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LOCAL NEWS

Imagine Closes Chapter on 12 Years

■ The Imagine Mental Health Matters team, after 12 years of raising awareness, says their work is coming to a close.

Details on Page 11



LOCAL NEWS

Local Officials Converge to Break Ground on Niverville's CRRC

■ It's official: the ground has been broken on the Community Resource and Recreation Centre in Niverville. As of July 16, work has gotten underway on the nearly \$20 million project.

Details on Page 13

SPORTS & RECREATION

Niverville Wildcats Win U11A Provincials

■ The U11A Wildcats baseball team came out on top at this year's Provincials, held on home turf in Niverville's Hespeler Park.

Details on Page 17

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Local Festivals Mark Big Anniversaries

■ New Bothwell celebrates 100 years, the Ste. Agathe Cheyenne Fest marks 30 years, and the St. Pierre-Jolys Frog Follies turn 50.

Details on Pages 14, 20, & 22



Cannabis Retail Outlet Denied by Niverville Council

»» DETAILS ON PAGES 3-6

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Bradley Schmaltz makes his pitch to Niverville's council on behalf of Canna Cabana.

BRENDA SAWATZKY

Cannabis Retail Outlet Denied by Niverville Council

A contentious week in Niverville saw people from both sides of the cannabis debate weighing in regarding council's decision to deny the first application for a retail location.



BRENDA SAWATZKY

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

A public hearing was held at the Heritage Centre on Tuesday, July 23 to discuss a conditional use application by cannabis retailer Canna Cabana to open for business at 349 Bronstone Drive in Niverville. Approximately 60 residents filled council chambers to speak to the issue or simply witness the results.

Upon a presentation of the proposal by Bradley Schmaltz of Canna Cabana and approximately 90 minutes of feedback from residents, council's vote was divided. In the end, councillors Kevin Stott and John Funk voted against the proposal while councillors Nathan Dueck and Chris Wiebe stood in favour.

Mayor Myron Dyck had the swing vote, and he voted against the proposal.

BUSINESS DECISION

To open the public meeting, the mayor indicated that he'd heard from many residents in the weeks preceding the hearing and was fully aware that there were two opposing viewpoints on the subject of cannabis, each carrying its own valid and compelling argument.

He reminded those gathered, though, that council's responsibility was to focus on it from a business standpoint.

"While the ethical, moral, social, and physiological elements

of what is proposed to be sold is what many are here to speak of, the only decision council is making today is whether the company has the legal right to operate in the location they have selected," Dyck said.

THE PROPOSAL

Bradley Schmaltz of Calgary provided a presentation on behalf of Canna Cabana, saying that the company is backed by ten years of experience along with a vast knowledge of their product line. As well, they are committed to making a positive impact in any community they set down roots in.

"We recognize the culture that sometimes can be surrounding cannabis and we're aiming to ease that," Schmaltz told council. "We're hoping to bring a more positive light to the industry... Together we can help eliminate the illicit market, keeping cannabis out of the hands of the youth while also ensuring that those who do wish to use it have a safe source to purchase their products."

Canna Cabana currently has 23 stores across Canada and boasts environmentally sound practices by using a proprietary recycling system to properly dispose of their own packaging when it's returned by the customer. Schmaltz says staff would be hired locally, providing jobs within the community. As well, local contractors and accountants would be hired for the build-out of the premises.

He provided assurances to

council that they fully support working with the local RCMP to provide education to the public. At the retail location, all efforts are made to prevent entry to anyone under 19 years of age. Security cameras would be installed throughout the store, including at the entry and exit points, and cannabis products would be stored in an RCMP-grade gun vault. All exterior windows would be coated in an attractive glaze to prevent outsiders from looking in.

Recognizing the stigma attached to cannabis, Schmaltz referenced a *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization* study performed in Washington State, one of the first states to legalize recreational cannabis. The study, he says, showed a reduction in property crime, theft, binge-drinking, and teenage cannabis use in a governmentally regulated system.

"The moral here is that we help keep cannabis out of the hands of the youth and we try to help keep the profits out of the hands of the criminals," Schmaltz added.

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

However, Schmaltz seemed unprepared to answer certain questions posed by council. These questions include issues pertaining to store security, carding minors, and washroom access. The lack of definitive answers left some councillors and the mayor with cold feet.

(continued on page 4)

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CITIZEN POLL

Do you think a second hearing with Canna Cabana will have a different result?

- ☐ Yes. Given a better presentation from a company representative, the results could be different.
- ☐ No. Council has already come to a conclusion about this company.
- ☐ Have another opinion? Share your thoughts in a comment online.



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LAST MONTH'S RESULTS:

Do you support the federal government's proposed ban on single-use plastics?

Yes.	No.
61%	39%

YOUR COMMENTS:

So many things in our society are absolutely dependent upon single-use plastics. To simply remove them would be catastrophic, to say the least, for the economy.
-A.Q. Rogulzinski

I support it in a general sense, as I imagine most people do. Meaning that with a smart, responsible approach we could accomplish this over time. Interestingly, I would like to point out that a ban isn't required if I feel this way... we are all free to stop using them at any time - but we only do when its convenient - and in my opinion that demonstrates that saying something and doing something are very different things. That said, I think it is laughable that the federal government makes an announcement of this magnitude, and with that quick of a timeline, without doing any due diligence as to how it will get done, what alternatives there may be, the economic implications, the cost of goods, how it would effect existing businesses that rely on it, and the amount of jobs that may be lost in all these industries (because, you know, they are all about jobs *cough, cough* SNC Lavalin). There is also a very real threat that this could outright put some companies out of business. It would be much easier to see this as real - and not just virtue signalling - if there was actually some (any) kind of information as to how 30 million people can stop using plastic in a few short years. It is one thing to just simply ban something, that is easy. But it is an entirely different thing to do it wisely and responsibly without putting undue pressure on the system.

