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VOLUME 3 - ISSUE 4

APRIL 2017

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#### LOCAL NEWS

### Niverville Unveils 2017 Budget Details

■ Niverville's town council has released its annual budget. Full details inside.

Details on Page 3



#### LOCAL NEWS

### Ritchot Moves Forward with Main Street Initiatives

■ After a series of public consultations, new street design features are on the way to St. Adolphe, Ste. Agathe, and Île-des-Chênes.

Details on Page 6

#### SPORTS & RECREATION

### Novice A Clippers Come Out on Top

■ The Niverville Clippers topped the 44-team Novice division, beating Steinbach in a best-of-three final series.

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#### ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

### Bring the Birthday Magic Home

■ Happily Ever After Parties is in the business of making children's dreams come true.

Details on Page 36

# Flood of the Century

*A retrospective look at the 1997 flood, 20 years later.*



» DETAILS ON PAGES 16-28

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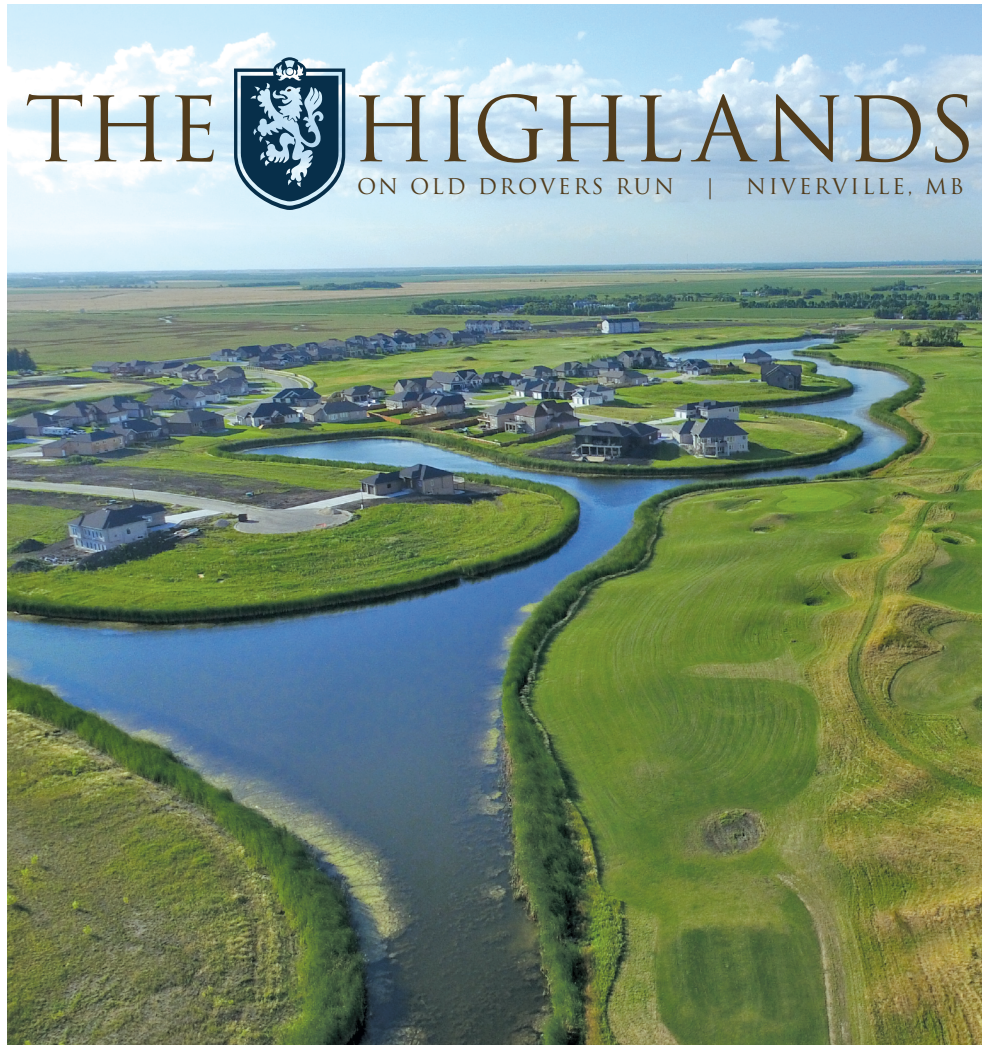
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The

Citizen

Niverville, Manitoba

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The Niverville Citizen is published monthly and distributed through Canada Post to all those with a postal box in Niverville, as well as those who receive flyers in the communities of Ile-des-Chênes, New Bothwell, Ste Agathe, Otterburne, and Tourond. Additional copies are manually distributed to businesses in the aforementioned communities, as well as the towns of Landmark and St Adolphe. The paper is printed in Canada by Derksen Printers Ltd. Republishing of this paper in whole or in part without prior approval is strictly prohibited.

The advertising deadline is 5:00 p.m. on the 15th of each month. The paper will be distributed the last week of every month.

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# Niverville Unveils 2017 Budget

## In the 2017 budget, taxes and expenditures are on the rise.

By Evan Braun  
✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

The Town of Niverville has released its 2017 budget, revealing it to the public at an open house held on Tuesday, March 7 at the Heritage Centre.

Of greatest concern to most residents is always the change to the tax rate. This year, Niverville's taxes will climb two percent. For the average home, which for the budget's purpose has an assessed value of \$291,000, this means an increase of \$33.18 annually.

The education mill rate, which is set by the Hanover School Division and which the town has no control over, will go up 2.41 percent. In 2016, education taxes accounted for 43 percent of the total residential property bill, and 67 percent for commercial properties.

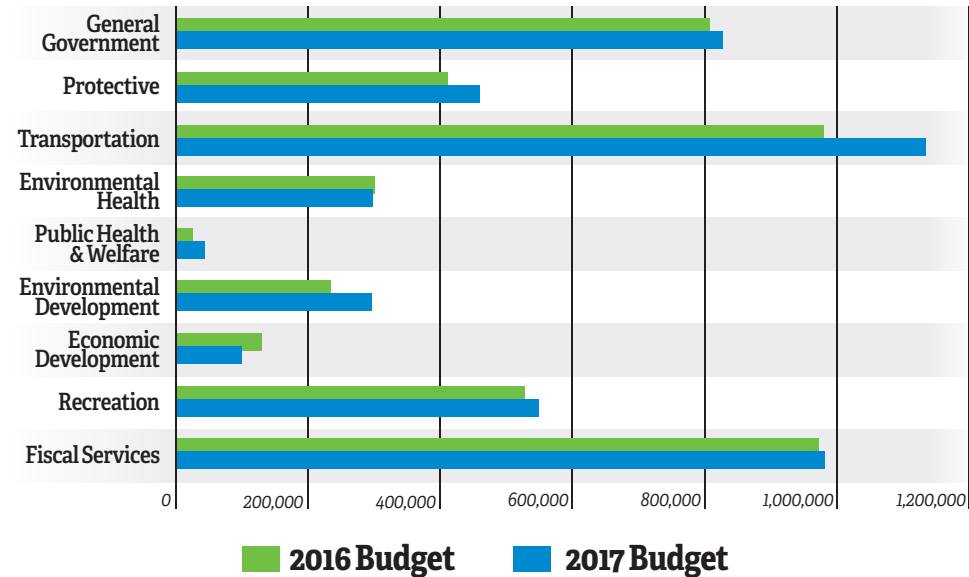
### TOWN EXPENDITURES

Funds earmarked for government services have risen 2.2 percent to \$828,518, which will pay for improvements to the town office's accessibility, the previously announced grant for businesses to purchase security cameras, and enhancements to the town's accounting system to create an online portal so residents can check their outstanding balances and make direct payments online.

Protective services are going up 12 percent this year, reaching \$458,466. This will cover funding for a half-time RCMP police secretary. Other measures include hiring an emergency coordinator and implementing tabletop emergency exercises.

The budget allocation will remain about the same this year for environmental health services. Major projects include the introduction of automated recycling services in May, a service upgrade eagerly anticipated by many residents since it was first announced three months ago. The contract has been awarded to Bristol Hauling at a cost of \$242 per tonne.

Niverville's public health and welfare services budget is increasing from \$21,000 to \$39,250 this year, which will cover continued



improvements to the Heritage and Hespeler cemeteries. An initiative is also underway to create web-based access to cemetery records.

Environmental development services will increase by 26 percent. Part of these funds will be spent to redevelop and pave the walking path which runs east from Station Road in front of Old Drover's Run. Also, the town's development plan and zoning bylaw will be reviewed, and a part-time arborist is to be hired to aid in tree-planting and tree maintenance.

In the area of economic development, the town has approved a 23 percent decrease in spending. Initiatives include hosting two open house meetings in 2017, one of which has already taken place. Funds have also been earmarked for enhancements to the town's marketing materials. Finally, council will be seeking updated photography of the community.

The town's recreation budget will see a nominal increase of one percent. Niverville will once again host extensive summer camp programming. Further expenditures will go towards the operation of the splash pad (which will operate from June 1 until September 5), and landscaping for its grounds. New showers will be installed in the Niverville Arena dressing rooms, and fencing improvements will be made to the dog park. The Niverville Curling Club will

receive new lighting and a more accessible entrance.

Sewer utility expenditures will increase by 20 percent in 2017, funding several projects related to the lagoon. A new pumping system will be installed to improve the movement of sewage between cells, boat access will be added to ease the application of chemicals to manage phosphate levels, and the service road will be upgraded to allow all-weather access. In addition, managing the phosphorous levels in waste water, per provincial regulations, is expected to cost \$85,000. A sewer rate study will also be conducted.

Niverville's largest expenditure is its water utility, pegged at \$3,836,416 this year. Funds will be directed toward the continuing process of locating a new well field. If the current proposal is approved in late 2017, a new pipeline will be constructed over the winter, with an estimated completion date of spring 2018.

Another expense is the new water main being built along Crown Valley Road to provide the Highlands subdivision with fire hydrant protection services. In addition, the town will complete several upgrades to the Spruce Drive water treatment plant.

Other community initiatives include baseball diamond upgrades, the installation of bike racks on Main Street, tourist signage, parking lot lights for the arena, and a renewal project at Opa's Park.

### TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

This year will see a significant increase in expenditures for the area of transportation services, a rise of 16 percent to \$1,139,191. Two new staff members are being added, one full-time position and one additional summer student position.

Of significant interest to residents of the Fifth Avenue Estates subdivision, the town will soon begin the process of rebuilding Sixth Avenue. The heavily travelled gravel road, which has long been an issue of concern, will be reconstructed in three phases. The first phase, to be completed this year, will see the road dug out from Highway 311 halfway to Crown Valley and topped with proper granular, geotextile, limestone, and a base layer. The second phase, scheduled for 2018, will see the reconstruction of the second half. A future third phase, should the next council approve it, will involve paving

the street. The contract has been awarded to Southwood Ventures of Grunthal at a cost of \$253,064.

New sidewalks will be installed this summer along the south side of Main Street, running for one and a half blocks from the east end of the Co-op property to the corner of Second Avenue South. This is a continuation of the sidewalk project begun in 2015 and put on hold last year due to the installation of the new water main. Armada Construction won the \$78,000 contract, which came in under budget. Council will discuss at a later date how to use the balance of money that was put aside for this endeavour. The portion of sidewalk fronting Co-op has been exempted for the time being, pending changes that the owners of the property intend to make in the near future.

Additionally, the town will improve drainage along Station Road, Second and Fourth Avenues South, and in Hespeler Park.

The town is also paying for a functional access design study for Main Street, the costs of which will be split with Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation (MIT). The contract has been awarded to CH2M, a Winnipeg engineering firm, for \$85,000.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ The full details of the budget can be viewed on the town's website: [www.wheretheyoubelong.ca/images/Notices/2017-03-07NivervilleFinancialPlanOpenHouseBoards.pdf](http://www.wheretheyoubelong.ca/images/Notices/2017-03-07NivervilleFinancialPlanOpenHouseBoards.pdf)

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## IN BRIEF

**The Citizen Expands Reach**

The Citizen is once again increasing its distribution. Beginning in April, all residents of St. Adolphe will now receive the paper on a monthly basis.

St. Adolphe is home to about 600 households and businesses. The Citizen comes out on the first Thursday of the month.

**New Fire Services Agreement for Niverville and Hanover**

Niverville's town council has entered into a new agreement with the RM of Hanover regarding fire protective services.

According to the new agreement, Hanover will contact the Niverville Fire Department for assistance on all calls within a two-mile radius of Niverville. However, the agreement stipulates that Niverville may not respond until contacted by Hanover.

The subject was a matter of significant controversy back in December, when it was announced that the Niverville Fire Department would no longer be dispatched to fires at properties just outside the town's boundaries. Instead, the New Bothwell Fire Department would respond. Some of the affected residents expressed concern that this would downgrade their level of protection, since help from New Bothwell would take longer arriving than from Niverville. The new agreement is intended to alleviate those concerns.

# Dying to Ride

## *Motorcycle safety is a life-or-death situation.*

**By Keiron Berndt**

With more motorcyclists back on the road after a blustery winter, many motorists are unaware of their presence, which often leads to injuries—if not death.

Matthew Robinson, a seasoned motorcyclist, was the victim of one of these accidents, and after two surgeries he's back on his bike. Robinson was sent 50 feet through the air after being struck by a distracted driver while riding, and he's lucky to be alive.

Robinson now has some advice for riders and motorists alike.

His first two tips are for current

and aspiring bikers. The first one would be the age-old biker saying of "Loud pipes save lives." Having people notice you, even if that means riding a flashy and disturbingly loud bike or sporting highly visible riding gear, is essential.

The second tip is to simply creating space on the road. It's a simple fact that most people on the road don't pay attention while driving, whether they're on their phone or just zoned out. These drivers are amplified when on a bike. Removing yourself from small pockets in traffic, or just flat-out staying away from everything, is the safest bet.

Riders often cut in front of

people at stop lights or weave in and out of traffic, and many motorists think they're reckless for doing so, but in reality they're just creating space.

One of the best things a motorist can do is not drive distracted. For example, while drivers are told to look three to five seconds ahead, for riders it's three times that. A distraction could be a phone, music, homework, eating, drinking, or even applying makeup.

A crash on a motorcycle is not the same as in a car. A sixty-kilometre-per-hour crash in a car often results in damage to the vehicle. However, sixty kilometers per hour

on a bike could permanently alter someone's life, or worse.

Running a yellow light can be exceptionally dangerous due to the speed and size of bikes that seem to "come out of nowhere." Not only are riders more vulnerable to the elements, ranging from rain to bugs, but they often have to avoid life-threatening situations due to other drivers' careless driving.

As you enjoy the warmer weather and sunshine, be sure to check your blind spots, don't drive distracted, and look twice for bikes that could appear in the blink of an eye.

# McHale Seeks Manitoba NDP Leadership

**By Brenda Sawatzky**

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

Former Niverville resident Michelle McHale recently announced her bid for the leadership of the Manitoba NDP. McHale, a staff representative of the United Food and Commercial Workers union, became a member of the provincial NDP in 2016. In the southeast, her name has become synonymous with Steinbach's first Pride march, as well as her campaign to remove same-sex marriage from the "sensitive issues" curriculum of the Hanover School Division.

The prospect of stepping into the shoes of former NDP leader Greg Selinger holds little concern

for McHale. Selinger lost the provincial vote to Progressive Conservative leader Brian Pallister one year ago, and the party has been divided since 2014, when Selinger faced public furor over the provincial sales tax hike and an internal revolt that caused five party members to question his ability to lead. The party has continued to struggle since the election.

"Over the past eight weeks, I've had the opportunity and privilege to speak with current and former NDP members about what they need from their next leader," McHale told supporters at her announcement on March 10 at the Gas Station Theatre in Winnipeg. "So many shared angrily, and with

profound sadness, that you can no longer see yourself and your own guiding principles reflected back to you in this party. And almost all of you have shared that the party that you once knew, loved, and believed in is unrecognizable to you now."

