VOLUME 5 - ISSUE 12

DECEMBER 2019

www.nivervillecitizen.com

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Niverville Says Yes to Cannabis

■ The campaigning is over and the yard signs have at last been taken down. In a plebiscite held on Tuesday, November 26, Niverville residents voted 863-719 to allow the sales of retail cannabis in town. So what comes next?

Details on Page 3

LOCAL NEWS

High Schoolers Get Apology from HSD

■ Two Niverville High School students have received an apology after their planned protest of MP Ted Falk was thwarted. **Details on Page 12**

SPORTS & REC

Local Man Helps Cheer **Bombers at Grey Cup**

■ Coty Loeppky of Niverville helped cheer the Winnipeg Blue Bombers to victory at this year's CFL championship in Calgary.

Details on Page 22

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Singer Brady Kenneth Nominated for Award

■ The local country music artist was nominated for the Emer $ging \, Artist \, award \, at \, the \, MCMAs.$

Details on Page 25



BRENDA SAWATZKY

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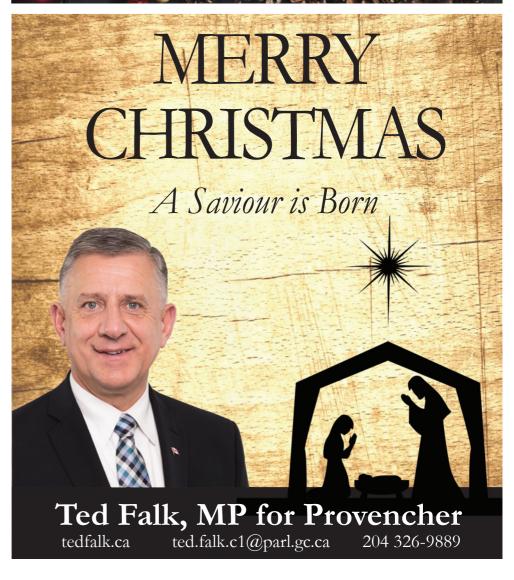
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The Niverville Citizen is published monthly and distributed through Canada Post to all those with a postal box in Niverville, Îledes-Chênes, St. Adolphe, Ste. Agathe, New Bothwell, Otterburne, and Tourond. Additional copies are manually distributed to businesses in the aforementioned communities, as well as the town of Landmark. The paper s well as the town of Landmark. The pape s printed in Canada by Derksen Printers Ltd Republishing of this paper in whole or in par vithout prior approval is strictly prohibited.

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

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Poll workers at the Niverville town office during the November 26 plebiscite.

BRENDA SAWATZKY

Niverville Says Yes to Retail Cannabis



Niverville residents have voted yes to retail cannabis in a highly contested plebiscite held on Tuesday, November 26

Voter turnout came in at 51 percent, which is only very slightly lower than the 52 percent turnout in Niverville during the recent provincial election held in September.

Out of a total of 1,582 votes, 863 voted in favor. The other 719 voted

Hours before the final count was tallied, Mayor Myron Dyck indicated that, regardless of the plebiscite results, the public vote resulted in a number of positive outcomes. Firstly, he says, it gave residents a chance to educate themselves on cannabis use.

"It's important for all Canadians to understand and educate themselves on

what they put into their bodies," Dyck says. "Whether natural products or not, there can be side effects and it behooves us all to know what we put into our bodies and if it's good for us."

He added that the plebiscite tested the community-and residents responded, for the most part, with respectful dialogue on either side of the debate.

"As a society, being that we are all equal and where there are topics or issues we disagree on, it is never okay to slander or bully someone because of their belief," says Dyck.

Derek Loepp, a proponent and key campaigner for allowing retail cannabis, says he wasn't so much surprised by the outcome as he was pleased that his community made the right choice.

"I am proud of our community [for taking] action on such an important issue," Loepp says. "Niverville got it right."

He sees the almost 10 percent

margin between the yes and no side as decisive, sending a clear message that Niverville is a progressive and forward-thinking community and a great place for any business to put own roots.

He's glad that the majority of voters recognize that prohibition doesn't work.

"Regardless of which side of this issue you are on, I would like to suggest everyone continue to educate themselves about cannabis and cannabis use so that we are able to have thoughtful conversations about it with our family and friends," Loepp says. "Education is the key to overcoming our fears."

"We appreciate now knowing the majority of Niverville's representative citizens will be welcoming to Canna Cabana.

Nick Kuzyk | Canna Cabana

Another community member, Roger Armbruster, voted no. He says he was confident the vote would be a close one and is thankful to town council for giving residents an opportunity to speak to the matter.

"My feelings are that both church attenders and non-attenders voted on both sides of this issue, so I do not want to see any division or polarization along those lines," Armbruster says.

Going forward, he adds, it's important that the community build bridges rather than drift apart because of an us vs. them mentality.

'Niverville is a place where we all belong, regardless of differing perspectives," says Armbruster. "Let's make staying connected as a vibrant community with strong families our most important vote!

THE FUTURE OF A STORE

Where does the community go from here? Based on council's commitment to respect the public vote, council will be required to entertain conditional use applications from cannabis retailers down the road. If they turn down an application in the future, their grounds will need to be based on the applicant's inability to meet zoning requirements as laid out in Niverville's zoning bylaws.

As for possible locations for a cannabis retail store, few options are available based on council's zoning bylaw, which currently states that a retail store needs to be at least 1,000 feet from any school, park, or public facility.

> The previous location at 249 Bronstone Drive, which Canna Cabana was seeking a conditional use hearing for in July of this year, has since been leased to the owners of Niverville Check Engine.

In addition to Canna Cabana, the province also selected a second company which has shown an interest in setting up shop in Niverville—Red River Co-op.

Should either of these prospective cannabis retailers show an interest in the community again, Mayor Dyck says council will deal with them just as they would any other business.

'When we have inquiries from businesses... coming to our town and wanting to know what we have available, we do have a list [that we provide]... of landowners or landlords and.. then they can go and do their due diligence," Dyck says. "Or we might send them to the Chamber [of Commerce for assistance]."

Nick Kuzyk of Canna Cabana says his company is ready to apply for another conditional use permit for a retail store in Niverville.

"We appreciate now knowing that a majority of Niverville's representative citizens will be welcoming to Canna Cabana," says Kuzyk.

In the meantime, local cannabis production, too, is very much a possibility for Niverville's business park.



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Families and Contractors Lose Thousands to Fine Haus Builders

By Brenda Sawatzky

□ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

When news broke last month of a young family whose dream of owning a home in Niverville was dashed, it raised the ire of many locals. People are taken advantage of all the time, but not every day does it hit so close to home.

THE MEMICS' STORY

Dorde and Laura Memic are the faces behind the tragic story. Parents to a young child, the couple dreamed of selling their Winnipeg home and settling in the country where houses are more affordable.

"The crime within Winnipeg seemed to be escalating and it made me uneasy at times," says Laura Memic. "I realize there is crime everywhere, but the small community and being farther from Winnipeg made me feel like it would be a lot less often."

There were many other things that attracted them to Niverville, not the least of which was the abundance of young families, the peace and quiet, and the dog park where their large dogs could run free.

Of course, the schools and upcoming recreation centre were great incentives as well.

Earlier this year, the Memics were thrilled to find an ad on Facebook Marketplace by a company advertising brandnew home builds in Niverville at a price they could afford. The company was called Fine Haus Building Co. A man named Jason Cianflone is the president and shareholder of the numbered company to which Fine Haus is registered.

"I inquired with the realtor

as to why the price was so good and was told the lots were owned by the builder, so bulk pricing was done," Memic says. "Also, the lots were slightly smaller than usual. So we made an appointment with the realtor to go over all the details and gave them our first deposit."

The couple then sold their Winnipeg home and moved into an Airbnb to wait out the build. The possession date for their new home was set for September 30, 2019.

Memic says everything felt legitimate until shortly after they signed the contract and turned over the second deposit. Worry began to set in as the summer passed with nothing happening.

Tension grew as every call to the realtor was met with vague answers or no response at all. Tension turned to panic as they discovered a Facebook page, the Jason Cianflone Scam Page, that had been created to give voice to the many people who'd had nightmarish experiences with Fine Haus.

The Memics immediately made inquiries, including a call to the Niverville town office where they discovered that a building permit had never been taken out on their property on Briarfield Court.

"We were told by Fine Haus that they got a permit on August 10, so we believed them," Memic says. "Why would they lie about having a permit? That's when I knew something was very, very wrong."

A further call, this time to a representative of the Fifth Avenue Estates development, in which their lot was situated,



Laura and Dorde Memic with their young child.

LAURA MEMIC

revealed another horror: Fine Haus didn't own the property on which they had promised to build the Memic home.

The Memics then also discovered that while Fine Haus appeared to be a Winnipeg-based company, Cianflone actually resides in Texas.

October 31 was the last time the Memics heard from their realtor. The realtor insisted that he, too, was in the dark about what was happening with Fine Haus.

RESPONSE FROM FIFTH AVENUE ESTATES

Ken Klippenstein is the property manager for Fifth Avenue Estates and their building company, Von Riese Homes. Klippenstein admits to having been wary of Cianflone, whose company, Fine Haus, had been known as Manitoba Family Homes less than a year earlier. According to Klippenstein, Cianflone had already garnered a less than stellar

reputation under his previous company name.

Klippenstein says Fine Haus had hired a local person who was reputable and well known in the community to act as liaison between the contractors and Fine Haus. This was enough to gain Klippenstein's trust. In hindsight, he realizes this employee had been duped as well.

"Fine Haus put a down-payment on 22 lots," Klippenstein says. "We had an agreement that they would take a certain number of months to pay out the balance. They closed on eight of them. The other ones I still own, but they had sold housing contracts for all of these lots, so all these people had a possession date and yet they didn't own the lot."

Klippenstein came to suspect that something was amiss when Cianflone's building company requested that the 22 lots be contracted to Fine Haus separately rather than as one unit. Klippenstein refused, since if they breached the contract on any one lot Fifth Avenue Estates wanted to retain the legal right to withhold deposits on all of them.

Despite his concerns about Cianflone, Klippenstein says he has an obligation to respect the privacy of those who purchase lots from him.

"By law, I can't disclose information about the people that are buying lots from us," Klippenstein says of his silence on the issue. "Now I can talk about it because it's all in the media."

Klippenstein's next clue that something was up came when he discovered a house, well into construction, on a lot for which Fine Haus had only paid the deposit. Based on a contract between Fifth Avenue Estates and Fine Haus, a build cannot begin until the lot is paid in full.

"He had no plans on ever finishing a house," Klippenstein says, aware now of Fine Haus's many unfinished builds in other communities. "He would finish one or two houses and let you think that that's how it's going to be done and from then on he doesn't complete anything."

While Fifth Avenue Estates has the legal right to assume ownership of the partially built home that now sits on one of their lots, they would likewise be left holding the liabilities and liens held against it. This puts Fifth Avenue Estates in a predicament.

The best way for homeowners to avoid this kind of situation, Klippenstein says, is to research the builder's history and reputation before signing any contracts or putting down a deposit. He also recommends hiring a lawyer with no affiliation to the builder to review the contract before you sign.

"My contracts state everything that I'm going to do for you," Klippenstein says. "Cianflone's state that he can make changes and not ever notify you about it. That should be a red flag when you see that in a contract."

Even before this, though, Klippenstein says the prices Fine Haus was advertising should have been a red flag to potential buyers. If it looks too good to be true, he says, get a quote from another builder to compare. Most builders' pricing for a specific style of home will be very close.

Advertising home builds for significantly less money than the rest of the market seems to have been Fine Haus's strategy, and for a while it worked.

RESPONSE FROM A HIRED CONTRACTOR

Bryan Trottier is the owner of Trotco Electric, a company hired to do electrical installation on 24 Fine Haus home builds in Niverville. Trottier also admits to having had reservations about Cianflone's previous reputation, although he likewise put his faith in the reputation of the company's local representative.

"That representative got blindsided as much as the rest of us did," Trottier says.

Trottier's company completed work on six Fine Haus homes before things began to go awry. In total, he's lost more than \$33,000, which he feels





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may well be a complete loss.

