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LOCAL NEWS

Local Christian School Gets More Likely

■ Steinbach Christian School is soliciting interest from local families about opening a new campus in Niverville.

Details on Page 3



LOCAL NEWS

U.S. Tariffs and Shopping

■ The relationship between Canada and the U.S. has been jolted since Donald Trump was inaugurated for his second term. His tariff threats have changed many people's view of America—including shopping habits.

Details on Page 9

SPORTS & REC

CRRC Hosts Men's V-ball Championship

■ The men's CCAA volleyball championship is coming to Niverville this month, hosted by Providence College.

Details on Page 14

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Local Photographer Explores the Wild

■ In recent weeks, Jen Normand of New Bothwell has been taking her wildlife photography to a whole new level.

Details on Page 18

First Steps Taken for Large Mixed Use Development in Niverville

» READ MORE ON PAGE 12

» BRENDA SAWATZKY

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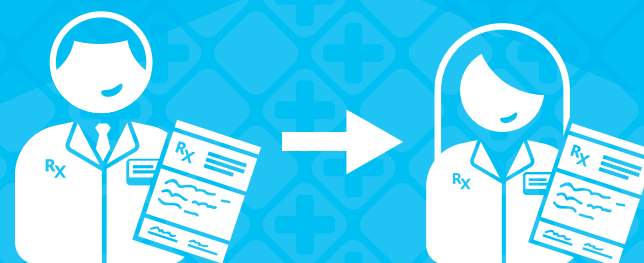


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WHAT'S INSIDE

Niverville Private Christian School Gets More Likely	3
Not Your Average Day Job, Part One: Seismic Exploration Over Land and Sea	4
Confronting Injustice: Young Changemaker Advocates for Nuclear Peace	6
Ritchot Council Talks New Fire Halls and More Multifamily Housing	8
U.S. Tariffs and Shopping Local	9
Citizen Poll	9
Well Water Testing and Your Health	10
Forgotten Flavours Opens New Location in Niverville	11
Niverville Council Approves First Step of New Development	12
Obby Khan in Niverville to Solicit Support	13
Niverville Gold Rush Bingo Supports Community Programs	13
Southeast School Divisions Promised Increased Funding	13
CCAA Men's Volleyball Championship to Descend on Niverville	14
Local Owner of Dodgeball League Looks to Recruit Players	15
Niverville Recreation Announces Spring Break Camps	15
The Nighthawks Enter Season's Final Stretch	16
Rage U12 Make it to Final in Saskatchewan	17
Encountering the Wild: Photographer Explores Passion for Nature	18



Thor Barkman, principal of Steinbach Christian School.

BRENDA SAWATZKY

Niverville Private Christian School Gets More Likely

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

On February 11, Steinbach Christian School (SCS) principal Thor Barkman invited parents to join him at Word of Life Mission Church for an informational evening to consider the next steps in bringing a Christian school to Niverville.

About 30 parents were in attendance, down from the approximate 100 who attended the first informational meetings on December 3.

"[The purpose of the meeting was] to communicate that SCS has approvals in place to operate a K-to-4 school in Niverville and will decide whether or not to proceed based on student applications," Barkman told *The Citizen*. "As well, to indicate a bussing option from Niverville for next year if a critical number of parents sign up for that."

The approvals of which Barkman speaks include local churches that are open to partnership in such an endeavour. Approval has also been received from the province to proceed, if demand warrants it.

"We have opened conversations with a number of excellent teaching staff familiar with the community, and we have established a rough budget for the startup," Barkman

says of the next stages of the process.

The only question remaining is whether there will be enough solid interest from local families with children in the early-years grades.

"The next crucial step is for parents to commit to enrolling their children," Barkman wrote in a press release. "If we receive enough applications, we will make a final decision about the feasibility."

Following the December informational meeting, parents were asked to submit forms indicating an expression of interest by early January. No firm commitment was required at that time.

Sixty responses of interest were received, with another 20 expressing future interest once their three- and four-year-old children age into the school system.

Still, parents will need to put their money where their mouths are to ensure the school becomes a reality. Between now and March 14, they are asked to submit an application of enrolment for children in Kindergarten to Grade Four, along with a tuition deposit of \$1,950 per student.

"This deposit will enable the school to move forward with infrastructure development, teacher recruitment, and other necessary expenses," the release states. "The deposit is fully refundable if there

are not enough applications to proceed for fall 2025."

The ideal teacher-to-student ratio, Barkman believes, is one teacher to 15 students.

"SCS has an exciting lineup of staff who have expressed interest in being part of this. They will not hire until they know that they have the students. However, SCS is overwhelmed by the quality of the teachers ready to contribute to their community."

Middle school and high school students, in this process, are not being overlooked.

If enough interest is demonstrated, SCS will provide a bus service for Niverville students to and from the Steinbach campus. The approximate cost will be \$12 per day, which covers both the bus and driver.

"We want all families and students to have access to Christian education. While we can't offer [Grades] 5 to 12 now, it doesn't mean in the future Niverville won't have it. For the time being, we will explore our options to get students to SCS."

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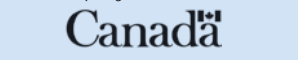
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Not Your Average Day Job, Part One: Seismic Exploration Over Land and Sea

By Brenda Sawatzky

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"What do you do for a living?" Whether you're meeting someone for the first time or making small talk with your barber, this is a question we spend most of our lives answering.

For most of us, the answer is straightforward. For others, their job is more than a title; it's a story.

Over the next few weeks, The Citizen will introduce you to locals whose careers break the mould—jobs that are rare, remarkable, and sometimes even dangerous. Let's meet them together.

Barrie Sylvestre of St. Adolphe works in the field of land and marine seismic exploration. For those unfamiliar with seismic exploration, it's a sophisticated means of locating subsurface hydrocarbon reserves—and it's an important part of operations for oil and gas companies.

Within this context, Sylvestre works as a health, safety, and environmental quality control (HSEQC) consultant. His team of quality control personnel can be sent almost anywhere in the world to oversee the work of on-site contractors.

"I just want to make sure that, at the end of the day, everyone goes home with all of their fingers and toes," Sylvestre says. "I've seen some accidents, and we've had to airlift some by helicopter to emergency."

Sylvestre's job takes him

away from home for weeks or sometimes months at a time. At the time of this interview, Sylvestre was in northern Alberta, getting ready to leave for South America.

He's been at this job for the better part of 35 years. In total, he says that he's worked on sea and on land in more countries than he can recall.

Seismic research itself is fascinating to Sylvestre. Whether it's done from land or water, the goal of any project is to identify potential oil and gas reservoirs beneath the earth's surface.

"We do two-dimensional, three-dimensional, and four-dimensional seismic research," Sylvestre says of his work. "Two-dimensional would be like an X-ray of the subsurface of the earth. Three-dimensional would be like an MRI."

The fourth dimension, he says, involves the use of timelapse images to get an idea as to how oil reservoirs shift and move.

Researchers also use sound-sensing devices to find potential oil sources. Land-based devices are known as geophones, and in water they're called hydrophones.

"On land, we place geophones at predetermined locations in a grid pattern," Sylvestre says. "They make a sound at [specific intervals] and the sound penetrates through the earth's crust. Then the sensors pick up the reverberations at different frequencies and collect the data. The data is put into a



Barrie Sylvestre of St. Adolphe.

✉ C/O BARRIE SYLVESTRE

computer and then you have your final results."

TWENTY YEARS ON THE SEAS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

While many people aspire to specific career paths from a young age, Sylvestre wasn't one of them. In fact, most of his career was the result of a series of fortuitous events.

As a child, he grew up on a small farm in Saskatchewan. He studied history in university and eventually picked up a job in Ottawa working for the federal government as part of Canada's museums.

That work took him all over the country.

"I was living in Ottawa, and in 1989 I went to Thailand just to travel for six weeks," says Sylvestre. "In 1990, I quit the government job with the intention of travelling [abroad] for a year and I ended up staying there for 20 years."

Sylvestre took a job as an English teacher in Jakarta, Indonesia, but the pay was poor and he wanted something more.

One night in a bar, he found himself sharing with an acquaintance that he was looking for work.

Ironically, the acquaintance had just quit his job in the oil and gas field. He gave Sylvestre his former employer's business card.

Sylvestre made a phone call to Singapore and quickly connected with the employer. As fate sometimes dictates, this gentleman had also been born and bred in Saskatchewan.

"He says to me, 'You're a good old boy from Saskatchewan, a farm boy. If you want a job, be here in a couple of days and we'll get you set up.' I had no idea what I'd be doing. I'd never heard of seismic research before."

Sylvestre was trained on the job. His first posting was to a vessel off the coast of Australia. Little did he know that he'd spend the next 20 years working on seafaring vessels like this one.

On-the-job training was the modus operandi for many companies in the 1980s. But today, Sylvestre says, the seismic research field requires engineering- or science-based degrees.

He began his career as a basic helper, on hand to do whatever needed to be done.

"On my first week being on board a vessel, we were running away from a cyclone,"

Sylvestre says with some mirth. "I was like, 'What the hell am I doing here?' We were in rough seas and it wasn't a big vessel by any means. We were just getting tossed around."

He stuck with it, though, and he's glad he did. Back in those days, he says, the men worked together as a brotherhood. There were no cell phones or computer screens to distract them. Communicating with family on shore was cumbersome, so they had to rely on each other.

