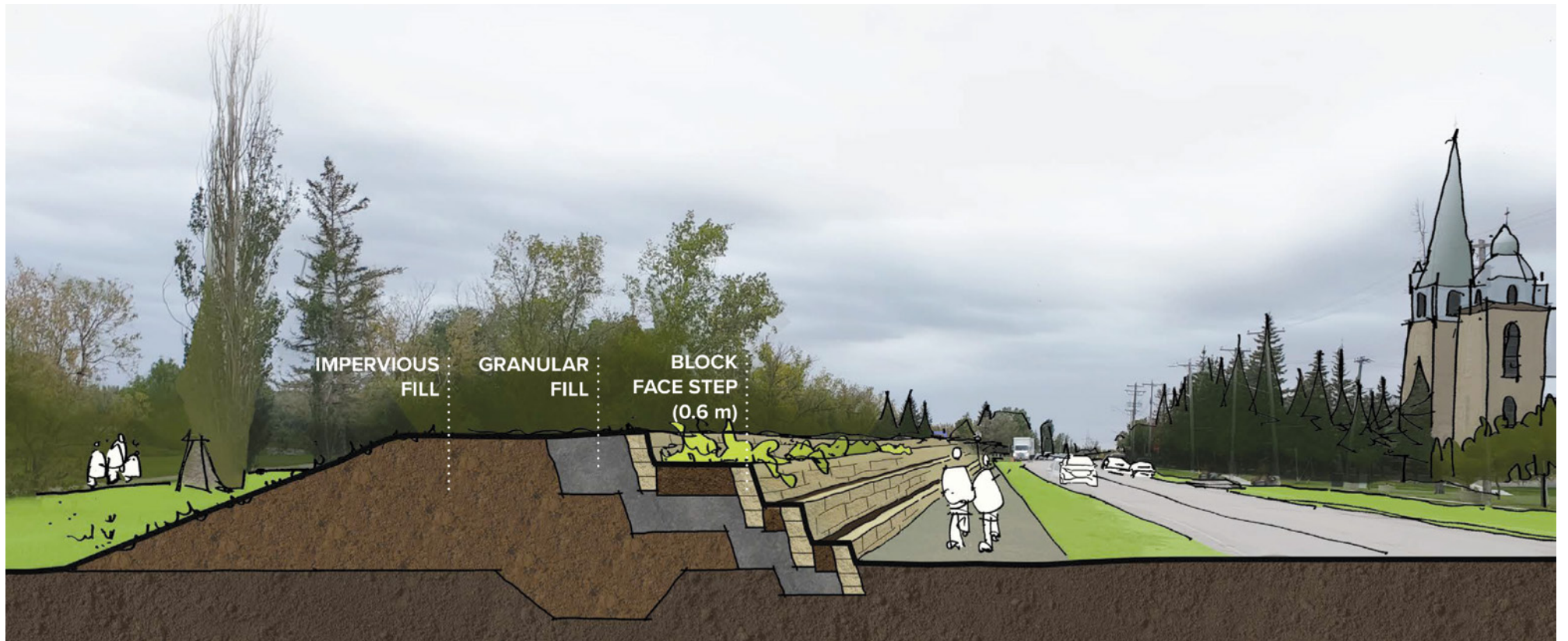
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The preferred design for the new Ste. Agathe dike: a combination MSE wall and earth fill dike.

GOVERNMENT OF MANITOBA

# Preliminary Dike Design Unveiled in Ste. Agathe

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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Ste. Agathe's Culture and Community Centre was filled with residents on June 13 for the third and final public engagement session on the community ring dike-raising initiative.

Information sessions one and two, which took place in December and March, addressed the province's intent to raise the dike to a one-in-200-year flood level.

Resident feedback was sought on key concerns and desires concerning the new dike's aesthetic.

Representatives from Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure (MTI), KGS Group, and Scatiff, Miller and Murray (SMM) were on hand again for round three, this time introducing preliminary design solutions created as a result of the data collected.

If the project proceeds, work will begin on stabilizing the riverbank in areas where it's needed, raising the existing earth dike as much as 1.5 meters in height, and creating new lengths of dike where none currently exist.

"Forty years ago or so, when projects like this were born, the decision-maker, I think, oftentimes was cost and budget [focused]," says Baldwin. "Here we are in 2023 and we have to think about a lot more things... as we're designing solutions for flood protection infrastructure."

In order to take advantage of federal grant monies, the province has set its sight on a completion date of March 2025 for this project.

Following the third public round of engagement, a preliminary design report will be submitted to the province which will set the stage for a detailed design, and eventually the tendering process.

The goal of the landscape engineers assigned to this task was to design a dike system that would protect the community well into the future with nominal input by the RM during high-water years.

"We don't want to have to plan for maintenance in the future if we can avoid it," says Jared Baldwin of MTI. "It's really about playing the long game. If you do a little bit more planning now you can save in the future."

Aside from public feedback, factors that influenced the dike

design included the cost of the build, environmental impacts, and feasibility of construction within the designated timeline.

Drainage upgrades also played a major role in the decision-making process.

Integrated into the design are new drainage culverts at the northeast and southeast corners of the community.

As well, two new retention ponds are being proposed on the inside of the northeast dike to collect rainwater and snowmelt and direct it towards the drainage areas.

## NEW DIKE ALONG THE RIVERBANK

One of the most involved sections of the dike design was the section that doesn't yet exist. It's the one-kilometre stretch along the riverbank on the community's east side.

This area borders private property and public space, including the local boat launch.

In session two, three different options were presented to residents for feedback. These included an earth dike similar to what surrounds the rest of the community, a mechanically stabilized earth wall dike

(MSE), and a bin wall dike.

"The most expensive [dike] per linear meter is, surprisingly and a little bit counterintuitively, the earth fill option," Baldwin says. "That is because it requires the most amount of riverbank stabilization, which translates into rock fill. That puts the cost way up there."

The earth fill dike also carries the greatest cost in terms of environmental impact, requiring major digging along the riverbank and the removal of some trees and vegetation.

Even so, the bin wall dike ranked the least popular option of them all, as it was the most complex to construct, had a poor safety rating, and was considered by most residents to be too industrial in appearance.

In this session, the representatives provided a fourth option: a hybrid dike consisting of both earth and MSE wall. This, they said, was an option the province asked them to consider.

This hybrid dike option ranked the highest in popularity. It was simplistic in operation and maintenance, reasonably priced, and provided the most user-friendly experience.

## IMPEDED VIEWS

Approximately five property owners will have their views and backyard enjoyment impeded by the new dike if it's built.

One of those property owners addressed Baldwin at the meeting, querying about the necessity of putting up a dike along this stretch in the first place.

Only three or four times in the past 25 years, she said, has it even been necessary to erect a temporary dike along this stretch.

In response Baldwin suggested that conversations such as these could be addressed during the detailed design phase.

"There will be group sessions with these owners to start talking about what options there are as far as those privately owned riverside parcels are concerned," Baldwin says.

These private group sessions, he adds, will likely be held this coming fall. If all goes well, Baldwin is hopeful that dike reconstruction will begin next summer.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ To learn more, residents are invited to contact Jared Baldwin: jared.baldwin@gov.mb.ca





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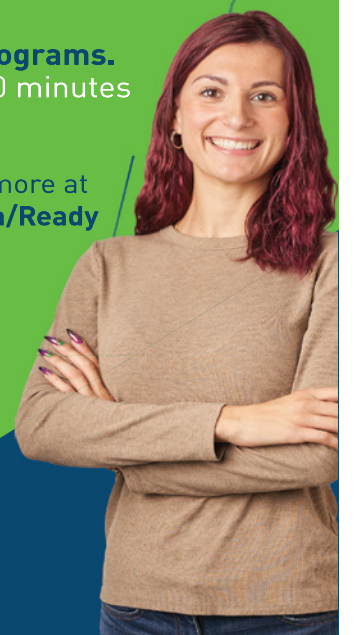
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# PCH Visitation Shelters Find New Purpose

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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In an effort to safely connect families with their aging loved ones, 104 portable visitation shelters were provided by the provincial government to personal care homes across Manitoba during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pods were glorified shipping containers retrofitted with doors, a window, electricity, and an HVAC unit. They provided isolated spaces where families could enjoy a safely distanced visit with a loved one without entering the PCH itself.

Today, all 104 pods are finding new homes and new purposes.

“We commissioned these visitation shelters during the pandemic so personal care home residents could spend quality time visiting with their families in secure, accessible spaces,” says James Teitsma, Minister of Consumer Protection and Government Services. “Now that they are no longer required for this purpose, we are donating them for a range of other wonderful uses for the continued benefit of Manitobans.”

Twenty-seven special interest groups will benefit from the pods, with 43 going to First Nations communities, 55 to not-for-profit agencies, and six to municipalities who expressed an interest.

The pods will be repurposed for housing and accommodations, recreation and sporting needs, animal care, vegetation, farming, and a



A PCH visitation shelter in Niverville.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

variety of other uses.

Recipients include the Assiniboine Park Conservancy, Bear Clan Patrol, K9 Advocates Manitoba, the Winnipeg Folk Festival, and Wildlife Haven Rehabilitation Center in Île-des-Chênes.

Zoe Nakata is the executive director of Wildlife Haven. She says

they were recently notified of their eligibility for four of the pods, which are currently located in Ste. Anne, Steinbach, and St. Pierre-Jolys.

Nakata is excited for the extra capacity they'll have at the animal rehab centre once the new pods are in place.

Largely, she says, they'll be used

as isolation spaces when bio-security is a concern.

“Right now is a time of avian influenza and other zoonotic diseases,” says Nakata. “There's often concerns of transmissible diseases, so for one of the pods, it's going to act as a quarantine triage intake area.”

Another example where

short-term quarantine is often needed, she says, is when a litter of foxes is brought in and one of them has a contagious disease called mange.

All of the selected pod recipients bear the responsibility for costs related to transporting the shelters to their new locations.