Why don't we start by developing alternatives to single use plastics. Its going to take time. Trudeau's government is ideological and has no sense of the cost or practicality of changing things. (i.e., no long term health studies before legalization of Pot, no idea how to replace our fossil fuel dependency, not to mention the world's increasing demands. Clueless.)

(continued from page 3)

"[Canna Cabana] didn't have a lot of those answers," said CAO Eric King in comments to *The Citizen* after the hearing. "It's not about cannabis. It's about how they came across and how they presented their business. There were lots of 'I don't know's' and... every time [they responded that way] the probability [of acceptance] went down."

THE ARGUMENT AGAINST

Twelve residents objected to the proposal, many saying that a business decision cannot be made without considering the social and ethical impact this business could have on the community.

Dr. Chris Burnett, a family physician of 39 years, was the first to address council. He has been prescribing medical marijuana for the past four years. In the end, though, he cautioned council not to act too quickly on the matter until more research is available.

Burnett cited the known medical benefits as well as the known risks of long-term use, including dependency and psychosis. His concerns lie, mostly, in the many things we don't yet know.

"It took about 40 years of research to link smoking to lung cancer and it took another decade to link it to heart disease," said Burnett. "[Cannabis] is a product that is endorsed by government and [now] it risks being endorsed by council. An interesting question is, who will receive the lawsuits in two or three decades? We're being dangled a promise of tax benefit, but [there's so many things] we just don't know and I feel that creating a human lab experiment at the expense of the Canadian population... is not acceptable."

Peter Braun, a long-time pastor in town, warned council that their authority holds much power and influence with the community's youth.

"There's many social trains coming down the track," said Braun. "We must do everything we can to impede the process on some of these things. While we try to protect the rights of all citizens... let's not make a decision where young people [will be] assuming that, because town council made this decision, it isn't a [problem area]."

Lifelong resident Dan Klippenstein suggested that council consider that newcomers to Niverville might be attracted by the level of safety people feel here from the vices of the bigger city.

"Are newcomers looking for everything that Winnipeg has to offer or are they looking for proximity to Winnipeg with some space between them?" asked Klippenstein. "I suggest that it is our differences and uniqueness as a community

"It's not about cannabis. It's about how they came across and how they presented their business."

Eric King | CAO, Town of Niverville

rather than the desire to be just like Winnipeg and other large communities that makes us an attractive option for newcomers."

Gord Kroeker, director of the Cornerstone Youth Centre, discussed the impact he sees a cannabis store having on the vulnerable youth he deals with on a daily basis.

"We are a centre that caters primarily to minors and [cannabis sales] is something that is of grave concern to me," said Kroeker. "Many of these kids are drug users and we love them and we welcome them in."

Kroeker noted that, located conveniently between the youth centre and the proposed store location, is a patch of woods that is regularly used by young people for late-night drinking and drug use.

"I know and I trust the business at hand to do their due diligence and have many safety precautions," he adds. "But I also know... that it's very easy to get an older brother or perhaps even a parent to purchase marijuana and give it to you."

From a societal standpoint, Kroeker says he also sees how habits such as gambling, alcohol, and drugs tend to attack the underprivileged.

"We're not actually getting rid of dealers," Kroeker said. "There will be dealers that will still sell to kids. I know them. They're not going out of business... But what we're doing is we're letting a large dealer into our community and saying, 'This is okay'... Ultimately, you can argue the good that marijuana does, but there will still be a cost and we should all be aware of the cost."

are critical in a person's risk for drug use," Stott said, quoting from the site. "People who are more vulnerable to drug-taking are simply more likely to use readily available substances such as tobacco or alcohol, and their social interactions with other people who use drugs increases their chances of trying other drugs."

The same warnings that apply to cannabis use, she says, also apply to antidepressants, sleeping pills, and other accepted medications.

"I would argue that a lot of pharmaceuticals on the market have been around for less long than cannabis products have been... and there is more money spent on researching those drugs because the pharmaceutical companies have a stake in that game," says Stott. "So to say that pharmaceutical products are okay but natural products are not, I don't think you can make that blanket decision based on your own personal belief system."

Mayor Dyck followed with the reading of five emails that had been received from residents in favour of a cannabis location, many of them urging council to consider the impact such a move could make in terms of shutting down the black market trade.

A REBUTTAL

Schmaltz was provided one last opportunity to rebut the residents' concerns. In regard to cannabis being a gateway drug, he asserts that this happens when maximum profit is the top priority, such as is the case with black market dealers who strive to get kids on marijuana with the intent of luring them into the more profitable illicit drug market.

Canna Cabana, he says, will only ever carry cannabis products.

He also welcomes the idea of creating a profit-share plan to launch programs that make the community a safer and more educated place for kids.

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PROPOSAL DENIED

Council then closed the public portion of the hearing to deliberate. Hours of operation were discussed at length, as well as exterior security cameras and wash-room access in the facility.

The proposal was then denied by a vote of 3-2.

"While council would rather be dealing with less controversial matters, being the low rung on the government ladder means that the federal government has made a decision that has severely limited the options available to us as a municipal government," Dyck said. "But we do have options."

One option, Dyck says, is to take the federal government to court on the matter. Another is to better educate the public on cannabis similar to the education invested into wise alcohol consumption. A review with council's legal team, he said, is in order.

"We face legal opposition either way," said Dyck, suggesting that council could be taken to task by Canna Cabana or higher levels of government for denying the request. Similarly, if they approved the retail store, lawsuits could ensue from users who are negatively impacted by cannabis. "I have some questions that have not yet been answered... and I would like greater clarification on the legality."



The location where Canna Cabana would have opened their retail store.

DUSTIN KRAHN

AFTERMATH

Although people who objected to the proposal attended the public hearing in large numbers, many proponents of the cannabis store did not—and they feel betrayed, believing that council's notice of the hearing gave the false impression that the meeting was meant merely to address the store's location and not to determine whether the company had a right to operate in the community.

