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## LOCAL NEWS

### Grasslands Endangered

■ For longtime residents of Manitoba, it's easy to take grasslands for granted. But they're an important, endangered ecosystem in need of protection.

Details on Pages 8-9



## WEDDING SPOTLIGHT

### What's New in Wedding Trends

■ The southeast region has become a hotspot in recent years for creative and inspiring wedding venues. This month, we take a look at what rural Manitoba has to offer brides- and grooms-to-be.

Details on Pages 15-19

## SPORTS & RECREATION

### Hitting the Trails

■ New cross-country ski trails in Niverville and the RM of Ritchot present an opportunity for residents to stay active during these cold winter months.

Details on Page 23

## ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

### Creative Business

■ From creating artisan soaps to crafting beautiful wooden pens and offering cost-effective marble countertops, local entrepreneurs are pushing the envelope.

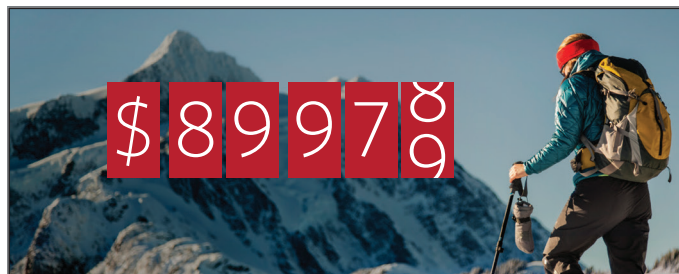
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# Legalizing Cannabis in Rural Manitoba

» DETAILS ON PAGES 3-5

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## MUNICIPALITY OF RITCHOT SPENDING SCAN SURVEY

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RitchotSpendingScan>

Approximate 12 minute survey. All responses kept confidential.

This survey will help the RM of Ritchot's Community Economic Development Office understand the purchasing power of residents and visitors. The results of this survey will help identify sector areas for future business growth and provide the RM of Ritchot and Chamber of Commerce with more localized data and context to local spending.



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# Legalizing Cannabis in Rural Manitoba

## *So many questions, too few answers.*



BRENDA SAWATZKY

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Municipalities in Manitoba were given a short window last month to make a daunting decision regarding cannabis accessibility in their regions. In late November, the provincial government, through the Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM), issued a survey to all municipalities asking for a yes or no vote by December 22 regarding their willingness to allow cannabis retailers to set up shop in their communities.

Municipal leaders scrambled. With less than a month to come forward with a decision, AMM regional meetings were called and councils huddled in special-agenda deliberations. But with vague direction coming from both the federal and provincial government, frustration ensued, leaving most municipal councils at a loss on how to make a firm decision based on ambiguous information.

"The legalization of cannabis is a significant policy change with far-reaching impacts in governance, health, and justice," a provincial spokesperson told the CBC. "Key aspects of the regulation of legalized cannabis will fall to municipalities."<sup>1</sup>

### THE REVENUE-SHARING DEBATE

Since the federal government's announcement of the new cannabis legislation, set to go into effect July 1, 2018, they have been working on an action plan to collaborate with the provinces on a profit-sharing strategy for the estimated annual \$1 billion in revenue that cannabis sales are expected to generate. This threshold is based on the feds' plan to charge an excise tax of



DEPOSITPHOTOS

\$1 per gram, or ten percent of the final retail price, whichever is higher. On top of that, both federal and provincial taxes will be applied.

Initially, the feds offered a 50/50 revenue split, citing the need to cover costs of administration at the federal level. While almost all provinces and territories signed onto the deal, Manitoba held out. Premier Brian Pallister wasn't happy with the plan, suggesting that the excise tax wouldn't keep prices low enough to weed out black market sales. Pallister also disagreed with the ratio of revenue sharing, an imbalance based on the exponential costs provinces would bear in the implementation of increased policing and educational campaigns.

Premiers from other provinces agreed, pressing federal Finance Minister Bill Morneau for a better deal. In early December, a new deal

was struck, offering provinces a 75 percent share of cannabis revenues.

"I believe the black market will still thrive with government prices set at \$10 per gram plus excise tax," says one Hanover resident who has used medicinal cannabis products for years. "I can buy it now at under \$5.50 per gram from the so-called black market and can grow it for considerably less than that."

*"The legalization of cannabis is a significant policy change with far-reaching impacts."*

**Provincial Spokesman**

### DISTRIBUTION OF POWER

While the federal government has laid out a list of strict regulations governing the sale and use of recreational cannabis, each province has been granted a certain autonomy when it comes to governing and determining the locations of retail vendors.

Ontario's government has opted for full control, only allowing the sale of cannabis at stores run by subsidiaries of the Liquor Control Board of Ontario. The province will offer limited options to rural municipalities in regard to whether or not stores will be located in their jurisdictions.

Pallister is taking another approach, a hybrid model that combines provincial control with private retail outlets, opening the door for residents of Manitoba to own and operate their own stores throughout the province. In

addition to municipalities having to respond with their in-or-out position, the province also extended a December 22 deadline to private entrepreneurs who wish to apply for retail sale permits. Pallister's government has also relinquished control to individual municipalities regarding their participation.

### TOO MANY UNKNOWNNS

But many questions still remain. Cannabis legalization is treading into new and relatively uncharted territory. The ramifications are, as yet, unclear. As well, the details of the provincial government's roll-out of the hybrid plan aren't fully known.

Questions have arisen as to whether cannabis retailers will be strictly standalone dispensaries or sanctioned to operate from within other stores, such as grocery stores, vape shops, or pharmacies. Does the province intend to beef up RCMP detachments, providing more officers to assist in enforcement and control?

It's questions like these that leave municipal officials at a loss.

The town of Altona voted yes on the matter.

"It was very apparent that, as far as council was concerned, they wished that they wouldn't have to make this decision," said Mayor Kelvin Klassen to *Pembina Valley Online*. "But the feds and the province have told municipalities that 'marijuana is here. How do you want to be involved?' So, our discussion centred on whether to allow it in town and, if we do, then we can determine where it is sold."<sup>2</sup>

The community of Gimli said no.

"We do not feel comfortable that the provincial government knows exactly what's going on going forward," said Mayor Randy Woroniuk to the CBC. "We felt there wasn't enough information. We felt that the government is not giving us enough time."<sup>3</sup>

Come deadline day, 38 of Manitoba's 61 municipalities contacted by *CBC News* had said yes to retailers in their communities while seven said

(continued on page 4)



(continued from page 3)

no. At least 16 gave no answer to the province at all. The RM of Hanover was among those.

"It's not a yes and it's not a no, either," Hanover Reeve Stan Toews told the CBC. "We're going to check our zoning bylaws, see how that would all fit in, and we're waiting on more information because we don't have enough information to say yes or no."<sup>4</sup>

#### NIVERVILLE AND RITCHOT

Both Niverville and Ritchot councils have also said yes. Niverville's decision was backed by contingencies, making their affirmative response subject to clarification from the province on the specifics of regulation, and subject to amendments to Niverville's zoning bylaw to define the appropriate location for a retail outlet.

"Council is of the opinion that it is in the best interest of the community to allow for the production and sale of cannabis," says Niverville councillor Nathan Dueck.

Mayor Myron Dyck adds that they would still like further clarification on the province's intent regarding profit-sharing with municipalities.

"The feds and province have an agreement," says Dyck. "The province and the municipalities do not. This is one great concern for us. We hope that the province will not take the revenue and download the costs to the RMs. It has happened before. This is one answer we wanted before having to say yes or no. This is why the hesitancy by so many RMs."

Ritchot Mayor Chris Ewen and Deputy Mayor Shane Pelletier have declined comment at this time.

Thankfully, the province



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offered a backdoor clause in their survey, saying, "The province intends to have an open and ongoing dialogue with municipalities about cannabis and your municipality can indicate a change in position on this subject at any point."<sup>5</sup>

This indicates that a municipality's December 22 response isn't binding.

Further to that, municipalities have the right to hold a referendum, called a plebiscite, drawing on the opinions of their voting public even after federal legislation has taken effect.

"The plebiscite is an option for councils to use," says Mayor Dyck. "If [a municipality should] wish to hold one they have until 2022 to do so. A yes vote [today] gives councils the option to hold a plebiscite or to decide no later on. A no vote [today] would only be reversible through a plebiscite."

A plebiscite must be initiated by a municipal council or by a petition signed by 20 percent of electors in the area.

Immediately after Niverville council's response at their December 19 public meeting,

Niverville residents began to weigh in.

"As a resident and taxpayer of Niverville, I am so proud to live in a community that is socially aware and puts the well-being of its citizens above fear-mongering and 'alternative facts,'" says one resident. "To remain a vibrant

[There are] major opportunities for the community [here], potentially attracting some of these multinational players to Niverville [which is] a prime location just outside Winnipeg. I realize for some this is a scary proposition, but all the government is doing is taking it out of basements and putting

**"Council is of the opinion that it is in the best interest of the community to allow for the production and sale of cannabis."**

**Myron Dyck** | Mayor of Niverville

and well-adjusted community, we must be willing to adapt and grow with modern thinking, science, and modern ideas. Thank you, council, for supporting legislation that is economically, ethically, and socially beneficial."

Another resident told *The Citizen*, "I'm happy about council's yes vote regarding cannabis. Niverville [is] a progressive place to raise a family.

it into proper facilities that can be regulated and monitored, keeping our communities safer and providing taxes to local governments instead of to criminal organizations."

Others shared their opinions on a local community Facebook thread. Most were in favour of council's position, while only one publicly remained wary.

#### REGIONAL APPROACH

With less than six months to go before legalization, rural community leaders are working together to establish regional approaches to the issue.

"We want to come up with a consistent plan throughout the Pembina Valley region so that we don't have community pitting against community, or different rules in different towns," says Winkler Mayor Martin Harder to the CBC. "We'd like to come up on the same page."<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, Niverville's council has been actively working with other councils of the southeast.

"The Town of Niverville has various ongoing meetings with our neighbours," says Dyck. "We are part of the Manitoba Capital Region where we meet with all municipalities around the City of Winnipeg, including our immediate neighbours in the RMs of Ritchot and Tache. This is a chance to discuss issues that relate to all of us and collaborate and share ideas."

Niverville's council also met with leaders from Hanover, Ste. Anne, La Broquerie, and the

City of Steinbach to discuss their options.

Ultimately, only the province has the authority to accept retail sales requests from Manitoba entrepreneurs. Municipalities can determine if and where these vendors will locate in their jurisdiction through zoning bylaws. At this point, Dyck says, they have no idea how many entrepreneurs have applied or how many rural retail locations the province will mandate.

#### FEDERAL RESTRICTIONS

The federal government has established regulations on the plant's sale and use. Protecting the country's youth is high on that list, so they have set a minimum age limit for sale and purchase at 18 years of age. Provinces have the authority to raise that age limit. Manitoba and other provinces have changed the minimum age to 19.

Heavy penalties apply to those who give or sell cannabis to minors. Penalties can reach as high as \$5 million in fines or up to 14 years in prison. The packaging, labelling, and display of cannabis is highly restrictive as well, with the intent to reduce the product's visibility and appeal to young people.

Possession of cannabis products for those over 18 will be restricted to a maximum of 30 grams per person at a given time. While the federal government's rules allow for users to grow up to four plants on their personal property for personal use, Manitoba's government has determined that no plants may be grown for recreational purposes here without an authorized license to sell and distribute.

Should any province decide to abstain from creating a regulated retail sales framework,



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residents will still be allowed access to federally licensed producers online.

Federal law has also set strict industry-wide standards for manufacturers and distributors, including quality control, promotional modalities, serving sizes, and potency, as well as the types of products available for legal sale. At this point, edible cannabis products will not be available for sale, although federal laws regarding these are expected to come into effect one year following the July 1 legislation.

According to the Government of Canada's website, "These measures would complement a public education and awareness campaign informing Canadians, including youth, about the risks and harms of cannabis use. In Budget 2017, the Government committed \$9.6 million over five years to a comprehensive public education and awareness campaign and surveillance activities."<sup>7</sup>

## MANITOBA'S ADDED LEGISLATION

Provinces and territories have full autonomy when it comes to licensing and overseeing the distribution and sale of cannabis, subject to federal conditions. These can include lowering the personal possession limit and restricting where adults are allowed to use cannabis, such as in public or in vehicles.

The province has already established that sales will be regulated through the Liquor and Gaming Authority of Manitoba, which has now been changed to the Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Authority (LGCA). This agency will regulate the purchase, storage, distribution, and sale of cannabis while Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation (MLLC) secures and tracks the supply of cannabis sold in the province. They will also issue grants to companies interested in promoting safe consumption. Two percent of the province's net revenue on cannabis has been allocated for

promotional campaigns.