"We began the projects and got paid for the first few," Trottier says. "Everything was going fairly smooth and then, one day, the bottom just fell out."

He first clued into a problem when other trades weren't showing up to complete their parts of the job. Shortly after, these trades began calling to see if he'd received payment from Cianflone's company.

Trottier then hired a lawyer and put a lien on the properties where he'd invested services. But a lien doesn't guarantee he'll be paid, since other creditors will have placed liens on the same properties.

Trottier knows of at least three other local contractors who lost money to Fine Haus. As well, banks will have been involved in the financing of these properties, and they too will be looking for compensation.

"To me, it seems so easy to avoid this because they had professional trades doing the work and the housing sales were done," Trottier says. "It was just a matter of building the houses, paying the trades, collecting your money from the homeowners, and you're good. I don't understand this."

Trottier says, just weeks before things began to go south, Cianflone told him that Fine Haus was hoping to complete up to 400 new home builds per year.

The last time Trottier says he heard from Cianflone was on October 31, when it was indicated to him that there would be a third-party company coming in to fix all the problems. Since that time, the company and its representatives have been unresponsive.

"Any time large sums of money are involved, there's a risk to the contractor, to the homeowner, to the subtrades, there's even a risk to the bank, and so there's always an element of trust," Trottier says. "So if you're building with someone, you have to trust who you're building with."

As far as Trottier is aware, Fine Haus is still in operation since no bankruptcy claims have as yet been filed.

However, efforts were made by *The Citizen* to contact Fine Haus, and the company did not respond. A phone number listed for Fine Haus is no longer in service.

RESPONSE FROM LOCAL FINE HAUS REP

For reasons of a non-disclosure agreement, Fine Haus's local representative requests anonymity, but he, too, would like to see justice prevail.

This summer, he walked away from his job with Fine Haus when they owed him \$30,000 in wages. By the time he walked, he had dealt with months of frustration when his pleas to the company to complete certain projects were falling on deaf ears.

"I feel so used," he says. "I was used for my credibility, used for my contacts, and had I known [what I know now] I would never have even considered working for them. Not in a million years."

The representative agreed to join the Fine Haus team in December 2018. At the time, he said the company had a number of poor reviews, but in the building world that was nothing unusual.

What really pushed him to make the occupational move was Cianflone's promise to use a portion of the profit from every home build to construct orphanages in Mexico. This kind of philanthropy was something the representative could really get behind.

Even as things began to crumble, though, many staff were unaware. The Niverville rep says Cianflone's method was to keep his staff compartmentalized so they couldn't see the bigger picture.

THE MEMICS GO PUBLIC

The Memics chose to contact the media in the hope of saving others from the same heartache. A detailed account of their experience with Fine Haus was published by the CBC on November 12.

"I wanted to give these victims a voice," Memic says. "Alot of them are scared. I was also very furious that Fine Haus was still trying to sell or accept deposits only a week before the walkout, when we were still fighting for them to get something done on our lot. Nobody else should lose any money to these thieves."

The couple has faced some public criticism for allowing themselves to be taken in. In contrast, there are also those who have demonstrated unanticipated generosity.

At this point, they are still living in an Airbnb in

Winnipeg and don't expect they'll ever see the \$16,000 in deposits they paid to Fine Haus. Neither will they recoup the costs they incurred when they hired a moving company and put their furniture into storage earlier this year.

NIVERVILLIAN STEPS UP

Niverville resident Barry Piasta was moved beyond mere compassion for the Memics' plight. Shortly after the CBC story broke, Piasta began a GoFundMe page to raise money to help the couple.

As well, he's organizing a family variety show that will include dinner and an auction in February. Few firm details are in place at this stage, but he hopes others will join him.

"I need people to share my [Facebook] posts and to offer whatever they can, be it volunteering or [donating] items and skills," Piasta says. "[So far] I've had three builders, five entertainers, two bakers, a restaurant, and a mortgage consultant offer their help. I need more to come on board."

Since fundraising plans began, Piasta says he's become aware of 21 families, some of them new immigrants, who have been victimized by Fine Haus. He hopes the fundraising initiatives can be successful enough to help some of those other families.

In the meantime, Piasta encourages everyone to put themselves in these victims' shoes, recognizing that Fine Haus appeared well organized and legitimate to anyone who hadn't been through a home build before.

"It's simply wrong what happened to them and paints Niverville in a bad way," Piasta adds. "It hurts all of Niverville's builders and developers, too."

When Laura Memic became aware of the fundraisers, she was speechless.

"This wasn't something we expected," Memic says. "We are so grateful for any and all the help we have received. Being a young middle-class family with responsibilities, it will take us years and years to get back to where we were. We would not have sold our home and given our only down-payment to a build if it wasn't going to satisfy our dreams. We thank each and every person from the bottom of our hearts."



Give the gift of legacy this Christmas

This holiday season give a gift that truly lasts a lifetime by donating to the construction of the Niverville Community Resource & Recreation Centre.

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Senior Spotlight: Annie Dyck

By Brenda Sawatzky

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

During this festive season, it seems fitting to honour Annie Dyck, a senior living at the Niverville Credit Union Manor and celebrating her ninetieth birthday on Decem-

I first met Annie at a watermelon and roll kuchen event held in the manor's cafeteria. She sat next to me there and, while she's a petite five-footnothing, she consumed more watermelon than I'd seen anyone eat in a very long time.

Watermelon, it turns out, has been a favourite treat since she was a child. Since that day, she's become fondly known to me as the Watermelon Lady.

Annie and her husband made their home at the manor in 2007, before the facility was yet complete. A few years later, she lost her husband, shortly after he turned 100 years of age. They had been married for 51 years.

She's had a good life, she says, which began on a significant day in 1929. A few years ago, Annie penned a short story about what she imagined her Christmas birth might have looked like.

"It was a cold winter night, the moon was out, and the stars were shining," wrote Annie. "The crisp, cold snow was glistening and the fields looked like glass. The horses' hooves and the clanging of the horses' bells could be clearly heard on the long road that led to the farmhouse where my parents lived."

Annie elaborates on what

that day might have been like for the visiting grandparents, pleased to welcome their blonde baby child on this special day.

"The God of the universe timed it exactly right and gifted the firstborn to this couple on Jesus's birthday,"

FARM CHILDHOOD

Annie was born on a farm in Plum Coulee as the first of seven children. She has many fond memories of life as a child on the farm. The snowbanks, she says, seemed bigger then and provided endless hours of play. She also loved to skate on an outdoor rink with her siblings and friends.

"My little brother had a pony," Annie says. "We had an open cutter and this pony would [pull] us... I remember I wore leather finger gloves and it was so cold that I froze my fingers. Why would I wear that? I wanted to be pretty."

She grew up, though, without special attention being paid to her birthday. It wasn't until she was 16 years old that her mother threw her a party with friends.

"I always felt gipped," Annie says

In spite of that, she has fond memories of Christmases past—festivities spent at her grandparents' home and a dinner table heavily laden with traditional Mennonite foods like plumi moos, a plum soup served cold—and one of Annie's favourites.

Her most memorable Christmas gift was an Eaton's

"We always had dolls, but



Annie Dyck of Niverville, a Christmas baby.

these were more beautiful," she says. "They had beautiful

On occasion over the years, she was even allowed to accompany her parents to the Eaton's store in downtown Winnipeg. It was a different kind of shopping experience than we know today. Eaton's shoppers would sit at tables and page through catalogues, ordering their products at a desk and waiting while someone carried it in from the warehouse in the back.

As a teen, her father gave her a rare opportunity to raise money of her own.

"My sister Mary and I had turkeys," says Annie. "My dad bought us a hundred of them so we could raise them and the money could be ours... And of course they were off the yard so we had to get the tractor and haul all the [food] and water down there. Then fall came and we sold the turkeys and had the cash in our hands."

To this day, she can't recall

what she and her sister spent the money on.

A NURSING CAREER

In the 1940s, after completing grade school and one year at Bible school, Annie moved to Winnipeg to begin training as a nurse at the city's Normal School.

"I was one of the first graduates in Canada to graduate from the licensed practical nursing course," Annie recalls.

Soon after, she moved to Ninette, Manitoba to extend her training and learn how to deal with patients suffering from tuberculosis.

The Ninette Sanatorium would later become known for its unique contributions to the treatment of the disease and for offering the first program of in-sanatorium training for medical students.

"When I first went to Ninette, there was a big snowstorm," says Annie. "I was even stormed in on the train... I forget exactly which town it was in, but [we were

from Winnipeg to open up the tracks."

During her months of service there, she was never afraid of contracting the disease since the facility trained the nurses to self-protect and sterilize.

She remembers that in the evenings, she and the other nurses would walk across the street to visit the local cemetery. While there, they'd read the scripture inscriptions on all the headstones.

Eventually, she moved on to Winkler to finish her nurse's training and work in the hospital there.

FAMILY LIFE

A few years later, she met her first husband at an event put on by mutual friends. They married in 1952. They were married for only six and a half years when he died in a tragic accident. Still in her twenties, she was left a single mother to raise their three daughters, Irene, Iris, and Ivy.

Two years later, she met her second husband at church. He was a recent widower with seven children of his own and significantly older than she was. They soon married and he became a doting father to her three girls.

Annie kept a few hobbies over those years, playing piano at church functions and baking cakes. On two occasions she came out with the winning entry in a radio baking contest with her madefrom-scratch layer cakes.

She experimented for a long time before she mastered the perfect cake and

stuckthere] until people came her family quickly tired of the many practice cakes they were expected to eat, because in those days nothing was thrown away.

At the prompting of her married daughter Ivy, the couple eventually made Niverville their home. Merv and Ivy were raising four daughters of their own in the community at the time. Ivy, well-loved as a teacher to many Niverville students, lost a battle to cancer in 2017.

Again, Annie feels gipped. A daughter should never die before her mother, she says.

Annie enjoys relationships with her remaining daughters and step-children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, although many of them are spread out around the country and visits are few.

"GOD HAS BEEN GOOD TO

In 2018, Annie's new friend Orpha threw the second birthday party Annie had ever had—and this year she looks forward to returning to her friend's home on Christmas day for a third.

Annie still owns a piano, but her eyesight prevents her from playing. In the morning, when her vision is a little better, she spends time reading her Bible.

At the seasoned age of 90, she lives with few medical issues and still manages quite independently on her own.

"God has been good to me," Annie says. "Without Him I wouldn't be here, because He's really blessed me throughout my life."





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LOCAL NEWS

THE CITIZEN | DECEMBER 2019

INBRIEF

NHS Daycare Awarded to Growing Minds

By Brenda Sawatzky

□ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

On November 5, Hanover School Division announced that they have selected a provider to operate the new childcare facility at the Niverville High School: Growing Minds Childcare (GMCC) Centre. Growing Minds, which currently operates out of the Heritage Centre and one location on Main Street in Niverville, is thrilled that their application was accepted. They will soon be entering into a working relationship with the school division.

"GMCC is very happy to have been selected as the provider of childcare services at the new Niverville High School," says chairperson Helen Peters. "As we consistently have a waiting list of almost 200 children, we appreciate the need for more childcare spaces for families and we are excited for the opportunity to expand our childcare services in Niverville."

For more than ten years, GMCC has been the primary provider of licensed childcare in the community. Peters says that they have built an excellent working relationship with Niverville's town council, the Hanover School Division, the local schools, and the community at large.

The new childcare facility will provide spaces for 74 more children. Of these spots, 53 will be held for pre-schoolers and the remaining 20 for infant care.

The GMCC board has yet to meet and hash through all the details of the new operation.

More details will be reported by *The Citizen* in the weeks and months to come.



Community Facebook Group Gets a Fresh Start

By Brenda Sawatzky

□ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

In this day and age, community Facebook groups are where it's at. Almost every rural community has one. These online water coolers provide an excellent place for newcomers to meet people and get to know their community, for residents to engage in meaningful dialogue, and for volunteer groups to take advantage of free advertising to the masses.

At the same time, these groups can be abused if not carefully monitored by volunteer administrators willing to take on the difficult task.

One such community Facebook group, Niverville 3.0, has morphed over the years, changing names occasionally as its administrative team shifted. In recent months, the group grew to include more than 3,000 members—until it was abruptly shut down by Facebook.