CAO Eric King says council followed the same protocols they would for any conditional use hearing and the notices looked just as they would in any other circumstance.

At any conditional use hearing, he says, council has the right to ask further questions of the applicant and then accept or reject the application if the answers don't meet council's standards.

PRECEDING EVENTS

So this begs the question, why did so many residents believe that a cannabis store in the community was a done deal?

Councillor Nathan Dueck, one of the two councillors who voted in favour of the proposal, says it was a fair conclusion to arrive at based on the series of events that preceded the public hearing.

"Council had already made a decision to support it for economic reasons and that decision was submitted to the Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM)," says Dueck. "The province then made a decision to put Canna Cabana in here based on a lottery. They have a legal right to operate in our town... They will always have a legal right to operate in our town. It's about location. Our job as councillors is to make sure that location prevails as the reason for the vote."

Dueck explains that in the fall of 2017, council was faced with a tough decision with little information from higher levels of government. On the cusp of cannabis legalization, every municipal council received a questionnaire from the province asking one simple question: "Would your municipality be prepared to support the production and retail of cannabis?" It allowed for a simple yes or no answer.

"If you answered yes, it carried through, like 130 other municipalities did," Dueck says. "If you voted no, like seven municipalities did, you had the opportunity later to potentially reverse that decision by presenting a referendum to your constituents."

Dueck says the town was given only weeks to deliberate and respond to the AMM. Because this council's mandate hinged upon economic

growth, and because there was a high likelihood that other nearby municipalities—such as Hanover, Steinbach, and Winkler—would turn it down, Niverville's council believed that a cannabis production plant would naturally gravitate here.

"It was strategic," says Dueck. "It was for the goal of creating jobs, economy, commerce, revenue, and growth in our town. It had nothing to do with the cannabis question. It was about promoting business in town."

Due to the wording of the province's question and having only one response available to them, council couldn't choose to have production without retail. But, Dueck adds, none of the councillors believed that the retail sector would ever see Niverville as large and viable enough to support a store.

NOT IF, BUT WHEN

In order to accommodate this possibility, council updated the town's zoning by-laws to make room for cannabis applications. And like many other municipalities, they chose to forego the right to hold a plebiscite during the 2018 municipal election.

Surprisingly, in the spring of 2019, the province decided that Niverville *would* be a viable location based on their mandate to provide retail cannabis to every Manitoban within a 30-minute drive of their home. The province also held a lottery to determine which retailers could apply.

In Dueck's mind, it's not a matter of if but when. If Canna Cabana is turned away often enough, he says, Red River Co-op, the standby retailer, will likely take up the banner. If they also walk away, other retailers are poised to step up.

"I am not for or against cannabis," Dueck says. "What I am for is making sure that we do our due diligence and follow through on what we started and were committed to already at this point. I don't want to sit through ten more public hearings with the same applicant coming back every single month, but they do have a right to do that and I would encourage Canna Cabana to pull another permit and come back and do it the appropriate way because they do have a right to be here."

(continued on page 6)

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(continued from page 5)

COUNCIL'S OPTIONS

Speaking from an administrative point of view, King says council had the option to table the discussion for another time. In those cases, council resumes the discussion at another meeting. This, King predicts, wouldn't have bode well with the residents gathered since the next meeting wouldn't have required council to send out notices again.

Another option would have been to simply apply conditions to ensure all of council's concerns were met. But in this case, King says the specific concerns posed by council would have been difficult to implement through words. In such instances, council usually denies the request with the expectation that the applicant will come back with a more agreeable proposal in the future.

As for the location, Dueck says that 349 Bronstone Drive met all the zoning bylaws and remains the most suitable location for a cannabis store. Due diligence had been done to ensure that the location more than met the requirement of being at least 1,000 feet from any school, park, or public facility, including the Cornerstone Youth Centre.

A LOOPHOLE?

Some objectors at the public hearing had done their own homework, too. They suggested that council consider a condition provided in the Planning Act which says that a proposal can be turned down if it is deemed "detrimental to the health or general welfare of people living or working in the surrounding area..."

"As municipal leaders, we cannot find loopholes in the Municipal Act to prevent

making decisions that we don't want to make," Dueck says. "The decision was made. You can't flip-flop on something that the province has already put in and the lottery has already decided."

Dueck adds that it's not his place to say whether people should use cannabis. His goal is to make sure people who choose to use it have access to a safe product as opposed to the many tainted ones available right now on the streets of every community.

And while it's true that people can drive to Winnipeg to access it, Dueck says people tend to choose the easiest route and that might mean choosing to buy on the street rather than make the drive.

"If you don't provide a safe product, you're going to end up having much bigger problems with dirty product on the street," Dueck adds. "Providing a legal outlet is probably the best way you can prevent that."

King concurs. "At the end of the day... if you support [cannabis retail, then] support it. If you don't, you don't. It's going to be gone in six months if people don't support it... That's [true] with any business."

In terms of keeping it out of the hands of the underaged, Dueck suggests the community has a responsibility to educate its children on the effects of cannabis use, whether a retail centre is located in the community or not.

"Cannabis is not the underlying issue," Dueck says. "It's social problems that are creating the substance abuse. You can't blame a cannabis company or the province of Manitoba or government of Canada or your own municipality for not dealing with problems that you're too afraid to

address yourself."

Generally speaking, Dueck says, Niverville is a community of middle-income earners with supportive parents and great local programs for kids to get involved in. In such a setting, he sees less risk of substance abuse than in places where poverty and family dysfunction are the norm.

ALLOWING FEEDBACK

So why did council allow for any public feedback of social and moral concern when the meeting was intended to be about a business decision?

"I feel town council made a very hard decision and they would have received backlash either way."

Tristan Friesen | Local Resident

"For the most part, it was to allow people to share their stories," Dueck says. "Because, in respect to the residents, if you silence them you would look like you were just pushing something through instead of giving them an opportunity to be heard."

King adds that at any given council meeting, public representation has the power to affect a decision.