The LGCA will allow for two types of private retail outlets. One will be age-restricted, preventing the entrance of anyone under 19 years of age, similar to nightclubs. The other will be open to any age but be required to follow strict rules regarding the display of cannabis products, similar to the sale of cigarettes. In each case, operators will need to obtain a retail license and ensure appropriate, standardized staff training.

Provincial penalties will be similar to those for alcohol, with fines of up to \$100,000 for individuals or one year in prison, or both. Corporations facing convictions of unlawful sales could face up to \$500,000 in fines.

Pallister has stated that the province's goal would be to see cannabis retail outlets accessible within a 30-minute drive for 90 percent of Manitoba's population.

## WHAT CONTROL DO MUNICIPALITIES HAVE?

The provincial plan leaves municipalities with final authority over whether to allow retail outlets in their jurisdiction. They will also have the flexibility to regulate local retail sales and create zoning laws to determine an outlet's proximity to places such as schools and daycares. It is so far unclear whether the province will profit-share with municipalities or give them unrestricted power on how to spend those tax revenues.

While municipalities have every right to expect a cut of the revenue, other factors might also become incentives for RMs to get on board. Job creation and property tax distribution is always at the forefront of municipal leaders' minds.

Delta 9 Biotech is currently Manitoba's only licensed producer of medical cannabis. It operates in an 80,000-square-foot building and, with the new legislation, hopes to expand to include another 55,000 square feet of space. On July 1, it is expected that other large

operators will receive licensing to keep up with the recreational demand. A municipality's willingness to not only allow but encourage these kinds of production companies to locate in their area could have significant impact on the economic development of their region.

## FALLOUT

Though a billion-dollar annual revenue base is certainly significant, legalization is likely the only way to demonstrate to Canadians just what the full benefits might look like.

According to *Forbes.com*, "The legal cannabis market [in the U.S.] was worth an estimated \$7.2 billion in 2016 and is projected to grow at a compound annual rate of 17 percent. Medical marijuana sales are projected to grow from \$4.7 billion in 2016 to \$13.3 billion in 2020. Adult recreational sales are estimated to jump from \$2.6 billion in 2016 to \$11.2 billion by 2020."<sup>8</sup>

But what about the current cost of the war on drugs? Of course it won't be eliminated altogether, given the ongoing pursuit of Class 1 drugs such as heroin, cocaine, and LSD. Removing marijuana from that scenario should conceivably reduce enforcement, judicial, and prison costs currently incurred on an annual basis by the Canadian government.

"The country can build as many prisons as there is space, but the simple fact remains that criminalizing drug use has not and does not produce results," wrote Omer Aziz for *The Globe and Mail*. Aziz added that the current cost of drug enforcement in Canada is greater than what the country spends on First Nation health services, veterans' health care, health research, and public health programs combined.<sup>9</sup>

In the end, time and strategic legislation will be the determining factors for the effectiveness of this new journey our country is about to embark on.

## CITATIONS

<sup>1</sup> Bryce Hoyer, "High or Dry? Manitoba Municipalities Must Decide If They'll Allow Marijuana Sales by Christmas," *CBC*. November 28, 2017 (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/manitoba-municipal-pot-plans-1.4423681>).

<sup>2</sup> Dean Penner, "Altona Council Says 'Yes' to Pot Sales in Town," *Pembina Valley Online*. December 14, 2017 (<https://pembinavalleyonline.com/local/altona-council-says-yes-to-pot-sales-in-town>).

<sup>3</sup> "Gimli, Man., Just Says No to Retail Pot," *CBC*. December 15, 2017 (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/gimli-pot-retail-manitoba-1.4451949>).

<sup>4</sup> Shane Gibson, "Most Manitoba Municipalities Plan to Allow Cannabis Sales," *CBC*. December 22, 2017 (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/marijuana-manitoba-municipalities-1.4461806>).

<sup>5</sup> "Press Release Cannabis: Public Notice RM of Gimli," *Gimli Community Development Corporation*. Date of access: December 27, 2017 ([http://www.gimlicdc.ca/mobile/notices\\_detail.asp?notice\\_ID=353](http://www.gimlicdc.ca/mobile/notices_detail.asp?notice_ID=353)).

<sup>6</sup> "Pot in Pembina: Southern Manitoba Communities Want Uniform Approach to Sale of Cannabis," *CBC*. December 8, 2017 (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/pembina-valley-pot-sales-1.4438725>).

<sup>7</sup> "Backgrounder: Legalizing and Strictly Regulating Cannabis: The Facts," *Government of Canada*. April 2017 ([https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/news/2017/04/backgrounder\\_legalizing-and-strictly-regulating-cannabis-the-facts.html?wbdisable=true](https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/news/2017/04/backgrounder_legalizing-and-strictly-regulating-cannabis-the-facts.html?wbdisable=true)).

<sup>8</sup> Debra Borchardt, "Marijuana Industry Projected to Create More Jobs than Manufacturing by 2020," *Forbes*. February 22, 2017 (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/debraborchardt/2017/02/22/marijuana-industry-projected-to-create-more-jobs-than-manufacturing-by-2020/#5dfb92033fa9>).

<sup>9</sup> Omer Aziz, "As U.S. Pulls Back, Canada Continues the War on Drugs," *The Globe and Mail*. Updated December 19, 2017 (<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/as-us-pulls-back-canada-continues-the-war-on-drugs/article17825870/>).

## CITIZEN POLL

### THIS MONTH'S QUESTION:

## Would you try cannabis if it was legal?

- ☐ **YES.** Once cannabis is legal, I would have no reason to abstain.
- ☐ **NO.** Regardless of its legality, cannabis is not for me.
- ☐ **UNSURE.** Time will tell.

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### LAST MONTH'S RESULTS:

## What do you think is the best course of action to take during the current Ritchot ward system review?

**OPTION A:** Maintain four wards, with one councillor per ward, and redraw the boundaries to account for recent population growth.

**66%**

**OPTION B:** Switch to a two-ward system, with two or three councillors per ward, along a north-south geographical divide.

**11%**

**OPTION C:** Eliminate the wards and transition to an at-large system, and possibly increase the number of councillors.

**23%**

### YOUR COMMENTS:

I would like to see the Councillor for Grande Pointe to represent all of residents of Grande Pointe. Since we live on the east side of Bernat Road we currently vote for and are represented by someone in Ile des Chenes who may or may not understand the needs of our unique community. The population of Grande Pointe has increased substantially since 1996 and the residents deserve proper representation.

Option B would allow for these wards to be status quo for many years in the future. Option A would need to be reviewed after every census to allow for population growth

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# Local Businesses Shine at the Annual Ritchot Chamber Awards

By Fiona Robinson

Ritchot Chamber of Commerce supporters showed up in style to the second annual Chamber Business Awards and Gala on December 2 at the TransCanada Centre in Île-des-Chênes. The evening of celebration was an opportunity to recognize businesses while also fundraising to support ongoing Chamber activities.

The festivities began with cocktails and networking, followed by a roasted beef sirloin dinner prepared by Lucky Luc's catering service with a chocolate truffle cake dessert that deserved a standing ovation of its own.

Entertainment included a special performance by the Winnipeg Police Pipe Band and music and dancing late into the night with the live band Project B. Each guest was also gifted \$25,000 in funny money to play at the casino, which together with raffle tickets and a 50/50 draw made up the night's fundraising component.

The tables were full and represented by 35 local businesses. Larry Niebel, Ritchot Chamber President (2017), opened the formal part of the evening by introducing the Chamber team, including Marc Palud (Interim Executive Director) and Roger Brodeur (Secretary and Treasurer) as



Larry Niebel and Marc Palud announce the Business Award winners.

FIONA ROBINSON

well as 2017 board members Rob MacLeod, Derek Roth, Dan Vermette, Norm Boulet, Trina Brulé, Roger Perron, and Lisa Ploss. Special acknowledgement was also given to Yvette Bernat for her role as Executive Director for much of 2017 and Dawn Harris, Executive Director of the neighbouring Niverville Chamber.

Ritchot Mayor Chris Ewen also said a few words and thanked the 2017 council for their dedicated support in his first year as mayor.

## BUSINESS AWARDS

Larry Niebel was joined by Marc Palud to announce the highly anticipated business awards.

The Corporate Volunteer

and Community Involvement Award, which recognizes businesses that champion volunteerism in the community, went to Ste. Anne Co-op, represented by general manager Henry Nickel. Ste. Anne Co-op was applauded for supporting multiple community events with donations, including \$75,000 towards the Grand Pointe Community Clubhouse.

Co-op was in good company with fellow nominees George Dyck of GDS Autobody and Glass and Steve Loney of TransCanada Pipeline. Dyck was recognized as a community-oriented business owner who has supported initiatives such as youth programs and search and rescue programs.

TransCanada Pipeline was also recognized as a well-known employer supporting the RM of Ritchot through a long list of donations over the years.

The esteemed Business of the Year Award went to Masoud Horriat of the St. Adolphe Pharmacy & Clinic. Living up to the name of the award, Horriat was acknowledged for going the extra mile to provide customer service and for his "big heart" and love for serving the community.

Fellow nominees of the Business of the Year Award were Gina George of the IDC Pharmacy, who was also thanked for going the extra mile for customers, and Tracy Dumont of Oak Island

Massage Therapy, who has served residents of the RM for over nine years.

Lastly, the Entrepreneur of the Year Award, which recognizes a business founder who transformed vision into reality, went to Emile Jolicoeur of Freedom Fire. This recently established company headquartered in Île-des-Chênes offers advanced reporting technologies for field reports in the utility, industrial, mining, and commercial sectors.

The two other candidates for Entrepreneur of the Year were artisan Julie Carrière of Coco Kisses Distressed Design, who exhibits across Canada and sells globally, as well as Morgan Dulle of Garage Inc. for recent business

expansions including a self-storage service.

The evening wouldn't have been possible without the generous support of local sponsors. Major sponsors included Craig & Ross Chartered Professional Accountants, Renovation Plus, Dan Vermette of RE/MAX Performance Realty, and the TransCanada Centre. Additionally, the RM of Ritchot, Adventure Power Products, Schooley Mitchell Winnipeg, and Centennial Gravel & Excavating sponsored the casino tables.

The Ritchot Chamber is always welcoming new members to support and include in business activities. Whether you're a nationwide company offering local services, a home business start-up, or any size in between, the Chamber is an active organization that advocates on your behalf. Members also receive the benefits of networking, training, promotional opportunities, and discounts on certain business services through affiliated preferred partners of the Chamber.

The Ritchot Chamber hopes to see even more business owners and supporters enjoying themselves at the gala in 2018.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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# Wellness: Looking Beyond the Physical

By Brenda Sawatzky

✉ sawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

The fields of health and wellness are ever-expanding, and this includes a resurgence in the western world of alternative modes of healing that move beyond the physical body and into less tactile areas of the human condition.

Sara Monk is a practitioner of reiki and crystal healing. Her Niverville-based business, Awakened Soul Perspective, seeks to help people connect with the areas of their existence that can't be seen through a microscope: the spiritual and the energetic.

Reiki is a practice first developed in Japan in the early twentieth century. Its practitioners place their hands in a series of positions over the body, channelling energy into the body's energy centres to assist in re-establishing a normal flow on every level—spiritual, mental, and physical.

Crystal healing is the art of placing crystals on various parts of the body. Crystals are said to have the capability to help balance the body on a deep level. This practice dates back to the early Hopi Native Americans and ancient Chinese medicine.

"I know it works from my experience," says Monk. "It's difficult to have faith in the unseen and people are often afraid of things that they don't understand. In order to overcome that fear, you need to learn about it."

Dr. Richard Gerber, in his book *Vibrational Medicine*, says that the physical body is a complex network of interwoven energy fields, and these create the life-force.



Sara Monk.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

These energy systems are powerfully affected by our emotions, spiritual balance, and nutritional and environmental factors.

Monk explains that we have seven main energetic body centres, called chakras. Each chakra corresponds with a different gland in your body.

"If you have a blockage in one of these chakras, it can work itself into the physical body and cause illness, which is why you need to release the blockage," says Monk.

Her primary focus is to help realign the spiritual, energetic, and physical bodies with each other. The process helps to

bolster the body's natural ability to heal itself. She also makes use of music and essential oils to assist in healing.

While her business is relatively new, Monk says she's been aware of her special abilities since she was a young child. She'd shut it off in order to get by in a society where such differences aren't readily embraced.

Her change of heart didn't come about without some struggle. A number of years ago, Monk was involved in two car accidents, one leaving her with near fatal injuries. It took her doctors months to discover the reason for her declining

health and many more months to successfully treat it. At her lowest point, she was weak and wheelchair-bound.

While in hospital, she received a visit from a spiritual counsellor. Through this counsellor, she learned about meditation and moved to a place of peace within herself. Reiki was also performed on her weak and ailing body.