McHale says that she was approached to consider the nomination in December and believes that, as a newcomer to the party, she has what it takes to help restore unity. Being new on the political scene, she says, is a hurdle that she can overcome.

"Maybe I don't know what I don't know about what's in store," says McHale. "That's entirely possible. But I have some really great people around me that are

educating me as I go."

While McHale is, as yet, the only declared candidate in the running, eight others are seriously considering making leadership bids. The majority of these candidates have past or present experience as MLAs.

As for internal party support, McHale says she hasn't been actively seeking it yet.

"I've been having conversations with a number of people, including a number of caucus members," says McHale. "But at this time, I'm not looking for endorsements. I'm just looking to say, 'Hey, I think that the skillset that you're looking for, I possess.'"

**Getting Ready For The Golf Season!**

The course and range are almost open! Here are some things you can do at home to prepare:

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- Practice putting on your carpet. (Simply flip a plastic cup upside down and use it as a hole.)
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# Preschool Aims to Build Strong Educational Foundations

By Trevor Lux

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

It can be said that preschool education plays an essential role in early childhood development, both socially and academically. Instilling confidence, building social skills, improving concentration, and focus are just a few of the many benefits. The Niverville Cooperative Playground (NCP) is one such example, and registration for the new year takes place on April 11 at 7:00 p.m. at the Niverville Elementary School.

"We encourage social play," says Irene Falk, a teacher and the director of the NCP for the past 25 years. "This enhances [the children's] cooperation and problem-solving. The children learn the necessity of rules and regulations and the importance of listening to the teachers. Learning our colours, numbers, ABCs, and much more. The children are comfortable with their surroundings and with the procedures of the school system, thus eliminating a great deal of stress with the first day of kindergarten."

Falk notes that the teachers observe, take notes, listen, and interact with children during playtime to get to know and better understand each child's social, emotional, physical, and cognitive needs.

"I feel very lucky to be able to have a job that I enjoy doing," Falk adds. "The children have been such joy to be with."

Falk is joined by Louise



ADOBE STOCK

Broesky, who has held the position of childcare assistant for 16 years. Additionally, the NCP Board of Directors consists of volunteers from the community.

"The board members play an important role in the program," says Katie Knebel, president of NCP, "with each member providing a different skill and outlook to ensure the entire program's needs are met."

Aside from Knebel, the other members of the board include Kim Luhowy (vice president), Meagan Mckuski (treasurer), Jen Morin (registrar), Darcy Fast (secretary), Mel Rideout (events coordinator), and Allison Friesen, who creates all newsletter communications.

"NCP is focused on making the program the best it can be," says Knebel. "We welcome parents' involvement and we will always listen to their suggestions. We are currently working on a website to help us communicate with our parents and make our program better known to the public. We want people to easily be able to find us and easily obtain information."

Knebel also notes that the program is looking to expand in the long-term and create additional childcare spots. "As our community grows, we know the need for preschool will also grow. We hope to grow along with Niverville."

The NCP is operated from the Niverville Elementary School.

"Being located in the school provides the children with a comfortable setting and relaxed environment, preparing the children for advancement to kindergarten," says Knebel.

Although the program has been a success, administering it is not without its challenges. "Even though we do get funding and... parent fees, unfortunately we still need to fundraise to meet our needs," adds Falk.

The NCP has been operating since 1980. To be eligible for the program, children must be three years of age before December 31 of the current calendar year, and they can continue to participate until they are five years of age. The program operates Monday through Thursday from early September until the end of May. Morning and afternoon sessions are offered, and parents have the option of enrolling their children in up to two sessions per week.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ The NCP board is currently looking for new members. Contact Katie Knebel for more information about this opportunity: 204-392-3030.

■ Registration for the 2017-18 school year takes place April 11 at 7:00 p.m. in the NCP classroom at Niverville Elementary School. Parents or caregivers are asked to please line up at the south-side doors of the school. Placement is determined on a first-come, first-served basis.

■ Anyone with questions is encouraged to email [ncpreschoolreg@gmail.com](mailto:ncpreschoolreg@gmail.com).

## INBRIEF



Tracy Beaudin.

HANOVER SCHOOL DIVISION

## New Principal Appointed for Elementary School

A new principal has been appointed for Niverville Elementary School, following the retirement of Judy Hiebert at the end of the current school year. Beaudin has taught for 16 years, 12 of which have been in the Hanover School Division. She has previously held the vice-principal role in Blumenort as well as at Steinbach's Southwood school.

"I was the resource teacher before I went into administration," says Beaudin. "So that already was a transition towards a leadership role, because you're dealing with teachers and EAs [education assistants] and parents in a different way. But moving into a principalship changes the way you work with others."

Beaudin has lived in the Niverville area for several years, first in the town itself, and more recently on a property just outside town.

"I'm excited just to get to know the staff and the

students, the parents in [Niverville]," she says. "I'm looking forward to just see the learning styles of the students, to build relationships with them and hear their voice and what they want to see, [discover] what their dreams are for their school."

Beaudin adds that she has a strong interest in exploratory learning and wants to encourage a hands-on approach. In particular she says she would like to explore the possibility of setting up Makerspace stations in the classrooms. At Makerspace stations, students are given opportunities to create and interact with physical objects. It's an innovative approach to education that embraces self-directed learning and uses technology to engage students.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ [www.makerspaceforeducation.com](http://www.makerspaceforeducation.com)



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# Ritchot Moves Forward with Main Street Initiatives

**Ritchot's main streets are about to get a whole lot prettier and more user-friendly.**



**BRENDA SAWATZKY**

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

In March, Community Economic Development Officer Lesley Gaudry facilitated Main Street revitalization open houses in Île-des-Chênes, St. Adolphe, and Ste. Agathe, inviting residents to participate by previewing concept plans that have been drawn up for each community.

"We had a great cross-section of folks who came out and provided some valuable feedback on the drawings," says Gaudry. "We talked about possibilities. We talked about needs. We recognize that these plans are not going to be the be-all and end-all. After these plans are done, the real work, the hard work, begins."

Gaudry received the green light from Ritchot's council to begin work on this initiative last year after she'd researched the benefits that other communities have received from community sustainability plans.

"[Ritchot] residents have seen growth in their communities and they have seen their infrastructure age," adds Gaudry. "What more opportunity time to have a proper look at what makes a main street healthy, happy, vibrant, safe, and accessible for meeting places and economic centres? At the same time, this has given us an avenue to connect with our local businesses and say, 'Thank you for having your business here. We appreciate you.'"



Constantina Douvris from HTFC Planning and Design.

BRENDA SAWATZKY

HTFC Planning and Design of Winnipeg was hired to begin work on the projects. The company boasts a 50-year history of outstanding revitalization projects and working with public sector, private sector, and non-profit organizations in communities across Manitoba, Ontario, and northern Canada.

"There are many professions that can look at aspects of revitalization from a specific lens: engineers... social scientists... developers," says Constantina Douvris, landscape architect for HTFC. "These are all valuable services. However, taken in isolation, they remain disjointed and disconnected parts of a bigger puzzle, driving communities towards disjointed growth and false starts. At HTFC, we look at planning and design problems in a holistic way, considering all of a project's drivers in developing well-rounded and custom-tailored solutions for

each community. HTFC does two things exceptionally well: we fully engage local residents in the design process and we convert ideas into compelling and easy-to-understand visuals that help communities reach consensus as they plan for the future."

**"Residents have seen growth in their communities and they have seen their infrastructure age."**

**Lesley Gaudry**

Community Economic Development Officer, RM of Ritchot

Gaudry says that Ritchot's revitalization plans include basics such as new signage, crosswalks, curb bumpouts, streetscaping, improved accessibility to sidewalks, and repairs to curbs, gutters, and potholes. Each community, though, is looking beyond basic renewal to include features such as roundabouts for

better main street access, community greenspaces that will double as areas for outdoor markets, and plenty of trees, shrubs, and flower gardens.

Because of the high volume of recreational cyclist traffic from Winnipeg, St. Adolphe's proposal includes bike lanes

might create bottlenecks for the heavy traffic travelling through on a daily basis.

"My concern would be the traffic [numbers] still won't be reduced and how many [speed limit] signs are they willing to put up?" says Lagasse.

According to Lagasse, there are currently no speed limit signs along Main Street and accidents are a common occurrence at the south end of town. She sees some favourable aspects to the proposed revitalization plan, though.

"I kind of like the idea of a park-like setting [on Main Street]," adds Lagasse. "I love the idea of [adding] trees. It beautifies everything, and lighting would be a big thing. We don't have enough [street] lighting."

The proposed plans for Île-des-Chênes and Ste. Agathe include walking and bike corridors to connect schools and new developments to the downtown areas, as well as

Main Street design elements that engage their heritage and francophone cultures.

As for the timing of the projects, Gaudry says there are still a lot of details to be worked out, and much will depend upon what each community places at the top of their priorities list.

"You could see changes as early as this fall and next spring," says Gaudry. "Changes need to be a partnership decision between economic development, council, public works, residents, and businesses. Some things the RM controls... and other items will [require dialogue] with Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation for years to come. But at least we have a plan, a well thought-out, solid plan to start the conversations."

Douvris says that these initial stages of planning and community involvement are integral to creating a personalized approach to each community rather than a cookie-cutter solution. Each Ritchot community will see very different Main Street results, reflecting their unique character, locations, and goals.

"Main streets are the heart of a community," says Douvris. "A vibrant and accessible main street that welcomes all residents... builds a core that supports local business and economic development while promoting social interaction, alternate modes of transportation, community connectivity, overall wellness, and community pride. When done right, main streets are social hubs that reflect the heritage, culture, and character of a settlement. Building better main streets makes economic sense [by] supporting local entrepreneurs, encouraging local and regional tourism, and attracting investment."



## IN BRIEF

## Provencher Still Leads Canada in Charitable Giving

According to data released by Statistics Canada for the 2015 tax year, residents of Provencher continue to be among the country's leaders in charitable giving.

Canada-wide, the median donation was \$300, while the median in Manitoba was \$420. Provencher in particular stands out from the pack. Blumenort has the distinction of being the most generous community in southeastern Manitoba, with a median donation of \$3,740. Other notable communities include Landmark (\$2,490), Kleeefeld (\$2,260), Steinbach (\$1,900), New Bothwell (\$1,500), Grunthal (\$1,400), and Niverville (\$1,320).

Nonetheless, on a national level the number of charitable donors is in decline. Although 21 percent of the Canadian population gave in 2015, that's down significantly from 29.5 percent in 1990. In other words, the overall amount of donations has crept upwards while the donor base continues to shrink.

## Students to Aid in Spring Cleaning

On Friday, April 28, from 1:30–3:00 p.m., students from Niverville Collegiate Institute will be dispersing around town for their annual community clean-up day.

"Reminder to drive with caution," says Carling Comte, who teaches Grades Seven and Eight. "Students will be on foot collecting garbage."

Comte clarifies that students will not enter people's yards.

"NCI is dedicated to keeping Niverville beautiful," she adds. "Let's support the students and staff of NCI in this endeavour."

In the event of a rain delay, the clean-up could be rescheduled for Friday, May 12.

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# Local Real Estate Agents Take on Property Management



The new Preferred Choice Property Management offices on Main Street Niverville.

CLARENCE BRAUN

## By Evan Braun

editor@nivervillecitizen.com

In the last several months, the Team Preferred Choice real

estate team of Clarence Braun and Wesley Dowse has made several key changes to their business, including changing their name, relocating to a new

suite of offices on Main Street Niverville, and starting a property management company.

First of all, the realty side of their business is now known

as the Clarence Braun and Wesley Dowse Team. The newest addition to their office, Preferred Choice Property Management (PCPM), began its operations in late fall 2016.

Braun says that they made the change to keep the two companies' names distinct from each other, to comply with new regulations that are coming to the Real Estate Services Act.

"We continually meet investors who want to buy property, but they do not want the responsibility of getting tenants and dealing with tenant issues," Braun says of the decision to get into the property management game. "Plus, with the new condo act that came into place in 2015, we had a [good perspective]

as agents. As we deal in condo sales, we are well aware of the daily concerns of condo boards. So our focus is on investors who buy rental property and apartments, and condo property management."

So far, PCPM represents five different investors, and all of their properties.

"Communication is one of the most important aspects of the lease and rental market," says Braun. "With a high level of communication, we can provide the service required to satisfy the demands of tenants on behalf of the investors as well as the condo boards that we represent."

As the two companies grow, Braun says that they needed a larger and more professional space. The new location,

1789 Main Street, contains six offices and a large boardroom.

"Being right on Main Street is a great advantage for us," Braun says. "Both for the visibility that it brings, plus it brings us closer to Tim Hortons."

Braun adds that they expect to hire their first employee dedicated to PCPM later in 2017. "As well, we are looking to be in a position to begin adding to our real estate team towards the middle to end of this year. At present, we have three agents that work with Wes and I. Nyk Andrusiak works out of Steinbach primarily, and Matt Young and Nick Bergmann work out of our Niverville office. Nyk Andrusiak works alongside Wes and I as a partner in PCPM."

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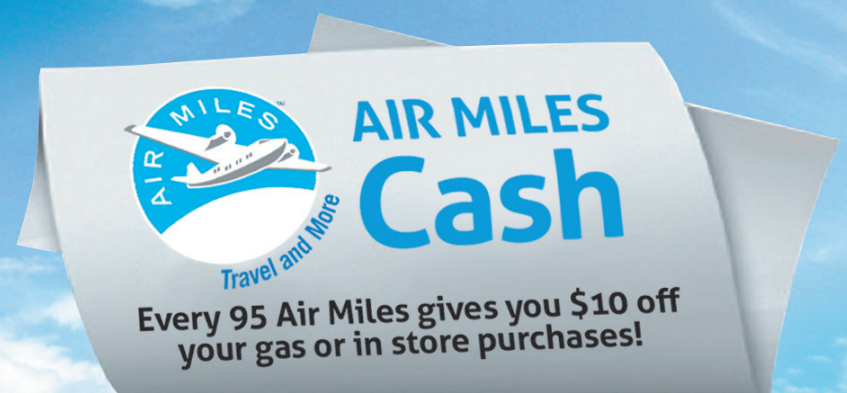


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**CHANGE.** To some that word is exciting as it is the anticipation of what is to come. To others it strikes fear as it takes one out of routine and into the unknown. The fact is change is part of life and we must learn to adapt to it. Where this affects municipal politics is in regards to changing from each community or municipality thinking only of its own interests, to all municipalities having more of a regional mindset. At a recent conference in Winnipeg called "Shifting to Drive" the municipalities of the capital region together with council representatives from the City of Winnipeg listened to speakers from around the world speak about how their communities are adapting to various regional initiatives. We were told that we need to work together as together we are stronger. Messaging from the Province to all municipal leaders is that we need to work together as there simply is not money for each municipality to have their own. Their own what you ask? Currently we see a regional landfill, or a regional hospital or police station. In the near future there could be a day coming where one municipality will have the water treatment plant and the neighbouring municipality the septic treatment. One may have the firehall, the other the school or arena. The message to municipal leaders is that in order to be financially sustainable more of a regional thought process is required. So as the days, months, and years move along, a change to regional thinking and initiatives is what is coming. We must be ready to adapt to it!

**Myron Dyck,**  
Mayor - Town of Niverville

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# Reaching for the Stars

*Local entrepreneur Colleen Dyck takes her GORP bars to Hollywood.*

**By Brenda Sawatzky**

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

Stardom is not altogether new to Colleen Dyck, owner of the Great GORP Project in Niverville. She's already received four regional and national awards and has been featured in numerous magazines since she began her energy bar business ten years ago.

This February, Dyck packed up her GORP bars and set out to do some stargazing of her own. The kind of stars you'll find in Hollywood for the annual Academy Awards.