DEMISE OF NIVERVILLE 3.0

Tristan Trippier-Friesen, co-administrator for the group, says that on Saturday, November 9, Niverville 3.0 disappeared from Facebook without explanation.

Facebook gave no indication about what had provoked them to remove it.

"We were probably flagged by the [Facebook] algorithm for something or other and, it being automated, I doubt we'll ever get a straight answer," says Trippier-Friesen.

He has since reached out to Facebook for answers. To date, only one response has been forthcoming: "We reviewed your group, Niverville 3.0. Because it still went against our Community Standards, we deleted it."

At this point, Trippier-Friesen has little hope for the reinstatement of that group.

Facebook groups like Niverville 3.0 are subject to the social media company's ubiquitous "community standards" rules, and the platform's algorithms sometimes flag certain posts that contain language or content that is deemed inappropriate.

Generally, Trippier-Friesen says that Facebook will notify the admin of a perceived offense, allowing them to take their own action on



Tristan Trippier-Friesen, co-administrator of the former

BRENDA SAWATZKI
Niverville 3.0 and a founder of its replacement, the Niverville Community Group.

the offending post or comment. In this case, however, the local administrators didn't receive any notification before the entire group disappeared.

While one can presume the reason for Facebook's intervention, many of the previous members might point to the highly toxic and sometimes inflammatory nature of some of the comments made in the past few months.

"I was talking with a guy who said he didn't even want to be on the page because of how hostile everyone was towards him," Trippier-Friesen says. "The toxicity [level] on there was out of control. When you have 3,000 members... it's not hard for someone to [jump on] and just ruin a post."

As well, the topic of cannabis has recently inundated the group since Niverville council's decision to hold a plebiscite on retail cannabis in town. Since Facebook is an American company, which follows different cannabis laws, the answer may lie there.

RE-EVALUATION

Regardless of the reason, for Trippier-Friesen and the other five administrators this incident provides an opportunity to re-evaluate the group. Trippier-Friesen chooses to assume responsibility for the group's demise since, especially in its earlier years, he says he lacked the incentive to administrate it to his fullest potential.

"When I first started monitoring 3.0 [with the previous admins], we didn't take it that seriously," says Trippier-Friesen. "[One admin] eventually moved on because he was just tired of the drama and I

can't say that I blame him."

But at the end of the day, Trippier-Friesen believes that the group added value to the community that simply cannot be ignored.

For that reason, he and a relatively new group of administrators have decided to turn the page and get a fresh new start.

A FRESH START

In recent days, the Niverville Community Group, the successor to Niverville 3.0, has grown legs and is accepting new members. With the right guidance and policies, Trippier-Friesen believes the new group has the potential to be a welcoming place for anyone who chooses to join.

This time, the administrators anticipate being much more hands-on.

"We're trying to find a balance between free speech and maintaining human decency," Trippier-Friesen says.

Members will be required to answer questions before joining the new group. Also, the administrators hope to keep the membership local to Niverville—or at least to those who demonstrate a vested interest in the community.

Anonymity through pen names will no longer be tolerated, since anonymity allows members to make comments without culpability.

As well, new rules will apply to the group's use, such as keeping the content strictly Niverville-centric. Respectful levels of dialogue will be expected within all posts and comments. Anyone posting personal info or details regarding minors will be automatically banned.

HEALING DIVIDES

Trippier-Friesen admits to being disappointed in the divide that occurred between Niverville's town council and some community members on Niverville 3.0 in the past. He envisions the new group as one that will provide a place where all levels of the community—residents, town council, and local business owners—can feel welcome and respected.

For him, this also means not excluding anyone based on their past Niverville 3.0 track records. Instead everyone will be given an opportunity to live by the new rules. Administrators will exercise the right to give people warnings and second chances as they see fit.

"Even with me being in college, I'm still going to put as much of my heart and soul into this page as I can," Friesen says. "It can be good. It can be constructive and useful, and hopefully we'll get the cooperation of the [members]. I am very, very grateful to the people who are on the site regularly and contribute respectfully."

Members can assist administration, too, to help keep the new group on a positive and supportive trajectory.

"The biggest thing I can says is, if you don't like what someone has said or if you think that it crosses a line, report it [to us]," says Trippier-Friesen. "It will still be up to our discretion, but I would rather have a post reported 30 times and find that there's nothing wrong with it than have the post not even be mentioned to the admin. That notification perks our ears up so that we can keep an eye on it at least."

He adds that his determination in investing in this community group comes from his lifelong love and appreciation for the town he calls home.

"I want to be more interactive with the people who want to be here," says Trippier-Friesen, adding that he doesn't want the administrators to be seen as gatekeepers. "It's a community site for the people of Niverville. It's for the overall health of the group... I don't want to make it some exclusive party where only the cool kids are."



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(I) CITIZEN POLL

Do you see social media as a positive or negative force in the world today?

A positive force. Social media brings people together, allows us to stay in touch with each other, and is an effective advertising and networking tool.

A negative force. Social media can be addictive, rife with cyberbullying and hostility, and can lead its users to experience depression and anxiety.

It's complicated. Tell us your social media stories in a comment online, whether they're horror stories or tales of inspiration.

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Congratulations to last month's winner: **RYAN LOEWEN**

LAST MONTH'S RESULTS:

In the aftermath of the federal election, do you sympathize for renewed calls for Canada's west to consider separating from the east?

Yes.	No.
41%	59%

YOUR COMMENTS:

Although federalism certainly can have its advantages, in the present the majority of these have been altered to solely favour the East. How can some say that it isn't an issue when the Martimes, home to less than two million people, have over twice as many federal ridings than Manitoba, despite having almost the same population? Is this democracy? Not at all. The East loves to alienate the West whenever possible and often seeks policies skewed immensely in their favour. The West is tired of the East's tyrannical rule over our people, our resources, and our wealth. This election, after the Conservatives swept almost all of Western Canada, the issues really hit the spot light. Now is the time that our aging federation must be remedied, or else the West should and will separate, as we certainly wish to not be on the bad end of the deal forevermore.

- A. Q. G. ROGULZINSKI

Although I do believe that in our dominion, Western Canada has been getting the short end of the stick, we should not separate. We should not be like the Quebecers who complain every time something doesn't go their way and contemplate separation. We have been blessed with the splendour and strength of our dominion, so contemplating splitting it in two ought to be unthinkable. Our best path forward is to pull out all of our weight, to show the East how much they need us and then stand up for our interests. We are in the right, so they will recognize that. It is simply a matter of time.

- Gordon Löwenberger

What I am seeing is that the big urban centres in Toronto and Montreal are not, as a whole, really compassionate towards the plight of Western Canada, and do not really seem to be getting the real extent of western alienation, especially those parts that have put much more into the Canadian federation than they have taken out.

Every province in Canada should have the same amount of seats in cabinet! I've been saying this since I was a young lad. The east has no interest in being self supportive of themselves, history has shown us that! Therefore separation is the logical answer to me!

The way Canada's population is spread out presents some major challanges. Challanges that take a government not just sucking for votes to overcome. This, unfortunately, made itself quite clear in the first liberal mandate. Their focus on Ontario and Quebec does win them elections, but while the rest of Canada does get to vote, we are just along for the ride. Western Canada tends to be more conservative, but is this perhaps because they feel they are actually listened to and fought for by those politicians moreso than completely identifying with their ideology? If there is one thing the liberals are quite bad at, it is listening to areas that don't have big populations and to people who's priorities do not line up with theirs. The liberals seem to be in the business of catering to where the votes come from, and areas that can win elections. But they might be surprised how much support they got elsewhere if they simply gave some attention, and more importantly, governed the east and west by the same standards. I can't help but dryheave when I see the liberals continually nit-picking at any provincial government that is PC, while turning a blind eye to the insane laws that are now being implimented in Quebec. (and sadly, the mainstream media has followed suit). If a prairie province inacted those laws verbatum, the governments response would be quite the opposite, and it would be swift. These same double standards apply in many areas, whether it is equalization payments or tanker bans. Seperating may not, and likely is not the answer, but one certainly cannot blame Western Canadians from feeling like they do not matter in the big picture, and that the priorities of Quebec and Ontario come before all else by default. The heavy population in the east gives them a lot of power and a lot of say, but that also divides Canada and the unique challanges that each region faces. There is a lot more to Canada outside of the borders of Quebec and Ontario. It is not just about where 'most' people live. It is about Canada.



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December 24: 7:00 - 12:00 December 25: CLOSED December 26: CLOSED December 27: 7:00 - 4:30 December 30: 7:00 - 5:00 December 31: 7:00 - 12:00

January 1: CLOSED January 2: 8:30 - 4:30 January 3: 8:30 - 4:30 January 6: 8:30 - 5:00 January 7: 8:30 - 8:30



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The Board of Trustees, Administration, and Staff of Hanover School Division wish you and your loved ones a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.





Niverville Teacher Wins French Teaching Award

By Brenda Sawatzky

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On October 25, the Manitoba Association of Teachers of French (MATF) presented Niverville Middle School teacher Carling Comte with the esteemed 2019 Greg Sametz Award. The award was created by MATF to honour excellence in teaching French communication and culture in Manitoba schools.

The \$500 award was presented to Comte during the annual Manitoba Teachers Society professional development day, along with a complimentary day of French cultural workshops with Greg Sametz. The MATF event was held at the Archwood School in Winnipeg.

"It felt like an honour to go up there and for them to say [positive] things about you," says Comte. "You do your work because you love it and because you love the kids, but it's kind of nice to be recognized. I was honoured."

Comte was nominated for the award by colleague Kate Hildebrand.

"Immediately upon her arrival [at the middle school], Carling worked very hard to reverse the stigma associated with learning French by integrating fun and engaging practices into each of her French classes," Hildebrand said in her nomination letter to MATF. "Not only did her students benefit but teachers benefited as well as she was

resources with both school staff and divisional staff."

The letter went on to note Comte's many initiatives within the school, including a weekly French club and an annual French Is Fun festival with carnival-style games for the entire school. As well, Comte has proved to be a significant resource person for the MATF through her participation in their teacher mentorship programs and through presentations made to rural French teachers.

Comte came to the Niverville school in 2014, but her career got started ten years earlier in Quebec where she taught English at an all-French high school. Eventually she moved to Manitoba and took a job as a French specialist for Grades Six to Nine in Blumenort.

Currently, she teaches Grades Seven and Eight French, ELA and Social Studies at the middle school.

"I've come up with this way of teaching French because, when I first went to Blumenort, it was a bit tough," Comte says. "The people weren't very receptive to it, so I was trying to figure out how to do it so it was enjoyable and fun, [hoping] that the [students] would actually retain some vocabulary... I find if you make it fun, engaging, and hands on, they enjoy coming to class and they're more likely to retain the words."

Getting them to retain

willing to share any and all French vocabulary is tough, she adds, when the language doesn't infiltrate their lives outside of the classroom. In the end, her hope is to instill a love of the language in her students in order to equip them to enter French post-secondary studies with confidence or just use their conversational skills as they travel abroad later in life.

> Comte grew up in Fort Frances, Ontario where she attended French Immersion from Kindergarten to Grade

> "It was always something that my parents wanted for their children," says Comte, adding that her mother felt like she'd missed out on learning a second language as a child.

> Now Comte says French has become her favourite subject to teach.

 $Greg\,Sametz, for\,whom\,the$ award is credited, began his career as a French language teacher more than four decades ago. Now retired, his long career included working as a French language specialist, the Director of Language Programs at Seven Oaks, and serving as the Manitoba representative on a number of national boards for second languages.

The MATF's goal has long been to provide culturally and linguistically enriched opportunities for teachers and their students of French as a second language.



Soap-Making Business Making a Splash

By Sara Beth Dacombe

SOAK Bath Co, owned by Niverville entrepreneur Candace Alarie, has recently received national attention for its handcrafted luxury bath and body products. SOAK features Álarie's homemade, all-natural recipes for soap and shampoo bars wrapped in biodegradable seed paper packaging.

The zero-waste business concept, along with the quality of the bath products, earned SOAK a feature in Canada's House & Home magazine.