"We had one TV and a VHS machine and everyone would pile into [one room] and watch a movie. It was a bonding experience. And it was fun!"

Sylvestre recalls some hair-raising moments when the crew wasn't sure whether they'd make it back to shore alive.

It wasn't that they didn't have the ability to forecast a coming storm, but the speed at which a storm moved could make all the difference. Their vessels were always pulling research equipment and tethered to literally miles and miles of line that had to be reeled in before evacuation was possible. That process could take upwards of seven hours.

On one occasion, they didn't get the job done fast enough.

Sylvestre was at the stern of the ship along with three others. Two of them were clipped onto the vessel at its tail, reeling in the line and equipment. Sylvestre was calling out the waves, warning whenever a big one was coming.

"I see this wave coming and I'm standing beside a pole. The guy who's running the hydraulics is at another pole. I yelled out, but the wave that came in was bigger than we anticipated. I'm holding onto the pole when this wave hits

and I went horizontal. I look over, and the hydraulics guys is holding onto a pole and he's horizontal. The two guys who were on the lifelines got swept into [the sea]. It was almost cartoon-like. It was just surreal."

Thankfully, he says, there were no fatalities that day. However, he's heard of circumstances when others weren't so lucky.

As time passed, Sylvestre worked his way up the ranks. He was promoted to support vessel coordinator, which made it his job to teach crews about the safety aspects of running support vessels.

Eventually he was headhunted by a large company and offered the job of safety officer, which he's still doing today.

During his years in Indonesia, Sylvestre met his wife Jasmine, who also worked in the industry and understood the nature of this job that required him to be absent so much of the time.

In 2010, he and Jasmine made the move to St. Adolphe where his father and two brothers already resided. In 2014, Jasmine received her permanent residency. She now works for Gilles Lambert Pest Control.

"She loves the cold more than I do," he says. "In the wintertime, you can dress up. In the tropics, you can't dress down enough to stay cool. So that's why she just loves it here."

In 2023, Sylvestre's father turned 100 and he was glad to be there for the big family celebration.

Today, at 62 years of age, Sylvestre is just beginning to think about retirement.

"I've still got some gumption in me. But at the same time, as we speak, my wife is in Bali looking for a parcel of land."

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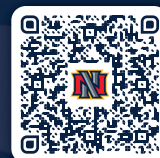
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Confronting Injustice: Young Changemaker Advocates for Nuclear Peace

By Jennifer Lavin

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Edlynnne “Eddy” Paez, a Grade 12 student from Niverville, recently returned from two different summits on the topic of nuclear peace, starting with one in Winnipeg, and then a second in Ottawa.

Last November, Paez attended the Youth Nuclear Peace Summit, an annual two- to three-day event held at the Canadian Museum of Human Rights in Winnipeg. Established in 2019, the event was initiated by a group of students alongside Marilou McPhedran, an independent senator from Manitoba.

“The goal of the summit is to get youth engaged and learning about nuclear peace and nuclear disarmament, and to engage in intergenerational conversation between educators, students, victims, and professors, and to just create dialogue about nuclear peace,” says Paez. “So it’s about giving these students this perspective. And then we have guest speakers oftentimes who come from countries that were affected by nuclear testing. So this is little known history, but in fact hundreds of nuclear testing sites have been used... especially in Indigenous areas.”

Paez goes on to talk about nuclear disarmament and

what it means in a global context. These are big, complicated issues with which to engage.

“When we say nuclear disarmament, we’re not saying that we want to end nuclear bombs, period. We’re saying that to create a weapon of this magnitude and scale comes with ethical ramifications. What we’re saying here is that we want to create a culture of peace. So by looking at it from a holistic standpoint, we’re looking at what are the negative outcomes caused by nuclear weapons historically?”

After attending the Winnipeg event, Paez was invited to attend the Youth-Parliament Nuclear Summit in Ottawa. She approached the Hanover School Division’s board of trustees and asked for funding to travel to Ottawa.

The board agreed.

She soon registered her attendance with McPhedran and the Manitoba Association of Rights and Liberties (MARL), which provided her with additional funding. In the end, 90 percent of her expenses were covered.

Paez didn’t travel to Ottawa alone. She attended the summit with another student from Niverville High School, two students from Winnipeg schools, and two chaperones.

On day one, after opening statements and greetings from



Edlynnne “Eddy” Paez, a Grade 12 student from Niverville. ✎ BRENDA SAWATZKY

various parliamentarians, Paez and her fellow delegates made a presentation on behalf of Niverville High School and MARL about art and activism, with an emphasis on how forms of art and visual media aren’t as far from action and social justice as many people think.

Approximately half the attendees were students, with the other half comprising professors, professionals, and parliamentarians. Paez even spotted Greg Fergus, Speaker of the House of Commons.

The summit had been intended to span two days, but

it was shortened to one since Parliament isn’t currently in session.

Paez and her fellow delegates were pleased to spend the second day exploring Ottawa and learning about programs available to students on Parliament Hill.

Serendipitously, Paez recently received her acceptance letter to attend the University of Ottawa—although she hasn’t yet made a final decision about where she’ll study next year.

In the meantime, Paez has applied to chair next year’s YNPS in Winnipeg.

So where does her interest in global affairs come from? Paez speculates that it may be a result of simply watching her parents.

“My parents were born and raised in the Philippines, in Nueva Ecija, a small countryside province,” she explains. “I’ve only ever lived in Niverville. So I experienced my culture somewhat vicariously through them, through their stories of growing up in a country that was considered ‘less than.’ I think that instilled within me a really strong sense of justice, because I thought, ‘It’s not fair that my parents’ degrees don’t count here.’ I am somebody who notices disparities... so that translated well to international affairs in that I have a deep-seated sense of empathy that came about because I noticed unjust behaviour.”

Around her family, Paez says that she is often called Madame President. While the rest of her family watched the Super Bowl this year, she chose to watch a political debate instead.

Currently, Paez and one of the other students from her delegation to Ottawa are working to create free professional development materials for teachers on the subjects of nuclear peace and disarmament.

Paez is also currently

in talks with MARL about getting an internship before she attends university in the autumn. She is also heading to Toronto soon for the Loran finals, Loran being one of the most prestigious scholarships in Canada. Paez is among four finalists for Manitoba.

One day in the future, Paez considers her dream job to be working on Parliament Hill or in the United Nations.

To other students who may feel like they’re just one person living in a small town, without many opportunities to make a difference, Paez has advice.

“Just get involved. The worst they can do is say no. You’re always going to be your own worst critic. But I have recently found that there are so many opportunities for youth to get involved that they just don’t know about... But that means there’s all the more power to you if you go out and look for it. I wouldn’t be halfway where I am if I hadn’t applied for things. And then I go there, and I think it’s all about gaining that confidence in yourself and recognizing why you do things. If you’re a true changemaker, you do things because you have a love for it. You have a love for creating things and making a difference. You’re not doing this for the title... you’re doing it because you see value and merit in driving change.”



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Ritchot Council Talks New Fire Halls and More Multifamily Housing

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Ritchot fire chief Scott Weir met with council at their public meeting held on February 4 to provide an update on departmental needs in the RM.

Two items hit the top of the fire department's wish list. The first is a new pumper truck for Ste. Agathe. Built in 2008, Weir says the old pumper is pushing the end of its life cycle at almost 17 years of age. With an average build time of 18 to 24 months for a truck like this, Weir recommends that council begin the process of acquisition as soon as possible.

A new fire hall, too, made the list. Weir says the most reasonable location for a new hall would be Île-des-Chênes, since this is where most of their current firefighters respond from.

Councillor Janine Boulanger queried Weir as to the possibility of placing it in Grande Pointe.

"I don't think it would be a terrible idea to put something in Grande Pointe," Weir told council. "Currently, we have more land over there. But we have two people from the Grande Pointe area and all of our [other] members are coming from elsewhere. That's the only challenge."

Regardless of which community



The current fire hall in Île-des-Chênes.

BRENDA SAWATZKY

it ends up in, CAO Mitch Duval says it must be located in the northeast section of the municipality.

"The need for a new fire hall in Île-des-Chênes is strictly based on the age of the existing infrastructure," Duval told *The Citizen*. "An expansion is not being considered for this same reason. It is something we would like to pursue as soon as possible pending land options, funding, and costs."

According to Duval, the Ste. Agathe and St. Adolphe fire halls are still in very good shape.

Council also gave approval of the first reading of two requests for zoning changes which, if passed after third reading, would make way for more multifamily housing.

The first request was for a rezoning of property located at the corner of Bonneteau Avenue and Dumaine

Road in Île-des-Chênes.

"The proposition is to change from RMHP, mobile home park zone, to an RG8, residential general, for the purpose of doing a multiplex as well as a single-family home in the area," Duval told council.

The second property council looked at was a vacant lot in St. Adolphe just north of the new daycare. To build multifamily units here,

the lot needs to be zoned RG8 as opposed to the agricultural limited (AL).

In 2023, developer Luke Wiebe of Kingdom Home Building Inc. was denied the same rezoning request by council when he proposed the idea of constructing approximately 100 luxury apartments on this site.

Wiebe faced significant opposition. For years, residents of St. Adolphe have been urging council to reserve the prime real estate on the community's south side for commercial use.

Jason Bodnarchuk, councillor for St. Adolphe, encouraged council's decision to deny Wiebe's request back in 2023.