"[Our goal was] to get good media attention, to have a neat story to tell, and to do a press release and have some fun," says Dyck. "It kind of helps when you can say stuff like this [in] your marketing material. It elevates your brand a little bit and speaks to the quality of it."

The idea began with her friend and associate in the wholesome food business, Peter Fehr of Gourmet Inspirations. Together, they sent samples of their products to the coordinators of the Academy Award gifting department and kept their fingers crossed. Both were accepted, thus beginning a race to organize their booths for the stars gifting suite.

The gifting suite, in Hollywood terms, is where hundreds of attendees to the awards can pick up complimentary samples of products offered by a broad variety of vendors from across North America. To participate, a vendor must have an elegant display and each gift package must hold a specific value.

In an effort to impress, Dyck ordered packaging befitting the stars: specially designed boxes with the capacity to hold one of each of her energy bar flavours. The boxes arrived just in time and Dyck enlisted family and employees to assemble the packages. Dyck arranged to ship them to the Biltmore Hotel, home of the gifting suite, and booked flights for herself and her husband Grant.

It was evident from the get-go that this adventure was about to get



Colleen Dyck and Keiko Avena, best known for her starring role on *Gilmore Girls*.

COLLEEN DYCK

a little wild. A last-minute phone call before leaving brought bad news: the shipping company would not be able to fulfill their obligation to deliver the product in time. Just hours before their flight, Dyck made numerous phone calls to UPS and was promised ground delivery on time. Recognizing the precarious nature of shipping products across country, Dyck stuffed a suitcase full of GORP bars just in case. If all else

failed, each attendee would at least get one bar.

Though the couple's flight arrived in L.A. as expected, their luggage did not. Missing was their entire trade show booth, Dyck's backup product, and all of their clothing. At about the same time, Dyck discovered that her entire UPS shipment of bars was being detained by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in Louisiana.

With only hours to presentation time, Dyck had nothing.

The luggage finally arrived and, after hours of phone calls, the couple managed to negotiate a release of their product from the FDA. But with the delay, UPS could no longer promise on-time delivery.

A chance meeting with an employee in the service department of the Biltmore Hotel proved to be

their salvation. The employee, an ex-UPS driver, made some calls on their behalf, making a deal to reroute the product for faster delivery.

According to Dyck, the product arrived at their display booth with only seconds to spare. The celebrities were already rolling in. For the first time since the adventure began, Dyck was able to relax and enjoy meeting and greeting hundreds of movie personalities.

"I was struck by how real and authentic and kind everyone was," Dyck acknowledges. "I was expecting a lot more of the stereotypical attitude that we often think celebrities have. It was such a good reminder. We can be so bamboozled by the media, and you have these conceptions that you don't even realize are there. Overwhelmingly, people were just wonderful."

The star-struck couple returned home to find that their website was receiving more traffic than ever.

"We had a good response," says Dyck. "The hotel actually just ordered bars for their staff because they liked them so much."

As for where to go from here, Dyck says the sky's the limit. The Academy Awards event was, in part, a kickoff to GORP's big break into the U.S. market. She plans on eventually seeing her energy bars go global.

"We're kind of at the edge of the cliff and I'm choosing to go forward and hopefully I can do it," Dyck says. "I want to grow as big as I can. It's not for the money, but it's for what the money can do. It's a tool. The more profitable you are, the more you can give, the more you can affect, the more jobs you can provide. All of those things excite me."

But even with dreams this big, Dyck has no intention of relocating her growing business.

"I want to keep it in Niverville. I want to create something that Niverville is proud of. [Here], I've got access to wonderful people right in my own backyard."

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# Hanover Raises Taxes in New Budget

*Superintendent also agrees with province's recent decision to end program designed to reduce class sizes.*

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

In March, the Hanover School Division's Board of Trustees approved its budget for the upcoming school year.

The board's projections show that the number of students in the division will continue its pattern of growth, with 8,000 students expected to be enrolled in the 2017-18 year. This is an increase of 171 students. The budget has been crafted with the increased enrollment firmly in mind, and will accommodate the hiring of additional teachers and guidance counsellors.

The budget also maintains Hanover's status as having one of the lowest cost per students averages in Manitoba. The upcoming year's operating expenses are anticipated to reach \$87.8 million, a 2.55 percent increase in expenditures from the previous year. Provincial funding, which has gone up 2.6 percent, helps to accommodate this growth.

Provincial funding, however, only covers 60 percent of the division's total revenue, with the remainder coming from school taxes. The 2017 mill rate will rise from 14.95 percent to 15.29 percent. On a hypothetical property with an



Hanover School Division's head office in Steinbach.

HANOVER SCHOOL DIVISION

assessed value of \$250,000, the approximate increase equals \$40 annually.

One week after the budget's approval, the province made an announcement which might have caused the board to revise their numbers. The government has elected to discontinue funding for the K-3 smaller class sizes initiative. The initiative, developed by the previous NDP government, had mandated that all classes from Kindergarten to Grade

Three be limited to 20 students. The province has noted that the policy change will give divisions more flexibility.

Randy Dueck, HSD Superintendent, has said that the funding change will not be immediate and that Hanover will still receive \$960,000 for the coming year. Thus, the budget will not be affected.

Dueck further remarked that he agrees with the province's decision to discontinue the K-3 smaller class size

initiative. He acknowledged the value of keeping class sizes low, but that there's nothing particularly important about keeping it to 20 specifically. He noted that the scenario doesn't change if the class size rises to 21 or 22.

Hanover School Division serves the communities of Blumenort, Bothwell, Crystal Springs, Grunthal, Kleefeld, Landmark, Mitchell, Niverville, and Steinbach.



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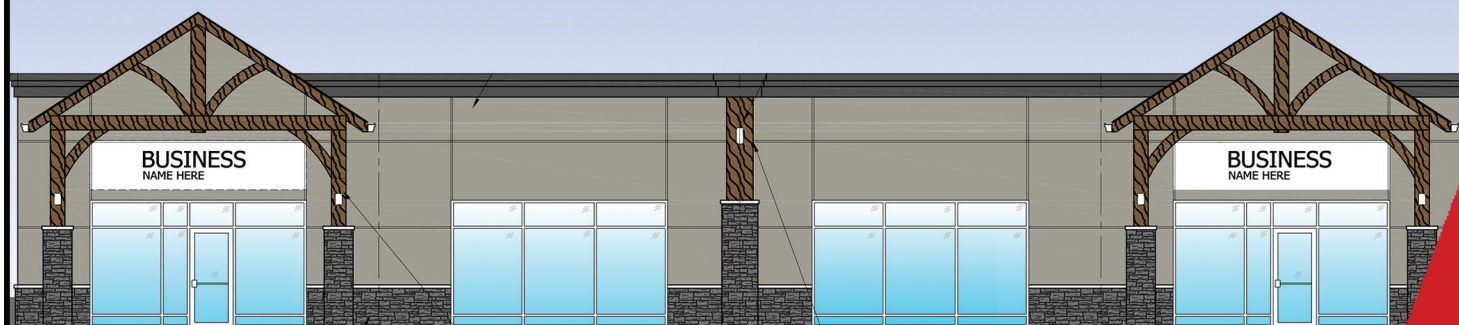
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Mel Buhler, Alan Kent, William Kent, Myron Dyck, Miguel Forest, Sylvie Forest, and Shannon Martin at the ribbon-cutting.

JOEY VILLANUEVA

## Tim's and Shell Mark Grand Opening

By Evan Braun

editor@nivervillecitizen.com

Under sunny skies on a warm spring morning, community members gathered to celebrate the grand opening of two of Niverville's newest businesses, the Tim Hortons and Shell station at the corner of Krahn Road and Highway 59. The event was held on March 25, approximately three months since both businesses first started operations at the end of December.

The owners—William Kent of Tim Hortons, and Miguel and Sylvie Forest of Shell—were joined at the ribbon-cutting by Mayor Myron Dyck, Morris MLA Shannon Martin, and Mel Buhler, President of the Niverville Chamber of Commerce.

"I want to extend my sincere thank you to both William and to Miguel and Sylvie for their investment into our community, and it is my privilege to welcome them not just to the community of Niverville but also to

the business community of Niverville," said Myron Dyck. "We wish you prosperous and good times ahead."

Martin echoed these sentiments. "These are the entrepreneurs that keep our economy going," he said of Kent and the Forests. "So I want to thank [them] for investing in Niverville, for investing in Manitoba. It's because of you that we have the province that we have."

"We're thrilled to be here and we're thrilled with the support that Niverville has given us," William Kent remarked. "We're glad to be here, and we're going to support the community as much as possible."

Cake was served at Tim's, and both Shell and Tim's held draws for gift baskets and gift cards.

Nazli Sharma, the General Manager of Hospitality and Guest Services for Kent's group of 11 Tim's locations in the province, has been working hard to get the Niverville store off the ground.

"The response has been overwhelming," says Sharma, who has been with the company for 11 years. "They give us targets, but they always give us very unrealistic targets. You know what? We're way more than 50 percent towards our targets... The welcome from the region, because it's not only Niverville, has been outstanding. Absolutely outstanding."

Miguel Forest says that the first two weeks after the soft opening were a bit slow, but business has been steadily growing at a good pace ever since. "Well, the grand opening was a hit! Shell fuel quality is second to none and the more the word goes around, the more [our business] will grow."

Forest is excited about deepening his connection to the town, including participating in the Olde Tyme Country Fair and helping with fundraising efforts for the Niverville multiplex. "We can't wait to see what this summer has in store for us."

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# Mennonite Church Manitoba and Same-Sex Marriage

By Brenda Sawatzky

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

The desire to stay true to biblical principles is ever near the heart of Mennonite churches across Manitoba. It stands to reason then that certain human practices, ideologies, or conditions have historically created discord among them over the years, especially in the face of what some would consider ambiguous biblical texts.

On January 12, Mennonite Church Manitoba (MCM) held an all-member meeting in Winnipeg, attempting to bridge the gap between the many Mennonite churches who come out on different sides of the same-sex marriage issue. Attendance was low due to a blizzard and a similar meeting was held again in Morden on March 4, with almost 200 people in attendance.

The purpose of both meetings was to provide an open forum for discussion, listening, and understanding, regardless of where individuals or congregations came out on the issue.

"While no clear consensus was reached regarding the topic of same-sex marriage, the tone of the conversation on the floor was gracious, gentle, and cordial," says Ken Warkentin, executive director of MCM. "We take that to suggest that, although there is not agreement on the issue, it is one that will not break our fellowship."

But several Manitoba congregations have already chosen to cut ties with MCM over this issue. Others are still wavering.

"Not everyone agrees with each other when it comes to which biblical passages get the most prominent

place in our discernment," Warkentin adds. "For some, it is strict adherence to particular texts. For others, it is emphasis on other texts. Since we are dealing with what most of us consider a prime source of God's revelation to us, emotions about agreement and disagreement run very high."

T. Kehler, an attendee at the Morden MCM meeting, agrees that differing biblical interpretation is at the heart of the debate. She notes that biblical passages have undergone a wider variety of translation and interpretation since the time of the printing press.

"[This is why] we see the splintering of the church," says Kehler. "Most churches, however, continue to follow an orthodox path of believing in certain tenets or doctrines based on particular biblical passages, traditional church teaching, and historical interpretation, the sacredness of the marital union between husband and wife being one of those. It is a matter of believing something that has been weighed by centuries of thought, understanding, and general consensus."

Kehler goes on to say that most fundamental Evangelicals believe in a literal translation of the Bible and its inerrancy.

"[For these Christians], God's acceptance of us is based on what we believe," Kehler says. "The danger

of believing in anything other than heterosexuality within the context of a marital relationship is that we will be wrong and incur God's judgment. Being wrong has eternal consequences. If one believes this, then one cannot be 'unequally yoked.' One cannot continue to worship, have fellowship, [and] partake of communion with those who are condemning themselves."

**"We believe it is important to be a faith community where LGBTQ Christians feel safe. At the same time, we acknowledge that there are individuals who do not share our perspective."**

**Rick Zerbe Cornelsen**

*Hope Mennonite Church, Winnipeg*

Kehler suggests that believers in this camp would argue that those who interpret the Bible differently are worldly and interpreting scripture for their own ends.

On the other end of the debate, some churches have been actively working toward accepting those with alternate sexualities who still long for a relationship with God and the church body. Hope Mennonite Church (HMC) of Winnipeg is one such congregation, and they have found an equilibrium with the issue while maintaining their membership with MCM.

Their website openly states, "Hope Mennonite Church desires to follow

Jesus' example of welcoming all people to God's table. In our context, this includes welcoming lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people and affirming their full participation in the life of our church."

In November 2012, HMC leadership created a consensus document to provide clarity to the congregation after years of wrestling with the topic.

The document expresses their belief that scriptural passages referring to LGBTQ people must be understood within the context of the time, place, and culture in which they were written, and similarly adapted to address today's societal differences. It states that this was the very example that Jesus set when he challenged the traditional holiness and purity codes of the time.

"Our congregation reached a consensus in 2012, after an eight-year process, to fully include LGBTQ people," says Rick Zerbe Cornelsen of HMC. "While the journey is ongoing, reaching this milestone allowed us to refocus on our broader welcome message and other ministries of our congregation."

Cornelsen is one of four members of an in-house ally group whose mandate is to respond to questions or concerns regarding LGBTQ within their church community and beyond

to the broader church. Last year, the congregation made the decision to hire a second pastor for their growing congregation, herself a married lesbian.

"We believe it is important to be a faith community where LGBTQ Christians feel safe," Cornelsen says. "We are thankful that we are an energetic and growing congregation. At the same time, we acknowledge that there are individuals and congregations who do not share our perspective."

He adds that, in spite of the strong views towards same-sex marriage from other Mennonite churches within the conference, HMC has never considered breaking ties.

"We continue to be committed to the body of Christ and to Mennonite Church Manitoba," says Cornelsen. "It's where we find support and where we remain in conversation on matters of disagreement."

While same-sex marriage appears to be the most current of many contentious issues the Mennonite church has faced over the years, Warkentin believes they will eventually be able to come to terms with this one too.

"Several generations ago we dealt with the issue of language," says Warkentin. "German was the language of the church and it kept us separate from 'the world.' This was a very contentious issue. Other issues have included the role of women in church leadership, what language we use to describe God, and divorce and remarriage. This is not a complete list of divisive issues... but we have had difficult conversations before and we have been able to weather them."

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# Commentary

## When Intent Fails

What happens when the costs of administering laws are more than our bureaucracies can handle?

By Greg Fehr

From our common law beginnings, the intent of our legal system has always been to find the balance in protecting the rights of individuals with those of the larger community. Simply put: you steal my goat, you pay me or replace my goat.

While crude in many respects, this system brought order, decency, and accountability to the masses. But its simplicity is both a pro and a con. For one thing, it has required us to create additional legislation to clarify unique situations, and this has altered the fundamental balance of our rights. Finding this balance is often at the root of our disagreements over political philosophy—and rightly so, given life's many complexities.

Many of these legislative adjustments have no doubt been required. But bureaucracy is often the bastard child of well-intentioned charity, and supporting that child is a challenge faced by the government and taxpayers alike as they get entangled in asinine legal webs.

Take rental properties, for example. While common law

still reigns in commercial matters, when it comes to rental properties we have the Residential Tenancies Act. I lament this legislation to some extent, but it's the lack of funding to properly administer it that's the root of problems faced by both tenants and landlords. I wouldn't suggest completely reversing it and going back to common law, but the complex webs that have been created in the name of equity and protecting all parties, coupled with overworked civil servants, has led to a system that borders on idiocy and ultimately hurts the people it was intended to serve.

Under common law, if the rent goes unpaid, the landlord can take possession and seize the tenant's assets. This works well in commercial contracts with savvy parties on both sides, but I would rue the day that a tenant arrives home to find the locks changed and their belongings left on the curb due to a small financial hardship or payment irregularity.