In March, SOAK was accepted to exhibit at the One of a Kind Show in Toronto, run by Informa, an international organization with a mission to provide business connections and opportunities to specialist entrepreneurs. The opportunity to attend the renowned market is an achievement, and it was there that an editor for House & Home approached Alarie looking to feature SOAK in the

of the publication's spring/ summer issue.

"The feature [in House & *Home*] focused on the artistry of my zero-waste soap bars," says Alarie. "Each soap and shampoo bar is wrapped with a biodegradable, plantable seed paper label, so you can plant the label and it will grow into wildflowers. The magazine feature was an incredible opportunity, and quite honestly it was entirely surreal. Opening the page to that feature in May really helped to validate the work it took to get to that point and the tough decisions that had to be made to get there."

The product line includes soap and shampoo bars, bath melts, and salt soaks which are made with all-natural ingredients-and all but one are vegan. Natural oils, butters, salts, powders, and clays are used to create beautiful bath luxuries that are nourishing for the body and moisturizing for the skin.

bathroom inspiration section irritation was one of the reasons Alarie started to make her own line of skincare products.

"I started looking for alternatives to manage my eczema," says Alarie. "I've always had a knack for arts and crafts, so naturally I started learning how to make soap from items in my pantry. After using soap and body care products made with oils and butters, not detergents, my eczema started to heal and I'm proud to report it has not come back since."

Alarie's decision to start SOAK stemmed from a passion for creative arts and finding the process of soap-making, blending colours, and experimenting with designs to be very fun. In 2018, she had enough soap bars to start attending craft shows, and in March 2019 she left a ten-year career in management to pursue making soap as a full-time business.

Alarie's experience has given her a message Finding ways to sooth skin to pass along for young

"Aim high. Dream big and stop playing small. It takes just as much energy to tell yourself why you can't do something as it does to tell yourself you can do something," says Alarie. "Start challenging the things you've told yourself you can't do and dare to tell vourself vou can do it. It can be life-changing and as an entrepreneur can make the difference between success or failure of your venture."

Since the Toronto market and the House & Home feature, the business has grown quickly and SOAK products are now available at 50 retailers across Canada.

Locally, you can find SOAK at Anya's Hair Studio as well as locations in Steinbach, Winkler, and Winnipeg.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For further details about which craft shows SOAK will be at, and where to find SOAK products, follow SOAK Bath Co. on Instagram: @cksoakbathco

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12 LOCAL NEWS
THE CITIZEN | DECEMBER 2019

NHS Students Attempting Peaceful Protest Get Apology

By Brenda Sawatzky

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Two Niverville high school students say they were shut down by the school's administration on the day they were given permission to hold a peaceful protest. Two weeks later, they were offered an apology—and an explanation.

In advance of the school's grand opening ceremony on October 29, students Laura Guenette and Sarah Salter decided to plan a peaceful protest in defiance of MP Ted Falk, who had been invited to participate in the event.

Falk, they say, has for years vocally and actively advocated against the rights of women and those in the LGBTQ community. As young women and members of Niverville High School's Sexuality and Gender Alliance (SAGA), they take umbrage with his stance.

"I was the one that told [the girls] to talk to the administration first," says Sarah's father, Don Salter. "I said, 'I don't want you guys rushing in there and causing a scene.' I wanted them to organize something that would be effective without [being offensive]."

With Don's support, Sarah began creating T-shirts with slogans like "My Body, My Choice, My Rights" and "Love is a Human Right." Laura approached the vice principal, Graham Sereda, to seek his approval to wear the custom-made attire to the event on October 29.

In terms of the plan, they say that protest is a strong word. Laura and Sarah's hope was to simply catch Mr. Falk's attention through their silent message from their spot in the bleachers at the rear of the gymnasium.

"At first [Mr. Sereda] was supportive of [a peaceful protest], or at least it seemed that way," says Laura. "He gave us tips on how to do it."

Also in approval of the plan was at least one of the teachers responsible for organizing the weekly SAGA meetings—as the students knowher, "Miss Jennifer." The girls say that Miss Jennifer agreed to wear one of Sarah's T-shirts to support them.

DAY OF THE PROTEST

On the morning of the grand opening, though, everything seemed to change. Before 10:00 a.m., Laura says she was pulled out of class by the vice



Sarah Salter and Laura Guenette from Niverville High School.

principal and told to change out of the shirt and rainbow cape which she wore. Miss Jennifer was also asked not to wear the special shirt made for her.

Shortly after, Salter began receiving text messages from an upset Sarah. When he reached out to the school administration for answers, Sereda indicated that he'd been taken by surprise when he realized there were others, not just Laura, who planned to wear the shirts. According to Salter, Sereda said that someone had become worried that the affair would get out of hand.

"I asked him, 'Can you tell me, of the shirts you saw, what was offensive?" Salter says. "He said he absolutely could not tell me that there was anything wrong with any of the shirts... At the end of the conversation, I still did not know who was responsible for trying to put a stop to

Shortly after, Salter pursued Hanover School Division (HSD) Superintendent Randy Dueck for answers.

"I didn't feel as if the administration was taking it seriously enough," Salter says. "I asked the girls, 'How far do you want to go with this? Do you want to go to the news?' and they said, 'Absolutely!' As soon as CBC contacted Randy and the vice principal, then things started to happen."

PULLED OUT OF CLASSROOMS

A few days later, Sarah and Laura say they and three other members of the SAGA group were pulled from their classrooms and asked to gather in the Learning Commons. Principal Kimberley Funk and Vice-Principal Sereda attempted to explain their position on what had happened during the very busy morning of the grand opening.

"[Ms. Funk] took us to the Learning Commons, which is full of windows, and we had to wait there for the longest time," Laura says. "Basically, all they said was that it was a miscommunication or misunderstanding... We didn't get an apology at all. Miss Jennifer was given an apology... but none of us SAGA members did and I'm still heated about that."

This act of pulling SAGA members from their classrooms, too, was a breach of privacy and trust, the girls say. When students are pulled from their classroom, for any reason, parents are notified.

Some of the SAGA students called to the Learning Commons that day could well have been students who were in fear of telling their parents about their LGBTQ leanings. For some of these students, opening up to other LGBTQ members of the group has been difficult enough without the humiliation of being exposed to their families as well.

"I'm really concerned about this administration... based on the history of the school division and the missteps that just keep happening," Salter says. "All I hear is talk of how supportive they are and yet I don't see it."

MEETING WITH SUPERINTENDENT

Two weeks after the grand opening, HSD superintendent Randy Dueck met with Laura and Sarah and NHS administration.

"We took the time to listen,

engage in meaningful dialogue, and discuss steps forward," Dueck told The Citizen. "As a division, we are always open to engaging our school communities and learning from our experiences."

Dueck added that the school division assumes full responsibility for what he calls a misunderstanding and lapse in communication and suggests that NHS staff will continue to provide for open conversations with the students.

"Our staff is committed to providing a safe, inviting, and inclusive learning environment that respects the human rights, diversity, and dignity of all students and their families," Dueck says. "We hold passionately to this belief and will continue to do so."

By the end of the meeting, the young ladies were left with the impression that Vice-Principal Sereda had, in fact, vehemently advocated for them to have their protest but the decision to stymie it came from the top.

When asking how they can have assurances that this kind of thing won't happen again, Dueck told them, "Because you're talking to me." He also commended the young ladies for their desire to stand up and protest, telling them, "Way to go!"

The Citizen was not provided access to any NHS staff for comment.

PREVIOUS CONTROVERSIES

The Hanover School Division has found itself at the centre of the LG-BTQ controversy before. In 2013, the division ruled in favour of student Evan Wiens, who went up

against Steinbach Regional Secondary School policy when he hung up posters advertising the school's Gay-Straight Alliance.

Three years later, though, the board faced public scrutiny over their response to a young Mika Schellenberg who'd pled with the board of trustees to update the division's diversity policies to better include LGBTQ people.

While the majority of the nine trustees at the time disagreed with changing the policies, two responses made headline news far beyond division walls.

One trustee balked at the idea of ending a divisional policy that stated a parent must be contacted if a child initiated a conversation with a teacher about homosexuality or gender diversity. He suggested that to remove the parents from the equation would be akin to going back down the path of residential schools.

Another trustee, trained as a medical professional, attempted to make a correlation between the sex education curriculum taught in Toronto and rising incidences of cancer.

Later that same spring, a human rights complaint was lodged against HSD by partners Michelle McHale and Karen Phillips due to the division's refusal to change their practice of excluding sexual orientation and gender identity from discussion in elementary and middle years classrooms.

Soon after, Manitoba Teachers Society president Norman Gould spoke to HSD trustees, encouraging them to make their schools more inclusive for LGBTQ students.

But again in 2018, an HSD trustee seeking re-election was called out on his platform to keep sex education, including sexual orientation and gender identity, out of Hanover classrooms in order to preserve the "innocence of children."

While Sarah and Laura received their apology, they'd still like to see some action. If the school division is truly ready to support diversity, the girls suggest that members of the administration attend SAGA and Gay-Straight Alliance meetings, engage in open conversations about it with all students, and recognize a school-run Pride day.





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1 LOCAL NEWS

THE CITIZEN | DECEMBER 2019

High School Hosts Grand Opening Ceremony

By Brenda Sawatzky

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

On October 29, the Niverville High School (NHS) gymnasium hosted its first major event—the official ribbon-cutting ceremony of the school's grand opening. Students, staff, community leaders, dignitaries, and residents all turned up for the auspicious occasion.

Hanover School Division Superintendent Randy Dueck emceed the event, calling on numerous delegates to speak. Music was provided by the NHS jazz band, led by music teacher Jennifer Horne.

"On March 23, 2018, on a cool and windy day, we stood outside, just west of the arena... and broke ground with a sod-turning ceremony," said Shannon Friesen, chairperson of the Building Committee. "Five hundred and thirty days later, on September 4, 2019, students entered the building for the very first time."

Ron Schuler, MLA for Ritchot-Springfield, teased students that, even though this gymnasium boasts the highest ceiling of any in the province, they'd already managed to lodge two sports balls in the rafters.

"When [Minister Goertzen] and I started to design this, we decided that we'd spend money on a bigger gym," Schuler said. "We did it for you, the next generation."

Randy Dueck then shared his pleasure in being involved in the creation of a facility as unique as this one, which combines a high school and Community Resource and Recreation Centre (CRRC) into one shared



MLA Ron Schuler, Minister of Education Kelvin Goertzen, students Dominic Augusto and Katey Hiebert, Mayor Myron Dyck, and MP Ted Falk..

campus

"This particular school is part of a shared vision and dream between Hanover School Division and the Town of Niverville for a dynamic community campus like none other in this province," Dueck said. "What a way to celebrate 50 years [for your community]!"

Mayor Myron Dyck took the crowd on a brief storytelling tour of the history of the campus. In 2014, he said, town council was taking a serious look at a \$2 million outdoor swimming pool project. At the same time, conversations were taking place with HSD regarding the impending need for a new high school. At the time, forecasts suggested a new school would not be granted by the province until sometime after 2020.

"Fast forward to 2016," says Dueck.
"The Town of Niverville residents, through a survey, say they do not want a pool and instead would like an indoor recreation centre... as Niverville has way more winter months than summer months... In August of 2016, council announces they will be setting aside \$5 million towards a new indoor rec centre and has plans drawn up for

a \$20 million project that will only get done if other levels of government step up to assist."

By the fall of 2017, HSD was assuring council that Niverville was at the top of the ask list for a new school. Even so, no one anticipated the province to make an announcement any time soon.

The year 2017 was also the year of Canada's one hundred fiftieth birthday and government announcements were made touting the availability of recreation facility grant monies across the nation. Council began the laborious work of securing some of that funding.

"On a beautiful spring morning in 2018, I'm driving between work appointments when I hear on the radio news that Niverville is being awarded a new high school," Dyck says. "It was very exciting and very unexpected."

In that moment, however, Dyck also began to doubt that grant money would be forthcoming for the CRRC.

"From my experience as a politician, if a community gets a grant for one thing, then the likelihood of a second one is very [low], as provincial and federal officials like to make all of

their communities happy before giving one community another grant," says Dyck. "Thus, while excited, to be

honest I felt like the... CRRC was dead."