"I've heard from everyone that commercial won't survive in St. Adolphe, but it doesn't mean that we don't try," Bodnarchuk told council at the time. "Once you lose that land, it's gone. We're never going to get it back."

The first readings of both zoning requests were approved by council on February 4.

The RM's next step will be to send notices to those affected, providing an opportunity for public response. The dates for these public hearings will be announced in the near future.

"I'm looking forward to the discussion to follow," Boulanger said of the St. Adolphe rezoning request.

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U.S. Tariffs and Shopping Local

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER
bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

After months of threats by the new American president to impose tariffs on Canadian goods, and an executive order given in February, the plan ended up being paused just hours prior to implementation.

Throughout February, after a 30-day reprieve, Canadians have been waiting to see what tariffs actually land in early March.

That reprieve came as a result of last-minute negotiations between Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and President Donald Trump, including some new spending by Canada to beef up border security.

At the time of this writing, the tariff situation was uncertain. By the time this newspaper is published, tariffs may have finally landed.

Also on hold since early February have been a slew of retaliative threats from a number of Canadian provinces. There have also been calls for bans on the sale of American alcohol.

Premier Wab Kinew initially directed Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries (MBLL) outlets to remove American alcohol from their shelves.

"Trump's tariff tax is an attack on Canadians," said Kinew in a February 2 press release. "We support the federal response to these tariffs, and here in Manitoba we're stopping the sale of American products at Manitoba Liquor Marts. How you choose to spend your money is one of the most important decisions you as a consumer can make. There are plenty of great Manitoba breweries and distilleries to support instead."

When push comes to shove, one has to wonder whether Canadians will shop local if/when tariffs are introduced.

As a matter of principle, many residents say they've been attempting to buy local



Your Grocery People in Niverville.

BRENDA SAWATZKY

for quite some time.

"I might not be able to go 100 percent Canadian due to price and availability, but I have been making small changes where possible," says one anonymous resident. "My hope is that this is the catalyst for getting in the habit of checking labels rather than grabbing the same thing from the shelf as usual."

Larry Niebel agrees.

"I find it interesting listening to people now talking about supporting Canada," Niebel says. "Where have they been for the last 20 years? Wake up, Canada."

According to Jason Reimer, buying local has far-reaching benefits, more than many seem to realize.

"I will make every effort to buy Canadian," says Reimer. "The more we buy from Canadian companies, it could lead these companies to expand. This will [mean] companies looking for employees."

However, St. Adolphe resident Laura Chevrefils says

that there's more to consider when it comes to our spending habits. It's not just about fighting back against our U.S. neighbours.

"To be honest, I'm still going to support Canadian and American wherever I can afford to," Chevrefils says. "I would rather support our labour and environmental standards and not have it shipped from across the world just to turn around and pay a ridiculous amount of carbon tax to save a planet that we are killing with our dependence on overseas cheap goods."

For people like Stephanie Hrymak, though, there's some doubt that principle will ultimately triumph over price.

"The other day when [a] storm happened, I asked why people risk their lives driving to the city in dangerous and life-threatening conditions," Hrymak says. "I got a response that there are a lot of people who live day by day with what they earn and can't afford to lose one day even if they have

to put their life in danger. So for an enormous amount of people, they will continue buying what they can afford."

If Canadian stores were to put more emphasis on reducing prices, she adds, more Canadians would support them on an everyday basis, not just in a crisis.

"It's not a mystery that they have inflated the prices way beyond [what's necessary], without a big reason," Hrymak says. "All is politics and greed. I wish these groceries stores would start to be true Canadians and do what is fair finally."

Edward Krahn says choosing local products is always a good idea, but it may not be as easy as we think.

"The government needs to pass a Truth in Labelling Act to ensure the source [of goods]," Krahn says. "Heinz uses a very interesting label, 'prepared for Heinz Canada Inc.' Now what does that really mean? China can produce a car, add a block heater, and say 'prepared for Canada.'"

Diane Grollé is quick to admit that making a swift change to buying Canadian won't be easy, but it's worth it.

"We are cancelling Netflix, Prime, and Disney and will download Gem and subscribe to other non-American streaming services," Grollé says. "We cancelled a cruise that we had booked and are looking for places to visit in Canada instead. The Amazon truck was at our place at least once a week, but I will no longer order things online."

For Grollé, even her traditional grocery shopping habits are changing. Instead of ordering online for quick pickup, she'll be shopping in store in order to check the labels on the items she buys.

"This will take a while, but we are going to try our best," she says. "I know it's hard with prices the way they are, but it's important for us to take a stand. Maybe we will just buy less."

In the face of tariffs, economic pressure, and talk of annexation from the U.S., are you making changes to your shopping habits to prioritize Canadian products?

- ☐ Yes. It is more important than ever to support local companies and keep our dollars close to home, even if it means paying more or forgoing certain purchases.
- ☐ No. It is not possible to source many of the products I need from Canada, and I have to consider the lower price more than where an item is made.

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LAST MONTH'S RESULTS:

When we refer to a place as having a "small town" feel, in your opinion is that feeling created more by the size of the population or by the friendliness of its residents?

Population. A small town is exactly what it sounds like. Fewer residents generally means safer, quieter neighbourhoods.

68%

Friendly people. Getting to know your neighbours goes a long way toward building community and creating the feeling of a small town.

32%

YOUR COMMENTS:

I think it also depends on the walkability of the town, and having small stores with regular, recognizable staff. Ile-des-Chenes and Otterburne, for example, don't feel like small towns to me because they don't have grocery stores or an ability to walk to your amenities.

As your community ages and the younger generation moves in, your community will change and the values will change. Also the building of residential highrises will cause this to happen. Comment from a Gretna resident whose community just lost its credit union.

It also depends on the type of housing built. Lower-priced, affordable, and/or low-income housing in large numbers could increase crime rate. Stereotypically that's what happens. Stats prove that.

The only people that would argue that a small town is not defined by numbers are the developers, realtors, and businesspeople who want to profit from the growth.

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Well Water Testing and Your Health

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Between Ritchot and Niverville, there remain many residents who derive their water from private wells. In Ritchot, this includes mostly rural properties since the majority of households in its four communities are tied into the municipal water treatment system.

In Niverville, it is estimated that 700 households in the older sections of town still use private wells for drinking water instead of treated water.

While recommendations are occasionally issued for well water testing to ensure that it's safe for consumption, it's also safe to assume that few householders bother to test when there are no apparent issues with the water coming from their taps.

When people think about water testing, most think about trace elements such as arsenic, barium, boron, fluoride, uranium, and manganese. Or there could be high levels of common minerals such as iron, manganese, chloride, sodium, and sulphate.

In some cases, these can be detected through the water's smell or feel on the skin, or by hardwater residues left behind on appliances. In many cases, these minerals require the use of a water softener.

Unfortunately, Manitoba well water is also susceptible to bacterial contamination which can't be detected by any means other than water sample testing at specific provincial laboratories. These labs test for the presence of bacteria known as coliform and E. coli, a very specific strain of coliform. These bacteria leave no smell, taste, feel, or visual trace.

High levels of coliform or E. coli often indicate the presence of other harmful microbes which can be responsible for a laundry list of health issues ranging from mild to severe, including gastrointestinal illness; infections of the skin, ear, or eye; and respiratory and neurologic symptoms. As well, people may experience stomach cramps, diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting, and low-grade fever. More seriously, some cite incidents of intestinal infections,

pneumonia, and meningitis.

The provincial standard for safe coliform levels in water is nine or fewer units of coliform per 100 millilitres. For E. coli, the tolerance level is zero units per 100 millilitres.

An annual test is recommended.

WATER TESTING AND HOME PURCHASES

In recent months, William and Kelly-Lynn Denslow of Île-des-Chênes were helping their grown sons shop for a house. They found what they were looking for in the local area.

Since the house was on a shared well system with three other homeowners, the Denslows' realtor recommended that a bacterial water test be done, making the purchase of the sale contingent on the tests results.

According to their realtor, almost all banking institutions require the test before providing financing for a house purchase. The Denslows found this to be true when they called numerous banking institutions to inquire.

Their realtor offered to take the water sample herself, since the province has very strict guidelines on how to do it right. The provincial site also recommends conducting the test twice at two separate intervals to ensure its accuracy.

Both of the Denslows' tests came back as a fail.

"They tested for coliform and E. coli," Kelly-Lynn says. "We had no coliform, but there were five [parts per million] of E. coli. You're allowed a few coliform and they don't get too alarmed, but E. coli? Zero."

The Denslows weren't unfamiliar with well ownership. They shared a well with their neighbours in the years prior to Ritchot's integration to a municipal system.

Back in the day, they say, there was little information provided on well water safety and maintenance. The only warning Kelly-Lynn can recall was the one they got when having their water checked because they were bringing home their first baby.

"Blue Baby Syndrome is [the result of] nitrates in the water, which you can get in areas where there is lots of fertilizer used and animal runoff,"

Kelly-Lynn says. "The nitrates turn into nitrites which can interfere with oxygen/carbon dioxide exchange in bottle-fed babies whose formula is mixed with contaminated well water."

Having been armed with this new knowledge of bacterial testing, though, Kelly-Lynn feels a real level of concern. After all, she spent her entire career in the healthcare field and is very aware of the ramifications of certain bacteria like E. coli on the human body.