But under the existing system, a tenant who is causing issues, including lack of payment, can continue to live on the premises for months

before the landlord can evict them. While the legal process is partially at fault, the judicial system is overburdened; if you were to apply for a hearing today, you might only get a hearing months from now. Little can be accomplished until such a hearing, so an educated tenant can live rent-and fancy-free for months. Add appeals and other delays and it's possible for a tenant to retain residence for a considerable period of time without payment. For landlords to get paid back rent, they must serve tenants in person—or indeed, tenants may never be found. And for tenants, the nuances of the complex system mean that well-educated landlords can exploit technicalities to their benefit.

Similar dysfunctions plague all aspects of our justice system. Many have fought traffic tickets only to win on appeal because the police officer wasn't able to attend due to more pressing priorities. And if you plead guilty with an explanation, the justice in front of you will likely cut the fine to remove another file from their overly busy docket.

We need to ask ourselves a

simple question: is this a just system?

Can we blame administrators and civil servants? I would think not, since their too-heavy workloads are often the root of the issue. We must instead look to legislators. Although we should commend their intent to create a just and functional society, perhaps they should ensure that the resources needed to administer laws, in terms of time and money, are already in place when those laws are enacted. Doing so would go a long way toward bringing some justice back into our system.

Or maybe, just maybe, we need to ask our political leaders to be more creative in passing legislation, perhaps legislation that can be enacted more cost-effectively, or perhaps even be self-administered.

Fairness is not created in the House of Commons or each province's legislative assembly. It is created in the way we all choose to live, work, and do business in our collective society.

Simple, right?

## Look on the Bright Side: The Spice of Diversity

By Jan Kendall St. Cyr

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

I agree with William Cowper's famous expression, "Variety is the spice of life that gives it all its flavour"—except that is, where food is concerned. I have never been one to seek out new or unique food experiences. While my kids and grandkids all seem to have adventurous tastebuds, I have always been quite comfortable with my limited palate.

But wanting to expand my experiences, I recently attended an international cooking class in Niverville. These classes are hosted by Eastman Immigrant Services out of Steinbach, whose job is to help settle new immigrants into our communities. The best part is that the classes are taught by immigrant women themselves, thus giving us an opportunity to learn about traditional recipes from those who have mastered them. More important, it's an opportunity to learn about their personal stories.

I dove right in and chopped, wrapped, and rolled while listening to a lovely Filipina woman share her memories of growing up in the Philippines and making this same food with her family. She spoke of the hardships she faced when she immigrated to Canada as an adult. As we ate the

delicious pancit bihon, spring rolls, and desserts wrapped in banana leaves, I felt a great appreciation for this woman, her culture, and her food.

The same was true when we cooked alongside a Syrian woman who was clothed in a headscarf and full-length black coat. She showed us how to make basbousa, a traditional Middle Eastern sweet cake, and maqluba, a halal chicken and rice dish, the name literally meaning "upside down" in Arabic. I was moved to tears as she humbly shared with us what her life had been like in Syria, how she had met her Iranian husband, and of the loss and heartache they had suffered there.

Although these women and I came from very different cultures, and prepared very different foods, I realized that we had much in common, much that connected us. We enjoyed preparing food for our loved ones and we shared a deep desire for peace, security, and happiness for our families.

This experience expanded my palette and understanding, teaching me that the world not only contains a wide variety of food, but also a great variety of people. Diversity is the spice that adds texture and flavour to our lives. It is something worthy of being savoured.

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# We Are Not Alone

At times in our lives, we feel forgotten.  
We pray, only to hear silence.

**By Rev. Nancy Finlayson**

"Why have you forsaken me?" Those are haunting words and I cannot imagine they were uttered in anything other than complete distress, if not despair, for in the midst of colossal suffering Jesus hung upon his cross feeling abandoned by God. At various times in our lives, we too may feel forgotten. Many of us have entered into darkness and prayed fervently for help only to hear silence in response, or beseeched heaven on our knees, hearing only the sound of our own lamentation. The cross is about what God does with suffering, and there is no life that will not carry such a cross.

In 2002, I had surgery to remove an ovarian cyst which, thankfully, was not cancerous. However, once home I developed a life-threatening infection impervious to antibiotics. I was readmitted to hospital deathly ill, and unable to stand or walk as the infection spread throughout my pelvis. Although the province's chief

infectious diseases specialist was called in, I continued to lose ground.

The following evening, around 2:00 a.m., I awakened in unbearable pain in the isolation room and couldn't rouse support as the call bell had disengaged from my gown. By now incredibly weak, I had no breath with which to yell for assistance. Completely alone, I felt myself sinking down into some kind of abyss, yet my heart cried out words my breath could not form: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Just when my head seemed to be falling from my shoulders, and shadows hovered in the silence about to overtake me, I was given a sense of God's absolute presence. My being seemed to fill with light, and though the pain was every bit as excruciating as before, the quality of that suffering had changed completely; I suffered the agony with hope, and not the despair summoned by overwhelming helplessness.

In remembering that

experience over the years, I have continued to receive the gift of God's grace instructing me. On that day 15 years ago when I reached the limit of my own agency, when I became completely helpless, when my ego failed, my reality became consumed by pain, and my soul reached toward God, I was given a completely different consciousness—and it made room for new life to flood into me.

At the end, God answered my prayer—not because I lived to tell this story, but because God's self was made known to me in the midst of suffering and his Spirit filled me with hope despite it. Had I died, it would have been with confidence that he was with me. In the moments of our greatest suffering and at our death, God is with us. We are not alone.

That was the gift. That is, in a very real way, what Good Friday and Easter are about for all of us—hope in a God who keeps promises.

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# *Flood* **of the** *Century*

*A retrospective look  
at the great 1997  
flood, 20 years later.*





## INTRODUCTION

# A Brief History of Red River Floods

By Eric Peterson

When you're talking about spring flooding in our part of the world, the year 1997 jumps to the forefront of any conversation. But while that flood was historic, it's hardly the only time rising waters have put our region in peril. In fact, a number of other floods could easily lay claim to being the biggest or most dangerous of their respective eras.

If you ask anybody old enough to remember, they'll likely make a case for the flood of 1950 as being the true flood of the century. Heavy winter snow and spring rains swelled the Red to the point that dikes could no longer keep the waters out of Winnipeg. The result was 100,000 people being evacuated from their homes and businesses, resulting in nearly a billion dollars' worth of damage in today's dollars. Outside the city, 550 square miles of the Red River Valley was flooded. The government declared a state of emergency and the Army and Red Cross were called in to help with relief efforts.

The 1950 flood prompted the Government of Manitoba to build the Red River Floodway, a project of considerable hand-wringing, which to this day protects Winnipeg from the river while occasionally causing headaches for people outside the Perimeter Highway.

Want to go back even further? How about 1826? Nearly

200 years ago, there were no government flood officials to call annual press conferences to keep the local settlers up to date on the latest flood forecasts. So when the Red broke its banks that May, settlers were caught by surprise and sent scrambling.

One source, from a settler writing in 1856, reads, "Hardly a house or building of any kind was left standing in the colony. Many of the buildings drifted along whole and entire; and in some were seen dogs, howling dismally, and cats, that jumped frantically from side to side of their precarious abodes. The most singular spectacle was a house in flames, drifting along in the night, its one half immersed in water, and the remainder furiously burning. This accident was caused by the hasty retreat of the occupiers. The water continued rising... and extended far over the plains; where cattle used to graze, boats were now plying under full sail."<sup>1</sup>

Of course, accurate data relating to exact damage and property loss in 1826 is impossible to find, but it can certainly be said that the flood of 1826 changed the course of our province. The flood caused the population to be redistributed throughout the Red River Valley.

Though flooding has continued to take place intermittently in our region—1852, 1974, and 1979 all saw significant flooding—most of us today will remember best and

identify most with the floods of 2009 and 2011. For many transplanted city folk at the forefront of the housing boom in Niverville and Ritchot, this was the first real flooding we had seen without the reassurance of the floodway to protect our property. As waters closed in around towns and roads in the region, worries and wonderment rose.

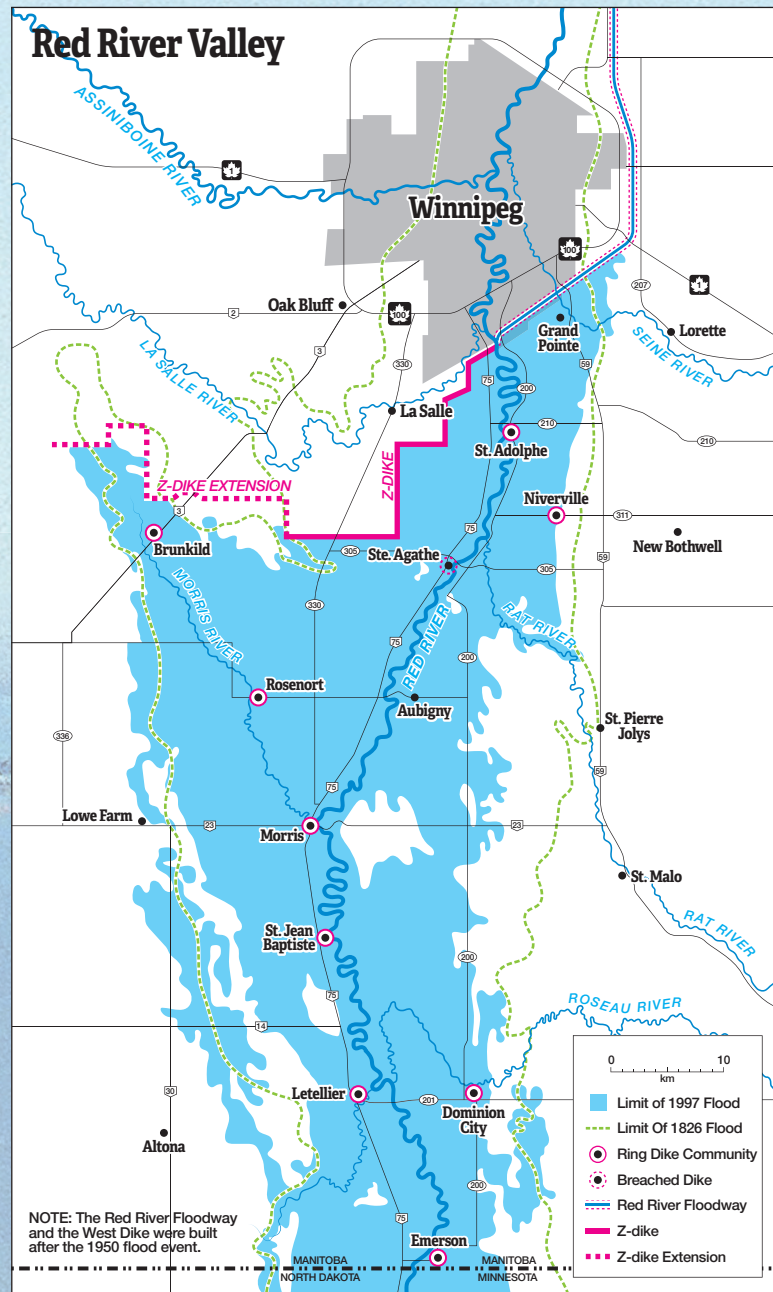
The 2009 flood was caused by the usual mixture of winter snow and spring precipitation, but with a heavy November rainfall thrown in after the ground had already frozen. In the end, the river crested just two feet lower than in 1997.

In 2011, initial worries were centred on the possibility of both the Red and Assiniboine Rivers cresting at the same time. Eventually the most severe flooding took place west of us, and another state of emergency was called as the Assiniboine reached its highest levels ever recorded at Brandon.

Flooding in 2011 was particularly agonizing for the Niverville community, as local resident Raymond Stott drowned after his truck was swept away by floodwaters.

## REFERENCE

1. *Manitoba Historical Society*, "Red River Flood—1826." Date of access: March 31, 2017 ([www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/pageant/11/redriver-flood1826.shtml](http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/pageant/11/redriver-flood1826.shtml)). Excerpted from *The River Settlement*, by Alexander Ross.





# Remembering the Flood of the Century

*1997—the year Mother Nature tested Manitoba's mettle. And found it very strong indeed.*

By Evan Braun  
& Brenda Sawatzky

The Red River is hardly one of North America's most notable rivers. It runs a mere 880 kilometres from its headwaters in North Dakota to its mouth at Lake Winnipeg, just the twenty-third longest river in the country. As the crow flies, the distance it covers is only 458 kilometres, such is its circuitous route. Its average discharge of 8,334 cubic feet per second is even less remarkable, ranking it thirty-ninth among Canada's rivers.

It flows very, very slowly. There aren't any falls or rapids along its course. The valley is so flat, so devoid of features, that its waters have almost nowhere to go. From the U.S. border to Lake Winnipeg, the river descends just 25 feet in elevation. When precipitation falls at the furthest reaches of this 236,000-square-meter watershed, it takes many weeks to arrive at its destination.

In North America, it seems we are constantly hearing about the great Mississippi, the Rio Grande, the Colorado, and the St. Lawrence. By comparison, the Red flows quietly, serenely along its meandering course, lazing along a shallow channel at the floor of its wide valley. It minds its own business.

Except when it doesn't. And then you had better watch your back.

## Sunday, April 6, 1997

When the snow started to fall at 4:00 p.m. Saturday evening, few people would have understood that it portended a minor apocalypse. It takes a lot to shut down a winter-prone city like Winnipeg, but by Sunday morning the city and its surrounding towns had ground to a rare standstill. Buses didn't run, cars and trucks were encased in snow to the tips of their antennae, and even ambulances and



April 23, 1997. Red River of the North main stem, Grand Forks, North Dakota, looking toward downtown area. Taken from a helicopter after a levee overtopped and Grand Forks was evacuated. US ARMY CORP OF ENGINEERS

emergency services couldn't get far without a plough leading the way.

It had already been an unusually snowy winter. Since the first snowfall of the season, more than 250 centimetres had fallen in the upper reaches of the Red River Valley. Winnipeg itself fared somewhat better, with just north of 150 centimetres. Still, that was a lot. Winnipeg's average snowfall is 113.7 centimetres.

Flood forecasters had plenty of reasons to be concerned. Even before the April blizzard, early forecasts pegged a 10 percent likelihood of a repeat of the 1979 flood which had devastated the region.

This outlook was about to get a lot worse. As the Colorado low crept over the valley, it smothered the Winnipeg area with 50 centimetres of fresh snow. The storm moved so slowly that it took two days to clear out. Every highway in the southern

Manitoba closed, as well as every school division. The power went out. Roofs collapsed. Drivers abandoned their cars in the streets.

More importantly, the storm doubled the amount of spring runoff.

"Well, I was very concerned, I must say," said Alf Warkentin, the province's flood forecaster, speaking to the CBC. "When I got up on Sunday morning and couldn't see across the street, that's when I knew that the worst was happening."<sup>1</sup>

## THE STORY UPSTREAM

Even before April's blizzard, the town of Breckenridge, Minnesota had been inundated—not by snow, but by unceasing rains. Breckenridge is located at the headwaters of the Red River. Wahpeton, North Dakota sits directly across the river on the west bank. The rains had been so severe that the animals in the Wahpeton zoo had been evacuated to higher ground on March 26. Those were the first flood refugees of 1997. The first of many.

On Saturday, as snow was beginning to fall in Winnipeg, the situation

in Breckenridge deteriorated rapidly. The already swollen river had nowhere to go except over its banks, cresting 19 feet above the riverbed. Driven by rain and high winds, the levees protecting the community broke open and water poured into the streets, four feet deep in places. 3,700 people were evacuated to neighbouring Wahpeton.

## Tuesday, April 8

Niverville's mayor, Clarence Braun, had just returned from a trip to Ottawa, narrowly missing the massive blizzard. Braun recalls that people around town had been engaging in the usual conversations about potential spring flooding before he left for Ottawa. Upon his return, and in the aftermath of such a vicious spring storm, the question of flooding was more certain than ever, but the extent of the predictions still defied belief.