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# Feds Claw Back Carbon Tax Rebate for Niverville Residents

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

It's been one year since the federal government began sending quarterly refunds to Manitobans for carbon taxes charged on fuel.

On a quarterly basis in 2023, Manitobans are scheduled to receive Climate Action Incentive (CAI) cheques, totalling \$132 for single adults and up to \$264 for a family of four.

If you're a resident of Manitoba living outside of the Winnipeg area, you qualify for an additional 10 percent rebate, presumably due to the lack of public transit options that require people to spend extra money on daily commutes.

Until very recently, Niverville qualified as a rural community in the eyes of the federal government.

However, at some point between April and June 2023, that all changed.

A new map of the Winnipeg area shows that the boundaries have shifted to include Niverville residents living west of Sixth Avenue and north of Crown Valley Road.

Henry Friesen is a chartered accountant and partner at Blue River Group in Niverville.

"For better or worse, Canada Revenue Agency is reassessing everyone with a Niverville post office box number, whether they live within the boundaries of the new map or not," Friesen says. "That includes dozens of families living east or south of Niverville who pick up their mail at the post office."

This means more for Niverville residents than a loss of the 10 percent rural carbon tax rebate going forward. It also results in a clawback of the 10 percent they received on their April CAI cheque.

In July 2023, Niverville residents will see a deduction on their quarterly cheque. It will be noted as an "April overpayment," since someone within the government decided that the recent ruling over the boundary change should have a retroactive effect.

For a couple residing in Niverville, this will equate to about \$80 per year.

For a family of four, it's just over \$105 per year.

"I estimate the total annual loss for Niverville residents at \$200,000," says Friesen. "This number will increase in the future as the federal carbon tax increases. Why the change was made retroactively may

not have a rational explanation beyond that of reducing the federal deficit by \$50,000."

Friesen says that some locals may not be quick to balk at the loss of \$80 to \$100 per year in tax rebates. However, as the carbon taxes continue to rise over time, so will the impact on every household and every budget.

The CAI was introduced as a response to the federal government's introduction of the carbon tax on greenhouse-gas-emitting fossil fuels in April 2019.

Provinces such as Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario, who didn't adopt their own pollution pricing systems at the time, are charged a pollution pricing fee established by the federal government.

According to the government of Canada's website, all carbon taxes collected are paid back to the province of origin. Ninety percent is returned to residents via the CAI cheques, and the remaining 10 percent is used to support small businesses and Indigenous groups.

The federal government characterizes this as a good deal for Manitobans, stating that eight out of ten households get back more money than they pay.<sup>1</sup>

In some households with

low automotive fuel costs, this may in fact be true.

But there are many additional ways in which Manitoba consumers must pay out of pocket to account for these carbon taxes.

"Carbon taxes have increased the cost of almost everything, not just the price of gas at the pumps," Friesen says.

Take home utilities, for example. Friesen says that his home heating bill is 25 percent higher than it would otherwise be thanks to the introduction of the carbon tax. On top of that, the federal government has imposed GST on the carbon tax, effectively taxing a tax.

"Every item that comes by truck costs more because of carbon tax," says Friesen. "In fact, every business has to charge more to pay for carbon taxes it pays. The cascading impact on inflation is much, much greater than meets the eye."

## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> "Climate Action Incentive Payment Amounts for 2023-24," Government of Canada. Date of access: June 30, 2023 (<https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-finance/news/2022/11/climate-action-incentive-payment-amounts-for-2023-24.html>).

## CITIZEN POLL

**Is it justifiable for the federal government to withhold carbon tax incentives from our communities based on our proximity to Winnipeg?**

- Yes. We are close enough to Winnipeg that we should be considered urban.
- No. Urban boundaries should end where city amenities, such as public transit, cease to become available.

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

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## LAST MONTH'S RESULTS:

**Do you support the practice of banning books in schools and public libraries that some parents may find objectionable?**

Yes. If a book contains controversial subject matter, a parent should be able to demand its removal. **34%**

No. Decisions about which books are made available should be left to school officials and librarians. **66%**

## YOUR COMMENTS:

Today anyone (including kids) have access to what some consider inappropriate. What is considered appropriate is subjective and varies for each person. Parents have a duty in teaching their children to understand that there is media in the world that they should not look at or read. You cannot control the external, you can only educate. Teach our kids to think for themselves. Books that promote hate or other "prohibitive grounds" as defined by Canadian law are obvious books that should be banned. Also graphic books that have an age restriction should not be made available to minors.

However, I think it would be very reasonable for parents to request that books with hateful or potentially harmful information/opinions have warning leaflets provided, like how a movie rating has tag words such as "offensive language," "violence," "scenes of abuse," etc.

Many of same parents who suggest that ridiculous notion don't even properly monitor their kids internet usage and are letting them be raised on TikTok.

We often learn and grow more from information that opposes our views than we do from immersing ourselves within them.



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NHS principal Kimberley Funk surveys the graduating class of 2023 at convocation.

BRENDA SAWATZKY



Gab-Roy co-valedictorians Justin Anderson and Hailey Claydon.

ERIC FOIDART

# For Graduates of 2023, a Proud Sendoff

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Nearly 130 students donned caps and gowns in our corner of south-eastern Manitoba this year.

Hundreds of family and friends were in attendance at convocations and banquets to help the graduates of 2023 take the next big step in their lives.

## ÉCOLE RÉGIONALE GABRIELLE-ROY

The 54 graduates of École Régionale Gabrielle-Roy marked their graduation over two days.

Following years of tradition, the formal convocation on June 22 took place at the Cathédrale de Saint-Boniface, with more than 600 people in attendance. Also as a matter of tradition, there were two valedictorians to represent the class: Hailey Claydon and Justin Anderson.

Anderson was also this year's recipient of the coveted Governor General Academic Medal.

Claydon served as student president during her Grade 12 year. She was awarded a number of scholarships, including the Jeannot Robert scholarship and the RM of Ritchot

scholarship.

"It was an honour to be recognized by my classmates and elected co-valedictorian with my friend, Justin Anderson," Claydon told *The Citizen*. "It was extremely special to me and is a badge of honour that I will forever wear proudly."

Claydon will be pursuing a degree in sciences at the University of Manitoba with the hope of ultimately becoming a doctor or scientist.

"I hope to actively engage in leadership roles and participate in committees and groups throughout my university journey," she says. "I aspire to make a positive impact on the lives of others while also following my dreams of working in the science-oriented field."

The COVID-19 pandemic made a lasting impact on the school life of those graduating from high school in 2023.

"Our year was cut short due to the pandemic and none of us knew what the future of our schooling had in store for us," Claydon said at convocation. "We were all put on house arrest and sentenced to online schooling. It was extremely rare to hear each other's voices during this time, and seeing each other's

faces was even rarer. Our teachers' patience was truly put to the test as we all hesitated to turn on our cameras when taking presence."

Anderson concluded the valedictorian address by offering a few highlights from the preceding year.

"We pulled through, put our minds together, and accomplished a great success, which will always be engraved in our memories," Anderson said. "We not only reached a goal we had set out to achieve, but we built inseparable friendships that will last forever. As we move into the next chapter of our lives, I hope that we can apply the same values that helped us succeed this year in our future endeavours."

A banquet and dance was held at the Victoria Inn in Winnipeg on June 23, capped off with a safe grad party at a rural homestead near Lorette.

## NIVERVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

The size of this year's Niverville High School (NHS) graduation matched last year's, with 75 students making the transition. A full day of grad events took place on June 28, beginning with convocation in the high school gym. The event drew nearly a full house of attendees.

Principal Kimberley Funk opened the ceremony, reflecting on the significance of this graduating class since they were the first to start and complete their high school experience at NHS.

"Looking back to the beginning, we had no drama room, there was no band room, we shuttled band students back and forth to the middle school every day," Funk reminisced. "We didn't have a daycare. The CRRC, which feels like it's always been here, wasn't. And then our school year was cut short as schools closed in March 2020."

Kylah Hiebert was honoured as this year's valedictorian, elected by her peers. She, too, looked back on reminiscences both challenging and rewarding.

"We are the fourth year of graduates in a world flipped upside-down by COVID," Hiebert said. "We have blazed new trails in education with the incorporation of project-based learning and the continuous addition of technology into our different classes, new and old. We're the first class in close to a century to see Mr. Limpricht finally retire. We probably won't soon forget the late-night study sessions, the numerous

projects, the friendships forged, and the challenges overcome. These experiences have moulded us into resilient individuals, ready to face the new chapter that lies ahead."

The Ivy Friesen Memorial Award was one of many presented that afternoon.

Friesen was a long-time middle school teacher in Niverville, beloved by all her students. In 2017, her life was cut short by cancer. Many of this year's graduates were in Friesen's last official class before her passing. Making the event more poignant, Friesen's grandson was among them.

Parting words shared by Mike Bouchard, an education assistant at NHS, sums up the character of this year's graduating class.

"When it comes to working with children... I've seen it all, or at least I feel like I've seen it all," said Bouchard. "But when I first walked into Niverville High School, I found the most amazing young people that I've ever met. The kindness and caring amongst [them] was second to none."

Celebrations continued into the evening with a banquet and dance held at the Niverville Heritage Centre.