So the Denslows began to research options for cleaning up bacteria in a well system. They were referred to MBM Plumbing.

SOLUTION FOR BACTERIA REMOVAL

MBM Plumbing, owned by John Muller, is located close to Oakbank. He's been in the plumbing business for 34 years, and his specialty now is residential and commercial well systems.

"To have quality drinking water, people spend more money when they buy bottled water. That's expensive also."

John Muller / MBM Plumbing

Muller says he's heard of many situations where homebuyers find themselves unable to secure a mortgage due to failed bacterial water tests. Coliform bacteria in Manitoba wells, he says, is pretty common.

Where that bacteria originates, Muller adds, is typically in the aquifer from which a well draws its water.

"Coliform bacteria can come from 25 or 50 miles away from your house," Muller says. "It's a fecal bacteria from some source. When you've got it in your well, your neighbours probably have the same thing also."

One of the most common practices in dealing with waterborne bacteria is a chlorine bleach treatment called shocking. While this treatment may be effective in the short-term on the water contained within the well itself, it does nothing to purify the water at its source.

"I have people that phone me and say, 'I've shocked my well four times and I just can't get rid of the bacteria,'" says Muller. "There are real estate

agents that are sitting on an offer and they can't sell because of the bacteria in the well. It's frustrating."

According to Muller, there is only one really effective way to prevent coliform or other nasty bacteria from getting into a household's usable water source: a UV light filtration system.

"The water comes in through a five-micron prefilter which stops much of the bacteria that's hiding within particles," Muller says. "It goes through a UV reactor [after that], and that doses the bacteria and kills it before it gets to the point of use."

The UV light system has been around for quite some time and Muller is surprised that more homeowners aren't aware of it. Through the course of his work, he's seen household water tests come back revealing bacteria numbers as high as 2,000 units per millilitre.

"When you think about the water that you drink every day, you cook with it, brush your teeth with it, wash your lettuce... you're going to come in contact with coliform," Muller says. "You don't have to have a lot in your system for it to upset your stomach."

Installing a UV system in the home runs approximately \$2,000 for the average household.

Ongoing maintenance includes filter replacement twice annually at a cost of about \$32 per filter. The UV light also needs to be replaced once annually at around \$90. Maintenance needs are dependent, of course, on the family's annual water usage.

"To have quality drinking water, people spend more money when they buy bottled water," Muller reasons. "That's expensive also."

As for reverse osmosis filtration systems, Muller says they are great to have, especially when the home uses a water softener, but they aren't a replacement for a UV light system.

Reverse osmosis systems remove softener salt from drinking water as well as herbicides and pesticides contained in the water, but they do nothing when it comes to harmful bacteria.

"With a UV light and an RO system, you'll have better drinking water

than most bottled water," Muller concludes.

THE RIGHT WELL SYSTEM

For anyone on a well system, Muller says regular maintenance should be done every three or four years to ensure that the system's components, like the well pump, don't blow prematurely.

A quick inspection by someone like himself can also indicate whether the home is outfitted with the right well for the appliances being used. Not all well systems, he says, are created equally.

"I think people should have it explained to them. Sometimes people go for the lowest price and the lowest price isn't always the best for today's appliances. The lowest price will get you a very basic system with a half horse pump. Only after do [homeowners] find out that they can't run the shower and do the laundry at the same time. It doesn't keep up with the demand."

As well, he adds, modern household appliances like the washing machine, dishwasher, and water softener, run on computerized cycling systems.

"[The computer] tells [the machine] to fill for, say, 15 seconds at 50 psi," he says. "So if you don't have a constant pressure well system, sometimes you're not getting a full wash or rinse on the washing machine because your system won't fill it with the proper amount of water."

Many people assume that a poor wash cycle is the fault of the appliance and not a low-grade well system. Ensuring that you have a constant pressure well system means that you'll have a constant 60 psi without fluctuation.

Getting your well system upgraded to match your appliances doesn't have to mean replacing the entire system, Muller adds. Oftentimes only certain components need to be upgraded.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ To learn more about provincial well water testing, visit: https://www.manitoba.ca/sd///pubs/water/drinking_water/factsheet2_test_wellwater.pdf

■ To learn more about MBM Plumbing, visit: <https://mbmplbg.com>



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Forgotten Flavours Opens New Location in Niverville

By Sara Beth Dacombe

Wild yeast bread and baked treats are now available for walk-in customers at 69 Main Street in Niverville. The new Forgotten Flavours storefront first opened its doors to the public on February 25.

Since starting the home-based microbakery in 2022, this local business has taken a detour through Winnipeg, opening a storefront on Corydon Avenue in the provincial capital before getting its Niverville location off the ground.

Chris and Maria Holbrow moved into 69 Main back in 2023, with plans to renovate the space into a bakery and café as soon as possible.

However, the 60-year-old former post office required major structural improvements.

The couple started by outfitting it with the kitchen they required in order to ramp up production, positioning them well for future growth.

The Corydon location has opened to rave reviews, and all its product are made right here in Niverville. In the process, the business has managed to grow their staff.

The day has finally come to open the doors in Niverville and invite the community to see what they've been cooking up.

"There were a number of delays for us at our Niverville location," says Chris. "The day-to-day demands from our business were what set us back the furthest. We know our customer base in Niverville has seen what we've done out there, seeing what we're making and selling and at the farmer's markets... and you know, it's not quite been geared at them. But now it will be. Now it's time."

The new store features a sales counter with delicious goodies showcased behind a plexiglass screen. The



Employee Liesa Funk interacts with a customer on the first day of business at Forgotten Flavours' new Niverville storefront. **SARA BETH DACOMBE**

floor-to-ceiling shelves are laden with bread and pasta.

The Holbrows have only made modest additions to the building so far. The store is a quaint 400 square feet, and there are still plans to develop the other 900 square feet available to them.

"We have plans to add a few seats inside for waiting customers, along with a small patio space out front of the building come the warmer weather," says Chris. "So that is something to look forward to.

This space will have a wide range of breads, pastries, pastas, cereals, and much, much more. It will be like walking into a European shop, finding products you simply will not find anywhere else."

For beverages, the plan is to begin offering drip coffee in the near future, with the intent to expand into a full menu of options as they grow and finish the space.

The Holbrows are excited to make good on their promise to open the business to direct sales in Niverville.

"We've always been a homegrown bakery, and this is our home," Chris says. "We always wanted to be even more interactive with our Niverville customers, who have been so good to us, so supportive."

Customers came out to support the business on its first day, repeatedly buying out the supply of sweet treats.

"I bought their breads when they first opened and it was just one-on-one sales, messaging them with what we wanted to buy," says local

resident Sue Thompson. "It was firstly the samples that won me over. They offered samples at the time and would literally drive them to people's houses."

The small-town feel of the business, not to mention the Holbrows' friendliness, made an immediate impression on Thompson.

But it was the quality of their bread that made her a loyal customer.

"I'm all about fresh baked, home-made, and local," Thompson says. "I've tried to make my own breads at home, but there is something about buying someone else's home-made... Their wild yeast is such a cool concept. It makes an amazing bread, with structure, that tastes great. For me, my go-to bread is the classic [baton] loaf. I use it to make a chicken parm sandwich. It's the best thing to do with good bread. The cinnamon buns are amazing. Caramelized onion and wild rice is great too."

Thompson can't wait to try many of the new products that have been offered first in Winnipeg, but not yet in Niverville, like the almond croissant and Bounty croissant.

Forgotten Flavours hasn't announced a grand opening yet, allowing time for the team to adjust to increased production volume.

"We first need to settle into this new location," Chris says. "We are also waiting on some additional pieces of equipment that will expand our product offerings. We do plan on having a grand opening event for both of our locations, but no set date on that."

In the meantime, what sorts of new products can customers expect?

"We've talked about a wild yeast pizza dough, but we haven't wanted to maybe mention it yet," says Chris. "But we can mention it now!"

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Niverville Council Approves First Step of New Development

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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Niverville's public council meeting on February 4 was held before a small audience interested in the discussion related to a conditional use request made by Avedo Inc.

The property the company seeks to develop is on Niverville's west side, bordering Church Street and Ritchot Drive.

Based on a preliminary design provided by the developer, the goal is to add approximately 350 residential units within seven multiuse buildings ranging in height from three to six storeys.

Since the land immediately bordering Highway 311 is zoned as commercial corridor, the applicant was there to request that allowances be made for one building, approximately six stories in height, which would be comprised of residential units only. All the other buildings would allow for main floor commercial space.

"There's been some drawings that have been sent out," Mayor Myron Dyck told the crowd. "Those are conceptual and not actual. So where buildings [appear], height of buildings, and position of buildings, that's not why we are here."

Dyck clarified that another public hearing will be required down the road, and an official plan presented, when and if the developer decides to proceed with construction.

As it stands, CAO Eric King told council that the proposal lines up with Niverville's current land development plan in that it helps to "minimize urban sprawl by facilitating intensification in appropriate areas... and encourages a

range of housing types."

King added that a public access road would need to be built by the developer, who would also be responsible for its ongoing maintenance and repairs. Further, the developer would be required to contribute toward planned traffic enhancements at the intersections of Krahn Road and Mulberry Avenue.

Avedo's owner, Stefan Hodelmann, lives in Niverville with his family. His company is responsible for building two apartment blocks on the west side of the railway tracks, one of which is still under construction.