"This whole experience allowed me to open up to my energetic and spiritual self and realize I'm not a victim," says Monk. "It started me on this new path. I started swallowing knowledge."

She began training in reiki and crystal healing, and in February 2016 she opened her own business. In November of this year, she began practicing from her home.

"Everything I do has a spiritual and energetic aspect to it," Monk says. "There is no way around that. That's who I am."

Today, Monk works with clients in person or remotely. Sessions vary between 30 to 50 minutes in length. She says energy healing is complementary to chemotherapy or any other mainstream medical treatments.

"I have a huge textbook written by a doctor who dreamed of a centre with true holistic healing," Monk says. "A centre with practitioners and doctors of all different modalities. I dream of that centre as well. So often doctors focus on just the physical. We need more of a prevention system that looks at every aspect of life. One in which people are empowered and are taught methods to take care of themselves."

## IN BRIEF



## HUB Insurance Opens Niverville Office

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

HUB Insurance is proceeding with plans to open a new brokerage in Niverville in the new office space at 106 Main Street, plans which have been in the works since early 2017.

"We should be open in the latter half of January," says Cameron Dueck, manager of the new branch. "We will begin operation with four full-time staff in Niverville."

Full-time staff include Dueck, Paul Brodeur, Jessica Reimer, and Rachel Weber. Other familiar faces who will frequent the local office include Ray Dowse (Business Development Manager), Holly Dibra (Multiline Account Executive), and Kris Moffat (Commercial Account Executive).

"HUB International, which began in 1998, is one of the largest and fastest growing insurance brokerage networks in North America," says Dueck. "The HUB model is unique in that it can offer the services of a global insurer, right in our own backyard."

Last year, the company acquired 16 branches in Saskatchewan. In total, HUB is a network of 400 integrated brokerages.

"I don't think we could have picked a better location in Niverville," says Dueck, who notes that the office furniture is set to be installed January 8. "The building is centrally located on Main Street, and being in a multi-unit complex provides a great opportunity to drive traffic."

HUB offers an expansive line of independent insurance products geared towards all types of clients, although the company's greatest strength is serving the mid-sized commercial market.

"Our team is really looking forward to getting into the community," Dueck adds. "Our time in Winnipeg has been very valuable in learning the landscape of the organization. I have personally spent some time in a few departments, which has greatly benefited in familiarizing myself with our HUB-branded commercial products and HUB Advantage home insurance plan."

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# Endangered Grasslands

*Our natural prairie ecosystem is more important than we think, and it's rapidly disappearing. What can individual landowners do to make a difference?*

By Liz Byron

In southern Manitoba, it can be tough to convince people that prairies are an at-risk ecosystem. The environmental damage doesn't look as obvious as a bleached coral reef or a smog-covered city.

The damage is very real, though. At least 70 percent of Canada's grasslands have already been lost to agriculture, permanent settlement, and invasive species.

One particular type of grassland, the tall grass prairie, has been so decimated that only 0.5 percent of the original ecosystem remains in Canada today. With the heavy losses of natural grasslands, many species of plants, animals, and insects are becoming endangered. Because so few protected areas exist within Canada and around the world, conservationists are growing increasingly concerned.

A significant part of their concern stems from a general lack of public interest.

Cary Hamel, the Science Manager for the Manitoba branch of the Nature Conservancy of Canada, theorizes that people aren't too concerned about our grasslands because they don't even realize there's a problem.

"If you ask people to name an endangered ecosystem, they think of the tropical rainforest or the coral reefs," Hamel says. "But actually, the most endangered ecosystem on the planet is the temperate grasslands."

Temperate grasslands, which only exist in the cooler places of the world, are varied. In Manitoba, there are four broadly defined types of



The tall grass prairie, an endangered ecosystem in need of protection.

NATURE CONSERVANCY OF CANADA

grassland: tall grass, mixed-grass, sandhill, and fescue, all of which thrive in different regions of the province.

Tall grass prairies once stretched all the way from Texas to Manitoba, one of the only places in the world where this ecosystem is found. These grasslands have been home to thousands of species, many of which don't live anywhere else. As their habitat disappears, they are unable to adapt or relocate, and thus they're disappearing. The white lady's slipper, for example, has become so rare that it is only found in ten locations in Manitoba, and picking or disturbing the plant is illegal. Birds such as the Baird's swallow and the

burrowing owl have also seen a catastrophic population reduction.

But concerns about grassland loss extend further than endangered species.

"Grasslands also clean the water," says Hamel. "They slow down flooding by absorbing water and keeping it on the land. They prevent soil erosion. They sequester carbon in soil. They're home to pollinators. They're also important for the economy in terms of livestock feed."

The loss of native grasslands also impacts Indigenous peoples, whose beliefs have traditionally been deeply tied to the land. Many argue that protecting these ecosystems is

also an issue of human rights for Indigenous people, who traditionally see themselves as stewards, rather than owners, of the land.

The Indigenous Environmental Network, an international group seeking to protect ecosystems like grasslands, states in its mission: "the traditional teachings, lifestyles, spirituality, cultures and leadership of our people, as well as the survival of our future generations, are entirely dependent upon our respectful relationship with the natural world."

They say that the loss of grasslands erodes their very culture.

There's a long list of reasons

to conserve grasslands, but there's an equally long list of challenges to any attempted protection. Public awareness is a large hurdle. It's not that people don't care; they just don't know.

"Prairies are easy to overlook," Hamel suggests. "If someone is driving down the highway or going for a hike, you just see grass and you don't really think about it."

When people think of the great outdoors in Canada, they don't think of vast landscapes of grass. Indeed, run a Google image search for "Canadian landscape" or "Canadian nature" and you'll bring up photos of majestic mountains, green forests, and sparkling

lakes. The prairies don't turn up in the top ten, or even top 50, results.

Another challenge in protecting grasslands is controlling the advance of invasive species. In particular, grasslands are at risk of being overtaken by shrubs and trees.

"Forests are great, and they're important, of course," says Hamel. "The problem is that they displace the grassland species. It's a natural process, but in the past it was kept in check by natural disturbances."

Historically, large herds of bison, deer, and cattle would graze, flatten soil, and clear space for new growth. And while many people think of

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prairie fires as destructive forces to be stopped, they are important in the lifecycle of a grassland. Fires keep shrub growth at bay and rapidly decompose dead biomass.

Climate change poses another challenge. In south-eastern Manitoba, the land is getting wetter, which means that trees and shrubs have an even better chance of invading grasslands.

And of course the biggest challenge to protecting the prairie ecosystem is the human race.

"People call grasslands the breadbasket of the world," Hamel points out. "Tall grass prairie soil is incredibly rich, so that's exactly where people want to grow their crops. It's where people have settled and built their cities, because it's where they can grow their food."

Hamel is quick to note that agriculture and grassland preservation are not necessarily incompatible. Reclaiming even a portion of land as natural prairies can be beneficial for retaining water on fields and preventing soil erosion.

"There is also research being done that shows that crops of canola have higher yields when they're next to prairies, because they get higher rates of pollination because prairies are home to different varieties of pollinators," Hamel adds.

The Canola Council of Canada publishes several factsheets on the importance of pollinators and protecting pollinator populations, too.

There are other economic advantages to native grasslands.

"It's really key for the livestock economy as well," Hamel

says. "Also, mixed economic uses on the landscape can be more resilient to change. And there is also ecotourism. There are actually people who travel all over to see these rare native species and natural habitats, so that's another way they can contribute to the local economy."

The Nature Conservancy of Canada isn't the only organization working to protect grasslands, but they are among the largest. They work to protect the most important and endangered pieces of remaining native grasslands.

"Almost all of the grasslands that remain are privately owned, so this conservation effort has to be done by choices made by private landowners," Hamel notes.

The Nature Conservancy frequently uses Conservation Easement Agreements to this end. A CEA goes on a land title and commits all future owners to conserving the habitat; in return, the Conservancy pays the owner for the value of that conservation.

"We really work to support people in making good decisions about the land. In a lot of cases, this land has been passed down through generations, with the desire for future generations to smell those same smells, hear those same birdsongs, see those same flowers. It's about something that's too good to lose."

The Conservancy also owns some land, and they work with livestock farmers to bring in animals to graze on the land to improve the health of the grasslands.

One of conservationists' goals is to get people out and onto the grasslands. Hamel believes that once people are

out amidst the native grasses, they will discover the beauty and value in preserving them.

In Manitoba, the best and largest remaining example of tall grass prairie is found at the Tall Grass Prairie Preserve. Located approximately 90 kilometres southeast of Niverville, near Vita, the preserve boasts 2,200 hectares of native grasslands. Visitors can explore three hiking trails year-round with no entry cost.

Smaller protected grasslands can be found in Winnipeg. The Living Prairie Museum at 2795 Ness Avenue is only 12 hectares, but it's also free to enter and includes an interpretive centre that is open during warmer months. It opens in the spring to coincide with the blooming of Manitoba's provincial flower, the crocus blossom.

In addition to preservation efforts, some organizations work to recreate grasslands, literally growing new ones. Hamel adds that this can even be done at the individual level.

"That's something that a general member of the public can do: plant a small batch of prairie grass in their yard," he says. "It's pretty neat to see. Right away you see the flowers and grasses, and you'll have butterflies and birds."

All in all, Hamel says, grassland protection is beneficial to everyone, and every bit helps, whether it's a small batch of prairie grass in your backyard, a part of farmland left to go wild, or assistance given to a conservation effort.

"It's a big part of the heritage of our province, and we want that to still be around for the next generation. It's like nothing else on the planet and it's too good to lose."

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# Niverville Family Chiropractic Gets New Digs

By Brenda Sawatzky

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After ten years in business, Dr. Heather McLeod and her team at Niverville Family Chiropractic are enjoying the up-scale clinic at their new location—106 Main Street in Niverville. McLeod is joined there by her long-time receptionist Gwen Sawa and colleagues Dr. Ruth Hitchcock (chiropractor) and Dr. Robert Lecker (optometrist).

McLeod is thrilled at the opportunity to relocate to the town's new office building, which provides the team with a better layout and improved use of space. The new clinic has increased by 500 square feet, allowing McLeod and Lecker their own private exam rooms, which were shared at the previous location.

"We're going to have semi-private adjusting areas," says McLeod, unlike the previous open concept. "There will be a closed room if someone prefers to get adjusted [in privacy]. There's a whole room dedicated to [the x-ray area]."

Though the chiropractic team has been providing x-ray technology for years, the old x-ray equipment has been retired and a newer, more sophisticated system has been installed.

"We use technology to assess nervous system function, which we've been doing for a long time," McLeod adds. "It uses three different tests to look at how the autonomic system is functioning: thermography, surface EMG (electromyogram), and heart-rate variability."

The new x-ray equipment is equipped with digital imaging, and images can be



Dr. Heather McLeod, Gwen Sawa, and Dr. Ruth Hitchcock.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

read in-house by both McLeod and Hitchcock, making patient diagnosis faster and more efficient.

Thoughtful planning went into ensuring patient comfort in the new clinic. A larger waiting area and a kids play zone are integral to the new floorplan.

"I would estimate that 35 to 40 percent of the people we see are under 18," McLeod says. "So we have lots of kids that come to get taken care of. Lots of families."

McLeod has a real heart for pregnant women and new moms, as well as the little ones they bring into the world.

Pregnancy and childbirth, she says, is not only traumatic to the mother's body, but the newborn's too.

"We had one mom stop in here on her way home from the hospital," she marvels. "Lately we've had a lot of new moms and their babies."

For this reason, McLeod is considering holding classes in the near future.

"We recently sent out a survey to some of our patients to see how we can best serve the community," McLeod says. "When I had a baby, there was a class that I was a part of and it was really nice to get together with people in the same boat."

Especially first-time moms. So we've actually been looking at creating a class around that."

Families are not their only focus, though. McLeod says they see patients of all ages, including seniors right into their eighties. Together, McLeod and Hitchcock have 37 years of experience in chiropractic medicine.

Clinic hours will remain the same, meeting patient's needs with a variety of hours from Monday through Saturday. The new clinic provides ample parking space at the rear of the building with access to the main floor clinic from the front and rear.

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# Local Couple Promotes Charm of Crow Wing Trail

By Brenda Sawatzky

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While many of us are familiar with the Crow Wing Trail (CWT), few are aware of the amount of effort and dedication that goes into its administration, maintenance, and promotion. Niverville residents Elena Borisova and Tomas Yebra Vega have signed on as the newest representatives of the trail and hope to encourage further awareness and active participation along its winding Manitoba route.