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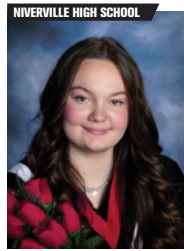
## NIVERVILLE HIGH SCHOOL



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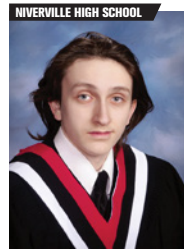
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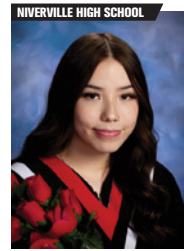
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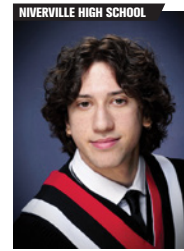
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**COOPER**



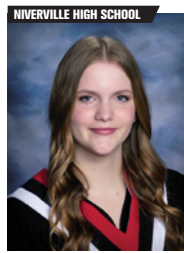
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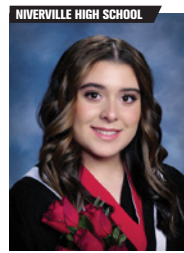
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JOSHUA  
**FRIESEN**



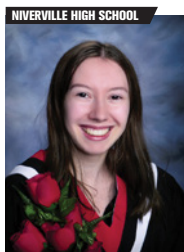
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EVAN  
**GROENING**



SARAH  
**GUGENHEIMER**



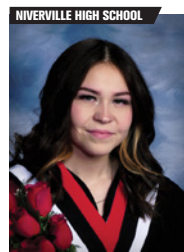
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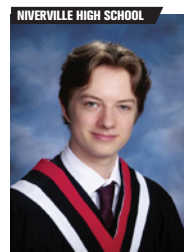
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KYLAH  
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BETSY  
**HILL**



MARK  
**HILL**



ZACK  
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MIRIANI  
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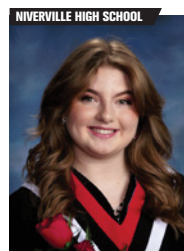
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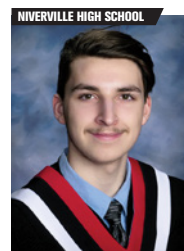
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ADRIAN  
**KEHLER**



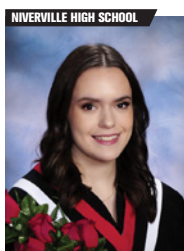
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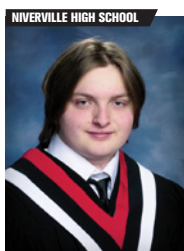
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BENJAMIN  
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EVELINA  
**KLEINER**



LIAM  
**KOSHOWSKI**



COLE  
**KWIATKOWSKI**



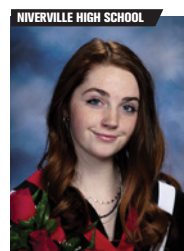
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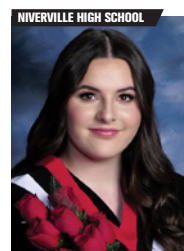
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**MACDONALD**



MERCEDES  
**MACKEN**



ELLIOTT  
**MARION**



FINLEY  
**NURSE**



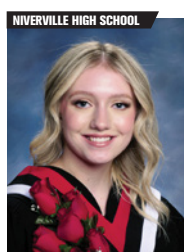
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JOHN  
**PENNER**



EMILY  
**PETERS**



CARTER  
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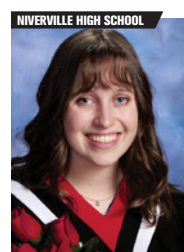
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BRIELLE  
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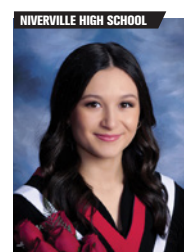
HUDSON  
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**RICHARDS**



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**SAKWI**

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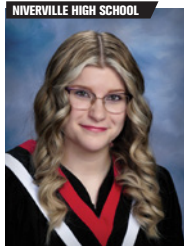
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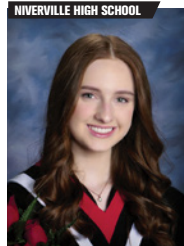
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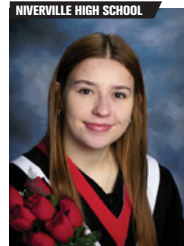
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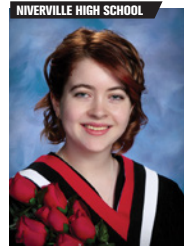
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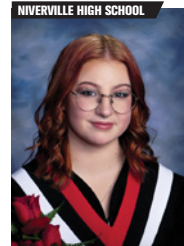
ALLISON TAYLOR



MALIA THIESSEN



KATHERINE WERY



AIDAN WIEBE



COLE WILLIAMS



AREESHA ZAMAN



MARCUS ZEILSTRA

## COLLÈGE RÉGIONAL GABRIELLE-ROY

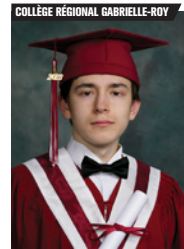
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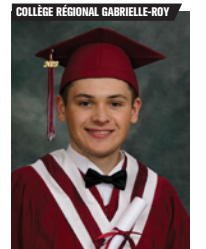
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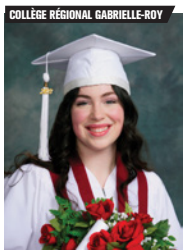
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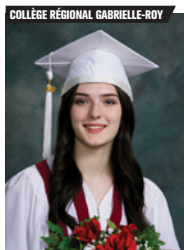
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ANDRÉ BOISJOLI



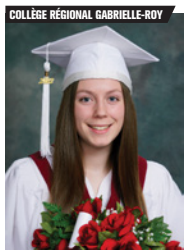
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DANIKA BOULET



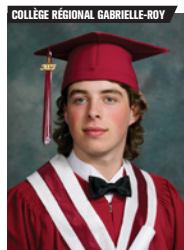
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SOPHIE CHAMMARTIN



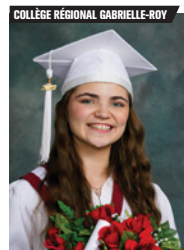
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MARCUS COOK



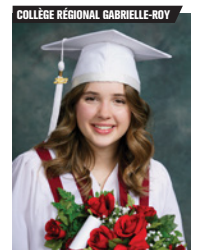
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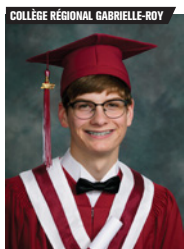
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BRIANNA DAVID



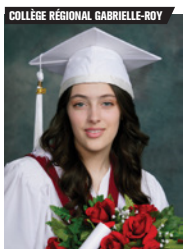
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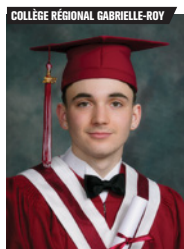
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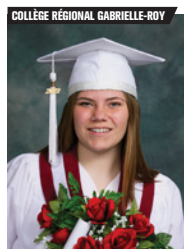
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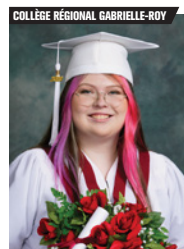
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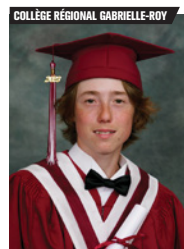
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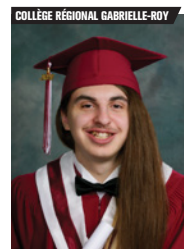
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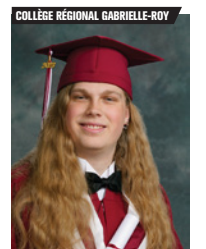
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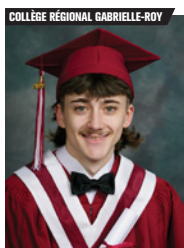
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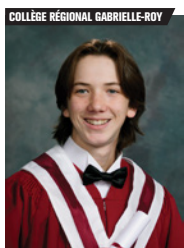
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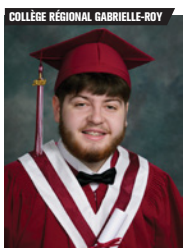
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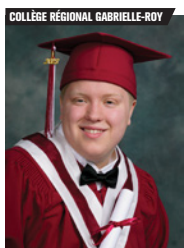
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SAMUEL LABOSSIÈRE



KAËL LAFOND



ALEXANDRE LAMBERT



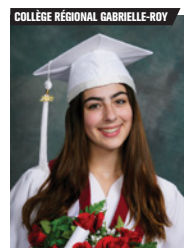
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SAMUEL LAMOUREUX



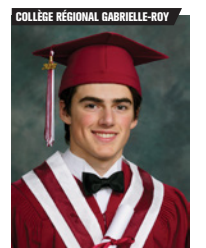
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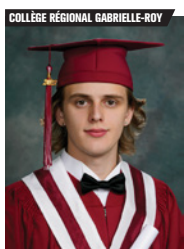
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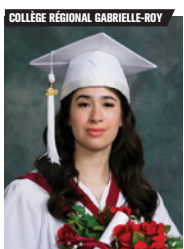
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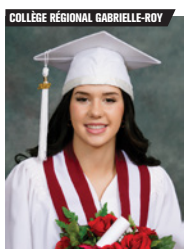
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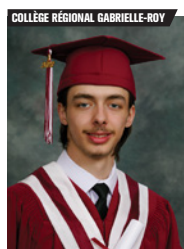
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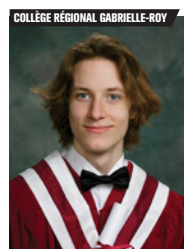
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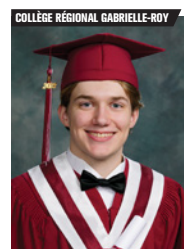
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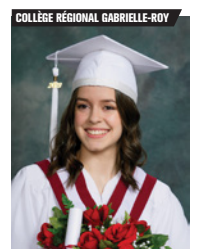
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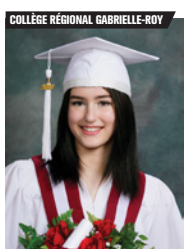
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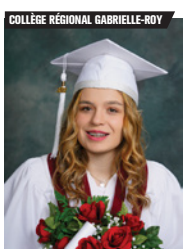
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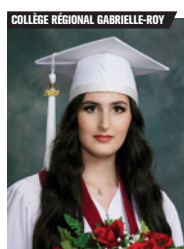
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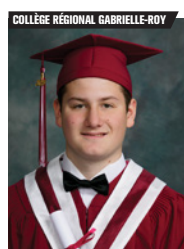
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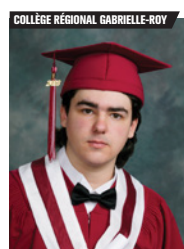
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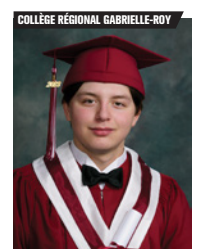
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 Congrats!