"If at the next hearing there's 500 people, that's great," King says. "If 300 of them are supportive of it and 200 are objecting, maybe that shows where it should have been the first time [around]... You need to show your elected people what's actually going on. They will do their best to try and figure it out, but [if you don't show up] you can't be mad at them if you don't agree with their opinion."

As well, King offers assurances that council does not discuss an application for a permit beforehand.

"When you see them discussing things like hours of operation, like they did at the meeting, that is literally the first time that these guys are talking about it," King says. "Some people have the misconception that they sit down behind closed doors and make a decision before [the public hearing]. It's certainly not the case. Going in, I had no idea which direction this would go."

cannabis might create an increase in crime and dangerous drivers, Friesen isn't worried.

"With the new laws in place, I know lots of people are taking them very seriously," says Friesen. "The laws are strict and I know many people who refuse to drive less than five hours after smoking [pot] because... the new roadside tests leave concerns about false positives. [Since] legalization, lots of cannabis users feel more on edge about getting in trouble now compared to when it was hush-hush and no one really talked about it."

COMMENTS OF A FATHER

Bryan Trottier, owner of the building Canna Cabana proposed to lease, was discouraged by the end of the council meeting, believing those who have strong views on the moral or social implications of legal cannabis should take it up with the province or federal government.

"As a business owner, I think Canna Cabana could offer a quality retail outlet where the owners have a professional commitment to their business," says Trottier. "They also have stressed that they want to contribute to the community. Their presence will attract visitors to Niverville and that will benefit other businesses."

As a father of a young child, Trottier recognizes that young adults will experiment with alcohol and cannabis and his hope is to build a community where that can be done in a controlled and legal manner. Rather than using fear as a form of guidance, he and his partner are committed to providing positive reinforcement and education on the risks of substance use and addiction.

THE MAYOR'S VOTE

Mayor Dyck and Counsellor John Funk also voted no to the proposal, but they both agree it was the poor presentation that made it an easy decision.

"My vote tipped due to the lack of professionalism on the part of the applicant," Mayor Dyck says. "Sending new or junior staff seemed like a slap in the face. It seemed to me that an Alberta company thought Niverville was a rubber stamp. We are a proud community with top-shelf business owners, a community that warrants a top-shelf company and not something less than that."

But Dyck would like to see more than just a better business proposal next time.

"If they reapply, hopefully they will bring their \$3,000 per hour lawyer, their scientist who can speak to the medical and science aspects of the product, and the president of their company so that when residents have questions, they can get answers."

Put in a position to try and make everyone happy, Dyck suggests he'd rather be building community resource centres than breaking ties on contentious votes.

For those concerned about the loss of tax revenue and economic spinoff, Dyck says, "There is a business already there that is paying taxes. The owner is merely looking to lease out the space. Any tax increase would be minimal."

Councillors Kevin Stott and Chris Wiebe were not available for comment.

Since the meeting, King has reported to the province on council's decision. He says they had no concerns other than to ask if Canna Cabana would be able to reapply. King responded in the affirmative.

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Seniors Spotlight: Bill and Roselyn Redekop

By Brenda Sawatzky

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

On July 20, Bill and Roselyn Redekop celebrated 56 years of marriage—and they have a big story to tell of life and love and all that goes with it. So much so that they published a book in 2010 called *Our Story*, a biography intended to bear witness to their shared life for the sake of their children, grandchildren, and the future generations to come.

Their three daughters—Sheila, Vicky, and Laureen—are all married and live in Niverville. They've blessed the Redekops with eight grandchildren.

The Redekops' lives hasn't been vastly different from others of their generation. They're both grandchildren of Russian immigrants who settled on a Manitoba farm and raised a family. But they believe in building a legacy and marking it down in words. Their three daughters—Sheila, Vicky, and Laureen—are all married and live in Niverville. They've blessed the Redekops with eight grandchildren.

The couple spent 47 years on their farm southwest of Niverville, a farm they purchased from the Wittick family in 1965 after being married two years.

"We came to town one Saturday and Mr. Wittick invited us over and he said he'd picked us to buy his farm," Bill recalls.

When the Redekops assumed ownership, the farm had a large two-storey home and an innovative U-shaped hog barn which had been equipped with an elevator to the third floor and automated equipment for feeding the livestock. The Redekops credit the uniquely designed barn to the genius of Eric Wittick.

Within a couple of years, Bill brought the stock of pigs up to 800, a large operation for its time.

"We won an award as one of the top pig-raisers in Manitoba," Bill says. "The Wittick boys [had given us] excellent stock and the packers wanted our pigs."

Bill and his brothers soon amalgamated their farmland and they worked together for decades without many of the dynamics that bog down a family business. Bill says he and Roselyn always got along well, too.

"We didn't work that much together, so we couldn't argue," Bill jokes. "[We were] always busy. She loved her garden and her flowers. She had her own [things] and I was with the livestock."

About 20 years after the purchase, Norman Wittick confirmed that he'd made the right choice for his family farm when he told Roselyn in an off-hand way, "Well, I don't think you've



Roselyn and Bill Redekop of Niverville.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

spoiled it."

FLOOD SETBACK

Thirty-two years into their farming operation, the Redekops were dealt a tough blow when the Flood of the Century took out their barns in 1997. In preparation for the flood, the livestock had been moved to barns on higher ground. The family was evacuated, but Bill stayed with his beloved home in spite of military and RCMP pressure to leave.

In the end, the house was saved but the barns were destroyed. The couple decided not to rebuild their hog operation and continued with the grain operation alone for another 15 years.

They eventually sold the farm and built a home in Niverville in 2012. When asked if the children didn't want the farm Bill replies, "We didn't want to torture them."

MEXICAN ROOTS

Bill was born into an industrious family. His grandfather had been known as the patriarch of the small community of Cuauhtémoc, Mexico where Bill was born. The family owned most of that village's businesses, including a John Deere dealership, cheese factory, slaughterhouse, general store, and grain elevator.