The CWT is 193 kilometres long and makes up one of the longest sections of the TransCanada Trail. Running from Emerson to Winnipeg, the trail takes a course through the municipalities of Emerson-Franklin, De Salaberry, and Ritchot, with sections crossing the Roseau River First Nation and the towns of St-Pierre-Jolys and Niverville.

The trail is known as Manitoba's first "highway" and was used in the 1800s as the primary trade route between St. Paul, Minnesota, and Winnipeg. Supplies were transported north from the Crow Wing Settlement on the Mississippi River. Furs, pemmican, and native clothing moved south from the Red River Settlement.

This route also saw the conveyance of many new settlers to the Red River Valley in the late nineteenth century. Upon arrival in Canada, these pioneers often rode by train to St. Paul, where they were loaded, along with their meagre belongings, onto an ox cart for the slow and bumpy ride north.

The CWT Association was established in 1999 by a group of volunteers wishing to commemorate the route's rich history. With the changing landscape—much of it now crisscrossed by highways, agricultural land, and private property—the trail has had to shift here and there to accommodate modern hikers. Scenic routes have been established through St-Pierre-Jolys, Otterburne, Niverville, and St. Adolphe, maximizing opportunities for tourism.

Ritchot Councillor Janine Boulanger is the CWT representative for her RM. She works alongside the Recreation and Public Works Departments to integrate loops, signage, and points of interest along St. Adolphe's portion of the trail. Lesley Gaudry, Ritchot's community economic development



Elena Borisova and Tomas Yebra Vega.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

officer, has supported the CWT Association by applying to the government for historical highway status.

Niverville is also an active member of the CWT Association, providing representatives for the CWT board and creating historical signage along the trail's path through Hespeler Park and past the Niverville Heritage Gardens.

When Libby Hanna recently gave up her position on the CWT board, Borisova and Vega stepped in to replace her.

"For us, we came into this because we love the outdoors and activities that involve exercise," says Vega. "[But] it's not only about promoting exercise. It's also about teaching the history and the nature of the environment."

The couple enjoy an active life of walking, biking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and canoeing. During the week, they work together at a Winnipeg firm as electrical engineers. This is also where they met, having immigrated to Canada only a few years ago. Borisova hails from Moscow, Russia while Vega left his home in Ponferrada, Spain.

Ponferrada, he notes, lies 200 kilometres from Santiago de Compostela, the destination for thousands of pilgrims who walk the Camino de Santiago every year. His

home city is one of many along the Camino to enjoy the wealth of economic benefits brought in by pilgrims from around the world. The tourists benefit as well, celebrating along with locals their history and cultural traditions.

"Any trail on the Camino is a treasure for the communities and the towns that are on it," Vega says. "They know how to take advantage of everything that the Camino offers."

Vega imagines that a similar benefit is possible for the towns along the CWT. Accreditation for completing sections of the trail, he says, is one way that the association may one day recognize and encourage people to use the trail. Continuing to promote the trail to tourists, running and cycling groups, clubs, and organizations is another.

On the Camino, people walk for a variety of reasons. For some it's a spiritual pilgrimage, while for others it's a physical challenge of endurance. Whatever the purpose, Vega says, one thing is inevitable: the establishing of relationships with complete strangers over a common goal.

"This contact with human beings and sharing the same experience, it transforms you," says Vega. "This is what people value, although they don't realize it. That

can happen anywhere you walk. You don't need anything special except for special people walking."

While the Camino sets a high standard for successful tourism, it requires a lot of ingenuity and effort.

"I think that [replicating the idea of the Camino] would be wonderful, but you have to have a lot of money and people involved in that," says Vega. "First, people have to see the value in this. There is an education component. If you think that this tourist attraction is valuable for your town, then you will invest in it."

Vega and Borisova have witnessed great enthusiasm and vision among the CWT board members, but their funding is limited to occasional government grants, memberships, and donations. Trail maintenance alone eats up a good portion of their budget. But the couple is excited to be a part of the vision and have been impressed with the level of maintenance and signage applied to the portions of the trail they've walked.

Actif Epica is an annual event that benefits from the CWT year after year. Every February, participants in this marathon come from as far away as California and race up to 200 kilometres. Their website describes it as a human-powered event, bringing communities together in celebration in a cold winter environment, demonstrating the strength of human ingenuity and the beauty of having fun whatever the temperature.

But the CWT isn't just for extreme fitness enthusiasts. The association encourages anyone to come and walk in the footsteps of Manitoba's early traders and pioneers. There are unlimited opportunities along the route for nature lovers, birders, artists, historians, photographers, cyclists, and explorers. According to CWT's website, "the trail is as varied as the multicultural makeup of this region."

"The trail is a living organism," Vega says, citing the wide variety of plant and animal species he and Borisova have enjoyed while walking it. "It has changed, and it will continue to change."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ [www.crowwingtrail.ca](http://www.crowwingtrail.ca)

■ [www.actifeppi.ca](http://www.actifeppi.ca)

## IN BRIEF

### Ritchot to Remain at Four Wards

On December 22, the RM of Ritchot's council made official their plan to remain a four-ward municipality in advance of next year's general municipal election.

The decision followed a consultation period in which a number of options were considered, including transitioning to two wards or an at-large system.

Although the municipal's four wards remain, the boundaries have shifted to ensure a more equitable division of population.

### Niverville Projects Receive Provincial Funding

On December 13, Morris MLA Shannon Martin announced a number of community development funding initiatives. Five local programs were announced overall, with three of them pertaining to the Town of Niverville. The investment in Niverville totals \$13,253.

"Our Progressive Conservative government understands the importance of investing in community development programs that enrich the lives of Manitobans," says Martin. "I am pleased to see our constituency will benefit from this significant province-wide funding."

The Niverville projects include the installation of accessible doors at the picnic shelter washrooms in Hespeler Park (\$7,253), further investment in the Main Street Historical Board Project (\$1,000), and gate and fence upgrades for the Niverville Heritage Cemetery on Main Street.

The province has committed to spend more than \$2.6 million in these grants, offered by programs from Community Places, Partners 4 Growth, Hometown Manitoba, and Neighbourhoods Alive!

FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ [www.gov.mb.ca/mr/bldgcomm/index.html](http://www.gov.mb.ca/mr/bldgcomm/index.html)



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# In Search of Peace: How a Congolese Family Found Home Where They Least Expected

By Brenda Sawatzky

sawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Justin Katotoka and Scolastique Issa are settled snugly on the chesterfield of their humble living room, surrounded by eight of their 11 children as they welcome the pale-faced visitor who's come to hear their story—a story that includes all the benchmarks of a riveting novel.

The family has lived in Niverville for only four months but already define it as home. This small town, after all, was their choice and not one forced upon them by government decree or wartime circumstance.

For nine years, the Katotoka family lived as displaced persons in Uganda, Africa. For all of their lives before that, they lived in the Democratic Republic of Congo, a Central African country embroiled in an almost 60-year war with no foreseeable end.

The Congo is known for its volcanoes, dense rainforests, and rare mountain gorillas. It is also rich in a variety of natural resources such as crude oil, copper, gold, diamond, and other minerals in high demand around the world. Some of these minerals, known as “conflict minerals,” are prevalently used in electronic devices. In the Congo, armed groups fight for control of these minerals, abusing the profits from their mining for campaigns of violence.

Since its independence from Belgian colonialism in 1960, the Congo has been ravaged by decades of armed conflict which has been responsible for the death of more than five million of its people. It's been called the deadliest conflict since World War II. The Congolese army and other armed factions have a long, brutal history of recruiting child soldiers. The United Nations reports at least 1,000 cases of child-soldier recruitment between 2012 and 2013 alone. Over 450,000 refugees have left the Congo to seek sanctuary in neighbouring countries.

Father Justin Katotoka remembers his earlier life in the Congo, working for a pharmaceutical company before he left his job to volunteer with local non-government organizations (NGOs). In his new role, he counselled and aided rape victims, and taught nutrition and health to struggling families.

“It was very dangerous,” Katotoka says.

Helping torture victims was also part of his mandate, details of which he was required to document in reports. Eventually, he too became the target for capture and torture. This became the breaking point for the family and the reason he and Issa collected their



Back: Franco, Michael, Gloria. Centre: Tina, Scola, Nina, Justin, and Chris. Front: Rita and Chance. Missing: Angelique, Anitah, and Shadrach.

© BRENDA SAWATZKY

children and fled.

“When you run, you don’t know where you are going,” says Issa.

Their urgent departure eventually took them to Uganda, a neighbouring country which had become a refuge for countless other Congolese before them. The family made their temporary home in the capital city of Kampala. Katotoka and Issa were able to find jobs, a distinction that made them “urban refugees,” and set them apart from those billeted to refugee camps, unable to support themselves.

While Katotoka once again found work in the healthcare field, Issa went to work teaching refugees how to make handmade soaps and other useful household items. The children were able to attend school where they also learned to speak English.

But without visas, the family's future was uncertain. Katotoka applied to UNHCR, the United Nations refugee agency for official refugee status, which would allow them to be considered for resettlement in a welcoming country. This required numerous interviews and assessments to determine that the family would, in fact, be in grave danger should they be sent back to the Congo.

“When you apply to organizations like UNHCR, they first send applications to different countries like Australia, Europe, United States, or even Canada and you have no idea in which country your application will be accepted,” says the eldest son, Chris. “So it [can take years] for you to find out which country you’ll be going to and then you have to spend years

waiting for representatives from [that country] to interview you. If you pass the interview, then you can be assured to get visas to go to that country.”

UNHCR prioritizes refugees based on family size, health and security concerns, or extent of vulnerability. The family had learned about large families who had been separated and sent to different countries to expedite their resettlement.

Days turned into months and then years. The family checked regularly at agency offices on their status and where they fit into the queue. Answers didn’t come and they eventually stopped asking, ready to accept their fate. They prayed that, should they go, they would not be forced to separate their family of 13.

“If we die, we die together,” says daughter Chance. “If we suffer, we suffer together.”

“At some points we had lost hope for coming abroad,” says Chris. “We thought maybe our application was being ignored.”

Daughter Tina says, “It took a lot of years. We had stopped going to the [UNHCR] office to ask about our case. We are like, ‘Maybe God forgot us,’ because other people were going and not us.”

Nine years after their arrival in Uganda, the family received word of their potential resettlement to Canada. They recall the immense joy and relief they felt upon receiving the news.

“You go to the church and you cry and cry,” says Issa.

“When we got the confirmation that we were coming to Canada, some [of

us] believed it, but others said, ‘We have to witness this,’ Chancesays. “For me, I never believed it until I stepped my foot onto the plane.”

The family underwent a final testing of their health, eliminating the possibility of tuberculosis or other illnesses that would have sealed their fate to Ugandan soil until the next opportunity arrived. They were all cleared.

As government-sponsored refugees, the family arrived in Toronto and were greeted by representatives who outfitted them with warm coats. It was March, but the family was still taken aback by the cold temperatures, having only known the tropical climates of Central Africa. There they waited for three weeks for visas and confirmation of their final destination.

“The government is the one that is responsible to look for the place they’ll send you and you have no option,” says Chance. “You don’t know anything until the final day. For us, we were hoping that we’d go to the States or Australia, but we ended up coming to Winnipeg.” She laughs. “This was not our dream.”

They eventually found themselves in subsidized housing in downtown Winnipeg, adjusting to the strange culture and local foods. Members of City Church, a Winnipeg church that works closely with newly arrived refugees, quickly befriended the family and helped them through the cultural transition, enrolling the older children at Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute at the parents’ request for a Christian school.

At the end of their one-year contract with the government sponsorship program, Katotoka and Issa finally had the freedom to move their children away from the city and into an environment they felt would better foster a positive future for their children and their strong Christian faith. Historically, the children of refugee families have been targets for gang recruitment due to their vulnerability and low-income status. The couple would not take this chance.

Upon recommendation from friends at City Church, the family made the curious drive to Niverville where they met Elaine Kehler, cousin to Sue Nielsen from City Church.

“We are very happy with this place,” says Katotoka. “We came here, we checked the town and found this house and we said, ‘This place is good for us.’”

Their oldest two daughters remained in Winnipeg, one now married and with a daughter of her own. The other is engaged to be married next year. The remaining 11 now live in a small bungalow in Niverville, enjoying their freedom and each other in the cosy space that is their new home.

They think often of what they lost when they fled the Congo.

“Being with [extended] family so close,” says Tina of her memories from the home country. “Some of [the younger kids] don’t know what our grandmother looked like or our uncles and aunts. We always think about them and we just go back to the memories that we have. We used to go to my grandpa’s place and play around the house and eat together. We miss those kinds of things. We were a big family, especially on my dad’s side.”

Katotoka says he is uncertain whether their extended family knows where they are today. Communication with them has been made impossible by the war and unrest. He is currently studying nutrition and health sciences online, a course provided by a college in Ontario. He will complete the two-year course in January and hopes to find work locally as a nutritionist or dietician.