Through proceeding council discussions, a new idea was hatched: to join the new school to the recreation centre, combining forces with the school division and appealing to the province for funding for a much different project. As well, council believed that such a design would allow funding that had already been promised to go much further.

Council was faced with a brief opportunity to secure land for the CRRC, convince HSD to collaborate on the plan, and then assemble lawyers, consultants, and professionals to create architectural designs to send a convincing message to higher levels of government.

"It involved a lot of people working a lot of long days," Dyck says. "During this time of great urgency, I reached out to the Hanover School Division superintendent to share this vision. I cannot tell you how thankful I am today that not only did Randy agree to meet, but he listened... It would have been very easy to say no and the

Niverville CRRC project would have been dead right there."

Finally, in the spring of 2019, council received notice that their application for a \$20 million grant for the CRRC had been approved by both federal and provincial governments.

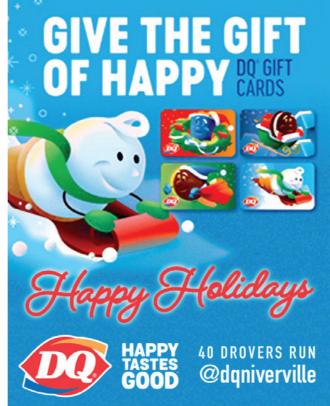
During the ceremony, special mention also went out to Gord Daman for his tireless work on the project, developer Cornell Friesen for donating the land on which the school and future CRRC sit, and Carl Fast of Wm. Dyck & Sons, who outfitted the school's workout room with \$30,000 in exercise equipment in memory of his late father, Alex Fast.

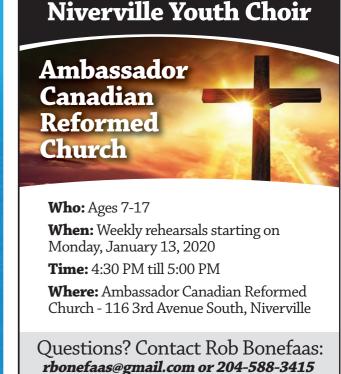
A key-passing ceremony took place, a tradition within the construction community to recognize those who play leading roles in the planning, design, and construction of big projects such as this one. The honourees who passed the key included a Public School Finance Board representative, the lead architect of MCM Architects, the project manager of Red Lake Construction, HSD's Director of Facilities, NHS Principal Kim Funk, and student Nick Johnson.

Student leadership co-presidents Arabella Zeilstra and Sawyer Pauls then shared their thanks on behalf of the students of NHS.

"The TVs in every room, the space we have to work, and the comfortable seating area of the Learning Commons makes for a very non-stressful environment, which I know that all the students love," said Zeilstra. "This makes learning and wanting to learn that much easier"







We're excited to announce the start of a

13th Annual Heritage Centre Gala Another Success

By Brenda Sawatzky

□ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

For the thirteenth annual Heritage Centre Gala on November 2, staff pulled out all the stops to treat 205 guests to a black-tie fundraising dinner. This event, year after year, provides much of the financial support required to run a variety of seniors programs and to purchase much-needed new equipment.

The financial goal, achieved through donations at the event, was to raise \$29,000 after ticket sales to be used toward this year's projects. To date, \$10,000 in donations has come in. This will aid in the purchase of a bathtub for residents with mobility issues as well as equipment and materials needed for a variety of recreational programs run within the Niverville Credit Union Manor.

Additionally, the funds will help subsidize the work of the campus chaplain and provide access to social programs for low-income seniors living in the community.

Special guest Joey Gregorash emceed the full night of dinner and entertainment. Gregorash, a Winnipeg-based Juno-Award-winning recording artist, is most recently remembered as the host of a children's variety TV show called *S'kiddle Bits*, which aired in the 1980s.

Gregorash was honored to be invited back to Niverville. His first visit, he told the crowd, was in 1970. His band at the time, Walrus, was the opening act for the Niverville Pop Festival, an open-air rock concert which has since been dubbed Niverville's Woodstock.

"I'm still doing rock and roll, but my audiences today don't exactly rush the stage," 69-year-old Gregorash joked. "If there's any movement [toward the stage]... security [knows] they still have a chance to go out and have a cigarette and come back."

Another Juno Award winner, Manitoba native Steve Bell, also lit up the stage, entertaining the crowd with



Steve Bell entertains guests at the annual gala.

BRENDA SAWATZKY

his storytelling and music. Bell took his listeners through a musical journey spanning much his 30-year solo career, including classics like "Why Do We Hunger for Beauty" and "Here by the Water."

"It's emotional for me to be here with you because I know the work that you do," Bell told the crowd between songs. "My father just passed away a couple of months ago and he passed away in a personal care home. My mother is still there and she now lives with advanced dementia. I'm watching the care and the love that they get because people like you do this kind of stuff."

Bell added that, as a younger man, he never concerned himself with the importance of senior's care home staff. Now, watching his parents age, he's become all too aware that loving, compassionate caregivers are a gift to the extended family as well.

Bell learned to play guitar at the age of eight. He tells stories of growing up a prison chaplain's kid with a musical mother who suffered from anxiety and depression, which was frowned upon in much of the Christian community during those years but was embraced and understood by the inmates they served.

"That became my church experience," Bell said of his childhood spent at a variety of prisons. "I had a little different experience of church than most did."

His desire to play music was encouraged by his parents but it was the inmates of the prison that taught him the craft. For years, the young Bell joined the inmates for impromptu bluegrass jam sessions.

"I've travelled the world and I've done all I've done because Canada's most unwanted men invested in me as a kid," Bell said. "And the point I'm getting at actually relates to the work that you're doing here: the dignity of every human being. No matter what stage of life... every single human person that has ever been conceived is first and foremost God's good idea. That's your foundational dignity and nobody can take it away from you... When we care for our elderly, when we care for marginalized people, we're affirming God's good

ideas."

Wes Hildebrand, CEO for the Heritage Centre, closed the evening with a series of acknowledgments to the people who make up the leadership and support team behind the seniors facilities at the Heritage Centre.

The work of the manor and personal care home staff was recently affirmed, he said, with an accreditation report that gave the facility 158 marks out of 161. As well, the province gave the Niverville PCH an almost perfect score based on provincial standards.

"This past year, we added two new programs here at the centre," Hildebrand says. "[These include] Service to Seniors and the Adult Day Program. We took those programs into our portfolio because we thought that they would fit very well with what we do. We've always wanted to reach further into the community and not just keep it within the walls of this campus."



Niverville Remembrance Day Service Brings Out Hundreds

By Brenda Sawatzky

□ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

It's been more than 20 years since Remembrance Day services in Niverville began with a humble gathering on Main Street at the cenotaph. Over the years, as attendance grew, the service moved to the Heritage Centre. This year, more than 800 people were in attendance, filling every chair and crowding the standing room.

Veterans of the world wars are few in numbers these days, and the masses at this year's ceremony stood to honour two aging veterans, who were wheeled into the auditorium in full military regalia. The crowd also applauded the many men and women, asked to stand, who have served in the military and peace-keeping forces since that time.

Many military personnel reside in this small community today.

This year's ceremony placed an emphasis on the fact that 2019 is the seventy-fifth anniversary of D-Day and the Battle of Normandy.

"On June 6, 1944, allied troops stormed the beaches of Normandy, France to open the way to Germany from the west," said emcee pastor Abe Klassen of Niverville. "Victory in the Normandy campaign came at a terrible cost. Canadians suffered the most casualties of any division of the British Army Corp."

The theme of this year's service was "A Journey to Remember." Klassen, also the keynote speaker, led those gathered on that journey through the use of a slideshow and memories of his and his wife Kathy's



An expectant crowd gathers at Rembrance Day ceremony in Niverville.

visit to war museums and memorials in Belgium and France this past spring.

Klassen's emotional account began with the Flanders War Museum in Ypres, Belgium.

"It was one of the most profound experiences of our lives," Klassen says, noting that it was at this museum where they discovered the existence of Kathy's great uncle, a man who had served in the Belgium army in World War I and died in a military hospital in 1917.

"Since Canada was a part of the British empire in 1914, [we] were automatically at war and our troops played a prominent role as part of this war," Klassen said.

Canada, at the time, had a population of less than eight million people. Approximately 620,000 Canadian men and women served in the World War I. Of those, 59,544 were killed while 172,950 were wounded.

It was at this site in Ypres where the famous Battle of Passchendaele

was fought, a battle that would become known as the most costly in terms of human suffering. Canadian soldiers here numbered 20,000, by far the majority of whom were killed or wounded.

Klassen's journey continued to Hill 62, a memorial dedicated to the Canadian Corp who either held or recaptured the area from the Germans during offensive operations in 1916. Thousands of Canadian graves scatter this memorial site.

Here, too, lie original trenches dug by World War I soldiers, preserved to this day for visitors to walk along and remember the horrors of war.

The journey continued on to Menin Gate in Ypres, which serves as a memorial to those who went missing in action.

"Since 1928, 365 days a year, The Last Post has been sounded every evening at 8:00 p.m. under the canopy of the Menin Gate," Klassen says. "Every day, the people of Belgium remember the cost of war. Traffic is halted and the street is closed before the ceremony begins. Only during the Second World War was the ceremony interrupted."

LOUISE HIEBERT

The Klassens' journey took them to the site of other heroic events in Dunkirk and Vimy Ridge, France.

"We imagined what it would have been like for these soldiers [at Dunkirk] as war planes flew overhead, bombing the beach and walking into the water vulnerable to sniper attacks and in the midst of explosions," Klassen recalled. "Imagine the mental, emotional, and physical toll!"

At the famous site of Vimy Ridge, another 100,000 Canadian soldiers battled a war that was not their own. A memorial here displays the names of 11,285 Canadian soldiers, all listed as missing in action and presumed dead.

"The land of Vimy Ridge actually belongs to Canada," Klassen says. "It was a gift given from France in thankfulness to the Canadian soldiers for winning back this ridge. It is now turned into a beautiful park that many people of France come to every day."

To close, Klassen asked those gathered what they will do to keep the horrific cost of war at the forefront of their hearts and minds in the coming years.

"The cemeteries and crosses row on row should never be lost to us," Klassen said. "Let us never forget the cost and continue to strive to make this Remembrance Day service a testimony to peace and reconciliation."

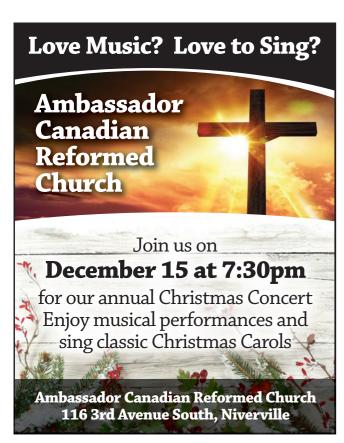
UNTIMELY DEATHS

Natalie Batkis is a member of the seven-person volunteer Remembrance Day committee. This past year, two long-time members of the committee were lost to untimely deaths: Ian Wallace and Janice Keam.

"Janice and Ian both contributed so much to our service and our community for so many years," Batkis says. "Their absence was deeply felt."

Batkis adds that the desire of the committee, for many years, has been to create an event that draws the community and families closer together and provides an opportunity to learn more about the sacrifices made to ensure the freedom we know today.

"It was amazing to see so many people in attendance this year, from babies to World War II veterans," says Batkis. "Our hope is that through this intergenerational sharing of knowledge, these services will continue to be passed down from generation to generation."







RITCHOT REGIONAL CHAMBER of COMMERCE

Chamber News



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Updates from the Ritchot Chamber

Gala Success

The 2019 Ritchot Regional Chamber of Commerce Business Awards Event Gala on November 16th 2019 was a wonderful success! With great networking opportunities, business and playful conversation, casino tables and comedy, there was truly something for everyone. We were honoured to have political representation from multiple levels attend, including the Honourable MLA Ron Schuler and councils from the RM of Ritchot and the RM of Taché who continue to support the work of the chamber and our local businesses.

Congratulations to our Winners

Congratulations to our 2019 Business Award winners. This year saw Maxx Pro Builder's Marty Ritchot take home the award for Entrepreneur of the Year, Titan Environmental won the award for Corporate Volunteerism and Cobblestone Homes was named Business of the Year! A special congratulation went to Roger Perron for his long-term involvement with the chamber.