**Congratulations**  
 Merik, Hayden & Hudson





Mayor Myron Dyck with Town of Niverville Award recipient Taylor Sakwi.

BRENDA SAWATZKY

IN BRIEF

### Ritchot Council Receives Quarterly Crime Report

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

Corporals Kaven Bussieres and Melanie Rouselle of the St. Pierre-Jolys RCMP detachment addressed Ritchot's council on June 6 to provide the quarterly crime report.

Looking at Grande Pointe, Bussieres indicated a number of suspicious vehicle reports and some break-and-enter activity. This, he said, has a lot to do with Grande Pointe's proximity to Winnipeg.

Ste. Agathe, too, saw extra criminal activity, primarily focused on one residence on Bellamy Drive. The RCMP, along with the Crime Reduction Team from Winnipeg, carried out a search warrant at the address and charges have been laid.

"That noted residence is bringing some people from the city that are involved with drug trafficking and property crime," said Bussieres. "We're still keeping an eye on it, but since we did the search it's been pretty [quiet] there."

The RCMP have been providing greater patrol presence in St. Adolphe lately thanks to additional funding received from MPI.

"MPI is funding our members to do extra shifts for traffic enforcement," said Rouselle. "They've been on the 200 and 210 quite a bit. They're averaging 20 to 30 stops per day, which is a lot for one member."

She said that residents have called the RCMP to complain about traffic violations in the reduced speed zone near the school.

Councillor Joel Lemoine then brought to Rouselle's attention some complaints received by the RM from residents living along Krahn and Sood Roads in terms of speeding.

# NHS Awards Showcase Talented Group of Grads

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

This year's Niverville High School (NHS) graduation award ceremony showcased a multitaled and dedicated crop of graduates. Over the course of the event, 16 community awards plus a variety of scholarships were bestowed on them.

More than half of this year's graduates are enrolled with post-secondary institutions this fall, a remarkably high number according to NHS student counsellor Deanna Wiebe.

Nineteen are enrolled at the University of Manitoba.

Others will be headed out of province to universities and colleges in Toronto, British Columbia, Alberta, New Brunswick, and even Arizona.

"They are a talented group with many musicians, athletes,

artists, social justice leaders, and entrepreneurs," says Wiebe. "Their resilience through COVID, their optimism, and their desire to make a difference in this world is impressive."

While not every graduate was honoured with an award, virtually every one of the 75 students received either merit or distinction recognitions, also an impressive feat.

A merit recognition is given to students who achieved two or more credits beyond the provincial requirements for graduation. Distinction recognizes those with an achievement of 90 percent or higher in their various courses.

This year's prestigious Governor General's Academic Medal, given to the student with the highest overall grade point average, went to Megan Reimer. Reimer also received the BSI Insurance award.

The Town of Niverville,

Niverville Credit Union, and Wiens Young Leaders Awards, each for \$1,000, were given to students Taylor Sakwi, Joseph Harder, and Sarah Gugenheimer respectively.

The Hanover Teachers Association Award went to Joel Harnett, and Ethan Friesen was recognized by the Andrew Grant Memorial Award. Both were for \$1,000.

Areesha Zaman and Jadan Dibra were recipients of the Chown Centennial Scholarship and the David Alan Grant Memorial Scholarship.

In memory of Mayor Myron Dyck's late wife, the Lana Dyck Joy Award went to Carys Derksen, chosen for her acts of selflessness and love for others and her commitment to bettering the lives of others without need for personal recognition.

The Ivy Friesen Memorial Award was presented to Marcus Zeilstra, recognized for his

strength of character and positive outlook on life.

Derek Plett accepted the Niverville Firefighters Award as someone pursuing a career in firefighting, ambulance, or policing.

The Niverville Family Chiropractic and MLA Ron Schuler Citizenship Awards were presented to Kyla Hiebert and Aysia Richards.

The MCC Thrift Store provided two awards, both issued with volunteerism in mind. The recipients were Makenzie Christ and Malia Thiessen.

Emmi Fixe and Gabi Olfert received the two awards presented by the Parent Advisory Council.

Recipients of the Raj Raichura Awards were Riley Schwill and Sienna English, while Owen Bornn and Carys Derksen took the Niverville Physiotherapy Athletic Awards.

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f i y t

# Super Citizen: Krista Shidel, Parent Volunteer

By Jennifer Lavin

✉ jlavin@nivervillecitizen.com

In this series, *The Citizen* profiles locals who strive to make our little corner of Manitoba a better place. Each month, we feature a person, family, or organization that helps brighten the world in some way. If you have someone in mind for a future month, please nominate them: [jlavin@nivervillecitizen.com](mailto:jlavin@nivervillecitizen.com).

Kofi Annan, former secretary general of the United Nations, once said, "Children are our future, and their mothers are its guardians."

Krista Shidel, a Niverville resident and mother of five, has taken those words to heart and spends most of her time supporting and guiding her children and helping other children in the community.

Shidel joined the Niverville Elementary School's parent advisory council in 2014 and took on the role of hot lunch coordinator. It was only in June of this year that Shidel stepped down from that position, all of her kids having completed their time at the elementary school.

For the last few years, Shidel had also stepped into the role of fundraising coordinator, helping to plan staff appreciation events.

As Shidel's children have aged up, she has gotten involved in all of their schools. In 2022, she became the fundraising coordinator for the Niverville High School PAC. And this year, she stepped into the role of treasurer for the Niverville Middle School PAC.

Shidel has jumps into all these positions with both passion and commitment, according to Shanda



Krista Shidel, a prodigious parent volunteer from Niverville.

▫ KRISTA SHIDEL

Offenberger.

Offenberger, who nominated Shidel for this month's Super Citizen honour, has long recognized the tireless work Shidel has carried out with the PACs.

"I've never met such a reliable person in my life," says Offenberger. "When Krista gives you her word, you don't have to question it. Krista

always shows up and never disappoints. She's incredibly organized and hard working. This girl is constantly lifting others in the community and never expects to be lifted herself."

Another admirer, Tammy Meyer, is a fellow member of the middle school PAC.

"Every time we need to get

together for meetings or outings, she makes everything fun," says Meyer. "She makes me laugh so much. She is super kind and fun to be around."

Shidel also helped to coordinate the tree-planting done by Niverville's Communities in Bloom committee at elementary and middle schools. For two years, she also was the rec hockey coordinator for the Town of

Niverville.

As if that weren't enough, she spent a season coaching little league soccer.

"I began volunteering as soon as my kids started school," says Shidel. "I just loved spending that extra time with them on field trips, in their classroom, sports, etc. I like to give my time helping at the schools because they do so much for their students. I like to pay it forward when I can!"

Shidel grew up in St. Adolphe and attended the United Church in Niverville. She and her husband Tony initially settled in Winnipeg, but after starting their family they decided to find a quieter place to raise their kids.

Niverville was a natural choice for them and the family has now lived in the town for a decade.

The Shidels have five children: Connor, Jensen, Alyvia, Blaikley, and Ella. One of Shidel's friends, Amanda Parkhurst, says that those five kids are the most important thing in the world to Shidel.

"Krista's kids are her life, her everything," says Parkhurst. "She really goes the extra mile to make events and holidays extra special for them and will always go to bat for and protect her kids."

Shidel's husband Tony adds that she volunteers so much of her time because she desires these beneficial programs to continue to operate, both for her own children and for the children of the whole community.

"My wife puts everyone else first," he says. "When times are tough, she's who you want in your corner. She's always there to lend a hand."



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## IN BRIEF

## New Technologies to Streamline Provincial Election

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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On October 3, Manitobans will hit the polls for the province's forty-third general election. And when they do, they're going to notice some big changes in how ballots are processed.

"We are introducing new tools for this election, but the process is the same," says Shipra Verma, chief electoral officer for Elections Manitoba. "Voters still show ID and mark a paper ballot. Each vote goes into a ballot box and is counted at the close of polls."

So what exactly is going to be different this year?

"What we're changing is the tool, which is more technology to provide better service to our stakeholders. The integrity of the vote is preserved."

The anticipation is that the new technology will streamline the paper-based system and allow for speedier voter service, shorter line-ups, and faster tallies after the polls close.

Poll workers will use laptops, providing them with secure access to the voters list.

Scanners will be available to scan voter information cards in order to find them more quickly on the list.

Printers will be provided at polling stations in order to print ballots on demand and vote-counting machines will accurately record ballots and rapidly produce end-of-poll results.

The vote counter is also capable of providing a summary of all election results, including the number of rejected and declined ballots and the total number of ballots cast.

According to Elections Manitoba, vote-counting machines, or tabulators, feature very high levels of security to maintain the integrity of the vote.

These machines have undergone rigorous testing. They are not connected to the internet and only certain authorized election officials will be able to access them.

Again, what won't change this year is the use of the familiar paper ballots. These ballots will, however, have built-in security features to ensure that only official Elections Manitoba ballots are accepted by the tabulator.

The ballots themselves will be retained for a period of time afterward for recount purposes.

While it's not guaranteed that every polling station across the province will be similarly equipped, Elections Manitoba estimates that at least 85 percent of voters will vote at stations using these more advanced technologies.

This year, voters will be able to cast their ballot at any polling station in their electoral division, whether for advance voting or on election day.