Chris will graduate high school next year and has already applied to the University of Winnipeg to study biochemistry.

Seventeen-year-old Chance still dreams of Australia, imagining a move there in her future. Her father gently rebukes her, longing to keep his children close as long as possible.

“Our dream now is here,” he says. “Canada is very good. We are very happy.”



# Town Planning Sessions and Economic Development Strategies

By Brenda Sawatzky

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A new year means a new chapter of freshly conceived planning strategies and initiatives for the Town of Niverville. Council closed 2017 with its annual planning sessions on November 3-4, held at Providence College for the first time.

"The experience was great," says Mayor Myron Dyck. "We had a boardroom to meet and our meals were provided by the local cafeteria."

In previous years, council retreated to the quiet space of a Winnipeg hotel boardroom to get in a full weekend of planning—planning that extends well beyond an eight-hour workday. This year's change in location provided the opportunity for council members to return to their homes for the night, saving costs and ensuring a restful sleep.

It also allowed for the attendance of other town delegations, such as the local fire chief and the public works and finance managers, who were able to make presentations to council and answer any questions that arose.

"The planning session is a review of all of our departments," Dyck says. "The agenda is over 20 pages long. We look at infrastructure needs, policy changes, bylaws that we need to make or amend, staffing and capital expenditure needs. We look at what we need now, in five years, ten years, and beyond. Costs are presented to council [as well as] the implications on borrowing money and taxes. Then council sets the priorities

and, in most cases, assigns staff specific tasks to research information on items council would like to see done."

Between now and budget time in April, staff will present their findings to council, hopefully providing the clarity needed to issue a green light, postpone the project for another year, or reject it altogether.

"We spend some time doing 'blue sky' thinking," Dyck adds. "We ask, if we could, what would we like to see for Niverville? A brainstorming session, if you will."

One topic on the planning session agenda was about policing services.

"We have asked staff to find out which companies provide overviews of policing services and to get a cost for such a report back to council," says Dyck.

Integral to this year's planning was extensive research data provided by Sison Blackburn Consulting (SBC) Inc. The company was hired to perform a thorough analysis of the community, past and present, creating a template by which council can move towards being an even more progressive and vibrant community.

"The development plan is intended to encapsulate the community vision of where it wants to be in the coming decades," said Ross Mitchell of SBC to attendees at this year's fall open house. "The town could decide to be just a bedroom community for upper-income commuters living in single-family dwellings with a gas bar and day-to-day retail. Or [it could

be] a 'complete community' that accommodates people and families from all socio-economic levels and lifestyles."

The resulting data was compiled alongside survey results gathered from residents and business owners in the fall of 2017. The document addresses the town's current strengths. What can Niverville build on? What are residents most proud of? What makes the community unique? Answers to these involve the upcoming high school and multiplex as well as the existing Heritage Centre campus. The community also boasts a large labour pool based on its growing demographic of young families. The wetlands in Hespeler Park offer opportunities for tourism.

Buzzwords used by residents in the survey to describe the community were friendly, small-town feel, service-based community, being on the edge of the city's influence, and value for money.

This document also looks at the economic development strengths of town staff, the local Chamber of Commerce, and private enterprise. Opportunities for commercial and industrial growth include further business diversity and pulling manufacturing and import/export businesses into the mix.

For a brighter future, the data asserts that Niverville needs to have sustainable and well-thought-out growth in all sectors. It also needs to create an economic climate where more residents have opportunity to work in the community and not just live

there. Maintaining the small town feel without losing progressive momentum is also a strong factor.

Gaps in Niverville's business sector include a lack of arts and entertainment options, high-tech industry, manufacturing, hotels, day-care, and tourism.

The best opportunities to fill Niverville's business gaps lie in addressing Main Street's challenges, including beautification, improving foot-traffic accessibility, increasing commercial density, and creating a hub for local and tourist traffic. Considerations for added Main Street business might include a lounge or bar, bowling alley, concert venue, and more retail.

Continued development of the community's industrial lands should create opportunities to draw in medium-scale manufacturing. The report suggests that the town's marketing strategy focus on affordable commercial land, a readily available and educated labour pool, and the reduced cost of that labour pool when compared to other communities or cities.

Encouraging builders to create more lease space, developing tourism draws, and pushing for a hotel in the community will further close the gaps.

With so much to consider, council is now busy working on implementation of these initiatives through an action plan. Come budget time in April, the community should have a better view of what's to come.

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RITCHOT REGIONAL CHAMBER of COMMERCE

## Chamber News

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## Update from the Chamber

The 2017 Business Awards Gala was a success once again this year, with more than 120 guests representing over 35 businesses having a great time at the virtual casino with live band entertainment. We would like to recognize this year's Gala committee: Yvette Bernat, Roger Brodeur, Lisa Ploss, and Larry Niebel. They all went above and beyond, volunteering their time to ensure that the gala was successful.

The Ritchot Regional Chamber of Commerce annual general meeting took place on Monday, December 11. All board positions and executive positions were successfully filled and the following priorities were discussed for 2018: hire a new part-time Executive Director, promote exploratory trade missions for growth and export outside our region, promote "buy local" initiatives, start a LeadGen club for members, start an exclusive member-to-member discount program, continue our Open for Business networking events in partnership with the Niverville Chamber of Commerce, facilitate business leaders roundtable discussions, have more direct interaction with members, and continue with both annual main events, being the summer golf tournament and fall business awards gala.

There are still a few spots available for the B2B Dialogue Roundtable Workshop scheduled for Tuesday, January 23 at 3:30 p.m. If you're interested in expanding and growing your business in 2018, be sure to apply for this powerful session that can uncover opportunities for your business. For details, call Marc Palud at 204-471-5680.

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# Wedding Spotlight

## Wedding Rentals for the Décor You're After

By Brenda Sawatzky

✉ sawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

While some bridal couples revel in the joy of the hunt for the perfect wedding décor, buying such items outright can be costly and time-consuming, even if you're lucky enough to unearth them at thrift stores and second-hand shops. And then the question arises as to what to do with them after the big event.

Event rental shops, such as Touch of Glass (TOG) in Niverville, cater to couples interested in elegance with ease. And they carry it all, from linens to décor pieces, vases, silk flowers, wine goblets, and dinnerware.

Being in the business, though, means staying well on top of changing wedding décor trends.

"In our area here, rustic-chic and vintage-chic are still going really strong," says Charmaine Derksen, owner and operator of TOG.

2018, she says, will continue to see many couples favouring one of these two looks. Rustic, she explains, usually includes elements that are close to nature such as raw wood and burlap. Vintage is a newer trend, focusing on antique



A table setting.

TOUCH OF GLASS

pieces like old photo frames, classic books, and interesting items one might find in grandma's china cabinet. According to Derksen, both of these become chic when they're paired with glamorous items like strings of pearls and golds and silvers to create an elegant display.

Vintage dishes are relatively new stock items in TOG's rental inventory.

"From everything that we've been seeing on Pinterest, [brides want it] eclectic," says Derksen. "You don't necessarily have to have a matching

pattern. So we decided to go with a colour theme. All different styles and patterns [of vintage dishes], but in golds and pinks."

Copper is another element that Derksen says will be a popular choice in 2018. She has already established an inventory of vases and copper-edged pieces to complement table centrepieces. According to Pinterest and bridal magazines, terrariums will also be big this year. Derksen's terrariums are geometrically shaped table-toppers with gold trim and glass

inserts, perfect with the addition of the bride's choice in candles or flowers tucked delicately within.

TOG offers free consultations to bridal couples, first establishing the couple's tastes and then providing artistic tabletop mockups for them to see firsthand the options they might consider. In terms of linens, the options are virtually limitless. While they carry the standard polyester tablecloths and napkins in upwards of 40 different colours, they also offer a wide variety of specialty linens such as satins, metallic

glitz, pin-tuck and pinwheel patterns, and more. And if they don't carry exactly what you're looking for, chances are they can find it.

"There are lots of great [rental companies] in Winnipeg and Steinbach," says Derksen. "We are open to sharing [our product]. It's a community and we help each other out. Having that kind of relationship means that, at the end of the day, it's the client that gets what they want."

TOG's rentals are available for pick-up or delivery. They also offer complete event setup and takedown if bridal couples want a completely hands-free experience.

Events in 2017 kept TOG hopping, providing décor and linens for Christmas parties, corporate events, meetings, galas, and fundraisers, but weddings were their primary focus through the summer months.

"There were weekends when we would do 18 to 21 events in one weekend," Derksen says.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ (204) 388-5500  
■ [www.touchofglass.ca](http://www.touchofglass.ca)

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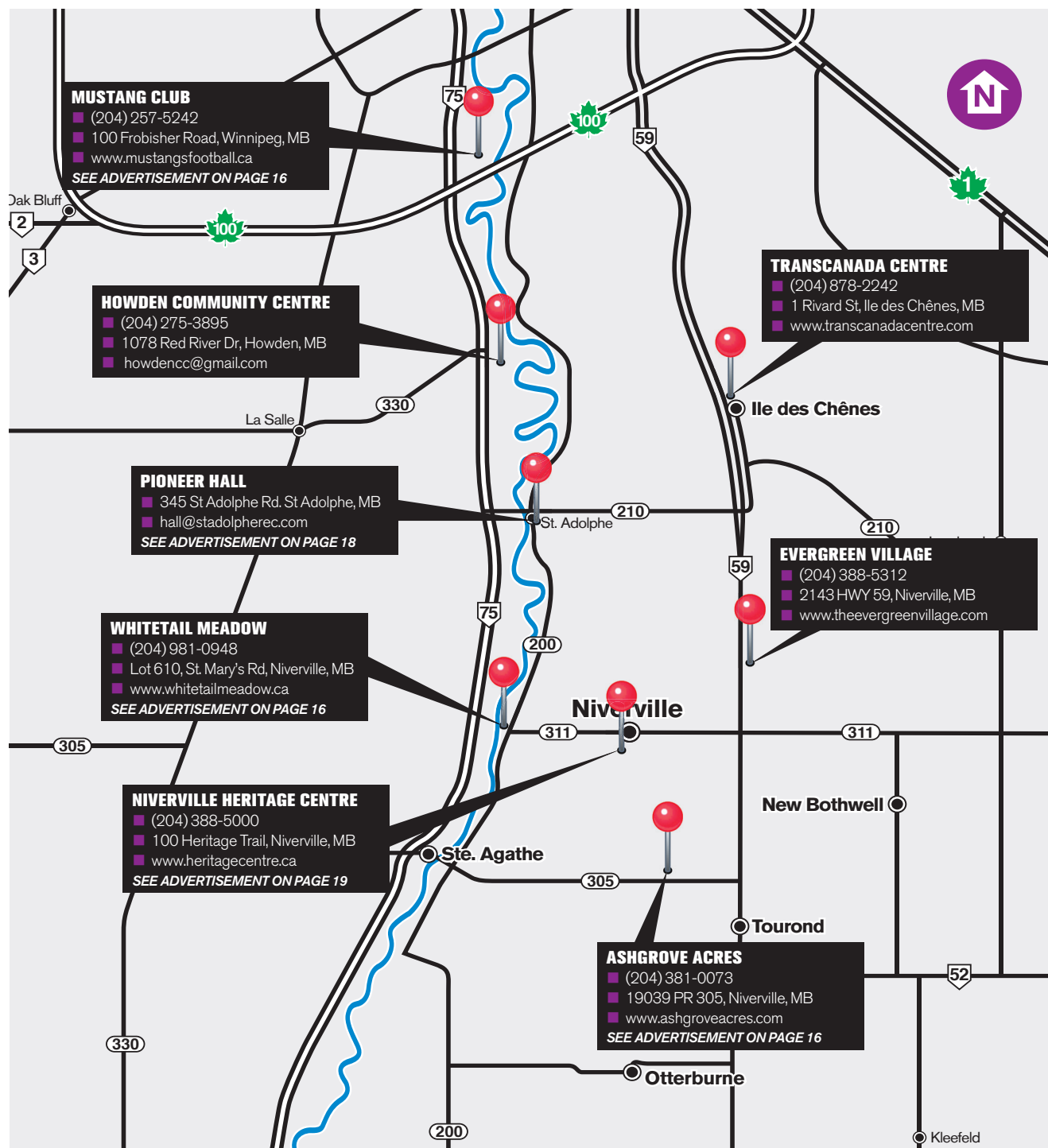


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# Great Overnight Options for Out-of-Town Guests

By Brenda Sawatzky

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

While rural Manitoba is making a name for itself with wedding venues and retailers, hotels for out-of-town guests are harder to find without making the commute to Winnipeg or Steinbach.

That doesn't leave the rural south-east without options, though. Sometimes the best gems are found when you take a look around.