"We have ambitious plans for that piece of land," Hodelmann told council of the new project. "I think many of us moved here because there's a certain level of excitement that this community offers. I know people in surrounding communities are envious of our growth, our creativity in getting things done as a community."

While an additional 350 homes in the community sounds like a lot, he said, it will be developed in phases which could take years to complete. Even so, he sees an immediate need for housing, arising from the coming movie studio.

"Our generic plan includes lots of underground parking, which we've noticed that a lot of people appreciate," Hodelmann said. "We're seeing a lot of seniors following their kids outside the city and moving into our suites. We'll include all kinds of amenities and we'll be creative."

One of these many amenities, he hopes, will be a day-care service. His company will work actively in that direction in order to help mitigate the community's childcare demand.



Niverville mayor Myron Dyck and CAO Eric King.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

Following Hodelmann, six community residents stepped forward to represent concerns with the development as proposed.

The first inquired as to whether the town's current services, including emergency services, would be able to keep up with the demand created by an additional 1,000 new residents.

Mayor Dyck suggested that the town is well-positioned for this kind of growth. A new RCMP detachment will soon open, bringing four officers to the community. By 2027, council hopes to begin construction on a new fire hall. Expansion is also currently taking place at the community's medical centre, making way for more doctors.

As for municipal utilities, both the water treatment plant and proposed wastewater facility will have the capacity for three times the current population.

School capacity was another concern shared.

"Schools are provincial jurisdictions," Dyck said. "Unfortunately, the province is reactive instead of proactive."

But whether it's through the addition of huts or building expansions, the province is keeping up.

Other residents questioned

the necessity for three- and six-storey housing units in the new development.

"The Ministry of Agriculture is trying to keep farmland in production for as long as possible and so they would rather see greater densification of neighbourhoods," said Dyck. "When you're the fastest growing municipality in the country, you're kind of front and centre as far as demand on land goes."

One couple living next door to the development provided some thoughts on how they'd like to see the land used.

"I would love to see some of the area developed for young kids," she said. "We don't have a lot of stuff for them to do. I know that we have the rec centre and I know we're a big hockey community, but not everyone's a hockey player. So instead of a whole lot more people coming in, rather [we should] develop some of that land for people that are already here."

Mayor Dyck agreed with the notion that Niverville could benefit from more things for young people to do. By providing commercial space on this land, he pointed out that the entertainment businesses will eventually come.

As for recreation facilities run by the town, however, little

more is in the forecast until the mortgage for the CRRC is paid in full.

When it comes to a community-run swimming pool, he added, that likely won't happen in the foreseeable future.

"We have talked extensively to various counsellors in the city of Steinbach," Dyck said. "They have one of the most used pools in the entire province. They run an operating deficit of a million dollars per year. We have 2,000 tax-paying units in the town of Niverville. That means that we'd need \$500 from every tax-paying unit every year just to handle the operations. The capital would probably [add] \$10,000 per household."

Another neighbour shared concerns over what the additional traffic would mean for the area. Based on a 1.5 cars per household, he said, it would add an additional 550 cars.

"How is this area going to be able to handle it from the perspective of traffic safety?" he asked. "Right now, already we see accidents waiting to happen."

As well, he wondered about council's plan to manage parking within the development to prevent spillover onto surrounding streets.

As for traffic control, King referred to a traffic study performed for this area in 2023, taking into account a buildout of this stretch of land.

In terms of parking, Dyck added that Niverville requires developers to provide a minimum of two parking spaces per door as opposed to 1.5 spaces, which is more typical in other communities.

"We're prepared to ensure that our residents are not impacted by [parking spillover] by having probably the

highest parking ratio per door in the province."

The idea of carshare programs is something council has been actively encouraging developers to consider implementing to reduce the number of vehicles in their developments.

One of the final concerns raised was that of low-income rental units and, if constructed, what kinds of people and crime they might bring to town.

Dyck assured her that these concerns are raised every time a new development is proposed. Over the years, he said, these issues have yet to materialize.

"When it comes to affordable housing, people that work at entry-level jobs need a place to live," Dyck said. "And it's those entry-level [workers] that we all rely on, too."

Throughout the evening, many people returned to the matter of whether or not Niverville is maintaining its small-town feel.

Mayor Dyck had one more response for that sentiment.

"Small town is a culture," Dyck said. "It's not a number. What is small town? It's paying for the coffee [of the person in the] Tim Horton's line behind you. It's shovelling your neighbour's driveway after shovelling your own. It's looking after your neighbour's dog or kid so they can quickly run an errand. We will lose our small town feel when we, as a people of Niverville, decide we don't give a rip about one another."

Two letters were received by council prior to the meeting, one in favour and one against.

In the end, council voted unanimously in favour of rezoning, if necessary, to allow for a residential-only building on this commercial land.

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Obby Khan in Niverville to Solicit Support

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Progressive Conservative leadership hopeful Obby Khan was in Niverville on Thursday, February 6 for a casual meet and greet.

A handful of locals were in attendance at the Golden Friendship Centre for the evening event.

The PC membership purchase cut-off date came on February 28. Until then, Khan was working hard to solicit support from rural voters.

Khan is running against one other candidate for the leadership, Wally Daudrich.

In order to vote for the next PC leader, you must be a party

member in good standing.

The new PC leader will be announced on April 26. The winner will replace Heather Stefanson, who stepped away one year ago.

Khan currently serves as MLA for Fort Whyte in Winnipeg. He has political experience as a cabinet minister and finance critic. He is also an entrepreneur and former Winnipeg Blue Bomber offensive lineman.

At the event, Steinbach MLA Kelvin Goertzen provided a brief introduction. Goertzen serves as Khan's campaign co-chairperson.

"Other than the fact that he's connected with people in pro sports and business and politics, it's important that he's

somebody that can win seats everywhere," Goertzen said. "Clearly [the PCs] can hold seats in rural Manitoba, but we're struggling in the city of Winnipeg. And if we don't win government... communities like Niverville, Steinbach, Altona, and Winkler get ignored."

Khan followed with an impassioned call for financial and membership support in order to win the upcoming vote.

He says that his goal as leader would be to bridge the divide between urban and rural.

"I really believe we can make this province better and I believe it starts with reconnecting with rural Manitoba,"

said Khan. "It's a relationship that I feel we have lost over the last few years. I feel if I'm not spending time with our own members and growing the grassroots, what are we doing? What am I doing in politics if I'm not there to represent the grassroots members?"

With some humour, he told the partially Mennonite crowd that he was considering a name change to Bobby Krahn.

More than once he reiterated the importance of faith, family, and accountability in the political arena.

"Just winning, to me, isn't what's important," said Khan. "It's how I do it and that's how I'm running this campaign. And that's how I think we can run this province."

Niverville Gold Rush Bingo Supports Community Programs

By Kim Kielley

If you've always wanted to play bingo but have no idea how, there is hope. The Niverville Gold Rush Bingo committee has you covered.

All you need is a bit of cash to pay for your cards and dabbers. Maybe some snacks too.

Then one of the bingo volunteers will help you figure out the game, according to Monique Lasko, one of seven Niverville Gold Rush Bingo committee members.

"If somebody has never played bingo, there are a lot of people there to help them," Lasko says. "We're more than willing to sit down and explain it to them. We're there to help."

She adds that new players shouldn't feel intimidated.

Word must have gotten out, because Lasko says she is

seeing more new players in the bingo hall. The Valentine's Day event on February 11 saw 140 players, for example.

That's the most Lasko has seen in the three years that bingo has been offered in Niverville.

Every Tuesday night until the last Tuesday of April, the Niverville Gold Rush Bingo hosts bingo. Originally held in the Golden Friendship Centre, the group has since moved to the Heritage Centre's east ballroom so more people can play.

The events begin at 7:00 p.m. and run until 9:30 p.m. The doors open at 6:00 p.m.

The roots of Niverville Gold Rush Bingo began after a discussion on Facebook. People really needed a place to meet and enjoy bingo, Lasko says.

"There was nothing. Right after the pandemic, people

wanted to get out."

Now in its third year, the bingo night is taking off. The group uses the old-style ball cage, since upgrading to electronic bingo would be an expensive endeavour. Electronic boards in the hallway keep participants in the know about game rules, prizes, and pricing.

Currently, \$20 will get you into the game. But for \$25, you can purchase a beginner's pack.

"There's one of everything in it," Lasko says. "So you don't miss a game or worry about which game you need if you're new to bingo."

Bingo cards range from a three-to-view pack for \$5 to a 15-to-view pack for \$20. Participants must be 18 and over to purchase bingo cards or collect prizes, although children

are allowed on the premises. Bingo dabbers are \$2 each.

Lasko explains that different games have different prizes. Currently, the biggest accumulator, the BONANZA, is just over \$5,000. Jackpot amounts are listed every week. Both grow each week when they're left unclaimed.

To date, the Niverville Gold Rush Bingo has spread \$37,800 of raised funds between the Golden Friendship Centre, Youth for Christ, and Growing Minds Childcare Centre. The group operates as a nonprofit.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ To learn more, visit: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1306717536746241>

■ To volunteer or join the committee, email: niverrillegoldrushbingo@gmail.com

IN BRIEF

Southeast School Divisions Promised Increased Funding

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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On February 10, better late than never, the provincial government released its 2024-25 school division funding plan, a week later than in previous years. For school divisions around the province, budgeting relies on these numbers.