As a young man, Bill's father began entertaining the idea of marriage but had determined that his new wife should be of Mennonite or German descent.

"He saw a picture of a girl from Winnipeg and decided that's the one he wanted to marry," Bill says.

It was a photograph, Roselyn explains, taken at the

Maedchenheim, a home away from home for young Mennonite women working in Winnipeg to support their families.

"He [drove] with his '31 car all the way from Mexico and he found her," Bill says. "He said why he came and what he wanted and told her, 'You make up your mind whether you [accept] the offer or not,' and then he went back to Mexico. She soon replied, 'Come and pick me up.' He came back and married her and took her to Mexico."

They were married in Mexico in 1932, but not without a promise that he'd eventually move her back to Canada. They had seven children in Mexico and the final one was born in Canada after their move. She died in childbirth when Bill was ten years old.

"The hardest time was when my mom passed away," muses Bill. "Who is there when you come home from school? Who feeds you cookies?"

LIFE IN CANADA

Bill's parents came to Canada in 1945 and purchased a farm one and a half miles northwest of Niverville where the Redekops' daughter Vicky and husband Gord live today.

"When we moved here, I couldn't speak a word of English," Bill says. "We weren't supposed to speak any German in school, so when my dad dropped me off [at school] I was home before he was. I didn't like school. I ran all the way home. I did it about four or five times and then I got a big spanking."

It wasn't the only time Bill fled from an uncomfortable situation as a child. He remembers being delivered to the hospital by his dad to have his

tonsils removed just in case they might become problematic in the future. They barely got Bill on the table when he jumped off and ran down the hallway with nurses in pursuit.

But Bill loved his childhood horses, Sally and Darby, and he loved the game of baseball. He joined the Niverville senior baseball team during his later school years and fondly remembers packing into the back of an open pickup truck to play against other rural schools.

"We went to Winnipeg on the back of a truck to visit the Coca-Cola factory," Bill remembers fondly. "Twenty to thirty people on the back of a truck to downtown Winnipeg!"

PRAIRIE UPBRINGING

Roselyn's grandparents were also among the first Russian immigrants in the late 1800s. Her grandparents purchased a farm near Niverville and her parents eventually settled on their own farm in Tourond.

She attended the two-room Carmichael School as a child along with her two sisters and a brother.

"If we wanted to take a shortcut to get to school, we only had to walk a mile, but we also had to walk close to the oak trees where there were wood ticks," says Roselyn. "And sometimes my uncle had a bull in the pasture and that was scary, too."

She also recalls school field trips in the back of pickup trucks. The most memorable was a trip to the Sherbrook swimming pool.

"It was a very nasty event for [my sister] Maryanne and me because we didn't have bathing suits," Roselyn recalls. "We sat up on the bleachers while all of these other kids were

having a marvellous time swimming in that pool."

Other fond memories were built at her grandparents' farm, where the children picked black currants and made games of sliding down the home's winding staircase.

"One of my first memories was when I was three and my grandfather passed away," Roselyn says. She describes sitting in her parents' vehicle with her sister, seeing her grandfather lying on his veranda with one shoe on and one shoe off after falling from a heart attack. Nearby, her great uncle was having an epileptic seizure.

"It was not too far from where Maryanne and I were in the car," Roselyn remembers. "We were sure he was dying, too. It was so frightening."

Roselyn eventually moved on to high school in Niverville and eventually to Teacher's College in Winnipeg. Her first job was at the Carpathia School in Winnipeg where she taught for three years.

"My parents went to the Chortizer Church... and we didn't have any youth activities," says Roselyn. She met Bill at her neighbours' farmstead where Bill had come with others for some organized games. "What probably attracted me to him... was that he was always joking, always fun."

MARRIED ADVENTURES

The couple was married in 1963 and she says Bill's silly humour has never faded over the years.

"Sometimes it bugs the dickens out of me," she laughs.

In Bill's jokester style, he admits why he proposed to Roselyn. "I figured, there's no use wasting gas on somebody else."

Travel has always been a part of their family life. Without fail, they took their three daughters on summer vacation every year. Their travels have taken them to virtually every state in America as well as the Mexican village where Bill spent the first seven years of his life. It's now a sprawling city.

In the last couple of years, Bill and Roselyn have enjoyed their new suite in the Heritage Life Retirement Living complex, away from the large yard and gardens they doted on at their home in Fifth Avenue Estates. To fill that time, they still travel as much as possible.

Those travels have taken them on high-energy holidays across much of Canada and Europe. One of the most memorable, Roselyn says, was a river cruise from Amsterdam to Budapest. They've already booked their next cruise for September, which will take them up the St. Lawrence River to enjoy the amazing sites of Montreal, Quebec City, and Halifax.

Communities in Bloom Hosts Better Gnomes and Garden Tours

By Brenda Sawatzky

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To help mark Niverville's fiftieth year since incorporation, the Niverville Communities in Bloom (NCIB) committee hosted the Better Gnomes and Garden Tours on Saturday, July 27 from 11:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.

Garden enthusiasts were able to visit five of Niverville's most unique and beautiful flower gardens, all hand-selected by the NCIB committee.

For an extra treat, the committee decided to add some whimsical fun to the garden tour.

"A special gnome [is] found in each of the gardens," says committee member Shirley Hoult. "Visitors who choose to can take their photo with the gnome and post it on the Niverville Communities in Bloom Facebook site to be entered to win a prize."



Cars line up for the Show-and-Shine.

BEN FUNK

Draw tickets, maps, and wristbands were available in the Heritage Life Retirement Living common room on the day of the tour. Tours were conducted either on foot or by personal vehicle and visitors to each garden were able to take as much time as they liked at each location.

To complement the event, a Show-and-Shine was held at the south parking lot of the Heritage Life Retirement Living.

"We had a great variety of vehicles registered for the Show-and-Shine, so that [provided] enjoyment for all

visitors regardless of any special interest," Hoult says.