MAISON PRÈS DE LA ROUGE

## MAISON PRÈS DE LA ROUGE BED & BREAKFAST

Maison près de la Rouge is a cosy little bed-and-breakfast located in Ste. Agathe, its name translating to House by the Red. Since May 2005, Guy and Suzanne Gagnon have been hosting overnight guests at their quiet and peaceful retreat at 425 Lemoine Street.

"This was a retirement project we could do together," says Suzanne Gagnon. "We love to meet and chat with people from around the world. We enjoy spoiling our guests and I love to create and prepare delicious meals to awaken their tastebuds."

The bed-and-breakfast offers two bedrooms, both with queen-size beds and private baths—one with a shower and one with a Jacuzzi tub to relax in after a long day of travels or event-going. A guest lounge area includes satellite TV and wi-fi. Guests will appreciate the private entrance and off-street parking.



CHATEAU DES SAGES

Another highlight is waking to the delectable smells of a home-baked and hot breakfast. Included in the price of the stay, guests will enjoy omelettes, crepes, French toast, eggs benedict, frittata, quiche, and waffles. Quick options are also available like fresh fruit with yogurt and granola, homemade muffins, scones, cinnamon rolls, juice, coffee, and tea.

"We give our guests a feels-like-home getaway where we take care of them," Gagnon says.

Breakfast is served in the sunny comfort of their attached sunroom which overlooks a backyard green-space thick with flowers, mature trees, and fountains. Every corner of the backyard is alive with a variety of local birds that also come to feed at the Maison's vast array of bird feeders, summer or winter.

■ Contact: maisonpdlrouge@mymts.net

■ Website: www.bbcanada.com/maisonpdlrougebb

## CHATEAU DES SAGES BED & BREAKFAST

Roger and Cecile Lesage are hosts at the Chateau des Sages Bed and

Breakfast in St. Pierre. In business for 15 years, the house is nestled on a peaceful, country-like setting on the northern boundary of the village.

"A change was inevitable and we did not want to lose contact with the public which we had so much enjoyed for many years," says Cecile



NIVERVILLE HERITAGE CENTRE

The location at 317 Sabourin Street North was home to the St. Pierre Florist for 26 years before it was transformed into a lovely spot for travellers to eat and rest.

Lesage. "There were not enough B&Bs in the area at the time, so we thought we would venture in this field to meet new people and to add a much-needed service in our area. We

have since enjoyed meeting guests from near and far and have made new friends from all over the globe."

The B&B offers a private guest suite with a fully equipped kitchen, living room with gas fireplace, and double hide-a-bed couch. The bedroom includes a queen-size bed and full bath with Jacuzzi tub. Guests can expect satellite TV, air conditioning, and free wi-fi. They also have access to the patio with gas barbecue, laundry room, and plenty of parking on the property.

The private suite is located on the main floor of the chateau and is mobility-friendly. With snowmobile trails nearby, it's also a great location for overnight winter layovers.

"Everything is included to make yourselves a hearty breakfast to enjoy at your leisure, indoors or out on the patio," Lesage says. "We are open year-round. Drop in if you wish, but advance notice will secure your reservation."

■ Contact: lesage@mymts.net

■ Website: www.chateaudessages.ca

## THE HERITAGE CENTRE GUEST SUITES

Located in the heart of Niverville are the brand-new Heritage Centre Guest Suites. The two suites are each fully furnished and feature two queen beds, a microwave oven, a bar fridge, a coffee maker, and cable TV in a modern, hotel-like setting. Fresh linens, towels, and toiletries are provided for their guests' comfort.

Nearby, and without leaving the building, guests can access Hespeler's Cookhouse and Tavern for a great meal and alcoholic beverage in the dining room or on the patio.

Also within easy indoor access is the Heritage Event Centre and the Highlights in Hair salon for last-minute grooming before a big event. Guests are welcome to stroll or picnic in the Heritage Gardens' lush greenspace.

■ Contact: (204) 388-2132

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MARIGOLD COTTAGE

#### MARIGOLD COTTAGE

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Marigold Cottage offers more than just a place to sleep. Situated on the Red River and alongside Whitetail Meadow, the cottage grounds provide a skating pond, cross-country ski and snowshoe trails, and an outdoor area for a bonfire with friends.

Inside, groups from two to eight can gather in the living and dining area on the main level. The second story is equipped with a romantic master bedroom overlooking the river, with king-size bed, fireplace, and roll-top tub. All linens and towels are included. Couples are encouraged to bring their own personal items and food to enjoy in the fully equipped kitchen.

The cottage is available for rent for a single night, or multiple nights at a time. Preference will be given to bridal couples renting the White-tail Meadow event centre.

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# Commentary



DEPOSITPHOTOS

## Changing How We Give

By Greg Fehr

As the dawn of a new year arrives, reflections on the past year swirl in our heads and we peer into 2018. With history being the best indicator of the future, it would be easy to look at the past 12 months and worry about the upcoming year. But when we ask ourselves what this new year will bring, we may find a good indicator in another question: will this year be positive for the marginalized and challenged individuals in our society?

Charities are facing large deficits, with charitable giving significantly down from previous years. We depend on agencies like The Salvation Army, Shalom Mission, and the Winnipeg Foundation to assist in providing a social net for many of our brothers and sisters. Their budget challenges may not only impact their beneficiaries, but also strain government resources—and

our tax dollars—to backstop their operations.

The decrease in charitable giving may be indicative of our economic climate, where people have less, or feel they have less, to give. But in some cases it may just indicate that we need to change the way we give.

While dollar donations are down, the will to directly engage with people appears to be gaining strength. Simply put, we want to meet the people we are trying to assist. At larger agencies, such as missions, this translates to people volunteering their time rather than cutting a cheque.

While largely unmeasured, one need only look to social media to see that we're spending more time assisting the less fortunate during the holidays. For some, it's becoming as much of a holiday tradition as large Christmas dinners.

Our need for direct connection also manifests itself in the diversion

of our gifts from large charities to smaller "house efforts" or even one-on-one assistance. Perhaps it's not that we don't see the good done by large, established charities, but that we find it to be too impersonal.

We want to engage with our fellow man, and we want to be engaged. We want to create "blessing bags" filled with supplies and directly hand them to the individuals who need them, and even spend a minute connecting. We want to stop our car and meet the person standing on the boulevard with the cardboard sign. We want to start up or support small endeavours that make us feel like we're truly connecting and helping.

What does this indicate for the new year? The way in which we assist those in our society who have needs is the largest indication of our success. When we lift up them up, we lift ourselves up ourselves; we raise our society as a whole. This can

be accomplished through both large charities and individual efforts, but with the rise of relational giving we can move down a path to better understanding.

When we look at the problems facing communities and societies, we can boil them down to a lack of understanding. Fear and hate come from ignorance. When we connect, we begin to understand.

So despite the challenges we face, our view of the new year must be optimistic, and this hope gives us the drive to move forward, helping us to realize our positive aspirations.

If you're still seeking your resolution for the new year, make it this: that you will not only have hope, but that you will share hope. Hope is not an absolute quantity; it has the ability to multiply with each gift. This exponential growth will lead us to a truly prosperous and healthy 2018.

## Look on the Bright Side: Be Prepared

By Jan Kendall St. Cyr

I smiled as I recalled the long ago memory of my brother enacting the Boy Scouts motto—"be prepared"—while pressing two fingers to his forehead in the accompanying salute. The recollection stirred my curiosity. What was it they were supposed to be prepared for? To be prepared means to always be in a state of readiness, both in mind and body. Well, this caught my attention, especially on the cusp of another new year with our hearts again full of dreams, goals, and new resolutions.

Although I'm familiar with the old admonishment that success results when preparedness and opportunity meet, I've never really given much thought to the importance of being prepared. Is it our lack of preparedness that causes us to fall short of our dreams and goals? Do we fail to take advantage of, or even see, the opportunities before us simply because we aren't prepared to meet them?

French biologist Louis Pasteur believed that "chance (or opportunity) favors the prepared mind." After further reflection, I came to the conclusion that being prepared thus requires me to put myself in the best possible position to receive. Whatever this year's goals may be, I must start to align myself now with the successful outcome I desire. I've come to understand that preparing our inner selves is the first step toward experiencing the results we crave.

This has led me to take stock of my thoughts. Thoughts that are contrary to what we want serve to sabotage our success. Trying and striving to outwardly reach a goal without having the support of our thoughts and feelings is like shooting an arrow at a brick wall! Our hearts and minds must first be convinced we're worthy of the success we desire. Taking a few moments every day to remember our value and worth prepares us to see and take those important next steps. Creating an inner and outer environment that's conducive to reaching our goals ensures that we are prepared to successfully navigate the course and cross our desired finish lines.

May this new year find us in a state of readiness, both in mind and body, so that when those wonderful opportunities do appear, we are fully prepared to meet them!

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# Sports & Recreation

## The Good and the Bad(minton)

**fitville**

**By Chantel Todd**

ctodd@nivervillecitizen.com

I have to start out by stressing the importance of reading instructions right to the end, rather than skimming through them. I was all geared up to go play badminton in St. Adolphe. I got my racquet, my shoes, my water bottle, and I even had a friend who wanted to attend with me. Great! We hopped into my car and headed over to the school and the parking lot was empty.

Weird. I had thought it would be full! So we waited a little bit, then we figured I must have gotten the times wrong or something. We googled the Ritchot leisure guide, and sure enough, I got the evening wrong. Oops!

Fast-forward to the next week, I gather my gear and head over the school, this time on the correct evening. I even managed to convince my friend to join me again so that I didn't go at it alone.



Chantel Todd takes on badminton.

CHANTEL TODD

Yvan greeted us in the gym and told us to warm up before starting a game. We grabbed a birdie and our racquets, then started hitting the birdie back and forth—a good warm-up, to say the least, because it had been at least seven years since either of us had played.

And do you think I could remember the rules?

No.

So we asked Yvan to explain the rules, the scores, and the court lines. Before we knew it, we were playing our first game

with Yvan and Henry. Playing badminton again wasn't hard, nor was it easy. We got into some good rallies and worked up quite a sweat. I have to admit, I'm not as quick as I used to be.

We played a few more rounds with other teams before calling it quits out of sheer exhaustion. After this workout, we were sore and ready for a long break. In fact, my wrist is still a little sore three days later! I guess I hammered that birdie a little too hard.

## Île-des-Chênes Minor Hockey Correction

A few details were incorrect in last month's article, "Île-des-Chênes Minor Hockey Takes Off." The Novice girls team is made up of players from Île-des-Chênes, Niverville, and Blumenort, whereas the Pee

Wee girls team is made up of players from Île-des-Chênes, St. Adolphe, and Ste Anne. These players also play on coed teams in their home-towns.

Also, the Bantam B team

has eight players from Landmark and Île-des-Chênes, rostered out of Landmark. Île-des-Chênes has ten players on the regional Seine River Snipers roster, who play at the AA Bantam level.

### NIVERVILLE RECREATION

#### ▼ NIVERVILLE ARENA - SOUTH END

##### Tuff-N-up Bootcamp

Mondays/Wednesdays starting Jan. 8, 6:30 p.m., \$150/\$75.

##### Public Skating

Fridays, 3:30–4:30 p.m.; Saturdays & Sundays, 11:00 a.m.–12:00 noon

##### Sticks & Pucks

Fridays, 4:30–5:15 p.m.; Saturdays & Sundays, 12:15–1:00 p.m.

##### Adult Rec Hockey

Saturdays, 9:15–10:15 p.m., \$10.

##### Bench League Hockey

Wednesdays, 9:30–10:30 p.m., \$8.

##### Gymnastics

Wednesdays starting Jan. 10 (ages 2–5), \$90.

##### Sound Lab Music Program

Tuesdays, Jan. 16–Feb. 20 (ages 2–5, 6+), 4:00–5:30 p.m., \$72.

##### Home Alone Program

Thursday, Jan. 18 (ages 9+), 6:00–8:00 p.m., \$30.

#### ▼ NIVERVILLE CURLING RINK

##### Youth Curling

Tuesdays, Jan. 8–Feb. 20 (ages 6–12), \$40.

##### Yoga

Mondays, Jan. 8–Feb. 26. Flow at 7:00 p.m., Yin at 8:15 p.m., \$84.

#### ▼ GOLDEN FRIENDSHIP CENTRE

##### Taekwondo

Mondays & Thursdays, 6:30–8:30 p.m.

### ST. ADOLPHE RECREATION

#### ▼ ÉCOLE ST. ADOLPHE SCHOOL

##### Badminton

Mondays, 6:00–8:00 p.m., \$2 (bring shoes & racket)

##### Pickleball (50+)

Thursdays, 6:00–7:30 p.m., Free.