We would like to also take this opportunity to thank each and every one of our Gala sponsors. It is with your encouragement, donations and cooperation that allows the Gala to be a success, year after year.

Shopping Locally this Holiday Season

As we step into the holiday season, the Ritchot Regional Chamber of Commerce would like to encourage everyone to shop with and support our wonderful local businesses. Shopping locally helps build our community, strengthen our local economy, and support our local entrepreneurs. For the benefit of all - shop local!

From everyone at the Ritchot Regional Chamber of Commerce, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

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BILINGUAL SERVICE

18 LOCAL NEWS

INBRIEF

Ritchot Public Library Receives Provincial Funding

By Evan Braun

☑ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

On Friday, November 15, MLA Ron Schular announced continued provincial funding for the Ritchot Public Library. Schuler, appearing alongside councillors from the RM as well as school trustees at Collège Régional Gabrielle-Roy in Île-des-Chênes, says the funding adds up to \$36,500.

"Our Progressive Conservative government is delivering strategic investments that support the services that our communities rely on," says Schuler.

The Ritchot Public Library serves St. Adolphe, Ste. Agathe, Île-des-Chênes, and Grande Pointe. It has three locations throughout the municipality.

"With these funds, we'll be able to continue to offer these services and programming to our municipal patrons," says Stephanie West, President of the Bibliothèque Ritchot Library Board. "The board of directors would like to thank the province, Provincial Library Services, and the Municipality of Ritchot for their continued support."

Libraries play a vital role in the community, not only offering patrons the ability to access books and media, but also providing programming that encourages literacy and community connection.



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Operation Red Nose Buckles Up for Holiday Season

By Brenda Sawatzky

□ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Last Christmas marked the first season of the local chapter of Operation Red Nose, and the volunteer committee is gearing up for another busy December. Operation Red Nose is a volunteer-based national program that acts as a formal designated driver service, providing safe rides for Manitobans throughout the holidays

Charmaine Gosselin coordinates the program from St. Malo along with ten other residents. Their plan is to cover a total of eight municipalities between Highways 59 and 75, and from the U.S. border to the Perimeter.

"Sadly, Operation Red Nose isn't spread out enough to saturate all of Manitoba," Gosselin says. "So our area... just hopped on board last year. We don't have an Uber, we don't have a taxicab serving all of our area, we don't have transit services either, so we've just had it engrained in our heads to find a designated driver every time we go out."

Operating Friday and Saturday nights from November 29 to December 21, and again on December 31, volunteers for Operation Red Nose want to be the designated driver for everyone heading out to festivities and functions where alcohol will be consumed.

Their goal is twofold: to keep Manitoba highways safer for everyone this holiday season and to raise needed funds for the St. Malo community hall. While the service is free, volunteer drivers are willing to collect donations of any size from people who make use of the service.

On November 22, Operation Red Nose St. Malo kicked off the 2019 season with an information session including presentations made by the local Chamber of Commerce, the reeve of the RM of De Salaberry, as well as St. Pierre RCMP and a flight paramedic from STARS Air Ambulance.



Troy Pauls, a flight paramedic for STARS Air Ambulance, speaks about the importance of Operation Red Nose.

□ BRENDA SAWATZKY

Partnering with Operation Red Nose, the St. Pierre RCMP detachment is offering free criminal record checks to all volunteers of the program. Based on dire past statistics, the local police hope programs such as this one can help reduce the number of tragedies on our roads.

In 2018, Manitoba saw 68 fatal collisions, resulting in 73 deaths. Approximately 45 percent of these accidents involved alcohol. On average, the RCMP lay charges against about 1,500 impaired drivers per year.

Troy Pauls has been a flight paramedic for STARS Air Ambulance for 25 years. During that time, he's attended the scene of thousands of alcohol-related accidents.

"When we talk about the people that are affected, obviously we talk about the patient and their family members, but we also need to think about the first responders that are affected over the holiday season," Pauls says. "We'd love to have a quiet holiday season and not see anybody in our emergency departments or on the side of the road. Unfortunately, that's not the reality."

Pauls encourages everyone to plan ahead and use the Operation Red Nose services leading up to the holidays. This includes people heading out to parties by snowmobile.

Of course, a program of this scale needs to be backed by generous advance donations in order to cover the costs of two-way radio rentals, reflective safety vests, and gas gift cards for volunteers using their own vehicles to taxi people around.

To date, Operation Red Nose St. Malo has received donations from five local business sponsors for \$1,000 each. Countless other donations have come in as well, including donations of volunteerism from businesses who have rallied together a group of employees to take on some upcoming driving shifts.

Already the program's local coordinators have signed up 160 people willing to dedicate a minimum of one night to the program. At this stage, they still need about 30 more to be able to offer rides right up until New Year's Eve.

December 31, though, is the trickiest night to find willing volunteers, so coordinators are offering a draw ticket to every New Year's Eve volunteer. The winner will receive a piece of luggage and a \$400 WestJet gift card.

"Asking people to volunteer on New Year's Eve is actually a

nationwide challenge," Gosselin says. "So find a group of friends or find a group of family members and register with us and you will have a ton of fun."

Volunteers go out in teams of three or four—one drives the team to the pickup location and another drives the client's vehicle and its occupants home. Other team members are there as support.

Each shift begins with an orientation at 8:00 p.m. at the St. Malo community centre. About 20 people may be required on any given night and will respond to pickup requests right up until 3:00 a.m. Volunteer refreshments are provided as well as tickets for a variety of draw prizes.

It was the St. Malo Parish's Father Dominic La Fleur's idea, one year ago, to gather some willing fundraising volunteers to help raise money for the aging community hall located in the basement of the parish.

The seven volunteers who committed themselves to the task were mostly mothers on maternity leave.

"We heard about Operation Red Nose being a great fundraising initiative and all the funds from ORN have to go towards youth or sport and we have a lot of youth and sport in this community centre," Gosselin says.

In its first year running, Operation Red Nose St. Malo volunteers gave 150 rides and raised \$12,000. Since that time, the babies born to these expectant moms have become fondly known as the Red Nose babies.

This year, Gosselin says the committee is hoping to double the funds they raise in order to provide a complete renovation to the hall's kitchen facility.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- To volunteer, contact Chantal at (204) 712-6041
- For more information or to find volunteer registration forms, visit www.operationrednose.com







Commentary

Counting the Costs of Consumerism

By Greg Fehr

It would seem we have entered a season in the development of our civilization, or at least our democracy, where the default method of raising awareness is to rally crowds. From climate change to indigenous rights, the production of signs and the gathering of people to hold them rivals what we saw during the 1960s.

The messages are clear, concise, and well supported by the backbone of social

While there's a part of us all that would likely join a protest against all the protests, I do feel encouraged by the engagement we see all around us, a level of engagement which has been sorely lacking for too long.

Perhaps not every issue requires a crowd and a sign, but I'll take too much engagement over apathy any day.

The interesting thing is that protests sometimes have unintended consequences.

On Black Friday, young people gathered at Polo Park mall in Winnipeg to protest the environmental impacts of mass consumerism. Although this raised some eyebrows, perhaps the message is something we can all embrace, whether we're climate change advocates or not.

have been better communi-



DEPOSITPHOTOS

and Wayfair, but regardless of the avenue we are in the heaviest season for consumer purchases. From Black Friday to Boxing Week, sales will feed the coffers of many corporations looking to further blacken their bottom line.

Indeed, Canadians spend approximately \$30 billion on Black Friday alone.

But at what cost? The protest's message concerned the impact of production and shipping these goods and the question of whether we really need these items.

I am concerned about the impact of heavy consumerism on our environment. But I find the impact on our collective and individual health to be just as concerning.

We live in a world where we're bombarded with sugrather than repair them. We're told that if we don't have the latest and greatest, we're being left behind.

If these messages don't get you, the technology will. Older items gradually become unsupported, discontinued, or otherwise discouraged. If you don't believe it, try running the new operating system on an older iPhone model.

Believe me, you'll want to purchase a new phone within a week.

The retailers are relentless. In the time it took me to write the 400 odd words above, I've received 17 emails and three texts regarding sales on items I likely don't need.

We put immense pressure on ourselves to purchase these items, not just for ourloved ones.

the Christmas season and often culminate with the first credit card bills that arrive in January.

The protesters are right: it is time to count the costs of all this consumerism. Even if you don't believe in climate change, we can all agree that we don't need half of what we have. Not only that, but the stuff that's supposed to make our lives better, happier, and more efficient actually has the opposite effect.

Perhaps we need less stuff and more time with the people around us, more opportunities to engage with each other in meaningful and

ALLOUR TEAM MEMBERS ARE IMPORTANT

memory-making activities.

Perhaps our gifts should include more consideration towards the true needs of those less fortunate, to help pull up those who are struggling in our society.

And perhaps we should buy from the local and small businesspeople, since they're often just starting off or struggling to get by. To these people, our patronage goes a long way.

The people we love deserve gifts with meaning, not large price tags.

We need less pressure and more meaningful gift-giving... true gifts for everyone involved. I believe this is what we all need...

...and to unsubscribe from all those email lists.



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Sports & Recreation

Two Clippers Teams Win Gold at Home Tourney

By Evan Braun

☑ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

At the recent Atom Clippers home tournament, held November 23-24 in Niverville, two local teams skated their way to gold medals. The Atom A and Atom C White squads both came up big in front of their home crowd.

In the Atom A final, the Clippers found themselves town 2-0 early in the first period against the undefeated 10A1 KW Canucks from Winnipeg. The comeback was something no player, parent, or coach will soon forget.

'Niverville came back as a united team to win the gold medal game 4-3," says coach Travis Mason. "Every shift, each player did their job, fighting hard for each other right until the very end."

Among the major highlights, he says, was a cross-crease glove save from goaltender Zaiden McDonald-Horvath that produced gasps of amazement from the crowd.

"Niko Lemoine had his best game of the tournament, leading the team with a goal and two assists," Mason adds. "Ethan King and Adrien Desmarais led by example, elevating their games to a new level by shutting down the Canucks leading scorer."

He says the biggest highlight of the game came in the third period, when Luca "The Bazooka" Wotherspoon scored the game-winning goal for the Clippers with a huge slapper from the point.

"It was great to see the team bond over the weekend, playing for each other and fighting together through close games in the round robin,"



The Atom A Clippers win gold at Niverville tournament.

Mason says. "Their will and determination was something each player on this team should be proud of. It's always a great feeling when you see the way the team carries themselves around the arena with a lot of energy and smiles."

The other tournament-winning team, the Atom C White Clippers, put on a clinic.

"We entered our home tournament with an amazing 6-0-0 record," says Atom C White team manager Noelle Strain. "We played three [round robin] games, winning all three, 8–0, 11–0, and 5–0, making it to the finals."

In the final, the team beat the Brandon Orange Crush 3-1 in a hard-fought battle to win gold. They were coached by Kevin Boone, Justin Reimer, Tom Sawatzky, and Rob Brandt.

Two other Atom teams from Niverville participated in the tournament—Atom B and Atom C Blue.

The Atom B team also made it to the gold medal final, although they came up just a little bit short when the buzzer sounded. The final score was 3–1, favouring their opponents from Portage la Prairie.

"It was a hard-fought game by the Clippers, who were down 1–0 with only four minutes to go," says head coach Ryan Brunel. "They made it to the championship game with big wins over St Adolphe 9-0 and Gimli

The Atom C Blue team came up short as well, losing all three of their round robin games despite playing hard the whole way.

"Our team had a fun weekend anyway and enjoyed every minute of the hockey experience and learning how to mesh well with our team members," says team manager Alicia Parsons. "All members of the team played exceptionally well."

Atom C Blue head coach Will Cuccaro agrees that the team is continuing to grow with every match.

"Despite what the scoreboard said, the Atom C Blue team became a very big thorn in the sides of their opponents, pushing them for [the

 $full]\,36\,minutes\,of\,every\,game,"\,says$ Cuccaro. "Their no-quit attitude, constant encouragement of each other, and commitment to a teamfirst approach is truly something to be appreciated and admired!"