# Local Dance Company Performs at Indigenous Peoples Day Event

By Sara Beth Dacombe

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On Wednesday, June 21, a competitive dance group from Prairie Soul Dance Company in Niverville performed at the Manitoba Legislative for the National Indigenous Peoples Day prayer breakfast, an event organized by Encounter Life Ministries in Winnipeg, Canada Awakenings Ministries in Niverville, and other local leaders.

The event was attended by a variety of Manitoba's top dignitaries, including Premier Heather Stefansson, Opposition Leader Wab Kinew, and Grand Chief Cathy Merrick of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs.

## ART AS ADVOCACY

In the fall of 2022, Prairie Soul began working with Canada Awakenings and Peter Yellowquill, a residential school survivor and former chief of Long Plains First Nation, to teach dance students and their audiences about inclusivity, Indigenous issues, and truth and reconciliation.

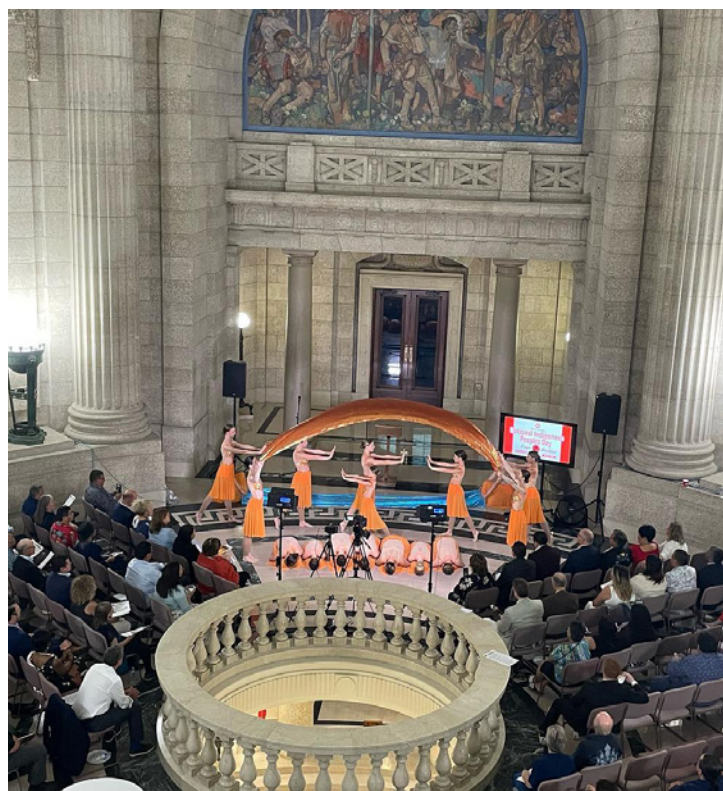
When Canada Awakenings approached Prairie Soul with the opportunity to perform for National Indigenous Peoples Day in 2023, the group accepted.

The dance presented by Prairie Soul involved 17 students ranging in age from 10 to 20 and incorporated elements of ballet, jazz, contemporary, and lyrical movement.

The music selected for the dance was "O Siem" by Susan Aglukark. The lyrics, which promote inclusivity by describing humankind as one family, is sung in both Inuktitut and English.

"The song, 'O Siem,' is by award-winning Canadian artist Susan Aglukark, who is an activist for the Inuit culture and Indigenous people in Canada. The song calls for inclusivity and acceptance while protesting racism and prejudice," says Melanie Ducharme and Danielle Auld, owners of Prairie Soul. "Together with our students, we had the opportunity to work alongside this group of amazing individuals throughout the season. With their guidance, our creative vision and interpretation of 'O Siem' came together. The dance reflects Susan Aglukark's message, truth and reconciliation, and working together towards positive change."

The group also used performance outfits as a medium to highlight the theme.



The performance at the Legislature on June 21.

BRITTANY CADIEUX

"We selected orange costumes to represent Orange Shirt Day and the symbol of forced assimilation of Indigenous children that the residential school system enforced. Sequins on the costume sparkle when they reflect light, symbolizing hope."

As a studio, Ducharme and Auld felt it was an honour and a privilege to be included in the event.

"We are grateful for the opportunity to share our creative work with the community of Manitoba," they say.

## POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

Sarah Brandt of Niverville is a parent of one of the dancers and was integral in connecting the dance studio with Canada Awakenings.

Brandt supports the work of all Canadians toward truth and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, and she is pleased that her daughter Lexy had the opportunity to perform for so many Manitoba leaders.

"To have my daughter dance in this historical moment is an honour for me as her mom because of the deep friendship I hold with Peter Yellowquill, and my continued partnership with both him, his wife Sheila, and Roger Armbruster from Canada Awakenings Ministries to educate and evoke change at a heart level,"

says Brandt.

Brandt is pleased to see that students at Prairie Soul are taught to take what they are passionate about and use that avenue to positively affect change in the community.

"Through the gentle leading and example that Dee and Mel are setting, they are learning that in dance there is space to listen, receive, and create," Brandt says. "When you trust your daughter and her passion to someone to train and lead them, these are the qualities you could only hope for in directors."

At the age of 13, Lexy says that she is learning important information about Indigenous history in Canada and can connect to their experiences through the art of dance.

"When I perform 'O Siem,' Miss Mel and Miss Dee often tell us to evoke emotion so that the dance tells the story," Lexy says. "So I think of my friend Peter [Yellowquill], who was in a residential school. He told us that he didn't get Christmas presents as a kid and that makes me feel sad. And I want to do something about it. I also like that by dancing, it joins what I love to do with what my mom loves to do and so we can work together."

Together with Lexy, Brandt feels that the arts can express what

words alone often fail to convey.

"When the students dance this piece, you can feel it in the room. It bypasses political views and impacts the soul," says Brandt. "There have been many words spoken hoping to effect change, but now they are making room for the arts, where music and dance speak the language of the heart, which is the language that every nation understands."

After the performance, Yellowquill reflected on his experience watching the dance for the first time.

"I could feel the effect of their work and conviction," says Yellowquill. "So did the audience. I was pleased and honoured to be there to watch and hear and was deeply moved... Love conquers, and must and will conquer, all."

## LOCAL SUPPORT FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

Roger Armbruster, director of Canada Awakenings, was pleased to be able to network with Encounter Life Ministries, a not-for-profit Indigenous organization in Winnipeg, to organize the prayer breakfast. One of their goals was to get participation from as many leaders in Manitoba as possible.

"Both the premier and the opposition leader readily agreed to attend, and to give their support," says Armbruster. "So upon this foundation, we have been building towards this event for the past two months now, and the feedback has all been positive and encouraging."

A handful of Manitoba MLAs were in attendance, as well as Lieutenant Governor Anita R. Neville, Grand Chief Scott Anderson of the Island Lake Tribal Council, and other Indigenous leaders and elders.

"[Neville] even allowed Grand Chief Cathy Merrick of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs to speak ahead of her, something that was not the normal protocol prior to this ceremony," says Armbruster. "There still remains much more to be done on the journey towards truth and reconciliation, but some important steps towards a more egalitarian system were taken yesterday."

Armbruster says that Niverville was very well represented at the ceremony, as town councillor Bill Fast, former mayor Clare Braun, and many others were in attendance.



Although renovations are still underway in Niverville, it will be similar in appearance to this location on McGillivray Boulevard in Winnipeg.

ANDREA MUNDIE

# Almond Nail Bar Coming to Niverville

By Sara Beth Dacombe

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A new franchise is coming to Niverville. Canadian-owned and Vancouver-based Almond Nail Bar, a professional nail service, will open its first location in Manitoba outside of Winnipeg.

The city is currently home to 12 locations and the company is growing.

The owners say that Niverville is a great choice for the upcoming franchise outlet. They typically look for engaged communities that value high-quality experiences.

“Almond Nail Bar has received numerous requests for a location in Niverville and has had a few people ask to open a location there,” says Andrea Mundie of Almond Nail Bar. “It is close to Winnipeg, so we have had customers make the drive, but most customers like to have their nails as a part of their self-care and hygiene routine, and their visits are every two to four weeks. So being in the market where they live is important.”

Almond Nail Bar serves a wide range of customers, typically women between the ages of 25 and 75.

They also offer children’s

services, “so moms are not trying to manage one more thing, like childcare, to get their nails done.”

Mundie says that the social aspect of weekly manicures is very popular, especially for those who have retired, and the company’s nail specialists eventually see a regular crowd of people who come in almost every week.

“They feel like family, and we become very close to our customers,” says Mundie.

Almond Nail Bar strives to stay on top of any new and unique nail trends or leaps forward in skincare or nail-care technology or products.

They are always seeking new ways to improve the nailcare industry.

Some initiatives they’re actively working on include eliminating products with toxic fumes, reducing nail-filing dust, and remaining diligent about their high standards in sanitation.

The team at Almond Nail Bar has also created an alternative to acrylic nails that gives customers more hygienic, fume-free experience, which Mundie says is an industry-first.

“Almond has created an entirely new artificial nail system that is an alternative

to acrylic nails,” says Mundie. “This system and all of the nail services, such as ‘gel polish’ and ‘magic polish,’ are fume-free. This protects the customers and the nail technicians. The proprietary system includes a protective layer under it that prevents nail damage, and they soak off which prevents further damage, and excessive removal dust. Likewise, the sanitation standards in the process and in the store design are extremely high. This innovation has the potential to change the industry.”

Mundie is pleased to be able to bring Niverville the

highest quality experience in nail salons.

Not only that, but she wants people to think of Almond Nail Bar as the exact picture in their mind when they think of nail bars.

What makes her inspired to stay at the top of the field in nail aesthetics? Ensuring that clients are comfortable and confident to extend to the company their genuine trust and satisfaction.

Mundie says that although renovations have begun at the retail site in Niverville, dates for completion and grand opening are still to be determined.



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# Blacksmith Hoping to Forge Ahead with Niverville Classes

By Brenda Sawatzky

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Cameron Bennett is the director and brainchild of Forging Ahead Inc., a non-profit charity on a mission to help those who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) find creative ways to work through their stress.