##### Karate

Tuesdays/Fridays, 6:00–7:30 p.m.

##### Tales & Tunes

Thursdays, Jan. 11–Mar. 15 (ages 2–4), 6:30–7:15 p.m., Free.

#### ▼ ST. ADOLPHE COMMUNITY CLUB

##### Gymnastics & Stunting (ages 2–8)

Mondays, 6:00–8:30 p.m., costs vary by age.

#### ▼ ST. ADOLPHE ARENA

##### Public Skating

Fridays, 5:00–6:00 p.m.; Sundays, 5:30–6:15 p.m.

#### ▼ RITCHOT SENIOR SERVICES (457 MAIN ST.)

##### Yoga

Wednesdays, 1:30 p.m., \$40/10 classes

##### Cardio Fit

Mondays, 9:30 a.m., \$40/10 classes.

##### Chair Fit

Mondays, 11:00 a.m., Free.

##### Muscle Fit

Thursdays, 9:30 a.m., \$40/10 classes.

##### Wii Games

Thursdays, 1:00 p.m.

### ÎLE-DES-CHÊNES RECREATION

#### ▼ TRANSCANADA CENTRE

##### Indoor Walking

Mondays/Wednesdays/Fridays, 9:00 a.m.

##### Seniors Yoga

Mondays, 10:00 a.m., Free.

##### Yoga

Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m., \$125/10 classes.

##### Golden Zumba

Tuesdays, 10:00 a.m., Free.

##### Zumba

Mondays, 7:00 p.m., \$75/10 classes.

##### Pickleball

Wednesdays, 1:00–3:00 p.m., Free.

##### Healthy Baby

Tuesday, Jan. 16, 10:00 a.m.–12:00 noon, Free.

#### ▼ ÉCOLE ÎLE-DES-CHÊNES SCHOOL

##### Taekwondo

Tuesdays/Thursdays, 6:00–7:30 p.m., \$40/month.

##### Spirals Rhythmic Gymnastics

Mondays, 6:00–8:00 p.m., \$105.

#### ▼ ÎLE-DES-CHÊNES ARENA

##### Public Skating

Thursdays, 3:30–5:00 p.m.; Sundays, 12:45–1:45 p.m.

##### Shinny

Tuesdays, 3:30–5:00 p.m.

#### ▼ ÉCOLE GABRIELLE-ROY LIBRARY

##### Tales & Tunes

Wednesdays, Jan. 10–Mar. 14 (ages 2–4), 6:30–7:15 p.m., Free.

### STE. AGATHE RECREATION

#### ▼ ÉCOLE SAINTE AGATHE SCHOOL

##### Taeknowdo

Tuesdays/Thursdays, 6:15–7:30 p.m., \$40/month.

##### Vinyasa Yoga

Mondays, 8:00–9:00 p.m., \$10.

##### Pickleball

Fridays, 7:00–8:30 p.m., Free.

##### Zumba

Wednesdays, 7:00–8:00 p.m., \$10.

##### Tales & Tunes

Tuesdays, Jan. 9–Mar. 13 (ages 2–4), 6:30–7:15 p.m., Free.

#### ▼ STE. AGATHE ARENA

##### Public Skating

Tuesdays 4:15–5:15 p.m., Fridays 6:45–7:45 p.m., Sundays, 12:15–1:15 p.m.

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# How Do You Solve a Problem Like Mark Scheifele?

By Nicholas Anderson

Despite finishing the month first in the Central Division, and two points back of the Western-Conference-leading Golden Knights, December for the Jets was much like the weather in Winnipeg: cold.

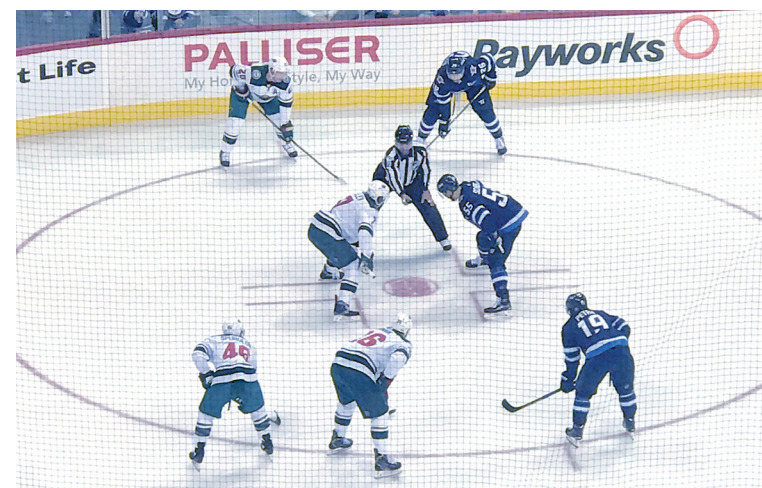
On the road, that is. The Jets continued to be scorching hot on home ice, going 5-1-0 in their own barn, improving to 14-3-1 overall when playing at BellMTS Place.

Leading the charge is goaltender Connor Hellebuyck, who when playing at home this season has gone 14-1-1 with a .930 save percentage. On home ice, the Jets' power play trails only that of the Nashville Predators, scoring on 32 percent of their opportunities.

Sadly, not all 82 games are played at home, and every now and again you have to visit another team's arena. It's in these games that the Jets look like a different team. Of an attainable 44 points available in road games, the Jets have managed to rack up just 23 of them, going 9-8-5 through their first 22 road games. December proved to be the Jets' worst month on the road, winning only two games and going 2-4-2.

What could be causing these struggles? One explanation could be that the Jets, like most teams, just perform better when they're in their own barn. Combine that with what's arguably the most electric fanbase in the league, and you're in for one hell of a night if you're an opposing team entering BellMTS Place. This also feeds their power play performance, which is nowhere near as lethal away from home. On the road, the Jets convert on just 17.7 percent of their power play opportunities, half the rate as on home ice.

Despite their struggles on the road, the biggest loss last month came via an injury to centre Mark Scheifele. Midway through the second period of the Jets' 4-3 victory against the Edmonton Oilers on December 27, Scheifele collided



Mark Scheifele takes a faceoff at the BellMTS Place.

DUSTIN KRAHN

with Oilers defenceman Brandon Davidson, and continued to slide until he hit the boards. Following the collision, Scheifele was down for several minutes and ended up leaving the game.

The following day, Coach Paul Maurice declared Mark would miss the next six to eight weeks with an upper body injury.

To call Scheifele's injury detrimental to the team's prospects would be an understatement. Since becoming the first-ever draft pick of Jets 2.0, Scheifele has put in all the work necessary to become one of the league's top centres. And it reflects in his stats. Since January 1, 2016, Scheifele ranks in the NHL's top five players when it comes to points, with 159 in 154 games. He also ranks in the top ten when it comes to playing time, averaging 20:30 per game.

So how big of a hole will Scheifele's injury create for the Jets? Fortunately, thanks to their excellent performance through the first half of the season, the team is in a pretty good position. That being said, there's no replacing Mark Scheifele. That's just a fact. But with such a deep roster, there are some options to help bridge the gap.

The Jets have chosen so far to use Blake Wheeler at centre, as he

has the defensive capabilities to get the job done. But should he want to, Maurice also has the option to pull the Jack Roslovic card.

Picked by the Jets twenty-fifth overall in the 2015 draft, Roslovic is starting to look like a steal of a draft pick. In 31 games with the Manitoba Moose, currently leading the American Hockey League, he has scored 15 times and assisted on 20 goals, giving him 35 points on the season. He was recalled on December 30 but didn't play in the Jets' final game of 2017 against the Edmonton Oilers.

During their first two games without Scheifele, the Jets looked impressive. Despite being outshot 79-75 in those games, the Jets managed to pull off two victories, winning 4-2 against the offensive juggernaut Islanders, and 5-0 against Connor McDavid and the Edmonton Oilers. Though Connor Hellebuyck truly stole the show in both of these games, the Jets' overall offensive effort sure helped seal the deal.

Heading into January, the Jets will hope to carry on the success they've garnered thus far without Scheifele, and hope to solidify their spot as a serious contender in the Central Division come April.

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# Ritchot Prepares for Cross-Country Ski Trails

By Liz Byron

Residents of the Ritchot municipality will have even more options this winter when it comes to outdoor activities, thanks to a series of new cross-country ski trails.

Earlier this year, the RM received funds from the Manitoba Hydro Community Development Initiatives Funding Program which they allocated for the purchase of a trail groomer, so that ski paths could be created and maintained throughout the snowy months.

Amber Mamchuk, Director of Recreation Services for Ritchot, says that the goal for the first year is to start with a few simple trails.

"We're going to do a trail in all of our larger communities, so we'll have one each in Île-des-Chênes, Ste. Agathe, Grande Pointe, and St. Adolphe. Each trail will be a loop."

Eventually the RM hopes to

expand the trail system, but Mamchuk emphasizes that they want to be cautious.

"We don't want to take on more than we can handle at first, so we're starting off small and hoping to build from there," she says, noting that the project is a joint venture between the municipality's Recreation Department and Public Works Department. They want to make sure they have a solid routine before getting too ambitious.

The exact location of the trails isn't set in stone yet.

"We have a rough idea of where they're going," Mamchuk says, "but until we get in there with our machinery and our groomer we won't know for sure what will work. We have to feel it out first before we can confirm trail maps."

One of the key factors in finding the right location is the presence of snowmobile trails.

"The idea is to keep ski trails and snowmobile trails separate," Mamchuk explains. "The governing body in this area for snowmobiles is Snoman Inc. and we'll be looking at their maps and try to steer clear of their marked trails."

Île-des-Chênes resident Linda LeBlanc says this is the main reason she's so excited to see the ski trails going in. She's been cross-country skiing recreationally for decades, and when she moved to Île-des-Chênes four years ago she was excited to be able to continue her pastime. However, she soon found that finding a safe place to ski was harder than anticipated.

"I've been skiing in the ditches," LeBlanc says. "But I have to share the ditches with snowmobiles. I worry about them not seeing me, since they're going so much faster than me."

Accessibility is another issue for

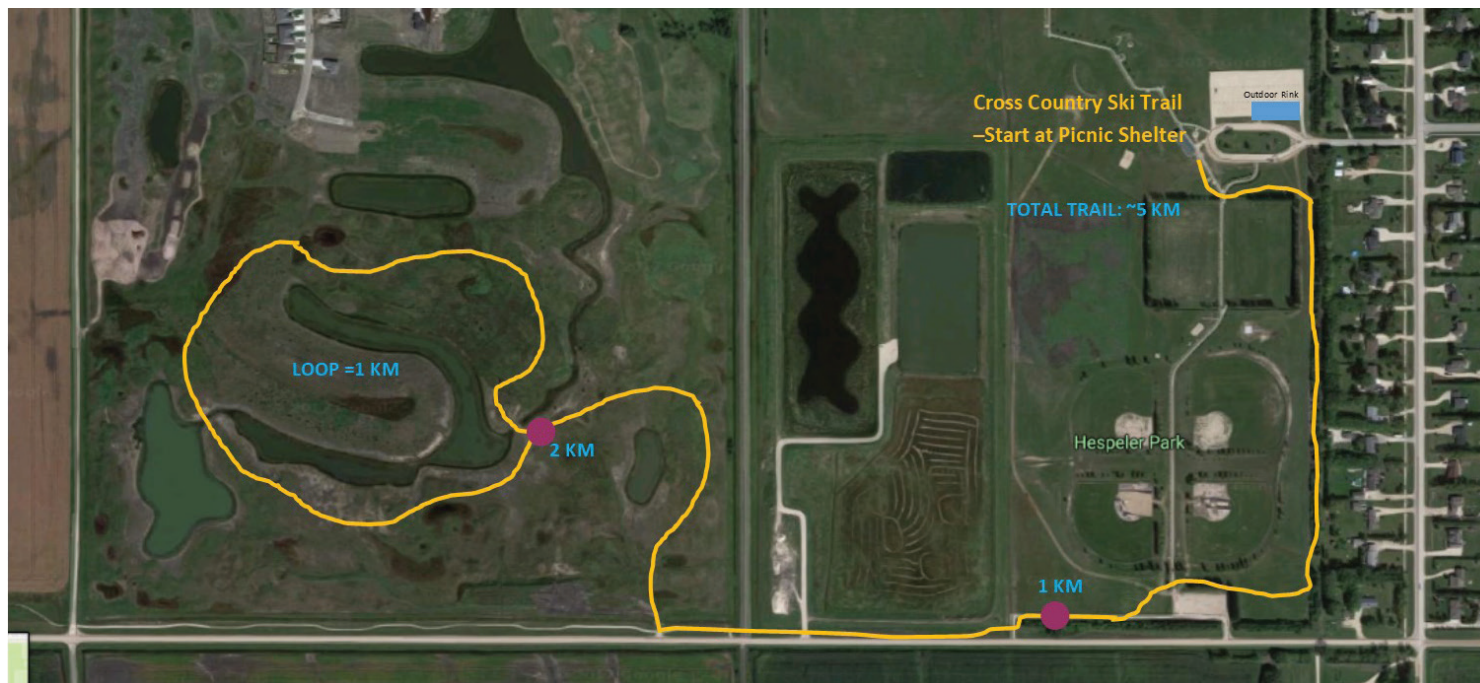
skiers, says LeBlanc.