Parsons adds that the Atom C Blue team has two upcoming tournaments this winter, a December Christmas Challenge in Fort Richmond and an away tournament in Portage la Prairie in January.

In late October, a couple of these same teams also enjoyed great success at the annual Rob/West Tournament in Winnipeg. The Atom As came out on top in their division, and the Atom Bs finished in second place.

Mason says that these early successes build confidence in the teams as they move forward.

"The [Atom A] team is looking forward to moving on to their next goal of the season as they get back to league play with their biggest challenges coming up in December," Mason says.

Brunel, who coached Atom B, says that the second-place finish at the Rob/West tournament mirrored their later second-place finish in the Niverville tournament. At Rob/ West, they fell short 2-0 against Stonewall in the final.

"But with two silver medals in two tournaments so far this year," Brunel points out, "they are determined to taste gold in their next one."

The Clippers Executive also pass along a message of thanks on behalf of the club for all the local businesses and volunteers who helped to make their home tournament such a big success.





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THE CITIZEN | DECEMBER 2019

INBRIEF



The Bombers cheer and dance tean

J. BURZMINSKI PHOTOGRAPHY

Local Man Helps Cheer Bombers to Victory at Grey Cup

By Sydney Hildebrandt

Most people only dream of witnessing the Grey Cup from a front row vantage, but Niverville resident Coty Loeppky had the opportunity to experience the game from the sidelines on Sunday in Calgary.

Although he wasn't just another fan watching from afar. Loeppky, along with the rest of the Winnipeg Blue Bombers cheer and dance team, spent the CFL championship hyping up the crowd at McMahon Stadium.

"I never thought of performing at a Grey Cup like this," he says. "Honestly, it's one of the most breathtaking experiences I've ever had performing."

Loeppky's experience began early on Thursday, performing routines at the Grey Cup festival all weekend leading up to the big game. But it wasn't the first time for the 28-year-old. He attended the Grey Cup as a cheerleader in Vancouver in 2014 as well as in Winnipeg in 2015.

In his three years cheering with the Bombers, this was the only time he has represented Winnipeg when the city's own football team was also competing.

To prepare, he and the rest of the dance and cheer team underwent intense training all season. Although the group didn't know the Bombers would be in the Grey Cup, of course, they still had to practice—because all CFL teams' cheerleaders and stunt people attend the championship, he explains.

The team spends four to eight hours a week in the gym training. Their routines include everything from basket tosses—throwing an individual, known as a flyer, in the air and catching them—to a stunt where the flyer is flung into the air and stands on one leg.

Many of their exercises are reflective of the cheer-leading movie *Bring It On*, to which the team paid tribute in their routines at the Grey Cup.

The sport doesn't come without exhaustion, he says. Some of their routines last around seven minutes, and at the festival they performed one routine 13 times.

"[That] alone is physically and mentally draining," he says. "It's an intense sport."

Loeppky, a self-employed subcontractor, has a history of cheer well beyond his time with the Bombers. Seven years ago, he joined Scorpions Elite Cheer, which helped him prepare to be on the Bombers squad.

His Grey Cup experience didn't end on Sunday, though. Loeppky took part in the Blue Bombers celebratory parade in Winnipeg on Tuesday, November 26.

Loeppky says initially he wasn't planning to return to the Bombers' cheer and dance team, but following this season's experience, he says joining the team again next year will be on his to-do list

"It's super rewarding. I'm super blessed to have had the opportunity to represent Winnipeg," he says.

Red River Rage Post Strong Season Starts

By Evan Braun

Collectively, the Red River Rage and their seven local teams, from the youngest skaters just learning new skills to teenagers playing at the U16 level, are having great starts to their seasons.

The teams play out of the arenas in Niverville and Ste. Agathe, but the players come from such communities as Niverville, Ste. Agathe, St. Adolphe, Morris, and St. Jean.

The Rage have two U10 teams this year, A and B. The young women on the U10A team are in their second year, and so far they boast an undefeated record—a big turnaround from last year, when despite hard play they had a losing record.

"After a difficult season last year, this team is off to a great start," says Rage President Jennifer Horne. "Their game is picking up speed and it's great to see the sportsmanship they are developing."

The U10B team contains 13 players who are all in their first year. Coached by Matt Exner and Scott Wallace, almost all of these players began in the R4U program in previous years, where they learned about the game and developed their skating skills. This is their first season playing actual games.

"Since our first game in October, our girls have improved by leaps and



Both of the U12 Red River Rage teams.

D JENNIFER HORNE

bounds," says U10B manager Allison Friesen. "They are learning more with every practice and every game. They show up to the rink with a smile on their faces and are always filled with determination and enthusiasm. Win or lose, these girls are having fun. They are each other's cheerleaders and best friends, on and off the ice."

The U10B team is progressing quickly and learning on the fly, playing in both the Eastman and Winnipeg Ringette Leagues. Recently, they returned from their first tournament in Brandon, held November 8–10, where they achieved a 1–2 record. So far they hold a 2–8 record overall.

The Rage also have two teams competing at the U12 level, and both have placed at the top of the league so far. In fact, they ended up playing each other for gold in Brandon

last month, with the U12A edging out U12B.

"It has been a strong start for this team and they are continuing to grow and mature in their play," says Horne of the U12B team. "It is good to see them connect both on and off the ice as players and as friends."

The U14 squad is a mixed team which includes players from Steinbach and the Red River Rage region.

Known as the Southeast Wildcats, they've posted a strong start to the season and a record of 4–3, many of which have been very close games. In the Brandon tournament, they lost to Regina in the gold medal match.

"The U16 team is having a great year so far," says coach Mel Hall. "They are sitting in first place in the Winnipeg Ringette League with an undefeated record... With

only ten skaters and a goalie, what the U16s lack in size they definitely make up for with determination and heart."

The U16 team recently played in the Bonivital Ringette Association tournament in Winnipeg, where they captured the gold medal.

In Brandon, the U16s were the only team registered in their age group, which meant they were upgraded to play against the U19 teams. Despite being matched against older players, they played hard and secured bronze.

"Our girls played so strong, keeping up with the older tier teams," says coach Julie-Ann Lodge "To date, we have also won all of our Eastman and Winnipeg league games. We have an amazing group of girls being mentored by great coaches, which just adds to a fun season so far."

The youngest players of all, in the R4U program, are focusing right now on passing and teamwork.

"It is great watching the girls develop their skills this year," says Horne. "We have a number of new players this year and it is great to see the club continue to grow."

"It's heart-warming to see the older kids helping out the younger ones, and making sure everyone has a chance to get a goal," adds coach Jenn Trinkies.

October vs. November: A Tale of Two Months

By Dan Hoeppner

The Winnipeg Jets started the year as many fans would have expected. By Halloween, they had earned a 6–7–0 record, ranking twentieth overall in the NHL.

But fans witnessed a significant upswing in November. This month, the Jets have put up a record of 10–3–1, fifth best in the league. This is an impressive record for any team, but even more so for this year's Jets. As a result of their strong play recently, the Jets have moved into a playoff position. They sit third in the Central Division with a 16–10–1 overall record.

Below are three areas which have played a role in their recent success.

1. Goalie Connor Hellebuyck has been brilliant this year, particularly in November when he saved 94.4 percent of shots-against, ranking second in the league (excluding goalies with less than two games played). He single-handedly stole a few games, most notably on November 1 against the San Jose Sharks, allowing only one goal on 43 shots.

2. The Jets successfully killed only 65.4 percent of penalties in October, which ranked dead last in the league. The Jets improved this stat in November, successfully killing 83.3 percent of penalties. This improvement reduced their goals-against by approximately seven goals throughout November, saving them an average of one goal

for every two games played. Considering nine of their 14 games were won by only one goal, their penalty kill has made a big difference.

3. Finally, there's luck and determination. Many fans use social media to talk about advanced stats such as expected goals and goals above replacement to measure how a team performs. According to these, the Jets are outplayed most nights.

Although some nights this is true, such as in that game against San Jose,, these stats fail to adequately measure heart, drive, and determination. These Jets are playing with an us-against-the-world mentality, and it's worked throughout November. Fans are starting to see a squad that

can overcome adversity and flourish.

We've seen examples recently of teams flourishing when their backs are against the wall. Two seasons ago, the Vegas Golden Knights reached the Stanley Cup finals with a team of players deemed expendable by their former organizations. Last year, the St. Louis Blues were ranked twenty-fifth in the NHL at Christmas, yet they went on to win the Stanley Cup.

As a Jets fan and supporter of the underdog, I find this season's team captivating. Despite losing two-thirds of their top six defencemen, they are flourishing.

Let's hope their success continues!

THE CITIZEN | DECEMBER 2019 SPORTS & RECREATION

Three Local Brothers Suit Up for Opposing Teams

By Brenda Sawatzky

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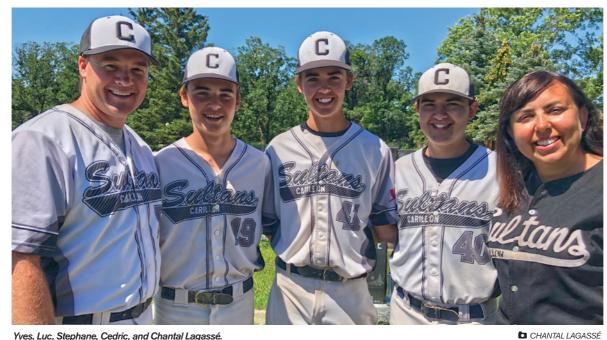
On September 27, Yves and Chantal Lagassé proudly witnessed a moment few parents ever get to see: their three teenage sons, playing for different baseball teams, enjoying the unique opportunity to play against each other at a high-level game in Grand Rapids, Minnesota.

On this day, the Home Run Sports Academy of Winnipeg was invited to play against Itasca College in Grand Rapids, an event which brought together all three sons.

Stéphane, Luc, and Cédric have been playing baseball for most of their lives. Each of them played on the A and AA divisions for Seine River as well as on their high school teams at Ecole Gabrielle-Roy. They each also made the cut for the AAA level and went on to play with the Carillon Sultans.

This year, Luc and Cédric, ages 17 and 15, played their way all the way up to the Home Run Sports Academy Travel, a U18 team that plays from September through March.

Their older brother, 19-year-old Stéphane, is in his second year at



Yves, Luc, Stephane, Cedric, and Chantal Lagassé.

Itasca Community College in Min-

nesota and plays on the varsity team

"We were thrilled to hear the news [of the match-up], as this would be the first and only time our three sons would play each other," says Chantal. "Cédric had the opportunity to tag his older brother out at second base during the second game. Luc crushed the ball and Cédric played an amazing defensive game.

Chantal and her husband Yves

were already baseball enthusiasts prior to having a family. Each of them played for their community teams during their youth. Later, as a husband and wife team, they played together on a slow pitch team from the late 1990s until 2013 when life

began to get busy with their sons' baseball endeavours.

"The passion our sons have for the sport of baseball is unbelievable," Chantal says. "They practice and play hard every time they step onto a field, no matter the level of team they are playing on. They also workout at least three times a week to be physically stronger for the sport."

Chantal recalls years and years where she and Yves dedicated themselves to driving to practices and games within the province and beyond. Their baseball travels have taken them to Saskatchewan. Alberta, Quebec, and Ontario. They also assisted in hosting the AAA Westerns on two occasions, which allowed them to build connections with other baseball parents nationwide.

"We wouldn't want it any other way," Chantal says. "They love the sport and we have met so many amazing parents."

Luc, who graduates from high school in 2020, is already checking out his options for colleges in the United States with noteworthy baseball curriculums. In 2022, Cédric intends to do the same.





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The Clippers B and C Blue teams at Bell MTS Place.

Novice Clippers Face Off at Bell MTS Place

By Evan Braun

⊠ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

Two Clippers Novice teams recently got a taste of the big leagues, when on Sunday, November 3 the Clippers Novice B and C Blue teams faced off against each other under the bright lights of Bell MTS Place in downtown Winnipeg, as part of the Manitoba Hydro Big Ice Challenge.

The teams include players from both Niverville and Ste. Agathe.