Proceeds from the event were designated toward the Heritage Pavilion Build fund.

The pavilion has been a long-term goal for the local Communities in Bloom committee and comprises a 26-foot diameter structure designed to model Niverville's original grain elevator built in 1879.

The pavilion will be located in the Heritage Centre Gardens and will provide a historical backdrop to Niverville's colourful past.

Council Addresses Home Business Applications

By Brenda Sawatzky

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At a public meeting on July 23, Niverville's council heard requests two for home-based businesses in the community.

The first hearing addressed a spray-tanning salon to be located at the residence of Stephanie White on 23 Kipling Lane. According to the application, council would need to allow for street parking for one client at a time. The business's hours would run on weekday evenings from 6:00 p.m. until 10:00 p.m. and on Saturdays from 11:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.

Council proposed changes to the request, mandating that the business owner reapply for another conditional use permit in one year's time to allow the town to monitor street parking over the coming year.

No objections were heard to the proposal. Council voted in favour of the home-based business upon these conditions being met.

Another home-based business request was discussed for the location of 22-79 Fourth Avenue South. The applicant, Stephanie Enns, was looking to relocate her massage therapy business from Niverville Family Chiropractic on Main Street to her home location in the townhouses of the multi-family development.

Enns had received approval from the owner and property manager, Luke Wiebe, based on the assumption that parking would be provided on her driveway and that there would be a half-hour of time between appointments. Business hours would run on weekdays from 9:00 a.m. until 9:00 p.m.

and on Saturday from 10:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m.

Council relayed the concerns with previous parking issues in this development, parking which often spills over onto the neighbouring streets and nearby church parking lot. As well, it was noted that the idea behind council's support of home-based business is to provide an affordable start-up option with the hope that these businesses will grow into retail locations outside of residential areas. In this case, it was suggested, the business application is a step backward.

The councillors' vote resulted in a tie, with Mayor Myron Dyck breaking the tie by voting to deny the application. Dyck recommended that the applicant seek adequate space to meet her needs at another retail space in town.



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Cush Laundry Mart Opens in Niverville

By Brenda Sawatzky

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For most of us, doing laundry is a necessary evil. It's the household chore that demands to be done but few care to spend the time and energy doing it.

Napoleon Lasu of the New Cush Laundry Mart understands that sentiment and is here to help.

"I first reflected on myself as the father of five kids," says Lasu. "[My wife and I] are both working and sometimes things become very overwhelming to both of us. We need some rest, we need to do laundry, we need to cook, we need to have fun with the kids... Sometimes I even see in my own house that laundry is not getting done. I figured out that if we can have someone to do the laundry for us, that would relieve a little bit and would create some time for the family."

His new laundry business is located at 9 Heritage Trail in Niverville and, for now, includes six Maytag washing machines, six Maytag dryers, and a large folding station. His hope, in the very near future, is to add a few supersized machines and a dry-cleaning service.

Currently, Lasu's machines can handle loads large enough for a queen-size quilt. Customers can come in and do their own laundry—or he will do it for them for a nominal fee. He also offers pickup and delivery services to Niverville and surrounding communities.

A medium load of clothes, between five to ten pounds, can be washed and dried by the customer for just \$8. If a customer chooses to simply drop off their laundry, Lasu charges an additional \$5 which includes detergent, softeners, and laundry folding.

"If your load is between 10 to 20 pounds, that's a large load," Lasu says. "If you were to do it yourself,



Napoleon Lasu of the new Cush Laundry Mart in Niverville.

BRENDA SAWATZKY

that would cost you about \$14 because you're going to use four machines... If you were to leave it with me, I will wash it and dry it and fold it for you... I will charge you an extra \$6 and that includes [the products I use]."

Lasu's machines aren't coin-operated, which means the customer gets longer run times for less money. Coin laundry machines, he says, charge \$3.75 for 35 minutes of washing or drying, costing the customer more in the end because 35 minutes is never enough to adequately wash or dry a load. His washers provide 45 minutes of wash time and up to 90 minutes of drying time for one low cost.

"A couple of days ago, somebody came here and said, 'Napoleon, I never thought I was going to use your machines... but my machine broke two days ago and I needed to do laundry badly,'" Lasu says with a grin. "That [put] a smile on his face. When you see someone coming with desperation to do laundry and you become a relief for them, that [puts] a smile on my face, too. And I believe that I'm going to put a smile on lots of people's faces. You

might not need me now because your machine is working at home, but once your machine breaks and you don't have that budget ready, then you're going to have to look for me and when you come you'll put a smile on my face."

While his hope was to open with full laundry and dry-cleaning services, renovations to the building he's in exceeded his initial budget and temporarily slowed the process. He's hopeful that, with enough support from the community and surrounding area, he'll soon be able to achieve his dream and add dry-cleaning services.

"If I can bring a [dry-cleaning business] here, that would help me to sustain this place and that's how I look at it," says Lasu.

In the meantime, he encourages locals to drop by, say hello, and offer suggestions on what he can add to the business to make it more beneficial for everyone.

FALLING IN LOVE WITH NIVERVILLE

This is Lasu's first foray into self-employment. The dream of opening a business like this one began about five years ago. Niv-

erville became his location of choice when he lived in the community for five years and fell in love with the people and community as a whole.

"I appreciate the people in Niverville," Lasu says. "They are very friendly and easy to get along with. It is a very secure community. That's why I feel good about Niverville... I never felt that my children were at risk in this community. It's very peaceful."

Unfortunately, Lasu needed to move his family to Dominion City to find more affordable housing while he started his new business. Apart from the laundromat, Lasu has also been a six-year employee of the Niverville Heritage Personal Care Home, working the night shift.

Lasu says he learned his skills with laundry from a South African woman while he was living as an asylum-seeker in Egypt. He's been in Canada for ten years now, having escaped the political unrest in his home country of Sudan.