In total, funding will increase by nearly five percent across the board, apportioned between the divisions at varying levels, from one to nearly 10 percent per division. Specific allocations will be provided for divisions with higher needs and enrolment levels.

"This year's funding increase goes beyond the rate of inflation and is consistent with last year's funding increase," said Tracy Schmidt, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning. "Like in many other areas of life, students benefit from predictability and will benefit in the other key areas we're making investments in through this year's funding, giving them the support they need to succeed."

In dollars and cents, the funding increase amounts to \$67 million with the majority, \$53.1 million, allocated for operating costs for public schools.

Included in the operating funding is a boost to the newly introduced provincial nutritional program of \$30 million, with an additional \$6.7 million from the federal government. As well, \$3

million is expected to be used to help decrease class sizes in early-years classrooms.

Aside from operating funds, another \$6 million has been designated for capital support, including the principal and interest costs related to building schools.

The final \$7.8 million will be doled out to the province's private schools.

How will this play out for school divisions in the southeast?

The division scolaire Franco-Manitobaine (DSFM) will see an additional 3.9 percent in funding over last year, giving them a total of \$79 million in provincial dollars.

The Hanover School Division (HSD) will get a 2.2 percent increase for a total of \$71.9 million in funding.

The Seine River School Division (SRSD) will receive a 5.7 percent increase for a total of \$41.5 million for the year.

For the second year running, school divisions will be allowed to set tax levies at their discretion, raising the levy if needed to meet their own budgets.

Manitobans will see a change on their property tax bill this year. In fall, every homeowner will receive an automatic \$1,500 tax credit, intended to help offset the impact of the education tax portion of their bill.

This new tax credit replaces the rebate offered by the Progressive Conservatives in prior years, which reduced property taxes by \$350 and took 50 percent off the education tax portion.



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Sports & Recreation

CCAA Men's Volleyball Championship to Descend on Niverville

By Gord Armstrong

This year's Canadian Collegiate Athletic Association (CCAA) men's volleyball championship is coming quickly. The March 5–8 event is being hosted by Providence University College at the CRRC in Niverville—a big opportunity for the town, the facility, and the school to show off everything they have to offer.

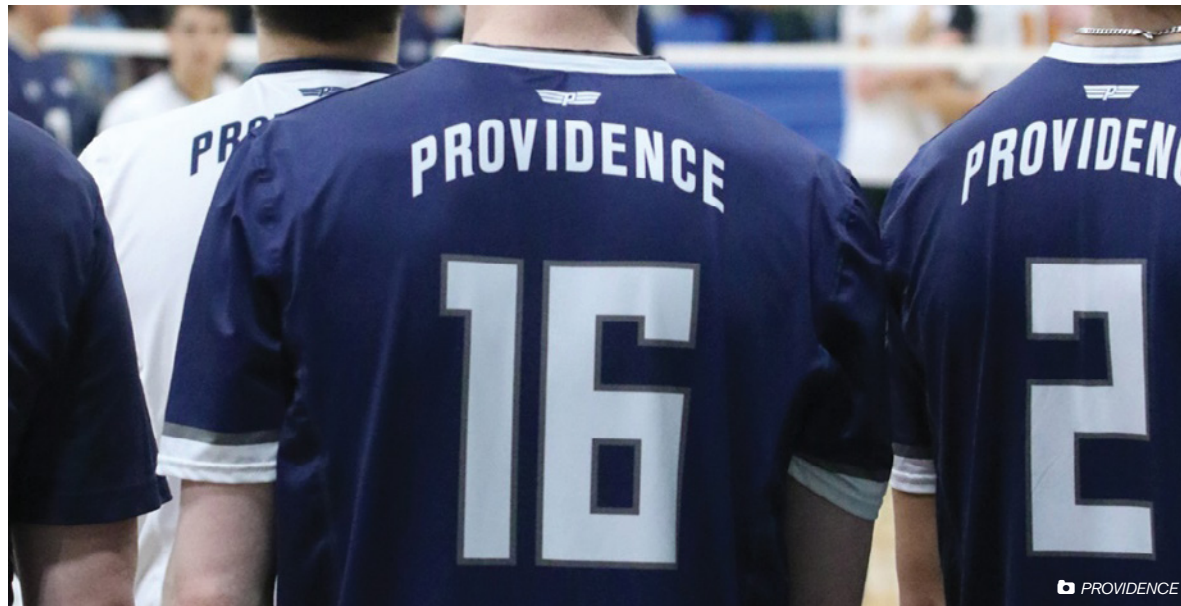
The tournament draws the best collegiate men's volleyball teams from across the nation and invites them right into Niverville's back yard.

Providence, home to the Pilots volleyball program, is situated in Otterburne, seven miles straight south of Niverville.

"The opportunity to host nationals is special," says Paul Armbruster, head coach for men's volleyball at the school. "We're blessed to have so many amazing people contributing to the organization of this championship. My hope is that it will be an awesome, unifying experience, highlighting Prov and our fantastic athletics community."

The teams will begin arriving in the province on March 4, with the action scheduled to get underway at the CRRC at 8:00 a.m. the following day. Matches will then continue through March 8, with the gold medal match starting at 7:00 p.m. The closing ceremonies will shortly follow at 9:00 p.m.

"The Pilots have appeared on a national stage with the NCCAA in the United States many times," says Joel Coursey, Providence's director



of athletics. "But it's an incredible opportunity for us to have the men's volleyball team qualify back-to-back and to host the Canadian nationals this year."

The Pilots competed at the National Invitational Volleyball Championship (NIVC) many times in the late 1990s and secured multiple national titles.

In that era, the school emerged as a volleyball powerhouse. They also claimed a significant national banner at the Division II level at the NIRSA men's volleyball national championships.

Providence rejoined the Manitoba Colleges Athletic Conference (MCAC) in 2009.

They went on to represent the conference at the CCAA championships in Toronto, hosted by Humber College, in 2023. They qualified for the big show again the following year, this time in Victoria, B.C.

As the 2025 event's host school, Providence was guaranteed a spot this year.

Nonetheless, Coursey explains that the Pilots beat Canadian Menonite University in the MCAC provincials so earn their placement legitimately for the third year in a row, a major achievement that puts Providence on the map.

"There'll be a lot of attention on us," says Coursey. "This tournament is exactly the opportunity we're

looking for to showcase the quality of our athletics program."

NATIONAL HUB

Since it opened its doors in 2021, Niverville's CRRC has become a hotspot for high-calibre sporting events. In addition to serving as home ice for the MJHL's Niverville Nighthawks, Providence's teams have been using the fieldhouse since day one.

Recently it was announced that Providence and the CRRC will also host the CCAA's national women's volleyball championships next year. That major event will take place from March 11–14, 2026.

It will be the first time a Manitoba school has hosted the men's

and women's national volleyball championships in consecutive years.

"This is an incredible opportunity to host back-to-back national championships," says Coursey. "It's monumental for the MCAC and for Providence."

"Last year, we said that our cutting-edge recreation facilities would put Niverville on the map as a go-to place for national championships and other large-scale events," says Niverville mayor Myron Dyck. "That is showing itself to be true with the Niverville CRRC having been selected back-to-back as the host facility for national championships. I am excited to see how the CRRC and other investments made into our community will continue to benefit us in the future."

Warren Britton, the town's director of recreation and wellness, adds that interest in the facility has grown steadily since its inauguration.

"This year alone, we have held or are planning to hold five provincial championship events in our facilities, not including the CCAA men's volleyball nationals," says Britton. "I fully expect that number to continue to rise as more organizations hear about [us]."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ To access the full schedule, visit: www.ccaa.ca/sports/mvball/championship/index
 ■ Tickets will be available both at the door or online at www.showpass.com/o/providence-university-college.

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NICK GRENIER

Local Owner of Dodgeball League Looks to Recruit Players

By Kim Kielley

How many 28-year-olds own a dodgeball league?

Nick Grenier of Île-des-Chênes does. He bought Dodgeball Winnipeg last year and now it's the largest dodgeball league in Canada with approximately 900 players.

For a game which originally used rocks thrown at moving opponents 200 years ago in Africa, today's dodgeball games are a little less injurious. Referees keep the game on track and rubber or foam balls are used instead of rocks.

All players need is a pair of running shoes and they're in the game.

Grenier's been playing dodgeball since 2019.

"I was heavily into baseball growing up," he says. "After baseball was over, someone approached me and said I obviously have the skills to throw the ball. So why

don't you come and play dodgeball recreationally?"

Grenier started on a rec team for fun with some friends. He didn't take long to get into the game and start playing competitively.

Competing at the national level was a natural segue for Grenier, an electrical journeyman who also owns Grenco Electrical, an electrical installation business he started two years ago.

Last July, Grenier's team, New Era from Manitoba, played in the nationals against the best teams across the country and won gold.

The icing on the cake was qualifying for Team Canada and representing his country at the world dodgeball competition in Austria last year. His hope is to qualify for the team again in 2026.

In the meantime, with approximately 900 members on the roster for Dodgeball Winnipeg,

Grenier hopes to encourage more people to play in this sport that accepts all levels of skill and physical fitness.

"Dodgeball is super inclusive," he says. "It's a very easy sport to get into."

And if you aren't competitive, you can play for fun, he insists. Referees are there to ensure that players know the rules. It's also an excellent form of exercise, especially during the winter months.