"When I returned, the conversations amped up a bit, but we had no reference point as to the significance of the event," says Braun.

## Wednesday, April 9

The slow-moving floodwaters took nearly a week to wind their way 137 kilometres north from Breckenridge to Fargo, a city of 74,000 and the second largest community on the river after Winnipeg. Its levees were built 38.5 feet above the riverbed, but on April 9 the National Weather Service got in touch with city officials and warned them that the crest would likely reach 40 feet. However, because the crest had been slightly lower than expected in Wahpeton, these officials felt they would have enough leeway.

Nonetheless, U.S. Vice President Al Gore rolled into town on Friday, April 11 to survey the panicked city just as the river was reaching its crest. All 74,000 Fargonians let out a collective breath of relief as the crest fell short of the worst projections; at 35.5 feet, the city was safe.

## Tuesday, April 15

In the days following, the Weather Service predicted a crest of 50 feet farther north in Grand Forks, just shy of the city's 52-foot levees. On April 15, flood forecasters further downgraded the level of the threat, lowering their prediction to an even safer 49 feet. Another city breathed in collective relief.

However, the Weather Service was dead wrong. They revised the crest upward the next day, back to 50 feet. They expected the crest to arrive on April 22.

The next day, they revised their prediction again, raising it to 51.5 feet, perilously close to the top of the Grand Forks levees. Even worse, the crest would arrive four days earlier than initially thought, on April 18.

## Thursday, April 17

The reality proved disastrous. It quickly became clear that the flood would be worse than expected, that it would easily exceed the levees, but there was little the city could do with so little notice.

The dikes around East Grand Forks failed at 8:00 p.m. on Thursday, sirens

70

Over the course of its 880 km journey, the Red River drops a mere 70 m.



sounding for an immediate evacuation of low-lying areas. By Friday afternoon, water in East Grand Forks came up to the roofs of some homes. Entire neighbourhoods were lost.

Rattled sandbaggers managed to save the University of North Dakota campus, but the dikes around downtown Grand Forks weren't up to task, and floodwaters poured four feet deep through the streets in the early morning hours on Saturday. The power shorted out, historic buildings went up in flames, and a city was forever altered. Approximately 35,000 lost their homes.

But the Red's most tantalizing prize was north of the border.

## NORTH OF THE BORDER

When news of the Grand Forks catastrophe reached Winnipeg, its citizens began to express concern. There remained a somewhat laissez-faire attitude among some, however. After all, Winnipeg had its famous floodway, and Grand Forks didn't.

The floodway, a 60-foot trench that ran 47 kilometres from St. Norbert on Winnipeg's south side to just north of Lockport, had saved the city in the earlier floods of 1979 or 1996. This massive water diversion had been built to handle approximately twice as much water as the river itself could carry. The floodway had been pushed into operation to some extent most years in recent memory, including 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1978, 1979, 1982, 1983, 1986, 1987, 1989, 1992, 1995, and 1996. Many believed the floodway gates would lift again, and with the help of the city's complex network of supplemental dikes, that would be the end of it.

Officials from all levels of government knew better by now that this flood would strain the province's resources to the breaking point, and they had about a week and a half to prepare for the worst.

## SOUTH OF WINNIPEG

Infantrymen from the Canadian Forces stationed in Manitoba set to work in the second week of April to fortify the towns of Ste. Agathe and St. Adolphe with sandbags. However, Major-General Bruce Jeffries, the commander of land forces in Western Canada, foresaw the need for additional aid, so he met with Brigadier-General Robert Meating, commander of the First Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group, and they ordered the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry's first battalion to redeploy from their home base in Calgary to Manitoba. The official name for the action was Operation



The island of St. Adolphe, safe behind its ring dike in late April 1997.

ANDY BARRIAULT

Assistance.

Eight towns dotted the flood plain between the border and Winnipeg—Emerson, Letellier, Dominion City, St. Jean Baptiste, Morris, Rosenort, Ste. Agathe, Brunkild, and St. Adolphe—and just about all of them had full ring dikes. The region's many farmhouses and rural properties had similar protections, either their own ring dikes or raised foundations built up to withstand most floods.

But this wouldn't be like most floods.

## Monday, April 21

Upon his arrival, Brig.-Gen. Meating toured the towns south of the city. When he stepped foot in St. Adolphe, he was disturbed by the relaxed, complacent demeanour of its residents. He witnessed people driving to work in the morning, going about business as usual.

Meating immediately began to argue in favour of a complete evacuation of the valley, both the towns and the rural areas. In doing so, he found himself in conflict with agriculture officials who advocated on behalf of rural residents who demanded that they be allowed to remain on their farms to save them from encroaching floodwaters. Meating's priority was the potential loss of life, whereas agriculture officials concerned themselves with saving livelihoods. Even after the flood came and went, people would still need to make a living.

Mayors from the affected municipalities (MacDonald, Ritchot, Morris, De Salaberry, Montcalm, and Franklin) concurred about evacuating the towns. The logic was sound. In the event that any of the towns' high ring dikes failed and water crashed in from above, residents would have

nowhere to escape. However, the mayors believed the farms were a different situation and that they should be allowed to fend for themselves.

## Wednesday, April 23

The evacuation got underway after the province's Emergency Management Organization (EMO) ordered the towns cleared from Emerson to Winnipeg. Sirens began to sound at 5:00 a.m., and by Thursday night more than 17,000 people had left their homes, leaving behind a skeleton crew of floodfighters to patrol the dikes.

Tim Siferd and Kathleen Martin lived in St. Adolphe with their young family, and though floods were common along the Red, they had never experienced anything approaching this level of urgency.

Siferd and Martin remember well the anxiety they faced as the gravity of the flood situation increased from day to day. When the province finally issued the evacuation order, the couple moved all of their furniture and appliances to the second story of their home. The existing dike had already been raised by five to six feet and the groundcrews were getting ready to close off the highway at both ends of the community.

"They began the evacuations around Emerson and were putting [people] up in hotels in the south end of the city," says Martin. "By the time they got to us, we were being billeted to hotels out by the airport."

The couple left with their four children, the youngest only one year old. Their hotel room was sparsely furnished with a television and two double beds between six people. They were given daily meal vouchers for the hotel restaurant. By the first day, there was already a two-hour wait to get into the restaurant.



Robert Stefaniuk, mayor of Ritchot.

Within a short time, uprooted St. Adolphe residents began pooling their resources to make hotel living more comfortable. One teacher managed to find space within the hotel to organize a makeshift classroom where the children could continue their education.

Robert Stefaniuk held a weighty position during the flood. As mayor of Ritchot, his jurisdiction included both St. Adolphe and its imperilled neighbour to the south, Ste. Agathe.

"Young and old, strangers and friends came together," says Stefaniuk. "It was not one event but

**"It was not one event but the whole experience that left a lasting impression of the true meaning of community and the endurance of the human spirit."**

## Robert Stefaniuk

Mayor of RM of Ritchot, 1997

the whole experience that left a lasting impression of the true meaning of community and the endurance of the human spirit."

According to Stefaniuk, the evacuation took a particularly heavy toll on the patients and staff of the St. Adolphe nursing home, the stress of the sudden move compounded by both physical and cognitive barriers. Thankfully, the staff was able to move alongside the residents, easing their difficult transition, at least in part.

Stefaniuk and his family were evacuated like everyone else as the floodwaters approached. They were billeted at the Crowne Plaza.

The situation in Ste. Agathe was much the same, although it didn't have a full ring dike like St. Adolphe did. Because of the community's relatively high altitude, it hadn't been deemed necessary to build a dike that surrounded the entire town. Instead, Ste. Agathe's defences relied on a single dike along the banks of the Red that ran parallel to the town's main street.

Jeannot Robert, a long-time resident of Ste. Agathe, took the lead in organizing hundreds of volunteers, assigning tasks and instructing people on how to build sandbag dikes. Both he and fellow resident Shaun Crew say they will never forget the incredible undertaking.

Despite its higher elevation and lower risk of flooding, Ste. Agathe was also evacuated save for a few who stayed to operate pumps, repair dike breaches, and watch and wait.

## Thursday, April 24

Until the 1979 flood, Grande Pointe didn't have rules regulating home elevation. Afterward, the government enacted legislation to ensure that all future homes in the area had foundations over 771 feet above sea level. Many new homebuilders went to significant expense to meet this requirement, spending approximately \$1,000 per foot.

Back in the early days of April, immediately following the snowstorm, Stefaniuk had anticipated high water levels, so Ritchot's council put in an order for 100,000 sandbags at a cost of \$165,000. The supplier indicated that if the municipality needed more, the supply would be endless.

But it wasn't. After the flooding of Grand Forks, people throughout the Red River Valley began stockpiling sandbags, and the suppliers all ran dry by April 21.

On Tuesday, April 22, nothing was amiss in Grande Pointe. Flash forward two days later, and

residents were scrambling to deal with an unexpected deluge of water that seemed to come from all directions at once. On Wednesday, the water swelled substantially, rising five feet within just a few hours. For days prior, residents who feared the worst had been lining up outside the municipal office in St. Adolphe to request additional sandbags. The municipality didn't have any left, and all they could do was add people's names to an ever-growing list. Some even wondered if Grande Pointe would be evacuated, as it hadn't been part of the earlier evacuation order. No one at the municipal office seemed to know.

Sand did eventually arrive on Friday, but the only way to get it to the affected properties was by boat, and most boats could only handle 15 or fewer bags at a time. The process was too slow to help many homeowners.

The evacuation order was further extended, and the RCMP went home to home throughout the day on Friday forcing people to leave.

(continued on page 22)

**76.5 million**

76,500,000 m<sup>3</sup> of earth was moved to create the Red River Floodway. At the time of construction, it was the second largest earthmoving project in the world, second only to the Panama Canal.

**27,400**

In Manitoba, 27,400 people were evacuated from their homes.



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(continued from page 19)

### THE BRUNKILD GAP AND THE Z-DIKE

Ron Richardson, a Highways Department hydrology engineer, spent some time looking at maps on Monday, April 21, in an effort to understand where the floodwaters would spread. As he studied the topography southwest of Winnipeg, he grew increasingly concerned. The last tributary entering the Red River south of Winnipeg was the La Salle River, and it entered the river behind the floodway gates, meaning that its waters wouldn't get diverted into the floodway. This was part of the design, however, and no one thought it would be a problem—so long as the Red didn't rise so high upstream that its waters spilled into the La Salle River basin and essentially did an end-run around Winnipeg's protections.

The cause of Richardson's concern? By his calculations, the Red River was primed to do exactly that.

"So I just called [Frank Barlshen, of Water Resources] and, basically, off the cuff, asked: 'By the way, Frank, what keeps the water from breaking around to the north of Brunkild [at a point of low elevation] and dropping into the La Salle basin?'"

Barlshen had been under the impression that high ground between the rising Red and the La Salle basin would preclude this possibility. Indeed, a host of experts began to study the matter. Alarming, the threat was real. Not only that, but staff from Water Resources observed the next day that river water was already flowing backwards from the Red towards that very low point of elevation: the Brunkild Gap.

Winnipeg had a critical break in its defences.

If the city was to be saved, the series of dikes serving to divert water into the floodway channel would have to be extended. Within twenty-four hours, a group of surveyors completed a new elevation map which ordinarily should have taken at least two weeks. They identified the ideal route for the proposed dike extension: a 24-kilometre zigzag route heading west of the intersection of Highways 305 and 330. This became known as the Z-Dike, and the government rapidly approved its construction.

The only problem? They likely only had 72 hours to complete it.

Equipment was procured from everywhere it could be found. Other difficulties involved securing (and transporting) the necessary material for the dike, and the struggles inherent with

digging up frozen ground. And with government, private enterprise, and the army all working in close quarters, they would have to find a way to effectively coordinate their efforts.

"I really think that a good number of people felt we will give it the Boy Scout try, but it is an impossible task,"

**400**  
More than 400 pieces of equipment shaped a total of 75,000 m<sup>3</sup> into the Z-Dike in less than a week. 25 km of dike was built, and another 15 km reinforced, at a cost of about \$10 million.

**"Since it was the largest flood seen by any living soul, we needed to maximize and utilize everything and everyone."**

**Robert Stefaniuk**

Mayor of RM of Ritchot, 1997

said Walter Saltzberg, the Highways Department's director of bridges and structures. "We were going to try it and we were going to put our best foot forward and do our best. But..."

By Friday, April 25, hundreds of pieces of equipment were frantically at work. In order to allow the operators to work through the nights, Griffin helicopters were pressed into



WADE KEHLER

ABOVE: Niverville, six kilometres from the river, surrounded by floodwaters.  
LEFT: Niverville mayor Clarence Braun takes questions from the media.



CLARENCE BRAUN

service, hovering above the worksites with two-million-candlepower flares.

Without a doubt, if the Z-Dike wasn't completed in time, if Winnipeg wasn't saved, it would end up being among the most profound natural disasters in North American history.

### Sunday, April 27

With the flood forecast swelling beyond all early projections, another community that had thought itself safe received a harsh awakening.

"[On] a Sunday afternoon in late April," Mayor Braun of Niverville relates, "I received a call from [town administrator] Jim Buys indicating that we had been directed by Manitoba Water and Conservation Stewardship to build a dike on the north and west side of Niverville. The message we received was that this flood would match the one of 1950 and we could expect water at the railway

tracks on the west side of town within three days."

The news circulated quickly, and Braun recalls that it was met with suspicion and cynicism in the town's coffee shops. The ridiculousness of a flood of that magnitude repeating itself was more than some were willing to bargain on. The notion of a dike being built around a community six kilometres from the river was met with mockery.

An emergency meeting was called on the same night and questions

began to arise. Who would pay for the half-million-dollar temporary dike? How would they find construction crews with large equipment on such short notice when most were already busy working at the Z-Dike? Would the town need permission from landowners whose land the dike would run along? Much of this land belonged to Ritchot, the neighbouring municipality. Land which Niverville had no jurisdiction over.

Fortunately, the urgency of the situation meant that municipalities were working together better than ever.

"The challenge was to get the many different levels of government and organizations to work together in a fashion that maximized all our resources," says Ritchot mayor Robert Stefaniuk. "Since it was the largest flood seen by any living soul, we



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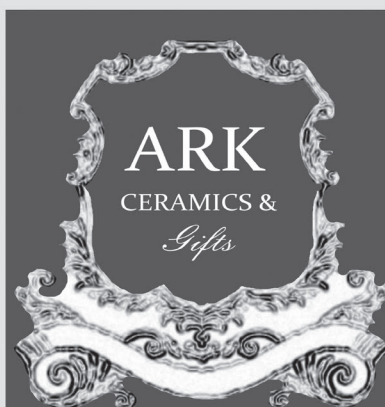
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needed to maximize and utilize everything and everyone."

Understanding the enormity of the situation, Ritchot gave its approval for Niverville's dike to cross their boundaries, and Chris Wiebe of Wiebe Investments came to the rescue with large equipment of his own, as well as some that was secured from a friend in Dugald.

"Within four hours [of that Sunday meeting], the earth-moving equipment was on the fields," Braun says. "The construction that began that night would go 24/7, through the night, to ensure that the flood protection was in place by Wednesday morning. The problem for the construction crews lay in that the large accumulation of snow first had to be moved out. Then they had to rake off the frozen topsoil and get it out of the way in order to get at the clay which was needed to build the dike. The construction to build higher went on while the water was rising on the west and north side."

At the same time that Niverville was hastily erecting its temporary dike, the flood was cresting in Emerson and beginning its inexorable march into Manitoba. Officials there were relieved to discover that the water was two and a half feet lower than expected. But it was still higher than any other flood in living memory.

The good news: Emerson's dikes, built four and a half feet higher than the crest, held strong. The bad news: 60-kilometre-per-hour winds were whipping water against many out-of-town property dikes. Although high enough, many of them failed under the onslaught. Losses throughout the valley were proving to be staggeringly high.