"It was a hard-fought battle for both teams, with goals on both sides," says Ashley Chamberlain of Clipper Ice Sports, adding that the game was officiated by the Atom A team's own Ethan King and Carter Fast. "Both boys did a great job. All around, everyone had a great day!"

Chamberlain says that the opportunity for teams to participate in the Big Ice Challenge is open to minor hockey teams through the True North organization on a lottery basis.

"Novice B was offered the opportunity and invited C Blue to join as opponents for the game," she says.

Coach Darrell Couzens of Novice B says the biggest perk for the kids was hearing their names announced when they came out onto the ice and when they scored.

"It was just like they ve seen when their hockey heroes score," says Couzens. "That was awesome for them... I think all of the players, parents, and officials took away memories that they won't forget any time soon."

Couzens points out that the players were also excited to take in the Moose game beforehand.

"That was also a great opportunity for the kids, and parents, to hang out together," he says. "The kids thought it was pretty cool that they ended up on the jumbotron a couple of times, too."

As a parent of one of the players, Chamberlain adds that her eight-year-old son Isaac was really

excited to sit on the Jets bench and play on their ice.

"He scored a hat trick during the game, which for him felt amazing," she says. "He attends some of the Jets and Moose games throughout the season and so hearing his goals announced the same way that his hockey idols' goals are announced was exhilarating."

Couzens is thankful for the opportunity provided by the True North organization.

"Having True North provide this and other opportunities to our minor hockey kids is just another way they give back to the minor hockey community," he says. "These kids look up to those players and many of them dream of playing professionally on that ice one day themselves. To have them have this experience at this age is something that I am really grateful we were offered."

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Arts& Entertainment



Niverville Elementary Choir Performs Anthem at Moose Game

By Evan Braun

☑ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

The choir at Niverville Elementary School recently got the showcase of a lifetime when, on Sunday, November 17, they got the chance to step out onto the ice at Bell MTS Place in Winnipeg and sing the national anthem at a Manitoba Moose game.

Music teacher Susan Simcoe, who's in her first year of teaching in Niverville, says the opportunity provided a great way to build the choir program. Last year, while teaching in Grunthal, she had the same opportunity and she wanted to replicate that success here.

"I reached out to the Moose before school even started in August to see if we could get a date to sing," says Simcoe. "And as I was recruiting singers for choir, I told them we may have the opportunity to sing at a Manitoba Moose hockey game. Some hesitant singers thought choir was at least worth checking out for this fun event!"

The recruitment tactic was so successful that Simcoe says 95 singers ended up signing up to join the choir. In fact, there was some concern at first that this number might be too high, and if the Moose game opportunity materialized some might have to stay home

decided not to leave out anyone who wanted to go

The choir had already been meeting for two weeks when she received confirmation that the group would, in fact, be able to make their big debut.

"When the singers found out, they were ecstatic! So much excitement," she says. "And I'm happy to see that the excitement for singing continued even after the initial rush passed about the game!"

Along with getting the invitation to sing the anthem, the choir had to sell game tickets. In total, 355 tickets were sold by the school, most of which went to family members.

"We meet once a week for 25 minutes for practice as a choir, but the students sing O Canada every day, so the singing part was the most natural," Simcoe says about practicing for the gig. "What was different this time was, we were now a choir-which means following a director, breathing, singing, starting, and cutting off together. It doesn't take long for young minds to put it all together."

On the day of the game, the nearly 100 students made their way to downtown Winnipeg. As to what would happen when they got there, Simcoe says some of the details were a bit obscure.

"In my organizing of the

But ultimately Simcoe event, I naively thought that to vie for their attention." 100 singers wouldn't have to scan their individual tickets to enter the complex," says the music teacher. "I found out after hours had been spent grouping the students together with a teacher chaperone that, in fact, each student and teacher chaperone would have to scan their ticket and go through security. Amidst a flurry of chaos, our fabulous team of teachers and staff wrangled the singers together and were led downstairs to our meeting room."

Along with the production coordinator at Bell MTS Place, Simcoe then got the singers into formation—four rows of singers, just like they'd practiced at school.

With minutes to go, the students were led down the hall towards the ice where anticipation mounted and nerves prickled," Simcoe recalls. "As we were waiting for go time, I walked up and down the hall saying, 'Breathe and smile!' You could feel the energy and excitement!"

At last, the moment of truth arrived.

"The singers very respectfully walked onto the ice with eyes full of wonder," she says. The NES choir was the largest choir the Manitoba Moose had every hosted to sing O Canada. They sang amazingly with hundreds of watching eyes and a huge jumbotron

After the performance, the students were rushed off the ice to the backstage meeting room where everyone was gathered and then taken up to meet their family members. From there on, everyone enjoyed the usual array of festivities and game day treats.

And it didn't hurt that the home team beat their rivals, the San Antonio Rampage, by a whopping score of 5-2.

As a souvenir, the Moose even gave each singer a new hat to remind them of their adventure.

"Opportunities like this, for a choir, are like playing a game with your hockey or ringette team, a dance recital, or gymnastics meet," Simcoe says. "It is in the working together and performing together for a common goal that brings singers together. It is what creates bonds and friendships that are strengthened each time we practice and perform. Being in a choir fosters a place of belonging, it builds confidence, and it offers singers opportunities that are beyond the classroom and ultimately creates memories that will last a lifetime. Being such a young choir, this experience will no doubt keep the singers motivated and excited to sing for a long time—until the next choir adventure."

🗎 INBRIEF



Kenneth Nominated for Emerging Artist Award

By Graham Schellenberg

In November, local country music artist Brady Kenneth was nominated for an award by the Manitoba Country Music Association.

Originally from Niverville, the Île-des-Chênes resident was one of six acts vying for the Emerging Artist award, set to be handed out at the 2019 Manitoba Country Music Awards held on Sunday, November 10 at the Metropolitan Entertainment Centre in Winnipeg.

The award ultimately went to Emma Peterson, who released her first single, "Maybe Tonight" in February of this year.

Kenneth also had the opportunity to perform along with co-nominees Peterson, Brian Jacobs, Rhianna Rae Saj, Aaron Starr, and The Moonlit Road that day at the Emerging Artists Showcase.

"I'm definitely honoured to be nominated alongside these artists," says Kenneth.

He adds that this was a first-time experience for him—one that he intended to soak in.

Kenneth released his debut album in 2016, titled That's the Way She Goes, and an additional three singles earlier this year. Since releasing his latest song, "Between You and Me," in July, the track has been played more than 55,000 times on Spotify.

While he acknowledges that he is still developing his sound, Kenneth describes his music as "modern country with a touch of classic in the tone." And despite his recent success, Kenneth is modest, clarifying that he is new to the genre and didn't grow up listening to country music.

"I'd say a big draw was the fact that there was all of a sudden this element of coolness to country [music] that never really existed before," he says. "It wasn't just for grandma and grandpa anymore... When I started hearing songs from artists like Eric Church, I was hooked pretty quickly."

With plans to release several more tracks online, Kenneth is looking forward to what his future holds. He's focused on writing new material and working with a producer in Toronto. He has a scheduled visit to Nashville, with plans to write several more songs while there.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT THE CITIZEN | DECEMBER 2019

Local Couple Launch Magic Playing Card Business

By Brenda Sawatzky

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Almost as if by magic, Kelly and Ricki ten Hove of Grande Pointe have discovered a way to combine their unique talents to create a burgeoning new online business: Red Fox Playing Cards. Unlike traditional playing cards, their Red Fox cards are designed with the card trick magician in mind.

Apart from working as a pilot for FedEx, Kelly has been a card trick enthusiast and magician hobbyist for more than 30 years. His wife, Ricki, is the creator behind the deck's unique artwork. The cards, while fanciful and attractive to look at, hold many secrets within their complex body of artwork.

Secrets that only the trained eye

"That idea, which I actually got from a Kinder Surprise toy... combined with [Kelly's] magic, suddenly clicked together," Ricki says.

Over the past year, the couple has poured hundreds of hours into brainstorming over the designs on the card deck, drafting and redrafting the graphics before the cards were finally ready for print.

Today, the playing cards are ready to be launched into a market that caters to aspiring and seasoned magicians, playing card collectors, and performers of cardistry, an art which focuses on the use of playing cards to pull off masterful stunts.

In July of this year, upon the completion of the first prototypes, Kelly created a website and Instagram account to market the product. Then, in the beginning of November, they initiated a Kickstarter fundraising campaign which exceeded all their sales expectations.

Kickstarter is an online $crowd\text{-}funding\,platform\,that\,allows$ developers of unique products to advertise for presales, benefiting the entrepreneur since little of their own capital needs to be invested. Only once the entrepreneur reaches their desired presale goals is the actual product created and shipped. Kickstarter then takes a



Kelly and Ricki ten Hove with their Red Fox Playing Cards

small commission from those sales.

At its completion, Red Fox's Kickstarter presales exceeded \$16,000. Murphy's Magic Supplies Inc., a magic paraphernalia wholesaler out of the United States, placed an order for an additional \$12,000 in product.

"Our initial goal was \$5,000 with Kickstarter and we got that within the first 12 hours," Kelly says. "So we made a second goal of \$10,000... and we reached that goal about a week into the campaign."

The ten Hoves have chosen as their producer the same company that has become known for the quality Bicycle brand playing cards. Every deck of Red Fox cards will also be accompanied by a set of red-lens glasses and access to Kelly's magic tricks tutorial site.

Other forms of marketing are achieving success, too. The couple's Instagram account has already attained more than 1,000 followers.

As well, recognizing that celebrity endorsement is important to the success of any brand, Kelly sent prototype decks to a variety of card magicians around the world. These have included world-renowned greats such as Chris Ramsay and Evan the Card Guy, each of whom has built a following of millions of

people on YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram.

One of our biggest fans is Richard Bellars from the U.K., and he's a professional magician that was on Penn and Teller: Fool Us," says Kelly. "He did over a 15-minute review just gushing over our cards."

The ten Hoves' strategy for gaining these endorsements has been built into the card designs from the get-go. The likeness of Chris Ramsay can be seen on the face of Red Fox's King of Clubs and Evan the Card Guy's face appears at the centre of his favourite card, the Nine of Hearts.

"I was flying home one day and

[the plane] was on cruise, so I just whipped out the camera and did a quick little card trick... [with] the King of Clubs, which is [Chris's] card," Kelly says. "I knew it wasn't going to fool him, but [my video] ended up on his YouTube channel."

The card design's secret lies in the age-old trickery of making certain colours and designs pop with the use of a red-lens filter. The hand-designed graphics on the back of each playing card incorporate minute markings which the eye can only capture after it's been trained to spot them with the filter first.

In this way, once the magician is practiced, he is able to recognize the number and suit of a holder's card without seeing its face side.

The deck also includes a variety of gaff cards, or trick cards, for the magician's use, such as double-sided face cards or a Queen that's holding a miniature card in her own hand.

Beyond just magic-related details, the ten Hoves took great pains to personalize their Red Fox deck. The face of the Queen of Hearts bears the image of Ricki. The Jack of Clubs and another Queen contain minute details that are important to their children, like hot dogs, Lego, rainbows, and soccer balls.

"We try and make it our story inside the cards, too," Ricki says. "We're trying to share about who we are in the cards."

The couple's next goal is to create Red Fox brand add-ons to keep buyers coming back. As well, they've developed a set of traditional playing cards without the secret details built

"Four months ago, I had six followers on Instagram and five of them were family," muses Kelly. "So it's come a long way... When all the people on Kickstarter start getting their decks and they show videos online unboxing them and using [them], other people will start noticing... so it has a lot of space to grow yet."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

www.redfoxplayingcards.com







ANNOUNCEMENTS



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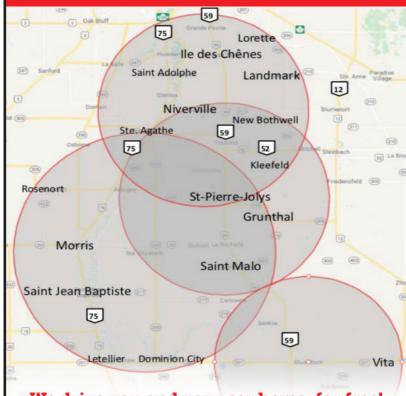


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