"The easier the access, the more likely you are to do it," she explains. "If I have to pack my skis up and go for a drive, I won't do it nearly so often. But if there's a trail near enough to walk, or a quick drive to trails with a place to park, well, I can go out for a quick ski after work and be home again for dinner."

The RM is waiting for a bit more snow on the ground before taking the groomer out, but hopes to be able to put the trails in early in the new year. Once the trail locations are set, maps will be available from the municipality online or from their office at 352 Main Street in St. Adolphe.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ Check back for maps, when they're ready, at [www.ritchot.com](http://www.ritchot.com).



Niverville's cross-country ski trails.

TOWN OF NIVERVILLE

## Niverville Introduces New Cross-Country Ski Route

By Chantel Todd

ctodd@niverillecitizen.com

As we get more snow in Niverville, the cross-country ski trails are getting ready to open. The Town of Niverville, with the assistance of a dedicated local volunteer, have started grooming the new loop.

However, it isn't quite ready yet. A little more snow is still needed in some areas of Hespeler Park and the Highlands.

The loop will begin at the picnic shelter in Hespeler Park and run along the east tree line, then steer west towards the wetlands along Crown Valley Road. The new loop

this year will take skiers into the undeveloped land in the south parts of The Highlands, an area featuring hilly terrain and frozen ponds. The loop is approximately five kilometers in length from the picnic shelter and back. There is also an opportunity to access the loop in The Highlands off St.

Andrews Way.

The Town of Niverville kindly asks that walkers, snowshoe goers, and snowmobiles stay off of the groomed track. Note that residents can also rent snowshoes at the town office.

## GORP WORLD ATHLETE OF THE MONTH



## Isabella Raftis

Bella is working on CanSkate Stage 5 with the Niverville Skating Club and has already begun bridging into StarSkate with the other figure skaters. She is also part of the club's new eight-person Synchro Skating Team, which will be competing for the first time this upcoming spring.

When she's not on the ice, Bella loves to ride her bike, swim, and dance. In her free time she also loves to draw and write short stories. Bella is in Grade Three at Niverville Elementary.

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# Arts & Entertainment

## Feeling Sensitive? Start Fresh with All-Natural Soaps

By Fiona Robinson

For those with sensitive skin, choosing the right skin products from retail shelves can be a painful and disappointing ordeal. That's what inspired the launch of Scent from Eden, a soap-making business in Niverville founded by local moms and entrepreneurs Amy Buhler and Ricki ten Hove.

"Both our kids had sensitive skin and we wanted more natural products. One day Amy looked at me and said, 'We can do that!'" explains ten Hove. "It started there. It was a combination of our kids both having sensitive skin and wanting to do something fun in our mom time."

That was 2014, a time when ten Hove was far along in her second pregnancy and Buhler was tied up with a broken foot. Tenacious, restless, and inspired by an upcoming maternity leave, they conceived their first soap products.

Although the pair originally began experimenting with the easier melt-and-pour method of soap-making, they quickly acquired the expertise of cold processing, a much more detailed technique that allows for greater control over ingredients and quality.

"All raw ingredients are mixed from scratch, then cured four to six weeks for the saponification process to occur," says Buhler. "Every batch is a 'loaf' and we get ten bars



Ricki ten Hove and Amy Buhler show off their wares.

FIONA ROBINSON

per loaf."

For the natural soap line, Scent from Eden only uses essential oils and colours the soap with the natural cleansing power of kaolin clay and activated charcoal, yielding swirls of pink, white, and grey in the final bars. For people who aren't particularly concerned with sensitivity issues, Scent from Eden also make soaps in a wider range of colours using a variety of fragrance

oils.

As busy moms who always want to make the best use of their time, the team is careful to balance the production of their classic batches with experimental batches for new products.

"We're always learning," Buhler says. "It's not a guaranteed process, but we've come up with some great mixes that look good, smell good, and lather well."

Each soap is a work of art with a unique scent. "Manchurian dragon, tea tree lavender, and sunrise are our top three soap sellers," Buhler claims.

Ten Hove agrees, adding, "Monkey farts was also surprising popular. It smells like a bowl of fruits, mostly bananas."

Whichever your selection, you'll join a long list of fans as Scent from Eden products have quickly become a favourite locally made product. "Often 20 bars are sold before they've been cured and wrapped," warns ten Hove humbly.

Business plans for 2018 include an expansion of their emerging lip balm line, made with all-natural ingredients such as coconut oil and bees wax that are scented with lavender or peppermint essential oils. The duo will also be researching new natural colourants for 2018 production and upgrading the packaging.

You can order Scent from Eden products on the business's Facebook page or in-person at Two Loonies & a Ladle, a shop that serves ready-to-go family dinners that opened last month in Niverville.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

- www.facebook.com/ScentFromEden
- Amy Buhler: rabuhler@gmail.com
- Ricki ten Hove: rickitenhove@gmail.com

### EVENT GUIDE

**Family Movie Day** (Ice Age: Collision Course)  
Friday, Jan. 5, 1:00–3:00 p.m., Jake Epp Library, Steinbach, Free.

**Games Day at the Library**  
Saturday, Jan. 6, 12:00–5:00 p.m., Jake Epp Library, Steinbach, Free.  
Wednesday, Jan. 12, 6:00–9:00 p.m., Jake Epp Library, Steinbach, Free.

**Creativi-Tea Time Adult Colouring Group**  
Friday, Jan. 12, 1:00–3:00 p.m., Jake Epp Library, Steinbach, Free.

**The Good, The Bad, and the MUNSCH**  
(Prairie Theatre Exchange)  
Friday, Jan. 19, 6:45 p.m.,  
Steinbach Secondary School Theatre, Steinbach.  
Tickets available: [www.steinbacharts council.ca](http://www.steinbacharts council.ca)

**Tropical Plant Parti Workshop**  
Friday, Jan. 19, 7:00–9:00 p.m., Niverville Arena, \$42.  
Pre-registration required.

**Coaster Parti**  
Friday, Feb. 9, 7:00–9:00 p.m., Niverville Arena, \$36.75.  
Pre-registration required.

Send your event listing to  
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REPAIRS & PARTS ON ALL MAKES & MODELS



# Creating the Look and Feel of Marble Without the Cost

by Liz Byron

For many people, installing marble or granite countertops is an unaffordable dream. Enter Terry Wohlgemuth and Cornell Friesen, co-owners of local company Creative Marble Design, who have come up with a less expensive alternative.

"We've created a marble and granite look for a lot less of the cost," Wohlgemuth explains.

Using an epoxy compound, he forms a coating over flat surfaces, primarily countertops. Wohlgemuth has spent months experimenting and learning how to manipulate the medium to create designs that look like marble or granite. The project is a perfect fit for his combination of creative flair and painting, woodworking, and furniture-making skills.

Most of Wohlgemuth's projects coat over a medium-density fiberboard product, although he can put this coating on a wide range of surfaces, including wood and glass. This way he can create new countertops or put a new coating on an old table, for example. The result is a surface that looks like high-end marble but comes at approximately half the price, if not less.

"People are so surprised when they see this stuff," Wohlgemuth says. "They want to know how I make it, and they can't believe it's painted. It looks so much like real marble."

It's a complex process in which he uses a two-part epoxy compound for the coating, aerosol paint to create veins of colour, and a blowtorch to marbleize the colours and remove air bubbles. He's been peppered with so many questions about the



Terry Wohlgemuth on the job.

TERRY WOHLGEMUTH

process that the company website now features videos of Wohlgemuth at work.

"The million-dollar question everyone asks is, can you cut on this?" Wohlgemuth notes. The epoxy, even after curing for 30 days, isn't quite as hard as granite. But, he says, proper care and common sense go a long way. "Normally people don't cut things directly on any countertop; they use cutting boards. And you're not going to slide a ceramic jar across your counter. Just put a felt pad under it, and it's safe... But if you see some scratches a few years down the road, I can come and wet-sand it down, polish it, take any scratches out, and it's good as new."

The surfaces also hold up very well under impact.

"If you drop something on these counters, they won't crack or shatter the way marble will. It's very well protected."

As someone who believes strongly in delivering quality products, Wohlgemuth has tested his work extensively, including installing epoxy countertops in his own home. His wife has given him some helpful feedback, too.

"My wife loves how easy it is to clean. She says some surfaces you'll end up with

streaks if you don't dry it, but she doesn't have that problem with this stuff. She also just put a pan right out of the oven directly onto the counter, came back later once the pot was cold, and no problem, no damage at all."



He notes that the counter is heat-protected up to 500 degrees.

Wohlgemuth says the appeal of this new venture is in the challenge of learning a new skill, but also in the creative freedom.

"For me, it's not about the money. It never has been. It's the high of creating something," he says. "That's one of the great things about this partnership; Cornell [Friesen] takes care of the business side, and I can focus on producing quality work."

He also takes deep satisfaction from helping people realize their home renovation dreams. "For people to come in and see my work and say, 'Wow, you did this to my house?' is so rewarding. That's worth a million dollars to me."

Friesen and Wohlgemuth launched Creative Marble Design in June of this year, and are just getting the business off the ground. They have big plans, though.

"We've got a table at the Winnipeg Renovation show from January 12-14," Wohlgemuth says. The event at the RBC Convention Centre regularly attracts thousands of visitors.

In late winter, they'll be opening a showroom in Niverville, including samples of marble designs along with some of their furniture. The space will be run by Friesen's other business, Von Riese Homes.

Regardless of how big the company grows, Wohlgemuth says he'll be staying local. "I'm from Niverville, born and raised, and I'd like to stay here. Sometimes small community is just nicer than a bigger city."

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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



Pens by epiK Wood Turning, handcrafted from wooden blanks. ■ FIONA ROBINSON

## Hobby Turned Woodworking Business for Future Shop Teachers

By Fiona Robinson

Brandon Kipe isn't your average pen salesman. As an experienced woodworker recently turned on to using a lathe, his portfolio of perfectly crafted wood-turned pens will have you ready to ditch the keyboard and go back to perfecting your penmanship.

It was a long road before pens became Kipe's signature item. "Both my grandparents were good at woodworking and I've always enjoyed it myself. In the past I've made bowls, boxes, and backpack guitars, but recently I've really gotten into the turning aspect," explains Kipe.

Kipe's combined interest in woodworking and enjoyment in teaching people new things led him to the Industrial Arts/Technology Teacher Education program offered through Red River College and the University of Winnipeg. It was there that he met fellow student and future business partner Jordan Kelly of Thunder Bay.

Although the two have become well-versed in many trades including metalwork, electronics, and graphics, it was their shared interest in woodworking that launched epiK Wood Turning (epiK is Brandon's surname, Kipe, spelled backwards) this last year.

Wood-turning is a hands-on art that requires precision chiselling while the wood spins on a lathe. Kipe especially enjoys making pens because of the small amount of wood that

is required, which means he can work with many different samples and realize results quickly.

"A simple pen takes me about an hour or so," he explains as he opens a kit of pre-pen wooden blanks in various sizes, materials, and colours. A few of his favourites include a dark, blackish wood called ziricote and a swirly, variegated wood called cocobolo.

He holds up a rectangular blank with one dark side. "This one is an upcycled Jack Daniel's whiskey barrel. You can smell the whisky as it's being turned."

Kelly also turns pens and is experimenting with additional product ideas for the business such as pizza cutters, ice cream scoops, shaver handles, and cigar holders.

"Basically, we're open to making anything that is turned," sums up Kipe, who has even turned an antique hammer handle into a pen for a commissioned gift.

The two future teachers may even entertain the idea of offering local classes if there's enough interest in woodworking in the community.

"All we need is the right space and tools," Kipe says.

Meanwhile, if you're bored with average pens or looking for a unique gift, follow Kipe and Kelly on Instagram to see the latest items turned out of the epiK Wood Turning shop.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ Instagram: @epikWoodTurning  
epikWoodTurning@gmail.com



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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

# STAY TUNED

The Friends of the Plex fundraising committee is planning another gala event for this spring! Stay tuned for more details! Information will be available in the next edition of The Citizen or on our website [www.nivervillemultiplex.ca](http://www.nivervillemultiplex.ca) as it becomes available.

*Together, we can.*



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