This summer, Bennett intends to take his mission beyond the blacksmith shop, located at his home in St. Adolphe, to the great outdoors at the Niverville Community Resource and Recreation Centre (CRRCC) where he'll offer workshops to anyone's who's interested in learning the fine art of working with metal.

"I like to teach people the basics," Bennett says. "If they have the bug and the itch for [metalworking, which] helped me so much, then I will gladly support them as they continue on."

Bennett served in the Canadian military for two decades, during which time he was actively engaged in a peacekeeping tour in the former Yugoslavia and then deployed on three combat missions in Afghanistan.

He closed out his military career as an aviation technician before his medical release in 2018 due to injuries, both physical and mental.

It took Bennett some time and effort to work through the inner conflict that raged in him long after his release.

Luckily, he found the one thing that calmed his spirit, kept his focus, and left him with a deep sense of accomplishment: blacksmithing.

In 2020, Bennett set out to share his love of metalworking with other



Cameron Bennett in his workshop in St. Adolphe.

▣ BRENDA SAWATZKY

PTSD sufferers. He outfitted his backyard shop for blacksmithing and registered his charity.

Just three years later, Bennett is hoping to expand his vision and open a spacious new shop in Niverville.

"I'm trying to create a vision of what I saw in Haliburton, Ontario," Bennett says. "It's a small cottage community that was extremely [attractive] because of the money that came in from the cultural arts [community]. Everything from blacksmithing, woodworking, painting, glassmaking, pottery, and all that stuff."

There, he says, the community's landscape is rife with works of local art, creating a vibrant tourist

attraction.

"Their economy is also doing great in the wintertime due to the fact that they have lots of people coming in to take classes," adds Bennett. "That's honestly my goal. The only difference is that I don't want it to be a for-profit organization. I want all the proceeds to go to mental health and wellness."

If Bennett's dream comes to full fruition, he'll see the addition of other artisans and craftspeople to his creative arts endeavour, offering a well-rounded array of classes to help people manage their mental health through art therapy.

"I'm trying to make this a community charity," Bennett says. "I'm

literally trying to create Canada's first mental health centre based upon alternative arts and crafts."

It's a lofty goal, but Bennett believes in its potential to heal and he believes in the philanthropic community that can help make it happen.

The outdoor popup shops he hopes to offer this summer will act as the springboard to the greater plan. If he can raise approximately \$12,000 in funds in the coming weeks, Bennett will have the investment needed to purchase the equipment and offer the open-air workshops.

Custom-made coal-burning forges are part of that plan.

"It's a cleaner burning coal so it

has less of a carbon footprint," Bennett says. "Coal forges are actually easier to store outside and they're not as dangerous because they don't have any gasses or flammable liquids that are kept under pressure. And you can get them a lot hotter and do a lot more things with them."

Proceeds from the outdoor workshops will go towards the purchase or lease of space in Niverville to get his art centre off the ground.

The Canadian Manitoba Veterans Support Group, he says, has already donated \$2,000 towards his cause.

Through an information booth set up at this year's Niverville Olde Tyme Country Fair, he received another \$350 from generous individuals.

He hopes other individuals and corporate groups will come alongside to partner with him.

In the meantime, Bennett will continue to fulfill custom orders from his home-based workshop. As always, the proceeds from his creations funnel right back into the charity to help people suffering from PTSD.

Currently he's working on a red-wood cedar table with decorative metal trim and a three-foot octopus lawn ornament.

He's trained veterans from the area and as far away as Kenora in the blacksmithing craft.

Recently, the Royal Canadian Legion informed him that his charity will be one of the recipients of Remembrance Day poppy sale proceeds.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more, or to donate, visit: [www.forgingaheadinc.org](http://www.forgingaheadinc.org)

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# Commentary

## Taking It Personally: Beware Personality Profiles that Let Us Down

By Daniel Dacombe

"I'm an ENFJ. What are you? You seem like more of an I to me... you know, an introvert. Have they tested you yet?"

If you've worked in professional settings since the 90s or early 2000s, you might have heard talk like this around the office.

No one's speaking in code or a different language. They're just referring to the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), a personality test that originated in the work of psychologist Carl Jung.

This personality test assigns people letters in four categories. It purports to describe our innate tendencies for thinking, feeling, and behaviour.

For a time, the MBTI was the industry standard for big businesses, governments, and employment agencies trying to get to the bottom of their employees' personalities and figure out what made them tick... and how to make them tick more productively.

The MBTI became so popular that the 16 different Myers-Briggs personality types launched straight out of the world of business analysis and became part of our pop culture—especially in the early days of the internet, when people could take the MBTI test and use its resulting four letters to supposedly identify what kind of person they were.

The MBTI tests people on whether they're extroverted or introverted (E or I), sensory or intuitive (S or I), thinking or feeling (T or F), and judging or perceiving (J or P).

You may have even taken the test yourself, and like many others found it to describe you accurately.

If you've heard of the MBTI, you may be surprised to know that it doesn't get much use anymore outside of its use in business or



DEPOSITPHOTOS

organizational psychology circles.

In fact, the MBTI has experienced significant criticism, to the point that it's dismissed by a majority of experts as pseudoscience.

And it's not just the Myers-Briggs test. Many personality profile systems have come under scrutiny as researchers try to ask deeper and deeper questions about what makes us who we are.

We can learn a great deal from the decades of research that have created the field of personality psychology. We can also learn why we should be cautious about the tests that claim to define us.

All personality tests, from ones designed in rigorous academic settings to the Facebook quizzes that tell you what kind of kitchen appliance/Hogwarts House/hot dog topping/Star Wars character you are, can fall into one of two categories: trait-based and type-based.

Trait-based tests assess someone based on the strength of particular characteristics, whereas type-based tests seek to place individuals into a

set number of categories.

The MBTI is probably the best-known example of a type-based personality test, though others exist.

When it comes to trait-based tests, the most widely used by academics and personality psychologists tend to be based on a system known as the "big five"—a series of five characteristics—openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism—that are rated along a scale.

These measures, also called OCEAN, form the basis for a large number of trait-based tests used in academic, business, and clinical settings.

When evaluating if any psychological tool is useful and evidence-based, typically we look at two main factors: the tool's validity (whether the tool measures what it attempts to measure) and the tool's reliability (whether its results are consistent over time).

As researchers have assessed the MBTI, its support according to these two factors has ranged from

inconclusive to conclusively poor.

For one thing, the results aren't always consistent when the test is taken by the same person at different times. This indicates poor reliability.

For another, the underlying reasoning for placing people into one of 16 personality types is dubious at best, and research has so far been unable to deliver a convincing case that the Myers-Briggs typology accurately describes real categories of human personality—which calls into question the tool's validity.

To make matters worse, despite the fact that its usefulness is in question, the results of the MBTI were used for decades in the workplace to determine how to make employees more productive, or even to determine whether people would be hired for certain jobs.

This is especially unfortunate when you consider that all personality profiles reflect a snapshot of a person and how they may function under certain circumstances. They say nothing about how dedicated, resourceful, or skilled that person

can be in overcoming obstacles.

Instead of being used to learn more about ourselves, type-based personality profiling too often creates situations in which people are placed into boxes, as though they won't grow or change for the rest of their lives.

That doesn't mean that we can't learn anything about our personalities.

By contrast, personality profiling based on OCEAN, or other trait analysis, is supported by much more robust evidence. They tend to be used more frequently in academic and clinical settings.

While these tests can't necessarily tell us how good an employee someone will be, they seem to provide a more rounded and accurate assessment of a person's personality—that is, with the understanding that this assessment is carried out at one very particular point in a person's life. The expectation is that they will change.

OCEAN-based profiles can give people the benefit of learning more about themselves and how they work without making them feel trapped or pigeonholed.

So just be slightly wary of any assessment that promises to tell you who you really are. Personality tests, whether trait-oriented or type-oriented, can be useful tools to give us insights into ourselves and how we work, as well as how we can improve ourselves. There's nothing wrong with wanting to understand ourselves better.

The real problem arises when we treat these results as unchanging and rigid—or worse yet, prescriptive.

The best information we've learned about human personalities is that they are deep, complex, and subject to change as we grow over time.

And that's a very good, and very human, thing.

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# Sport & Recreation



Lauren Evason of St. Adolphe.

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## Evason Selected for Youth Olympics Curling Trials

By Ty Dilello

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St. Adolphe's Lauren Evason, alongside Jaxon Hiebert of Sherwood Park, Alberta, have been selected as one of two mixed doubles finalist curling teams for Team Canada at the 2024 Youth Olympics in Gangwon, South Korea.

The Evason-Hiebert team, and as the second pairing, will work with Curling Canada coaches at an upcoming training camp in Edmonton.

They will then compete at the end of August in a best-of-seven series to see which pair will represent Team Canada.

In order to be eligible to apply for the four-person or mixed doubles team at the Youth Olympics, players needed to either qualify for the U18 Canadian Curling Championships or the Canada Games.

"I had qualified for the U18s in Timmins, so I had to complete my application before the event so that Curling Canada could scout me during the competition," says Evason. "For the application itself, there was a written

component, and I needed two references. And I had to include my grades, past report cards, and all my athletic achievements. I didn't really have any expectations for the four-person or mixed doubles team. Either way, I knew it was an honour to be selected."

When Evason, a Grade 11 student at École Régional Gabrielle-Roy in Île-des-Chênes, received the email that she had been selected as a finalist for the mixed doubles team, she was beyond shocked and excited.

"I had heard rumours that those who had made the team had already been notified, so by early April I had accepted that I wasn't going to hear back from the committee," says Evason. "I was definitely disappointed at first, but I was content with their decision and was very excited for whoever was picked."

However, it turned out that all hope was not lost.