While in Egypt awaiting his refugee acceptance, he worked as an office assistant and company translator. Since coming to Canada, he's gained his legal Canadian citizenship and couldn't be more proud of the country he now calls home.

"Come to me," Lasu says of his new business plan. "I just want to say to the customers out there, please, I need your support. If you feel that your [laundry] is overwhelming, bring some clothes for me and with the \$5, \$10, \$15 dollars, you keep me going. And then one day you will really need me and you will find me around here... I would like to prove my services so that I can stay here and put more smiles on people's faces."

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Imagine Closes the Chapter on 12 Successful Years

By Brenda Sawatzky

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After 12 years and a successful run, the Imagine Mental Health Matters team is moving on. The organization, founded by Mona Stott of Niverville, achieved what they set out to do and more, working to eradicate the stigma attached to mental health disease and suicide.

"The communities around here became suicide-safer," Stott says. "The awareness is definitely out there and people are a lot more comfortable with it. We've just lifted the lid off Pandora's box."

While the committee morphed over the years, Stott has been there since its inception. They achieved much through their many events, which included a half-marathon along the streets of Niverville, family events at Hespeler Park, craft and fashion shows, and the One Big Day for Imagine event which taught the importance of reaching out to family and friends when you're in a state of mental health crisis.

But Stott says it wouldn't have happened without the faithful champions who gave from the heart year after year, including local businesses, members of the Crystal Springs Hutterite colony, and individuals from the communities in which they worked.

This past year, Stott organized speakers for a radio talk show who candidly discussed the disease and its effect on sufferers and their loved ones.

While she hopes to continue her work toward the goal of fighting the stigma, she felt the timing was right to retire from the Imagine team this year. With that, the committee as a whole decided their work here was done.

"What's happened is that our organization has grown to the point that people think that we're clinical," Stott says, suggesting that people in crisis were looking to them for professional help.

The Imagine organization began when Stott herself was in a state of crisis. She and her husband Jeff lost their 25-year-old son Joey to suicide in 2007. At the time, Stott had been training for the Manitoba Marathon. Joey died just days before the marathon, leaving the Stotts devastated and feeling alone in their pain.

To cope, Stott poured herself further into running, which she says gave her a chance to scream, cry, and think along the roads of the rural countryside in which she lives.

"June 17 was Joey's birthday and it was Father's Day and also the Manitoba Marathon," Stott says of the fateful day they buried their son. "I still had this unfinished business that I needed to do in completing the marathon. Looking back, running was a very good coping mechanism for me."

That fall, members of her Running Room group invited others to join Stott in a run for mental health awareness. About 300 runners showed up to demonstrate their support. Within months, the Imagine Mental Health Matters organization was born.

Stott knew the team had a big job ahead of them since the stigma carried by mental health and suicide had deep roots. As a child, Stott's mother suffered from bipolar disorder, a condition that was poorly understood by medical professionals let alone untrained individuals.

She recalls the church viewing mental health disease



Mona Stott holds up a picture of her children, Danielle and Joey. ✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

as "the devil's work" and heard stories of suicide victims being buried outside of the graveyard's boundaries with headstones facing west, marking them as unfit for heaven.

Stott's wish is that her mother and son could be alive today to witness the changes that have taken place in terms of open conversation about the disease, even within the faith community. She encourages parents to begin conversations about mental health at home from a young age.

The first Imagine run in 2008 had a Rock 'n Roll theme, with local musicians entertaining runners along the route. Stott was shocked and pleased to see parents with young children standing at the end of their driveways, cheering on the runners with chants of "Stamp out the stigma!"

Year after year, the event grew and changed, but one

thing never changed—the event became a safe place for people to talk about the loss of loved ones and for others to admit their own struggles and seek help. The Lonely Mile became a permanent fixture: signs along a stretch of the route were emblazoned with the names of those who had lost the fight with mental illness, a solemn reminder of the importance of the mission.

During the early years, Stott pursued training as one of only a few mental health advocates in Manitoba. She was invited to speak at schools and corporate events and was eventually recognized as a master trainer through the ASSIST program. She went on to train staff of the City of Winnipeg and Child and Family Services to recognize the red flags of a suicidal person.

"People are suffering in silence and the silence fuels the disease," Stott says.

"There's all these red flags and if you care enough for the individual, you'll take the time to ask, 'What's going on?'"

The most common indicators, she says, include risky behavior, self-medicating, lack of personal care, giving away personal effects, and a language of self-deprecation... red flags she wished she'd had the education to deal with 12 years earlier.

"That's where our medical system needs to step up and look after these individuals," says Stott of Manitoba's overworked and underfunded mental health workers. "It's not for us to be doing that. When you do this, you take on people's pain and you come back drained mentally because you want so badly to get them the help that they deserve."

THE LAST YEAR

In 2019, as Imagine comes to a close, the committee has sought out ways to disperse the remaining funds entrusted to them. Once again, Imagine offered graduation bursaries to high school students.

The balance will also be donated to high school students, providing opportunities for classrooms of kids to attend a concert performed by the Robb Nash Project this coming November.

Nash is a successful Canadian musician with ties to Niverville. The meaning of his own life came into perspective the year he nearly died in a fatal collision with a semi-truck. Since that time, he's dedicated his career to reaching out to youth with messages on bullying, addiction, self-harm and suicide.

According to his website, more than 800 students have handed Nash their suicide notes after concerts. As well, hundreds of razor blades have been turned in from those who self-harm, and bottles of pills have been relinquished.

Stott and the Imagine team are glad to help people like Nash carry the torch into the future. And while the work of the Imagine team will soon be a memory, thanks to their dedication Manitobans will be talking about mental health issues long into the future.

For now, Stott is excited for the extra time she'll have to focus on making memories with her husband, daughter, son-in-law, and two granddaughters.

"My granddaughters will never know their uncle Joey," Stott says. "There's always going to be a huge presence missing. It's just the harsh reality of where we are in our life."

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Greg Knox of Richardson International presents a donation cheque to Fire Chief Keith Bueckert.