Several players from Niverville and the surrounding area drive into the city to play dodgeball. Grenier adds that if there's enough interest, he would consider starting a division in Niverville, and possibly Steinbach, in the coming year.

The game is affordable. Registering a team, which consists of six to ten players, costs \$625 a season with a guaranteed nine weeks of one-hour games. The game

requires a minimum of six players on the court, but Grenier encourages teams to have enough subs to offset those who need a quick rest during the hour-long game. Individuals who don't belong to a team may register for \$75 a season.

To accommodate the growing interest in the sport, Grenier just added a new location, at the Isaac Brock Community Centre in Winnipeg's West End.

Most of all, Grenier just wants people to get active and involved.

"If more people try it out first, and gain enough interest, and start the division in Niverville, that's a least a good step in the right direction," he says.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more or register, visit: www.dodgeballwinnipeg.com or email: info@dodgeballwinnipeg.com

IN BRIEF

Niverville Recreation Announces Spring Break Camps

By Gord Armstrong

For families looking to fill the gap this upcoming spring break, which falls from March 31 to April 4, local parents need look no further than Niverville Recreation's spring break camps, coming soon to the CRRC.

The day camps promise to provide a host of safe, fun, highly entertaining activities for children. Online registration is now open.

Teresa Mistelbacher, supervisor of camps and recreation programming, says that spring camp registration usually fills up quickly. She encourages parents to sign up, especially if they spot a favourite theme, to ensure their kids are able to participate.

Some of the day camps are already about half full.

The activities will take place throughout the CRRC, including the fieldhouse, kitchen, and multipurpose rooms. If the weather cooperates, the camps will also schedule some outdoor time.

"That way, the kids get a well-rounded day of activities, games, and crafts, all based on the theme of the day," says Mistelbacher.

The first day camp is called Athletic Anarchy, an opportunity for kids to complete and unleash their energy through sports.

Next up: Jurassic Adventures. Mistelbacher says this day will be "packed with dino-themed activities, including fossil digs, creative craft projects, and interactive games that bring these ancient creatures to life."

Science will be the focus of day three, a.k.a. Totally Gross Science. It'll offer kids a chance to get hands-on with a range of experiments and unforgettable new experiences.

On day four, kids will head to the beach—figuratively, of course. The day will bring beach-themed games, arts and crafts, and even a beach dance party.

The spring day camps will end with YES! Day. According to Mistbacher, the kids will "embrace the spirit of spontaneity and exploration as we dive into a day filled with fun activities that inspire creativity, teamwork, and joy."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ To learn more, contact Niverville Recreation: 204-388-4600.

■ To register online, visit: <https://nivillerec.ca/programs/childrens-camps>

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The Nighthawks Enter Season's Final Stretch

By Ty Dilello

tdilello@nivervillecitizen.com

For the Niverville Nighthawks, February started with a franchise-best winning streak. It ended with one of the toughest schedules they've ever had to face.

FEBRUARY 2

WAYWAYSEECAPPO WOLVERINES, HOME

The Nighthawks returned from a week-long break with no signs of rust to defeat the Waywayseecappo Wolverines by 3-1.

But it was the Wolverines who got on the board first, scoring just one minute into the contest.

Then it was all Nighthawks. Aiden Corbett scored later in the period to tie the game.

Lucas Bertolin and Matteo Speranza added insurance markers in the second and third periods. The Nighthawks held on in the ensuing defensive battle to secure the victory.

"It was a big win for sure, as the break was long... but I felt that our players all did great," said Nighthawks head coach Dwight Hirst. "The guys who went to the MJHL/SJHL Showcase [last] week all played to their own strengths and showed that they deserved to be there."

The showcase event, held at the Seven Oaks Sportsplex in Winnipeg, brought together the finest talent from both the MJHL as well as the Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League.

Next up: the first of four games against the Dauphin Kings in just one month.

"We've got more work to do in practice to get ready this week for a homestand on the weekend against Dauphin and the Winnipeg Freeze," said Hirst.

FEBRUARY 8

DAUPHIN KINGS, HOME

The Nighthawks stayed hot with a big 4-0 shutout win over the Kings on



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this Saturday evening at the CRRC. Dauphin occupied first place in the MJHL's West Division, but Niverville outplayed them for most of 60 minutes.

Niverville's first period goals from Dawson Zeller and Adam Vigfusson gave the team a boost for the rest of the night.

Evan Panzer scored in the second period for Niverville, while Bryce Warkentine added an empty netter late in the third on their way to the shutout.

"Our pace of play and tenacity on

pucks was impressive tonight," said Hirst. "It was a great job by all of the players this evening."

Hirst was also quick to credit goalie Austin Dubinsky, who moved to 16-5-2 on the season with a 2.54 goals-against average and a .917 save percentage.

"Dubie has been solid," said Hirst. "He's a solid human being and that leads to being a solid goalie. The fact that he plays like he did tonight, it's a testament to the players in front of him and how they play in front of him."

FEBRUARY 9

WINNIPEG FREEZE, HOME

The Nighthawks continued their recent domination with an impressive 5-2 win over the Winnipeg Freeze at home. It was a mismatch right from the start, with the Nighthawks outshooting their opposition 46-17.

They jumped out front with quick goals from Panzer and Zeller. Winnipeg then scored in the second period but it was all Nighthawks in the third period with tallies from Bertolin, Sean Williams, and Panzer again.

Winnipeg couldn't muster a

comeback, although they did get a second goal in the third period.

Niverville's Jake Torget stopped 15 shots in goal for the win in his netminding debut.

"The winning mentality is building right now," said Hirst. "Capitalizing on the turnovers and jumping on them immediately was important tonight and being on top of the play in the offensive zone."

FEBRUARY 14

SWAN VALLEY STAMPEDERS, AWAY

The Nighthawks kicked off a big three-game weekend road trip with an important 7-2 rout of the Swan Valley Stampeders on Friday night.

The Nighthawks got started fast with goals from Hayden Wheddon, Williams, and Spirig. Swan Valley got one back to end the first period.

In the second period, Niverville picked up right where they left off with a goal from Corbett just two minutes into the frame. Swan Valley scored once more—but then the Nighthawks took the game away with three more goals from Corbett, Williams, and Wheddon.

When the dust settled, the Nighthawks were the big victors.

"It was a big win against a team who had been running pretty hot as of late, and in a rink that was full tonight for a local charity," said Hirst. "It's best when we get in the driver's seat and dictate the pace of our night early on. And that's what we did with those first period goals."

FEBRUARY 15

NORTHERN MANITOBA BLIZZARD, AWAY

On this night on the road, the Nighthawks reached a franchise-best seven-game winning streak.

After giving up the game's first goal halfway through the opening period to the Blizzard, the Nighthawks rallied in the later stages of the frame by scoring three goals in five minutes. Those goals were scored by Bertolin,



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Speranza, and Zeller.

The Blizzard charged the rest of the night and threw shot after shot toward the Niverville goal, but Dubinsky kept the puck stayed out. He stopped 52 shots in goal for the win, in perhaps his best performance of the year.

"It was a great win, in that we may have bent, but we did not break," said Hirst. "We can have nights like tonight that test our team's resiliency. And our goalie Austin was amazing tonight. Sometimes you need a performance like that from your goalie and they steal the victory, which was just fantastic."

FEBRUARY 16 DAUPHIN KINGS, AWAY

All good things must come to an end, as they say, and the Nighthawks' winning streak was no exception.

The team finished their long road trip of western and northern Manitoba with a 4-3 loss to the Dauphin Kings on Sunday night.

The Nighthawks were playing their third game in three nights and had to be feeling it. They looked slow and were outshot 52-30.

Williams opened the scoring for Niverville midway through the first period.

Dauphin replied with a pair of goals early in the second period before Jase Konecni got one back for the Nighthawks to knot the game at 2-2.

The Kings scored twice in the dying minutes of the second period to jump out in front.

Henry Smith scored his first goal in a Nighthawks' uniform with three minutes remaining in the third period, but it wasn't enough to turn the tide.

"It was tough for us to play three games in three days," said Hirst. "The 4:00 p.m. start today was a matter of us getting back into a game just 18 hours later. We train and push our cardio for these times, but mentally we were not sharp on a few occasions against Dauphin today. We have got to learn from those moments and get back to work at practice on Tuesday."

FEBRUARY 20 WINKLER FLYERS, AWAY

The Nighthawks gave it a good go against their likely first-round playoff opponent, but ultimately lost 3-2 to the Winkler Flyers on the road.

Winkler opened the scoring midway through the first period. Their excitement was short-lived, however, as the Nighthawks replied just eight seconds later with a goal from Williams.

The Flyers took back the lead a few minutes afterward.

From there on, play slowed considerably. There were no goals for the next 40 minutes of action, including a scoreless second period.

In the third period, Winkler broke through one more time.

Just when it seemed the game was out of reach, with just under two minutes remaining, Spirig found the back of the net for his ninth tally of the year.

Unfortunately, the Nighthawks couldn't get the equalizer.

"It was a hard-checked and closely contested game tonight against a really good team," said Hirst. "It's a team who we will be seeing a lot if the playoff positions stay the same right now, so we've got to see what we need to do firsthand to stick with Winkler for 60 minutes."