"I got the email while in the car with my friend and her mom on our way home from her dance recital, and I was totally speechless," she continues. "I couldn't believe

what I was reading, and I truly thought I was dreaming. I couldn't wait to get home to tell my parents, not knowing they had also gotten the email."

Despite hearing the news some time ago, Evason says that she wasn't allowed to talk about it with anyone until the Canadian Olympic Committee made the official announcement—which finally happened last week.

"I am just so grateful to have been chosen for this opportunity. And although it feels a lot more real now that it has been announced, it hasn't truly sunk in yet."

Evason knows Hiebert, her partner, because they both competed at the U18 championships.

They didn't chat at the Nationals, but they are now starting to get to know each other a bit since they've been introduced as partners.

The Curling Canada training camp will take place from August 27 to September 4. The camp will begin with on- and off-ice training on Sunday, with the games kicking off on August 30.

At the event, a best-of-seven series will determine who goes to South Korea as Team Canada. The other team will serve as alternates but not travel to the Games.

Evason has a full life outside of curling. She's also a self-taught baker who runs Baked Creations by Lauren.

And with wedding season starting up, she's entering a particularly busy and challenging time of year.

"I make cakes for all occasions," she says. "I am self-taught other than watching YouTube videos to try and perfect certain techniques, and I took a cookie decorating class to learn the basics of royal icing. I really enjoy creating new cakes, and my favourite part is seeing people's faces when they receive their cake or treats."

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you're interested in having a cake made, or cupcakes/cookies, send inquiries to laurenevason@gmail.com. She can also be found on Instagram: @bakedcreationsbylauren

### IN BRIEF

## Barnabe Wins Volleyball Manitoba Award

By Ty Dilello

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Last month, Ste. Agathe's own Logan Barnabe was awarded the 15U Volleyball Player of the Year by Volleyball Manitoba.

He was also named the tournament MVP at the recent 15U Provincial Volleyball Championships, held in Niverville.

Barnabe, a Grade Nine student at École Régional Gabrielle-Roy in Île-des-Chênes, plays his club volleyball for 204, one of the top young teams in the country.

That team finished fifth overall in Canada at the 15U Volleyball Nationals in Edmonton at the end of May.

"Our 204 season was a great success, winning the provincial 15U volleyball championship," says Barnabe. "It was especially meaningful for me and a few other of my teammates—Colin Vermette, Marek Goller, Tristan Cousineau—being from the Ste. Agathe/Niverville area. The vibe at the Niverville CRRC was electric with all the parents and fans cheering us on in the gold medal game."

After the provincial championship, Barnabe's 204 team was ranked number one in Manitoba when they went to Nationals.

Being in the top tier, his team competed against the best in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Quebec.

"We battled hard and lost a devastating match 15-13 in the third set to one of the best teams in Canada and ended up placing fifth overall," Barnabe says. "There were 80 different 15U teams competing at the Nationals tournament, so I was very proud of our team and all that we had accomplished together."

Barnabe was humbled and honoured to be named the 2023 Volleyball Manitoba 15U Male Player of the Year.

"There are so many incredible athletes that I play with and against who were just as deserving," he says. "It obviously means a lot to be recognized for the hard work I put in to improve my game this year. But more important were my teammates, who pushed me to be better in practice and games. Also, my amazing coaches who trusted me with the captaincy of the team and worked so hard to help me improve my skills as a volleyball player."

Up next for Barnabe is next month's North American Indigenous Games, which will be held in Halifax, Nova Scotia. He will be playing as a part of Team Manitoba.

"As a Metis athlete, I am super excited to represent Manitoba in Halifax and spend time with my teammates. We've had a few training sessions, and I believe we have a very talented group. I'm very excited to meet our competitors from across North America at these games. I've never been to the east coast before, so it'll be good to explore a bit and make good memories in a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and hopefully bring home a gold medal."

Barnabe is looking forward to continuing his high school volleyball seasons at École Régional Gabrielle-Roy and continue with club volleyball up to the 18U age level.

"I'm hoping to play at the university level one day, and I will continue to work as hard as I can to achieve these goals. But only time will tell."



# East and Gagnon Take Home Awards

By Ty Dilello

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A couple of best buds from Niverville and Ste. Agathe received awards at the Manitoba Major Junior Hockey League (MMJHL) awards banquet on May 17.

Hayden Fast (Niverville) and Denis Gagnon (Ste. Agathe) have grown up playing hockey together on various teams, starting from Niverville Clippers Peewees to the Eastman Selects U18AAA, and this year they rostered together for the St. Vital Junior Victorias in the MMJHL.

Both players played close to 70 games this season, including exhibition, regular season, and playoffs.

The 2023 MMJHL awards night was very memorable, as Gagnon was named a Second Team All-Star and Hayden Fast took home the MMJHL's Rookie of the Year.

Fast had put up 59 points in 43 games in the regular season and 18 points in 18 games in the long playoff run.

"Winning Rookie of the Year was one of my goals from the start



Hayden Fast and Denis Gagnon get recognition at the MMJHL Awards. GREG FAST



of the season, and it means a lot to have accomplished that and contributed to the Victorias' success this season," says Fast.

This year's Victorias team had a lot of amazing athletes, with other teammates also being recognized for their hard work and dedication, including those who received league scholarship awards for their post-secondary education.

The Victorias went on their longest playoff run in 16 years and made it to the finals, experiencing some epic comebacks along the

way.

Although they ultimately lost to a very talented St. James Canucks team in the finals, the Victorias still managed to hold their heads high.

Gagnon continued his education at the University of Manitoba throughout the season and Fast worked a full-time job in addition to serving as assistant coach of the Eastman U13AA boys team, who were undefeated in the regular season and went on to win the league championship.

Looking ahead to next season, Gagnon's plans are to finish his last year with the St. Vital Victorias while further pursuing his education degree.

Fast has signed with the Soderhamn/Ljusne HC J20 team in Sweden, with the opportunity to play Division 2 pro hockey and continue his hockey career.

"My agent reached out to me not long after my last contract ended and just asked what my plans were for the upcoming season, and I was still very unsure at that time," says Fast. "I didn't even know if I was going to play another year of competitive hockey to begin with, so I jumped at the idea of going overseas, as that's been a dream of mine for a long time. So I felt very blessed. Hopefully, I can keep growing as a hockey player and a person next season."

The duo would like to acknowledge the great community support and encouragement they receive by so many businesses, family, and friends in Niverville and Ste. Agathe that enable them to play competitive hockey.

# Nighthawks Make Moves at 2023 MJHL Draft

By Ty Dilello

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The Niverville Nighthawks had a big day at the 2023 MJHL Draft on Sunday, June 4 at the Alt Hotel in downtown Winnipeg, making five selections and trading for a new potential starting goaltender.

The draft highlighted players who are freshly eligible to play in the MJHL, those who are registered to play hockey in Manitoba according to Hockey Manitoba regulations and were born in 2007.

To start the day, the Nighthawks made a trade. They received 18-year-old goaltender Keegan Gordon from the Winnipeg Freeze in exchange for a 2023 draft pick and future considerations.

Despite playing on the last-place Winnipeg Freeze last season, Gordon put up an exceptional .915 save percentage, which is even more incredible considering the fact that his record on the year was 2-22-2.

"We identified Keegan a while back and felt like he was the guy who could take us to the next level," says Nighthawks head coach and general manager Kelvin Cech. "With Raiden LeGall also waiting to play this season,

we're happy with our two goaltenders for next season. There's a lot of things that we need to do to upgrade the line-up and fill some holes, but that's a good place to start in the net today with this pickup."

When the draft began, the Nighthawks owned the fifth overall pick in the first round and promptly selected forward Gavin Holod of Stonewall. Last season, Holod played U18 AAA hockey with the Interlake Lightning and scored 27 points in 44 games.

Cech notes that he is very happy that Holod slid to the fifth spot, as he likely would have selected him if they'd had the first overall pick.

"Our scouting staff has been watching Gavin all season and looked at him really closely," says Cech. "So when he was there for us when it was our turn to pick, we were ecstatic."

Holod will attend the Nighthawks training camp at the end of summer, and then a decision will be made by the staff if he's ready for MJHL hockey or if he'll need another year of seasoning at the U18 level.

With the nineteenth overall pick in the second round, the

Nighthawks selected forward Caleb Moore from St. Adolphe. Moore played U17 AAA hockey this past season with the Eastman Selects and scored 51 points in 36 games.

"We drafted Caleb because he is a good player and a good human, and it's just a bonus that he's a local player. He's an awesome kid, and we're looking forward to seeing him at camp as well."

With the first pick in the fourth round—and the forty-third overall—the Nighthawks chose defenceman Nathan Forster from Lorette. Forster played U17 AAA hockey with the Eastman Selects this past season and scored 31 points in 35 games.

With the seventy-fifth pick in the sixth round, the Nighthawks drafted defenceman Luke Ross from Winnipeg. Ross played hockey with the RHA U16 prep program last season and scored 36 points in 35 games.

Finally, with pick 102 in the eighth round, the Nighthawks selected netminder Quinn Burfoot, also of Winnipeg. Burfoot played for the Pilot Mound Hockey Academy U17 prep team last season and had a 2-11-3 record with

an .877 save percentage.

"We've had Quinn out to a couple of our camps, and we just really like his game and his style and think he's got a bright future in the next few years—and we plan on it being with us," says Cech. "We also added a pair of young defencemen that will develop over the next year or so and will hopefully be part of the Nighthawks in the future."

At the end of the day, Cech is extremely pleased with the team's draft results. They were able to draft pretty much everyone they wanted off their list and even traded for a goaltender who should be able to step in and make an impact in the coming season.

"We walked away from this draft with exactly what we wanted. So we're pumped that the future of the club looks even brighter right now."

Going forward, the team's attention now shifts to training camp and building the roster.

On June 1, free agency opened up across the country at the Junior A level. This means that many players will be on the move, and the Nighthawks will be active in bolstering their line-up in time for September.