Finally, the EMO chose to overrule the municipalities' objections to extending the evacuation order to those living on rural farms. A provincial emergency declaration gave them the power to do this despite the fact that the municipal mayors and councils refused to sign the order.

Although the RCMP officially made no arrests, they began showing up at residents' doors with soldiers and handcuffs. They didn't give these homeowners a choice but to come with them.

Gene Whitney, who served as councillor for the Ste. Agathe ward of Ritchot until he retired from civic government in 2002, says that there was

tension between the municipality and the military when it came to the evacuation order.

Whitney says that he attended a meeting at which the military decided to go from house to house in pairs, one representative from the RCMP and one representative from the military, and tell people to get out.



Water swirls over Highway 75 south of Winnipeg.

JEN SCHELLENBERG

"I told [the officer at the meeting], 'You don't need to bother the people in my ward that I'm responsible for, because I already talked to these people,'" says Whitney. "Anyway, the next morning I get a call from Alex Fast, and [the military] has been around to tell him to get the hell out, and his brother, and

controversial that the EMO eventually gave up and stopped enforcing the order. But not until a lot of people were taken away and prevented from trying to save their properties.

In hindsight, Whitney adds that the military took their experience during the flood and made the most of it the

following year, when they responded to the ice storm disaster in eastern Ontario in Quebec. "They did a bang-up job there," Whitney says, "because they found out, as I and many others told them, 'Listen to the local people. They know the lay of the land.'"

But in Manitoba, the situation was about to deteriorate further: a spring storm was forecast to hit the region late on Monday.

#### Monday, April 28

Fortune shone on the Z-Dike builders, buying them four additional days. As the flood expanded west, the network of roads and natural rises between the river and the dike slowed the encroaching waters long enough for the operators to complete their work. The howling north winds also played a role in holding back the water. Upon completion, an oil boom was dropped in front of the dike to assist in breaking up the wave action.

But the Z-Dike brought with it some unintended consequences. Although it would protect Winnipeg, it didn't work in Ste. Agathe's favour. Rushing waters from the south crashed up against the Z-Dike Monday night and diverted eastward. Ste. Agathe lay helplessly in its path.

**125,000**

*In the event of a Z-Dike failure, officials estimated over 125,000 residents of Winnipeg would need to be evacuated.*

Jakey Dyck... So I got a hold of the [officer] and I said, 'Those three people that you harassed, they all fish, they all know how to boat, they're farmers, they're innovative, the whole bit.' They knew how to look after themselves."

According to Whitney, he had to intervene to help residents get through the military checkpoint near Niverville so they could return to their properties. "I had to go to the checkpoint, because [the military] was holding them up. I had to tell the sergeant, 'Just leave them alone. They're not going to be a problem.'"

The situation proved so

(continued on page 24)



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(continued from page 23)

"I remember standing on [Highway 75] at approximately 8:00 p.m. and looking south-west," says Jeannot Robert. "I noticed the elevation on the waters coming towards Ste. Agathe across the fields. It was then that I felt a sense of hopelessness for all our efforts and hard work. At midnight, workers informed me that the water was coming over the tracks and quickly over Highway 75, across our village. I remember asking a fellow worker, just before we inundated, to make sure the large diesel pump on the south side of town was full of diesel. He came back and said, 'Mr. Robert, I can't find the pump.' It was under two feet of water. Everybody laughed and we knew we were done."

The water had rushed in over the unprotected west side of town, rapidly filling the community and most of its homes and businesses. Moving quickly, crews opened up the dike on the east side to allow the trapped water to gain access to the Red River.

"There was a feeling of despair as a few dozen of us watched," says Robert. "All we could do was to pick up the equipment quickly and store it. We left town via [Highway] 305 eastward as water was coming over. I remember thinking, 'How high is this going to get?' We had formed a caravan and made it to Highway 59, pushing water at places."

According to Robert, some areas of Ste. Agathe saw up to five feet of water. The hotel and many homes were badly damaged. Portions of the school later needed to be demolished and rebuilt. The waves were two to three feet high, with whitecaps. 500 homes were destroyed.

"I was standing on the dike in front of my house on Main Street," says Gene Whitney, Ritchot councillor. "You have to have a perverse sense of humour, I think. The guy who owned the hotel, he tried to leave and get to Highway 75, but the water was coming over it. It was between three and four feet high there. This guy went up to the intersection of Cheyenne Street, right beside the hotel, and he knew he couldn't go any farther. He was running down the street carrying two suitcases and



Main Street Ste. Agathe after the village was inundated.

RM OF RITCHOT

the water was about four feet behind him. I stood on the dike and watched the water come up against it and start to run into my basement."

But at least the Z-Dike held.

At the Crowne Plaza, Stefaniuk received a call at 6:30 a.m. from Harold Clayton at the EMO, informing him

**"It wasn't just houses we were fighting for, it was peoples' homes. Those are two completely different things."**

**Robert Stefaniuk**

Mayor of RM of Ritchot, 1997

about what had happened in Ste. Agathe.

"I was shocked," Stefaniuk later told a *Free Press* reporter. "I couldn't believe it. It was a very bad day."

But Stefaniuk is quick to point out that the province was both helpful and supportive during this time. In his mind, the province made the sensible decision in building the Z-Dike to protect Winnipeg, the economic centre of the province.

**8,500**

8,500 Army, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard personnel were deployed for 36 days, in the largest Canadian military operation since the Korean War.

"My greatest challenge during that time was keeping on top of the questions and concerns of the residents," says Stefaniuk. "I made sure we answered every call and attended every meeting. The challenge lay not so much in the volume [of calls], but in the emotional aspect. It was an emotional time for everyone,

including myself. My heart broke for them. It wasn't just houses we were fighting for, it was peoples' homes. Those are two completely different things."

Shaun Crew was one of those people fighting for his home. With a property situated on the riverbank outside Ste. Agathe's dike, he had organized a crew to sandbag alongside him. He describes the emotions of shock and disbelief upon discovering that his hometown was inundated by water.

"I had no idea whether or not my own home ring dike would have held and whether or not pumps I had set up to handle the worst would even be running," says Crew, who had been evacuated just before the flood arrived. "I was able to enter Ste. Agathe the following morning by launching a boat off of the Z-Dike... across the fields and Highway 75 to my front door. My own dike had held and I suffered no damage to my home. Property damage was a whole other matter."

**Tuesday, April 29**

As the weather worsened, the flood arrived in Niverville a little bit earlier than projected. A taskforce was immediately put into place. Niverville school teacher Harry McKnight was instrumental in his role as emergency coordinator. The town's firefighters assumed around-the-clock responsibility for patrolling the dike for breaches.

"There were some close calls on the northwest corner of town as the water was about five feet high on the dike at places," recalls Braun. "When the north wind blew,





Despite everyone's best efforts, the worst happened. On April 28, the Red Sea overwhelmed Ste. Agathe's defences.

RM OF RITCHOT

the hastily built dike faced incredible pressure, but it held."

The Word of Life Church and Niverville Collegiate Institute quickly became home base for the military. Positioned on the edge of the flood, Niverville was a perfect staging ground for their continued operations in the region. They set up equipment in parking lots, cots in the gymnasium, and a mess hall in the church.

"I seem to recall the buzz that went through certain segments of the community when the military arrived," says Braun. "Friendships were formed amongst some community members and the soldiers. I recall greeting the commanding officer of the Canadian military on the land now occupied by the Vista Cove condos. His helicopter landing drew a huge crowd. I recall the opportunity provided to municipal leaders to

take an airplane tour of the Red River Valley. It was unbelievable to see it all from the air."

"Looking back now, it all seems a bit surreal," Stefaniuk adds. "I vividly recall flying over the area. Once we passed the floodway, we came upon what was to become known as the Red Sea. We could not see the water's edge. What was [once a] sprawling prairie was gone. It was a staggering amount of water and to see it from that perspective was shocking. The strength and power of Mother Nature was truly awe-inspiring and was only [mitigated], I found, by the strength and power of the human spirit."

Fortunately, all the other towns' ring dikes held. Hundreds of buildings throughout the valley, however—mostly farmhouses but also a church, a school, and a seniors home—weren't so lucky.

Braun applauds the enormous

support that poured in from the entire community, including a group of local women who prepared food in the Son City building day in and day out, feeding the soldiers

and local volunteers. Those who had earlier been sceptical about the possibility of such a massive event now looked on as their community rallied hard against the odds.

Just as persistent wind and waves tested the Z-Dike, the floodwaters began to recede in Emerson.

The end may have been in sight, but for some residents of the south-east the worst was still to come.

### Friday, May 2

The crisis in Grande Pointe roared into town swiftly.

When the crest finally arrived in Winnipeg, the river within the city was at its maximum allowable level, 24.5 feet above the riverbed at the James Avenue pumping station. If the city let any more water through the floodway gates, the network of dikes throughout the city would almost certainly undergo systemic failure.

At the same time, the floodway was already at its maximum designed capacity, 60,000 cubic feet per second.

Faced with no other option, the

floodway gates rose even further, pushing the floodway to an untested 64,000 cubic feet per second. As long as the floodway didn't fail, this move would save the city.

But there was a cost. Just as Ste. Agathe had arguably borne the brunt of redirected water from the Z-Dike, raising the floodway gates beyond capacity would force a torrent of water to flow backwards—south, straight into the 150 homes in Grande Pointe, many of which were barely hanging on after the sudden overland flooding that had occurred on April 23. However, the Department of Natural Resources calculated that the water level in Grande Pointe would go up a mere six inches. And that was that.

This was only the latest in a series of failed flood predictions. Instead of rising six inches, the floodwaters surged up several feet. This wasn't the straw that broke the camel's back so much as the two-by-four.

"I don't think the officials exactly knew what was going on," said Grande Pointe resident Elmer Hywarren to the *Free Press*. "They've bungled it here as they did in Ste. Agathe. They had their computer models and obviously their computer models were not right."

Another resident, Claude Lemoine, agreed. He was quoted in the same article, saying, "We're paying the price of protecting the city. They've given up on us. They're using us as their catch basin."

Tim Siferd, having evacuated with his family a week and a half earlier from St. Adolphe, had spent the intervening time with his colleagues at Fisheries and Oceans Canada. On a variety of watercraft, they had been kept busy bringing aid to areas south of Winnipeg.

"We did a lot of sandbagging before the flood hit. After the flood, we were going around with a bunch of boats because we worked for Fisheries and Oceans," says Siferd. "We used them to do a lot of sandbagging and try and save the people in Grande Pointe. When Grande Pointe was going down, we were transporting army personnel back and forth... To me it was a lot of fun because it got me out of the office."

(continued on page 26)

138,000

At the flood crest, the flow in the Red River reached 138,000 ft<sup>3</sup> per second, enough to fill the Pan Am Pool once every second. Approximately half of the flow was diverted around the city by the Red River Floodway.

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## CITIZEN POLL

## THIS MONTH'S QUESTION:

**Do you think it's fair for the government to protect Winnipeg from flood events at the expense of rural residents south of the city?**

- ☐ **YES** – Winnipeg, as the provincial capital and centre of Manitoba's economy, must come first.
- ☐ **NO** – Protection measures such as the floodway and the Z-Dike place an unfair burden on rural residents.

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## LAST MONTH'S RESULTS:

**Do you expect Niverville and Ritchot to continue to grow at the current pace, or a greater pace, in the future?**

YES	NO	OTHER
68%	18%	14%

## YOUR COMMENTS:

I think some towns like Niverville will continue to grow but unless Ritchot does something about the highways in IDC to change the land lock issues I don't see much happening there. - **Melanie Deakin**

If our services and business start to keep up with residential growth, than I suspect we will continue to grow at the same pace. However, if not, I believe our growth will begin to stagnate.

With 49 houses currently for sale, building is bound to slow down.

It will be hard for these areas to grow if taxes keep going up and no daycare spaces for before and after school kids.

This region has a lot to offer, and I predict we could experience accelerated growth in the next 4 years IF we attract more business to the area.

Main Street in Niverville needs a facelift. Currently it's unattractive and would not draw anyone to it as a place to visit now or in the future. The only attraction to Niverville today is Tim Hortons! Need to make it a town that people want to visit again and again. The post office is terrible! It was supposed to be renovated last year but that was cancelled much to the disappointment of Niverville residents! Come on, town, get with it!

(continued from page 25)

Typically, the crew would go out in two boats, with two people per boat. There was a constant threat of submerged signs, trees, vehicles, and debris which could cause damage to boats or endanger their lives. Siferd recalls flagging the tops of submerged road signs for other boaters.

Throughout the day, one family after another lost their battle with rising water, even in cases where the foundations had been built up to the government's own specifications.

And the situation only got worse, with the floodway gates being raised again on Saturday, and yet again on Sunday. At the height of the disaster, the floodway was accommodating 65,100 cubic feet of water per second. (For sake of comparison, remember that the Red River's typical discharge is only 8,334 cubic feet per second.)

Of Grande Pointe's 150 homes, a mere 25 survived.

The flood forecasters seemed to be at a loss to explain it. Larry Whitney, speaking on behalf of the EMO, insisted again that raising the floodway gates beyond capacity could only have brought the water level up by six inches in Grande Pointe. He blamed the extra water on "unpredictable flow patterns."

So, was it true that Grande Pointe had been knowingly surrendered to the waters? In a game of chess, was Winnipeg the queen and Grande Pointe an expendable pawn?

An employee from Water Resources later suggested that the sudden rise in water in Grande Pointe might be blamed on the CP Rail track near Niverville becoming submerged, which had never happened before. The implication was that water had gotten up onto the railbed, and then channelled north into Grande Pointe along the raised stretch of track.

This explanation went over about as well as you might expect.

## RECEDING WATERS

The battle over compensa-



Looking east toward Niverville from the submerged Highway 311.

ANDY BARRIAULT

tion dragged on for months after the flood receded. Life may have returned to normal in Winnipeg, but not in communities like Ste. Agathe and Grande Pointe, and not for the hundreds of people who lived in farms peppered throughout

was compounded by another statement Filmon made on July 27: "In some cases, people chose to live outside the city for lifestyle to avoid higher taxes and they pay no premiums and now they are having a lot of money paid to

And then he goes on TV and says that people have to take responsibility for where they live. I've never forgiven him for that to this day."

Furthermore, the compensation trickled out at a glacial pace, the frantic rapidity of government decisions at the height of the flood giving way to more typical bureaucracy. Residents felt helpless, confused, and frustrated. Some legitimately wondered if help would come in time for them to get settled for the coming winter.

In the years to follow, homes were rebuilt and communities adjusted to a new reality. Sandbags were removed, debris hauled out, destroyed structures demolished.

The municipalities have undergone extensive flood-proofing to protect against future floods of that scale. The City of Winnipeg spent a not-insignificant fortune to expand the floodway. Ste. Agathe received a permanent ring dike within a couple of years, two feet above the 1997 flood level. Niverville, too, erected a permanent dike. The Z-Dike has been upgraded and extended into

**"The people of Ste. Agathe are unbelievable. You didn't have to ask for help; they were there, side by side, working for a common goal."**

**Jeannot Robert**

Resident of Ste. Agathe, 1997

the countryside. These Manitobans struggled to move on, especially when it was revealed that the maximum flood compensation would be \$80,000, far short of the expenses most homeowners were facing.

Matters only got more acrimonious when Premier Gary Filmon publicly stated that people who chose to live on a flood plain had to be prepared to accept some of the risk. This

them by the taxpayer at large."

Some residents in the southeast are still bitter about that, even though the government did eventually raise the compensation levels.

"The problem with the flood that year was that we never got a [final] forecast," says Siferd. "It kept going up and up. And then... Gary Filmon absconded with all of the heavy equipment to build the Z-Dike to protect the city.

**1,950**

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Looking north along Highway 200 near the Rat River.