FEBRUARY 22 DAUPHIN KINGS, HOME

After a couple of tough losses, the Nighthawks got back in the win column on Saturday night with a dramatic 3-2 overtime victory at home over the Dauphin Kings.

The Nighthawks jumped out to a 2-0 lead halfway through the game after goals from Speranza and Zeller.

Dauphin scored late in the second period to cut the lead in half and then got another goal early in the third period to tie it up.

The rest of the third period was scoreless and the game headed to overtime.

Speranza was the hero of the night, finding the net to score his sixteenth goal of the season.

"It was very important to

get that win after losing a 2-0 lead," said Hirst. "We got away from our start and had too many highs and lows tonight, so I'm glad that we ended up on the high and won in overtime."

FEBRUARY 23 WINKLER FLYERS, HOME

The Nighthawks were a step behind all night long on their way to falling 4-1 to the Winkler Flyers at home. Winkler outshot Niverville by a 52-22 margin over the course of the night and it showed on the scoreboard.

The Flyers scored late in the first period, and then three times in the second period to lead 4-0 before the Nighthawks finally woke up and got on the board.

Merik Boles scored his sixteenth goal of the season late in the second period to cut into the Winkler lead.

However, the third period was scoreless and the game ended with the Nighthawks finishing well short.

"Winkler dictated pace and control all night long, as we didn't respond well with structure or intensity," said Hirst. "Those are both things we lacked tonight as it was in one ear and out the other."

This game could be seen as a potential first round playoff preview, since Winkler is likely to be the Nighthawks' opponent. Should this be the case, Hirst notes what his team needs to do better if they're going to have any success against the Flyers.

"We have to play to our strengths and do what we do best," he said. "We didn't do it tonight. We played tentatively, cautiously, on the perimeter, and we need to understand that we must be at our best every time we step on the ice."

FEBRUARY 26 PORTAGE TERRIERS, HOME

The Nighthawks outshot the Portage Terriers on home ice, by a wide margin, but were unable to outscore them. The home team fell 3-1, unable to get past the Portage netminder until the last minute of play.

Portage opened the scoring

late in the first period and then added another late in the second period to take a two-goal lead.

The Nighthawks kept chipping away but weren't able to score until a minute left in the third period with the goalie pulled. Wheddon scored to cut the lead to 2-1.

But then Portage added an empty netter with six seconds left to hold on.

"It was a combination of their goalie playing well and our team not burying our opportunities," said Hirst. "We played well and didn't get the win. We fell asleep defensively on two shifts and that cost us."

The Nighthawks would have to follow this up with yet another contest with the Kings, facing them for the fourth time this month.

"We've just got to keep coming back to practice and get better on our board work, as we lacked in that area tonight," said Hirst. "If we do that, we'll be ready for this weekend's game with Dauphin."

MARCH 1 DAUPHIN KINGS, AWAY

The Nighthawks once again found themselves on the losing side after falling 4-2 to the Kings on the road.

Even with the loss, the Nighthawks were securely positioned in fourth place in the MJHL's East Division with a record of 30-18-3.

The match started off promising. Speranza opened the scoring with his seventeenth goal of the season late in the first period.

After a scoreless second period, though, Dauphin came up with four goals in the third period, while Niverville only found the net once, with a tally from Wheddon.

"The penalties to start the third period gave them some momentum," said Hirst. "We killed off the first one, but then they scored on the second penalty. Those back-to-back penalties gave them energy to gain some momentum... We need a full commitment to our identity and what makes us successful, not periods or shifts of success."

IN BRIEF



Rage U12 Make it to Final in Saskatchewan

By Brenda Sawatzky

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For one group of young ringette players, last weekend provided the perfect opportunity to demonstrate their formidable spirit. At a three-day tournament in Regina, 12 teams faced off for a chance at a gold medal.

Among them was the Red River Rage U12, a team comprised of Niverville and St. Adolphe players under the age of 12.

The girls took home the silver medal in the end, a bittersweet outcome after six hard-fought contests.

Although visions of gold loomed in their sight, the players and head coach, Jennifer Trinkies, were extremely impressed by their second-place finish.

"Manitoba teams are typically seen as not very strong at the club level," says Trinkies. "Of course, the Eastman Heat and The Flames are top teams, but Manitoba clubs aren't really feared in the ringette world."

For that reason, Trinkies says she had no expectation her team would make it to the finals on Sunday morning.

As for the Regina team that won gold, they've gone completely undefeated in their entire season so far. To face off with a team of that calibre and lose by only one point with 11 seconds left in overtime? This small-town Manitoba team left the tournament with a whole new level of respect from the

entire field.

In fact, this weekend marked their very first time playing in an out-of-province tournament.

"Our teams typically go to Regina to get a bigger challenge," Trinkies says. "Their program is amazing, so we go there expecting not to win but just to have a good time."

For Trinkies and the other coaches, the weekend was packed with good memories. Among them was watching some of these young players score their very first goals.

"This shows that our girls were working together as a team," Trinkies says. "It wasn't the same girls getting [the goals] every time."

After every game, the team collectively chooses four team members to take the titles of smasher, sniper, best attitude, and best overall player of the game.

During the tournament, Trinkies says every one of her players received at least one of these special mentions, further demonstrating that sportsmanship trumps showmanship for these young hopefuls.

"I think it's important to go to hotel tournaments, as I call them, because it brings the team together," she says. "This tournament, you could see our whole team working the hardest that they've ever worked—and I think it's because they were hanging out with each other, getting to know and trust each other. You can just really tell, on the ice, when they've started to gel."



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Arts & Entertainment

Encountering the Wild: Photographer Explores Passion for Nature

By Gord Armstrong

Jen Normand of New Bothwell is a country girl at heart, and nowhere is this more in evidence than her passion for nature photography.

She may not pursue this passion full-time—after all, she has only been doing this for the past few years and it doesn't quite manage to pay the bills—but that doesn't stop her from scrounging for every spare minute to spend outdoors.

That's where all the wildlife is, and it's where her passion finds its truest expression.

"For me, I feel like it's still a long journey, but it's an exciting journey," she says of her growing passion. "We actually do have a lot of animals here in the southeast, like Niverville and New Bothwell. You know, I like to stay near small towns and backroads. That's where I find all these animals."

She also travels further afield. Last year, she encountered her first black bear at Bird River.

"That was very exciting for me," Normand says. "I was floored. I'm holding my camera and I'm shaking out of excitement. My adrenaline is just going. To make eye contact with these animals is incredibly intense and a beautiful experience."

For those who wonder whether taking pictures of an animal like a black bear is safe, Normand is quick to reassure that she never leaves her vehicle. This means she takes her photos right on the side of the road.

Some of her subjects, like bald eagles—which happen to be her favourite—are perched high up in the trees.

Normand's big dream is to one day head out to Alaska and photograph the bald eagles to be found there.

"My dad passed away in 2020 and his favourite bird was the bald



The bald eagle in its natural habitat.

JEN NORMAND

eagle," she explains. "So that bird will always have a special place in my heart. This is why I started photography. It was an outlet for me to grieve over my dad."

Her passion for wildlife came very naturally and was passed down not just from her dad, but also her grandfather. She grew up watching programs like *The Nature of Things* with David Suzuki. Watching those shows with her dad and grandfather created a special bonding

experience, and to this day they help her feel like she's close to them.

Since 2020, Normand says that she has seen the return of many animals to the local area—and not just bald eagles.

In general, she's discovering animals of all kinds.

She loves to head out onto the local backroads, driving ever so slowly as she searches for signs of our abundant wildlife—for example, skunks, bears, coyotes, and foxes.

It's nothing for Normand to head out into nature for six or seven hours at a time, just looking for that one bird, or that one animal.

"When I do [find them], I could sit with them for one to three hours. Depends how long they allow me to stay with them."

If that makes you think Normand is a naturally patient person, think again. But she says that photography is helping her to be more patient.

As for equipment, Normand currently uses a Canon R7 with a 100–400-millimetre lens. Her first camera was a Nikon B600, which she says had an incredible zoom lens, but the clarity of the pictures wasn't quite up to her standards.

She readily admits that she doesn't excel at technology, so learning how to work a camera has taken time—and she's still in the process of learning.

So what does it feel like to capture the perfect shot?

"Oh gosh, it's like winning the lottery. It literally is. I'm shaking. I'm smiling from ear to ear," she says. "That for me is excitement, pure excitement. The adrenaline is going. I'm shaking while I'm holding the camera because I am so excited."

While Normand had not offered her work for public consumption, she recently donated a couple of canvases to the Wildlife Haven Rehabilitation Centre in Île-des-Chênes. They hosted an auction of two of her pieces in mid-February.

This was a first for her.

"Initially, I got into photography for my own mental health," she says. "But people are liking these photos, which totally took me off-guard. I was not expecting any of this. It was just a for-me thing."

In the end, she feels it's so important for people to respect the wildlife that surrounds them.

"That's the biggest thing. Respect and admire what we have here, because the world can get very ugly. But take a moment to stop and smell the roses. I mean that literally. We have a lot of beautiful animals out there. Manitoba is beautiful!"

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Normand's work can be viewed on Facebook: www.facebook.com/jennifer.normand.photography

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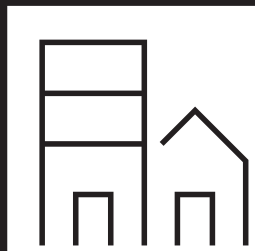
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