## Ambassador Canadian Reformed Church

### The Good King

God is good. People will often bring that truth into conflict with his power. How does an all-powerful God create a world in which the sort of evil that happens today happens? There is a three-part answer to that question.

For one, God did not create the world as we see it today. God created everything good. It was Adam and Eve who, through their disobedience, brought evil and death into the world. Mankind was separated from the life of God and was subjected to sin and misery. It is not God, but men and women, through their disobedience, that create pain and misery so prevalent in the world today.

God's goodness is further shown in that when he saw what had become of the beautiful creation he had made through humanity's sin, he had mercy on his creation. He sent his Son to die, to suffer and die, to suffer an anguish that no other human has experienced, to offer mankind a way back to the righteousness and holiness that was the state of the original creation.

In that, he uses the futility and suffering of this world to point mankind to the salvation that is offered in his Son, Jesus Christ. And for those who come to Jesus Christ, we trust that just as God used suffering in the life of Christ for the good of the world; he also uses our suffering for the good of the world. So we see that God's goodness is shown by using the evil we experience for a greater purpose.

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# Arts & Entertainment

## Niverville's 2023 Fair the Smoothest Yet

By Jennifer Lavin

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For another year, the Niverville Old Tyme Country Fair was a rousing success. With excellent weather and huge attendance, the fair committee's general manager, Dustin Krahn, says that the event went off almost flawlessly.

Planning and execution for each year's fair begins more or less immediately after the preceding one, and Krahn says that all the preparation throughout the previous 12 months was smooth-sailing.

"We had a few new faces join the planning committee, which is always a big help and allows us to spread things out and make everyone's job a little bit easier," Krahn says.

The committee was blessed with a good number of volunteers this year. Krahn says they were a little short on setup volunteers, but the crew began putting everything up a day early to compensate and the issue worked itself out.

There were no significant glitches throughout the weekend outside of an occasional hiccup with a ticket scanner or point of sale machine—certainly nothing that affected the event as a whole.

"All in all, I would say this was the smoothest fair I've been a part of in terms of how things all unfolded," says Krahn. "Aside from a few things running about ten minutes late on Saturday, everything ran very smoothly and most of the acts stayed within their time or worked with us to get back on schedule. We were well prepared with a solid plan this year and that certainly paid off for all of us behind the scenes."

In 2022, the fair saw some long lineups from people looking to purchase tickets, due to issues with the point of sale machines and internet connectivity. But the committee learned some lessons from that experience and made some adjustments for 2023. New machines this year simplified and sped up the process of buying tickets. There were also a lot fewer cash transactions and a significant increase in the number of pre-purchase transactions.

Fairgoers may be surprised to learn that admission fees only cover about 40 percent of the cost of the event.

"Obviously there is a lot of ground to cover to get from 40 percent to 100



The Olde Tyme Country Fair went off without a hitch this summer.

RENATO ROCHA

percent," Krahn says. "If you're wondering how we make it all work, you can turn your eyes to our sponsors. They are the ones who step up and bring this home for all of us... We hope that the community and fairgoers really take to heart and understand how big of a part the sponsors play in making this event happen and allowing us to do things that you will not see at many other festivals of our size."

Krahn adds that throwing a fair of this size is certainly not without

risk, the most significant of which is always the weather.

"Unfortunately, no amount of planning will ever get around that unknown. It is the biggest risk we take every year, because regardless of what the weather winds up being, we are committed to all of the various artists, entertainers, and contractors that we hire."

This is why the fair's sponsors are so pivotal, he explains.

"They help us in a big way by easing that pressure and sharing in the

risk that it takes to host an event like this," says Krahn.

Although there are too many people who give of their time and energy to make the fair a reality, he does want to single out a few key personnel.

Raesha Enns and Irene Unrau were in charge of the mainstage. This already challenging task got even more challenging this year, as there were twice as many bands as usual. Organizing the soundchecks and schedules is a huge job in and

of itself, but running the stage also involves providing transportation, accommodations, and meals for the performers, among other things.

"Raesha also tends to order me food and remind me to eat during fair weekend," Krahn says. "So that deserves a special shoutout as well!"

This year, Lorissa Teichmann and Jenny Trinkies took on the Kids Zone. Krahn says that the committee had a goal to do more with the Kids Zone in 2023 and that Teichmann and Trinkies not only made huge strides to improve this offering but also have lots of ideas to keep improving it into the future.

Dana Reuther took on the task of organizing the parade in 2023.

"The modified parade route worked well and allowed traffic to flow through town using the First Street South detour," Krahn says. "This is as opposed to previous years, where both detours at one time or another crossed paths with the parade."

Finally, Krahn says that he is thankful to all the businesses on Niverville's Main Street for accommodating the event.

"With reduced access and parking, we are well aware that the fair can be a fairly large inconvenience for some of them," he says. "We owe them a very special thank you for their patience and for always being supportive of us."

Planning for the Niverville Olde Tyme Country Fair 2024 is already underway. In fact, the committee began putting pieces together in April and they've already sent offers to some potential acts.

Krahn would love to see more people join the planning committee come September so that each role can be spread out a little more, allowing a full team to work on each project instead of just a single volunteer.

"It really just boils down to not overworking or burning people out. With a team, things tend to be a lot more fun. There are more ideas being shared, and the task at hand is simply a lot easier to take on. So we really want to focus on that more in the coming years."

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you are interested in joining the volunteer squad, please email: [volunteers@nivervillefair.com](mailto:volunteers@nivervillefair.com).

# Author from Niverville Wins Literary Award for Debut Novel

By Jennifer Lavin

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On June 7, former Niverville resident K.R. Byggdin, who currently resides in Halifax, was awarded the Thomas Raddall Atlantic Fiction Award for their debut novel, *Wonder World*.

The Raddall jury awarded the \$30,000 prize for the book, writing, "As funny and sassy as it is poignant and observant, *Wonder World* is a virtuoso exploration of love and hope, a story of building bridges to family and community while staying true to oneself."

The award was established in 1991 by noted Canadian author Thomas Head Raddall and continues with ongoing support from the Raddall family. The award is granted in appreciation of great fiction and to provide what the Raddall family calls "the gift of time and peace of mind" for the winning author to continue their writing.

The prize money will indeed give Byggdin time and peace of mind as they continue work on a new novel and begin their studies at the University of Guelph to earn a master's degree in Fine Arts, Creative Writing.

Byggdin says that the award is extra special since it is, to their knowledge, the only major literary prize in Canada that is sponsored by a family rather than a corporation. The Raddall family remains active in the stewardship and maintenance of the award.

In the acknowledgements of *Wonder World*, Byggdin calls the book "a complicated, queer love story to the prairies."

And that is indeed how it reads.

The main character, Isaac, grew up on the prairies but then moved to the east coast. A death in the family sees him return to his small Manitoba town and brings back all the joys and complications of life there.

Byggdin, who identifies as queer and non-binary and uses they/them/their pronouns, delivered a powerful acceptance



K.R. Byggdin, formerly of Niverville, has won a major literary prize. © C/O K.R. BYGGDIN

speech at the awards ceremony.

"Now more than ever we need more stories of queer and trans joy in the face of ignorance and oppression that seeks to erase us from history and the present moment," they said. "We will not be silent and we will never disappear. For those in the audience who do not identify as two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer: we need you too. We need you to be loud and firm in denouncing the division and oppression that's on the rise."

Byggdin is particularly proud that their win occurred during Pride month.

"It was really, really nice and beautiful and touching to have such a positive response from the crowd. It meant a lot this year in particular with all the difficult politics that we're seeing in Canada with queer and trans folks just fighting for their right to exist and be safe."

Growing up in rural Manitoba, Byggdin notes that there were not many opportunities to talk to or even see LGBTQ2S+ people. They recall their first Pride events in Winnipeg and attending a coffeehouse where local musicians, storytellers, comedians, and drag

artists etc would come to perform.

"I remember that as a queer, non-binary, closeted person, I was scared to even go to the parade because I thought I might be noticed," they say. "But I did think I could go to this coffeehouse. I remember the glow in my heart as I sat down in that audience and listened to the singers. There was so much joy and happiness in the room and it felt like I belonged."

Byggdin says that those coffeehouse experiences were the first few glimpses they had of members of the LGBTQ2S+ community being truly accepted for who they were. And it was where Byggdin began the journey of accepting themselves for the first time as well.

As Pride events begin to show up in more small towns, both in southern Manitoba and across the country, Byggdin says they are grateful to see representation for the queer people who have always been here but have not been getting a chance to live their lives openly.

"When I was growing up, I can only imagine what it would have been like for me to know that Pride was happening in my small town or communities nearby," Byggdin says. "It can be a very scary thing

to walk down Main Street in Steinbach as a visibly queer, trans person if you're by yourself, so having these opportunities to be in large, happy groups together remind ourselves that we do belong and get that moment of knowing that we're here in numbers and that we have friends and allies in this community."

Besides showing up and celebrating at Pride events, Byggdin points out that so much can be done by allies to confront homophobia or transphobia when it comes up, even in everyday conversation.

"It can be scary to confront the hate and the very real violence and vandalism that can occur against queer and trans folks but when people don't hear that gentle pushback in conversation, it can be all too easy [for them] to assume that everyone around them thinks the same way," they say. "I don't think you need to be intense about it, but I think people underestimate the power of a conversation."

Byggdin hopes that *Wonder World* has helped to inspire conversations like these and spread the message that there is nothing wrong or broken about who we are.

*Wonder World* is now available to purchase at The Community General Store in Niverville and Byggdin is pleased about the novel being available in their hometown.

"It was such a beautiful moment for me to know that my book is now available in my hometown," they say. "To know that there's a place in my hometown with a book that means so much to me in relation to a town that means so much to me... It's just really exciting and wonderful to me!"

Whether it's writing an award-winning novel, marching in a parade, or conversing with friends, Byggdin has a simple suggestion for how to begin: "Just lead with love and I think good things will happen from there."

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