ANDY BARRIAULT

an impenetrable earthen wall. Meanwhile, a study is underway to examine the prospects of raising all dikes in the valley to a 200-year-level event.

Gene Whitney, who was the Public Works Chairman for Ritchot, says that when the province redirected Highway 75 around Grande Pointe, they raised the northbound lanes considerably to act as a natural dike. And on the other side of the community, they closed some roads in order to accommodate bigger, better ditches to handle overflow.

Both Jeannot Robert and Shaun Crew of Ste. Agathe agree that their community is one of outstanding resilience and goodwill.

"The people of Ste. Agathe are unbelievable," says Robert, noting that he believes the community is now well protected. "You didn't have to ask for help; they were there,

side by side, [working] for a common goal. When the waters left, they were there again for the cleanup and re-entry. It seems that they all got on a high and did not quit after the flood but continued to improve [and] rebuild."

Two decades later, Ste. Agathe has grown considerably. Before the flood, the community had about 100 homes. Now there are 260 homes, a commercial park, and new amenities and businesses. Niverville's population has tripled. St. Adolphe has doubled in size, and Grande Pointe is also bursting at the seams.

The memories of 1997 will never fade, and with every new spring, residents along the Red River must live with the apprehension of what may come. Flood forecasts have improved markedly. The topography of the valley is more thoroughly mapped, computers are able

to predict water flow with far greater precision, and the infrastructure of our communities is stronger than ever.

But ultimately it's not the strength of our dikes that defines us; it's the strength of our people.

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St. Adolphe Park, just outside the riverside community's ring dike, was quickly submerged.

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# Understanding Our Watersheds

By Nina Munteanu

*Nina Munteanu is an ecologist and the author of "Water Is...," a scientific and personal exploration of water.*

Humanity's connection to water has quilted our world with unique stories of developing and flourishing civilizations. The oldest civilizations sprang from the fertile floodplains of some of the world's greatest rivers: the Tigris and Euphrates, the Indus, the Yangtze and Yellow, the Ganges, and the Nile. From the nomadic tribes of our ancient peoples to our modern global network, rivers and their watersheds reflect our evolving relationship with nature.

A river's story is a story of its people. That relationship has been by turns cooperative, utilitarian, abusive, and disastrous. "Our struggle to control [water] has been behind the rise and fall of some of the greatest civilizations on Earth," says geologist Iain Stewart. Some societies have successfully and sustainably adapted to water's rhythms; others, like the ancient Khmer Empire of Angkor, "conquered" water's rhythms to suit their needs—then collapsed from that very success.

Massive water diversions and the over-exploitation of surface and groundwater have been the hallmark of explosive populations throughout the world for millennia. Angkor flourished for six centuries through the ingenious water collection system of the Khmer, but it resulted in deforestation and desertification—and the eventual collapse of an empire. The more recent desertification of the Aral Sea basin—reducing what was once the fourth largest lake in the world into a mud puddle through massive diversion and aggressive extraction for commodity exports—represents one of the world's greatest ecological



Ecologist and author Nina Munteanu.

■ NINA MUNTEANU

disasters, one precipitated entirely by humanity's actions, which have in turn greatly affected the local climate and water cycle.

We influence the water cycle as a society and as individuals, from creating large-scale diversions to choosing to drink bottled water instead of tap water. At the root of humanity's disruption of the water cycle is our poor understanding of how we influence them. A watershed is an area of land that catches precipitation, and drains into a waterbody or groundwater. Also called a drainage basin, it is usually bounded by a ridge of land that separates ground and surface waters flowing to different systems.

We impact the water cycle within our watershed through two principal means: water removal and diversion from one watershed to elsewhere (piping water for agriculture, hydrating a city in drought, exporting the

water by the bottle and through commodities in the form of fruits and vegetables) and disruption of a watershed and its capacity to safely and effectively retain water by changing or removing vegetation, draining wetlands, and creating impermeable surfaces through development.

Manitoba's Red River flows north over a vast fertile floodplain into Lake Winnipeg. Some 9,000 years ago, this flat basin formed the bottom of a huge glacial sea and its sediments are now productive agricultural land for farming communities. Prior to the arrival of agriculture in the 1800s, the cover of native grasses, swamps, wetlands, and woodlands helped maintain a water balance through infiltration, reduced soil evaporation, increased soil moisture status, and trapped snow. Nineteenth-century agriculture left the land bare during the spring runoff period. Wetlands have been

reduced by close to 50 percent in the last two centuries, according to several hydrological studies.<sup>1 2 3</sup>

These shifts are significant, given the role that wetlands play in improving water quality and balancing runoff and discharge. Surface drainage for agriculture uses have notably increased annual runoff, storm runoff volume, and peak discharges.<sup>3</sup> Straightening main channels has also increased peak discharges. While current agricultural practices, such as summer fallow and minimum tillage, have reduced the increased runoff of nineteenth- and twentieth-century farming practices, the landscape remains transformed.

Urbanization also changes the local hydrological cycle, mostly through decreasing natural vegetation cover and increasing impervious surfaces. The effect is catastrophically compounded as infiltration of water into the ground decreases, because it can't get there or it rushes too fast across hardpan (the aquifer doesn't recharge), and because there's less vegetation to softly absorb rainwater, which results in water returning to the atmosphere more quickly. Urban runoff is a major source of flooding and water pollution in communities worldwide; it is also recognized by governments as the leading source of water quality problems in cities.

Trees form a natural buffer on any landscape. Functional forests effectively allow a downpour to reach the ground gently rather than in a torrent. Because trees help regulate the natural cycling of water to and from the earth, the removal of trees and vegetation exacerbates the intensity of rain events. These will overwhelm the capacity of a city's drainage system and cause flash floods, storm surges, and overbank flooding. Impervious surfaces (like rooftops, streets, parking lots, and driveways) promote floods

and lower the water table. Water rushes like a banshee on a rampage as drought-flood cycles develop. Most municipal storm sewer systems discharge untreated storm water into streams, rivers, and bays. The excess water can also flow into people's properties through basement backups and seepage through walls and floors.

Some municipalities are beginning to recognize the wisdom of using watersheds as natural political boundaries. With the help of multijurisdictional environmental authorities, NGOs, and visionary MLAs and municipal councilors, we are starting to see political and social infrastructures based on ecological criteria.

As individuals, our influence within our watershed can be as subtle as choosing to drink our own tap water over bottled water and as significant as choosing to plant a tree in our front yard.

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3. L.M. Glymph and H.N. Holtan, "Land Treatment in Agricultural Watershed Hydrology Research." In: W.L. Moore and C.W. Morgan, *Effects of Watershed Changes on Streamflow* (Austin, TX: Center for Research in Water Resources, University of Texas Press, 1969), 44–68.
4. W.F. Rannie, *Hydroclimate, Flooding and Runoff in the Red River Basin Prior to 1870* (Winnipeg, MB: University of Winnipeg, 1998), 184. Prepared for the Geological Survey of Canada.



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# Sports & Recreation

## Niverville Club Crowns New Curling Champions

**Champions declared after shortened season**

**By Chantel Todd**

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

The Niverville Club's season got cut short by unseasonably warm weather, forcing curlers to head out of town for post-season play. Most of the playoffs occurred in February at the Otterburne Curling Club. The final was played on March 15 in St. Adolphe.

The champions were skipped by David Aitken, and supported by third Brad Wasilinchuk, second Marc Loepkey, and lead John Schmitke.

"This season was very challenging at the Niverville Curling Club," explains Wasilinchuk, who says that limited ice time led to teams being eliminated after a single playoff loss. "If you had one bad game, you were done."

Wasilinchuk says that their team would like to thank the generous curling clubs in Otterburne and St. Adolphe, who opened their doors to players from Niverville.

He adds that the club has a lot of young curlers, and that it would be nice to see some upgrades at the Niverville rink in the future. "Niverville has a very strong curling club, and we have a lot of fun and socializing at NCC."

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ info@nivervillecurlingclub.com



Dave Aitken, Brad Wasilinchuk, John Schmitke, and Marc Loepkey.

JOEL MARTENS

### EVENT GUIDE

#### Niverville Community Garage Sale

Friday, May 5–Saturday, May 6  
Register your address at  
recreation@whereyoubelong.ca

#### Niverville Free-Give-Away-Day

Sunday, May 7  
Put your free items at the end of your driveway.

#### Tuff-n-up Bootca.m.p

Monday/Wednesdays, April 4–May 10  
6:30 p.m., \$15 (drop-in), South End of Arena

#### Yoga: Flow & Yin

Mondays, March 6–April 24  
Flow 7:00 p.m.; Yin, 8:15 p.m., \$15 (drop-in)  
Curling Rink Basement

#### Baby & Tot Gymnastics

Thursdays, June 22, South End of Arena  
**Tot Gymnastics**  
(18 months–3 years), 11:15 a.m., \$12 (drop-in)  
**Kinder Gymnastics**  
(3–5 years), 12:15 p.m., \$12 (drop-in)

#### Ritchot Senior Services

**Cardio Fit**  
Mondays, April 3–24, 9:30 a.m.  
**Cardio Fit**  
Mondays, April 3–24, 11:00 a.m.  
**Yoga**  
Wednesdays, April 5–25, 1:00 p.m.  
**Muscle Fit**  
Thursdays, April 6–27, 9:30 a.m.  
**Alzheimer Touch Quilt Project**  
Wednesdays, April 5–19, 10:00 a.m.  
457 Main Street, St. Adolphe, 204-883-2880

#### Seniors Indoor Walking

Tuesdays, 7:30–8:30 & Wednesdays, 6:45–7:45  
St. Adolphe School Gym

#### Zumba

Mondays, 7:00–8:15 p.m., \$75 (10 sessions)  
TransCanada Centre, Île-des-Chênes

#### PickleBall

Tuesdays/Thursdays, 1:00 p.m.,  
TransCanada Centre, Île-des-Chênes  
Thursdays, 6:00–7:30 p.m.,  
St. Adolphe School Gym

#### Indoor Walking

Wednesdays, 9:00 a.m.  
TransCanada Centre, Île-des-Chênes

#### Club A.m.ical Lunches & Bingo

Thursdays, 11:30 a.m.  
St. Adolphe, 204-883-2491

#### For More Information:

■ www.nivervillecreation.com

#### Send your event listing to:

■ ctodd@nivervillecitizen.com

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## The Chamber corner

### *Do you commute to work? We have someone interested in you!*

University of Manitoba graduate student Ellen Enns has chosen Niverville for the focus of her Masters thesis in City Planning. She is interested in, among other things, why people choose to live in one community, yet work in another.

She will be conducting both in-person and on-line surveys in April. If you are interested in helping her with her research, please contact the chamber at [chamber@niverville.com](mailto:chamber@niverville.com). We will pass on your contact information to Ellen. If you see her in one of the businesses in Niverville, stop and complete her survey.

As an incentive, there will be a draw for a \$500 Visa gift card.

### *Is your business cyber-secure? Probably not.*

Attend the chamber's annual meeting, April 13 at 7:00 p.m., Heritage Centre.

Guest speaker Mathieu Managire with Avenir IT will talk about 3 steps to protect your organization from cyber-attacks, data breach lawsuits, bank fraud, and compliance penalties.

*"82,000 NEW malware (virus) threats are released every single DAY with the intention of robbing you blind, corrupting your business and/or stealing your (and your clients') data."*

### *Welcome to our new members*

**Bothwell Cheese, Mike Raftis**, marketing office.

**Niverville Shell, Miguel & Sylvie Forest**

**Rusty Acres, Eric Rempel** – machining, welding, general repair and fabrication.

**SCOPE Leadership Development, Darrell Kehler** – leadership development consulting & coaching.

**Shaw Cable, In-Home Team. Mike Schroeder** – community representative.

**The Little Things Photos and Film, Kayla Hoskins** – specializes in documentary-style family photos and short films.

**Tim Hortons, William Kent**

**Two-Nine Project Services, John Wiebe** – project site supervision and management, primarily in commercial and industrial electrical.

The Niverville Chamber of Commerce encourages sustainable economic development through advocacy for and support of local business.

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Executive director: Dawn Harris  
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Fitness instructor Mel Smook and Chantel Todd doing a plank.

CHANEL TODD

# Spring into Something New

**fitville**

**By Chantel Todd**

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

As I sit and write this, my legs are burning and my arms feel like they're going to fall off. This isn't necessarily a bad thing. It will only hurt for a day or two... or so I tell myself.

I went to try a new class in Niverville the other night called Spring into Bootcamp. I wanted to gather my bearings and arrive early, but I didn't manage to make it out the door until 6:56 p.m., and the class started at 7:00. Good thing I only live five minutes away!

As I stumbled in the door with my shoes and a water bottle in hand, I mentally prepared myself to get my butt kicked. I quickly tied my runners up as Mel, our instructor, explained

the class to us, a group of ten.

We started the warmup, a light jog on the spot, slow squats, and a couple of other exercises that I've already blocked from my memory.

I was already sweating, and this was just the warmup.

We started with legs, doing six minutes of squats and lunges. Hence the burning legs.

The first two minutes weren't bad, and I figured I could do this. The two minutes after that were okay too. But those last two minutes? My legs burned from my glutes to my calves. Boy, did I have to push myself to finish.

But I'm glad I pushed myself. It makes me feel accomplished that I was able to finish that workout, and almost at the instructor's own pace.

Well, I was close to her pace. Maybe I was off by a couple squats or five.

As we moved through the bootcamp, it honestly felt like it got easier, or maybe I was going crazy. It could have been a little of both. We did cardio, and then arms, then lastly we worked on our abs. I was so sweaty by the end that I could have probably rung out my T-shirt.

As I sit here at home now, barely able to move my legs, I'm ready for a good night's sleep and the full day ahead of me.

I encourage you to get out of your comfort zone and try something new this spring!

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## IN BRIEF



Back row: Kalam Paull, Trevor Larade, Nick Bergmann, Brian Alex, Mike Loeppky, Jens Debreuil, and Travis Mason. Front row: Tony Foster, Dan Kosman, Brian Trottier, Jim Parkhurst, and Ryan Brunel. Missing: Ray Dowse, Matt Exner, Graeme Loeppky, and Jason Plett.

## Chiefs Win Good Time Hockey Title

Another season has ended for the local Good Time Hockey League, and the Chiefs have carried the day. After losing the first game in the best-of-three finals against the Dark Knights, the Chiefs roared back to win both the second and third matches to clinch the title.

The Good Time Hockey League is an eight-team recreational hockey league that plays out of the Niverville Arena.

# Skating Club Ends Season on a High Note

By Chantel Todd

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

The Niverville Skating Club celebrated the end of its second season with the annual Achievement Night at the Niverville Arena on Friday, March 10. The theme was “movin’ and groovin’.”

The club boomed this year with 65 CanSkaters, 13 CanPower Skaters, 15 Adult CanSkaters, and four Star Skaters who also started learning synchro skating, a new program in Niverville this year.

On Achievement Night, all the skaters hit the ice to showcase their newly learned skills in front of family, friends, and the community. Special guest skater Cynthia Kote, from the La Broquerie Skating Club, performed a solo. The 16-year-old has already passed her Junior Bronze dance, Senior Bronze dance, and Senior Bronze free skate. Other solo performances included local skaters Miqaela Olatundun (Star 3) and Elizabeth



Zoe Bardal, Willa Dowse, Elizabeth Huddleston, and Miqaela Olatundun of the Star Synchro Team.

ELISSA LEAH

Huddleston (Star 2).

The synchro skaters debuted their very first performance, which led to an invitation for them to perform at the Morris Skating Club Ice Show as guest skaters.

“We are so proud of them,” says Niverville Skating Club board member Leslie Bardal. “And a special thanks to the Morris Skating

Club for the use of the matching yellow dresses.”

Bardal was impressed to see just how far the skaters in the various programs have improved over the course of one year. “Many of them could barely stay standing in November. With an increased level of confidence, and the encouragement of a great coach and program

assistants, they were able to demonstrate speed, agility, control, and balance.”

Two awards were given out: CanSkater of the Year and CanSkate Champion. Sara Desmarais was named CanSkater of the Year for her tremendous development and love for the sport. Isabella Raftis was recognized as the CanSkate Champion. This was Raftis’s first year in CanSkate, and she completed the first three stages this season.

“[Sara] always came dressed for figure skating and developed a true passion for the sport,” Bardal says.

All the board members would like to thank Coach Meghan Rafferty for her skill, patience, and encouragement throughout the season, along with all the volunteer assistants and parents who helped on and off the ice.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ nivervillesc@gmail.com  
■ www.facebook.com/nivervilleskatingclub

## Junior Varsity Panthers Win Bronze

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

Niverville’s Junior Varsity Girls team won bronze at this year’s provincials tournament in Winnipeg, and the Immanuel Christian School.

“Niverville beat MacGregor on Friday, and went on to lose to Goose Lake on Saturday,” says Coach Graham Beer. “Then the Niverville girls played Immanuel Christian in the third place game on Sunday and won 69–25. Goose

Lake ended up winning first place.”

Beer adds that three players received player-of-the-game honours throughout the tournament: Annika Wolfe, Rhyanne Pauls, and Julia Beer. Julia Beer also was selected as part of the provincial all-star team.

“The girls were Zone 13 champions, where they went undefeated,” Beer says. “They were a great group of girls to work with and worked very hard this season to accomplish this result.”



Back Row: Nathan Dyck (coach), Jenna Dykun, Rhyanne Pauls, Julia Beer, Megan Hiebert, Teagan Schmidt, and Graham Beer (coach). Front Row: Sydney Enns, Raquel Garcia, Annika Wolfe, Raena Braun, and Mattea Jones. Missing: Ashley Sawatsky.

GRAHAM BEER



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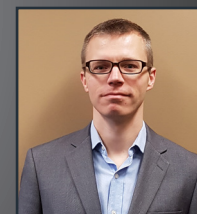
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# Novice A Clippers Win Eastman Championship

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

Niverville's Novice A Clippers won the Eastman Championship in the deciding game on Monday, March 6 in Steinbach.

The Steinbach Millers had won the first game in the best-of-three series, beating Niverville handily on home ice. The final score was a lopsided 7-1. However, the Clippers battled back the following night at the Niverville Arena, winning 4-2 to tie the series.

In the final on Monday night, the Clippers turned in one of their best performances despite the grueling schedule, with three games in three days. The Clippers defeated their opponents 7-4. It was a satisfying end to a season in which they lost only two games in league play all year, both to Steinbach.

The Eastman Novice A division, comprised of seven- and eight-year-old skaters, has 44 teams. Topping the league is a significant accomplishment.



Back Row: Coaches Ray Dowse, Eric Cousineau, and Jason Hudson. Middle: Chase Hopkins, Kaleb Collette, Tristan Cousineau, Logan Barnabe, Max Dowse, Niko Lemoine, Cheyenne Scott Cooke, Noah Hudson, Haven Wiebe, and Aaron Schmidtke. Front: Luca Nurse and Xander Admiraal. KATHLEEN WIEBE

# Penalties, Poor Discipline Down Jets

By Tim Hiebert

One of the biggest issues plaguing the Jets since their return in 2011 has been their inability to stay out of the penalty box. Winnipeg leads the league in minutes shorthanded (1,577) and power play goals allowed (314) over the past six seasons.

Even though they've had lots of practice being shorthanded, it certainly hasn't helped them improve their penalty kill numbers. They have the twenty-eighth ranked penalty kill since 2011 and it's gotten worse in each of the last four seasons (83.2 percent, 81.8 percent, 78.4 percent, 76.7 percent).

The lack of discipline has been killing them for years, and it's gotten worse since Paul Maurice took over from Claude Noel. The biggest culprit is arguably the team's most important player: Dustin Byfuglien. Byfuglien leads the entire league in minor penalties since 2011 with 213. He's currently second this year and has finished in the top ten in each of the last four.

Byfuglien logs a lot of minutes

and plays a very unique style of hockey. Maurice has really let him do his thing since he arrived and has put more and more responsibility on Byfuglien every year. He leads the league in minutes played per game this year and has often played more than 30 minutes. Byfuglien is a tremendous talent and is crucial to the team's success. He needs to realize how important it is to stay disciplined and not take that after-the-whistle roughing minor or retaliation slashing call.

A lot of this falls on Paul Maurice, too. How much is he really preaching discipline in the locker room? This parade of players to the penalty box needs to stop, and he needs to put more emphasis on the matter. Having Byfuglien in the penalty box so often doesn't exactly help the penalty kill. He's one of the Jets' best penalty killers and can be a dominant defender when he wants to be. It's too bad he can't be out there to kill off his own lack of discipline.

Another defenseman with similar issues is Mark Stuart. Like Byfuglien, Stuart ranks among the

top offenders with 134 minor penalties since 2011 (the twenty-eighth most). Stuart has been in a steady decline for years now and is probably nearing the end of his NHL career. He was a healthy scratch for most of the first half of the season, but injuries have forced him back into action. He's being asked to kill penalties again and it's been a struggle for him. He can still come up with a big blocked shot or two, but his overall game has slipped noticeably this season.

The penalty kill has looked good at times, but when things start to go bad, they go really bad. They've allowed three power play goals in a single game five times this year, and two of those games involved giving up all three in the second period. It happened once versus Florida in mid-December as Florida scored on three Toby Enstrom penalties in a span of eight minutes. It happened again in early March against the Penguins when Nick Bonino finished off a hat trick with two power play markers. Pittsburgh would actually score four in the period on their way to a convincing 7-4

win.

Sometimes the best penalty killer is your goalie. That just hasn't been the case enough for Winnipeg this year. Hellebuyck and Hutchinson have struggled as the last line of defence, with both posting save percentages in the .860 range when shorthanded. In comparison, some of the top shorthanded save percentages belong to Roberto Luongo (.920), Sergei Bobrovsky (.904) and Frederik Andersen (.903).

Winnipeg has actually been pretty good at five-on-five over the years, and especially good at four-on-four. The special teams need to get better, though, and the penalty kill in particular needs a lot of improvement. The Jets need to either start taking penalties less frequently or improve their ability to kill them off. Improving in one would be nice, but to become an elite team they will definitely need to do both. Combining better discipline with better defending in general will be crucial for this team if they want to get back into the playoffs next year.

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**Julia Beer**

Julia is a Grade Ten student at Niverville Collegiate. She loves sports and participates on her high school soccer, volleyball, and basketball teams.

This season, Julia was awarded provincial all-star team honours in two sports. Her Junior Varsity Girls volleyball team won bronze at the MHSAA provincials in December, where Julia was named a provincial all-star. She was also named an all-star at this past March's Junior Varsity Girls basketball provincials, where her team also won bronze. Last year, Julia played club volleyball for the Junior Bisons, who were national champions.

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# Arts & Entertainment



Deb Brissette at her in-home studio.

SYLVIA ST. CYR

## Artist Seeks to Bring Healing through Art

By Sylvia St. Cyr

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

Last October, Deb Brissette opened the Highlands Art Studio out of her home in Niverville. Brissette offers art lessons to children on Wednesday and Thursday evenings, and also facilitates paint parties. She has also taught classes in other towns throughout the region, including St. Pierre-Jolys, Ste. Agathe, and St. Malo.

Brissette and her husband Paul moved to Niverville in 2016 from Landmark. Although she has worked in healthcare since the age of 17, art has always been an important part of her life. Brissette has painted murals, made crafts, sold paintings, and baked specialty

chocolates and candies.

"I had a three-year bout of PTSD [Post Traumatic Stress Disorder]," Brissette says of a difficult period a few years ago. "I had buried a lot of my artwork for years. It was into the third year [of PTSD] when I picked up a pencil and started sketching again... Before I knew it, I was feeling better and recovering."

Because art has brought healing to Brissette, she wants to share this unique form of therapy with others.

"When I first started Highlands Art Studio, I was hoping to get more into the wellness end of it, where art can help make people feel better about themselves and everything they're going through," says Brissette. "I'm seeing that the people I'm working with are also finding

it helpful."

For children's painting classes, available for those ages seven to 14, no experience is necessary. In each one-hour weekly class, students tackle three 20-minute art projects. Brissette teaches everything from different styles of painting to moulding clay and tangling. She explains that tangling is a form of doodling in which the artist repeats the same patterns over and over to create a unique design.

"I'm always trying to keep it fresh and new," Brissette says of the variety.

On top of her children's classes, Brissette also offers paint parties, both for kids birthdays as well as for special occasions. She and her husband can host up to ten people

in their home at a time, but for larger groups Brissette can meet in other venues.

Brissette loves teaching prospective artists of any age.

"My classes in St. Malo have been very endearing because I have young and old participating together," she says. "It's amazing how much they can all do with the same lesson. I love to inspire others, to encourage them no matter how experienced they are."

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ To book a paint party or inquire about classes, call 204-471-8710.

### EVENT GUIDE

#### Film Night Fundraiser

April 6 | 7:00 p.m.  
Mennonite Heritage Museum, Steinbach. \$12.

#### Providence Spring Concert

April 7 | 7:30 p.m.  
Providence College, Otterburne. Free.

#### Winnipeg Comedy Festival

April 7 | 8:00 p.m.  
Morris Multiplex, Morris. \$20.

#### Matt Falk Comedy

April 7 | 7:15 p.m.  
Pantages Playhouse Theatre, Winnipeg. \$35.

#### Creativi-Tea Time

April 12 | 6:30–8:30 p.m.  
Jake Epp Library, Steinbach. Free.

#### Matt Falk Comedy

April 18–19 | 8:00 p.m.  
Rumors Comedy Club, Winnipeg. \$12.

#### Painting on the Prairies

April 18 | 7:00 p.m.  
Hespeler's Cookhouse and Tavern, Niverville. \$35.

#### SBC Spring Concert

April 21 | 7:00 p.m.  
Steinbach Bible College, Steinbach. Free.

#### Country Gospel Concert

April 23 | 7:00 p.m.  
SRSS Theatre, Steinbach. \$15.

#### The Wizard of Oz (Play)

April 28 | 7:30 – 9:30 pm  
SRSS Theatre, Steinbach. \$12–19.

#### Send your event listing to:

■ sstcyr@nivervillecitizen.com

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# Making Dreams Come True

By Sylvia St. Cyr

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

Happily Ever After Parties specializes in helping dreams come true—specifically for kids who dream of meeting their favourite princess or superhero, and for parents who dream of achieving this without having to fly the family all the way to Disneyworld.

The company was started in 2012 by Gillian MacDonald from Niverville. MacDonald is the president of The Royal Princess Ball Committee, not to mention a mom, and she works full-time as a social worker.

In January 2017, the business was sold to Samantha DaSilva-Chaves.

"I started off as a princess, and I was one of the first employees hired," says DaSilva-Chaves. "I had already been managing the business for [MacDonald] since 2014, so when she was ready to sell, it was a very natural transition for her to sell it to me, knowing I would continue to take care of and nurture her business. She has built it from the ground up."

Happily Ever After Parties offers an extensive list of characters for children's birthday parties.

"The *Frozen* sisters, Anna and Elsa, are still the most popular," DaSilva-Chaves says. "In regards to superheroes, I would say Batman and Spiderman are the most popular."



A bevy of Disney princess at the 2017 Royal Princess Ball.

■ PETER RUIZ PHOTOGRAPHY

Parents can pick from a list of extras they would like for the party, such as spa services, face-painting, balloon-making, dancing with the character, cupcake decorating, and storytelling.

DaSilva-Chaves says that kids often ask questions. "Our staff are all experienced actors and definitely do character study before they play each character."

The company offers more than birthday parties. If you've attended the Niverville Olde Tyme Country Fair or the Morris Stampede, chances are you've seen a Jedi knight,

Spiderman, or Cinderella walking around. And chances are Happily Ever After Parties sent them.

"We also visit schools, daycares, hospitals, and provide services for many charity events," DaSilva-Chaves adds. "One charity event in particular that we sponsor is entitled The Royal Princess Ball. This year, 20 of our characters donated their time to the event. It raises funds for the Children's Hospital Foundation of Manitoba's abuse and trauma centre."

Although the company is based out of Winnipeg, actors travel

extensively throughout the region. They've even gone as far as Fort Frances, Ontario.

For a limited time, DaSilva-Chaves says that customers in Niverville can expect a discount. "The former owner, Gillian, lives in Niverville and was previously offering to cover the travel fee herself to promote business in her hometown. I will continue to honour her offer until September 1, 2017."

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ [www.happilyeverafterparties.net](http://www.happilyeverafterparties.net)

## IN BRIEF



Rebecca Lemire and Isaiah Klassen at SEMF. ■ PRAIRIE SOUL DANCE COMPANY

## Local Dancers Dazzle at Manitoba Dance Festival

By Chantel Todd

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

Prairie Soul Dance Company of Niverville had the privilege of performing at the annual Southeastern Manitoba Festival (SEMF), entering 40 performances in various dance disciplines. SEMF has nine categories: dance, strings/instrumental/guitar, senior piano, junior piano, vocal, musical theatre, speech/theatre arts. The dance portion took place at the Steinbach Regional Secondary School theatre from March 11–12, and then resumed March 18–20.

At the end of the festival, Prairie Soul Dance Company was selected to perform at the highlights evening on March 20, and another selection at the Southeastern Stars Gala in March.

"This is a festival that we look forward to participating in every year due to the positive energy and appreciation of the arts that we constantly feel when we're there," says Rebecca Lemire, an administrative assistant at Prairie Soul.

In a separate achievement, Lemire and fellow student Isaiah Klassen received dance scholarships from the adjudicators for their outstanding performances at SEMF.



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Kyla Donkersgoed.

CARLOS CHAVEZ

## Mixing Old School Art with New World Techniques

By Sylvia St. Cyr

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

Keeks Paper Co., based in Winnipeg and started by a woman from Niverville, specializes in creating custom hand-drawn greeting cards, stationary, and wedding invitations. The results of combining hand-drawn art with computer technology are always one-of-a-kind.

"You see so much out there that's purely graphic or digital," says Kyla Donkersgoed, the company's owner and artist. "My designs are originally hand-drawn or painted, and then tweaked for the final design using computer software. This allows me to continue creating with my hands and not just stay on the computer all day."

After finishing high school in Niverville, Donkersgoed moved east to attend the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax. She then transitioned back to her home province to study at the University of Manitoba's International Development Studies

program. This led her to travel to Thailand for her practicum.

"While there, I was working for a social entrepreneur," says Donkersgoed. "I worked for her, but in my downtime I would design packaging and give logo ideas for the business. I can't not do design."

Five years ago, she worked for a flower shop, The Floral Fixx, when her boss mentioned that she could use some greeting cards in the store.

"So I made her greeting cards," Donkersgoed says of her first opportunity. "Then a friend asked if I could design her wedding invites. From then on, Keeks Paper Co. was born."

It didn't take long before her new endeavour became a full-time job. Donkersgoed worked to get her cards into stores across Winnipeg and the surrounding area. Keeks Paper Co. has also been featured in *Wedding Bells Magazine* and the blog *L.A. Bride*.

When Donkersgoed designs wedding invites, she sits down with the bride and groom to hear their ideas. Then she creates something

just for them. She uses a local print shop, Minute Man Press in Winnipeg, to print all of her stationary.

Three months ago, she branched out into business branding. Donkersgoed handles everything from creating logos, brainstorming branding strategies, and website design. This requires a lot of time meeting with clients.

"They're so passionate about this new business that they're starting," she says of working with startups. "I've had the best conversations with people, because they just open up. After asking what they do, ten minutes later they've told me their life story. That's my favourite part of this job, and then the designing."

You can find her greeting cards at the Forks market, the Winnipeg Art Gallery, and many local flower shops.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ [www.keekspaperco.com](http://www.keekspaperco.com)

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