MEL BERGEN

Niverville Fire and EMS Receive Substantial Grant

By Brenda Sawatzky

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Niverville Fire Chief Keith Bueckert is excited to accept a grant on behalf of the Fire and EMS Department. The \$20,000 grant, provided by Richardson International Ltd. of Winnipeg, will be put toward the purchase of another four Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) units.

The goal is to acquire enough units to equip every member of the fire department, providing added safety for the members themselves while giving the community the benefit of having more firefighters actively involved in the business of saving homes and lives.

The additional four units will bring Niverville to a total of 18 SCBAs, leaving them only two units away from their goal.

"The SCBA with the bottle is close to \$8,500 per unit, so they're not cheap," Bueckert says. Bueckert and his team will combine the grant with the \$7,500 received from the Fireman's Ball, as well as funds from other campaigns they've been active with over the year.

To commemorate the

donation, Fire and EMS members, as well as their families and town council, gathered for a dinner on July 30 at the fire hall. Another six to eight families who live in Niverville and work for Richardson International were invited to attend as well.

Bueckert says two members of his team, Deputy Chief Brad Wasilinchuk and firefighter Greg Knox, worked hard at the lengthy application process, which required them to indicate the specifics of Niverville Fire and EMS's fundraising initiatives and equipment needs.

Knox also works for Richardson International, a Canadian agriculture and food industry company, and made the team aware of the grants the company provides on an annual basis to organizations that make a difference in the agricultural community.

"Our SCBAs are used in all different types of environments that require us to be on air," Bueckert says. "Whether it's going into a [collapsed] grain bin or farm fires. They are big on helping in the community and they came through in a big way for us."

The first ten SCBA units acquired by the Fire and EMS

team happened as a result of good fiscal management of the emergency services budget provided by the town every year. The balance were a result of fundraisers such as perogy dinners and the Fireman's Ball, as well as individual donations.

More recently, the Fire and EMS Department participated in the Strike Out Stigma slo-pitch tournament, a fundraiser created to generate awareness and raise funds for first responders dealing with PTSD. Bueckert says proceeds they received from that event will be maintained in a mental health fund to assist their own members.

"You never know when a call is going to affect somebody," Bueckert says. "If we don't have all of the resources, we want to make sure that we have all the funds that we can to send these people for help... They say that [the number one killer of] first responders is suicide. It's not job illnesses or an accident at work... So that's a scary statistic."

Residents are reminded to come support the Fire and EMS at their open house in the second week of October during Fire Prevention Week.



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Officials Break Ground on New CRRC

By Brenda Sawatzky

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

On July 16, ground was officially broken on Niverville's new Community Resource and Recreation Centre (CRRC). In April, council was pleased to announce over \$11 million in funding for the CRRC from the federal and provincial governments. Along with Niverville council's earlier commitment of \$5 million, that funding was more than enough to kick the project off, leaving only \$3 million of the almost \$20-million-dollar budget left for local fundraising.

Ground-breaking day had been temporarily delayed as council awaited finalized design plans.

Local officials gathered at the site, including MP Ted Falk of Provencher, MLA Shannon Martin of Morris, Minister of Infrastructure Ron Schuler, Niverville Mayor Myron Dyck, as well as council members and town staff, representatives of the CRRC fundraising committee, and the management team of Von Ast Construction.

Dyck opened the event by acknowledging all levels of government as well as those on the ground floor who have invested themselves in seeing this project through to fruition. Among those are the Friends of Niverville, a committee dedicated to the planning of this project for the past few years.

"You need people who are community champions and invest in your community," Dyck said. "Today we have



Councillor John Funk, Clare Braun, MLA Shannon Martin, Mayor Myron Dyck, MP Ted Falk, Minister of Infrastructure Ron Schuler, Councillor Chris Wiebe, Councillor Nathan Dueck, and Libby Hanna.

BRENDA SAWATZKY

both Libby Hanna with us as well as Clare Braun. [Thank you] to all of their committee."

Special mention also went out to the Von Ast Construction team, the builder council has contracted for the project.

"They've shown themselves to be highly professional and to provide a quality of workmanship that I know this community can be very proud of," he continued. "And we're very excited that they will be the ones working on this."

Ted Falk says he sees Niverville as one of the communities in his riding that is really

going places.

"You've got a council and community groups here that are aggressive," says Falk. "They want to look after their residents and provide facilities for them so that people are attracted here and they want to stay here so that their families can thrive and grow."

Shannon Martin added that this new facility only reinforces the community's motto, "Where you belong," and he's thrilled for the vibrant, active community that he's had the pleasure of representing for the past six years.

The proposed

99,000-square-foot facility, once complete, will house a new arena, fieldhouse, and regulation-size ball courts. But it will also serve as an optimal gathering place with a two-storey indoor playground, meeting rooms, multipurpose rooms, a teaching kitchen, and rental space.

Unique to any other rural facility in Manitoba, the CRRC will connect to the new Niverville High School by way of a corridor leading to a registered childcare facility and the school's performing arts space.

"This has been tried in a

few other places in the city, but this is the first one that's been tried outside of the city," says Schuler. "You bring together two really important facets of a community: the school and the extracurricular activity. Too often those are separate, but schools need space for extracurricular and sometimes extracurricular needs stuff from the school, so this is a really healthy combination."

Actively involved on the fundraising committee for the CRRC, Braun says times in Niverville have changed since the first arena was built here 52 years ago.

"I was 13 when we built [the current arena]," says Braun. "I watched the politics of this happen and there was a certain sadness to seeing it unfold because, as a community, we weren't together."

The original arena plan, he says, included a proposed dance hall on the same site but council and the community at large were highly divided on the issue.

In 1995, when Braun was elected mayor, he recalls a level of frustration with higher levels of government who wouldn't provide funding to Niverville for even the most basic healthcare amenities. The solution, he and council decided, lay within the community itself and not from higher levels of government.

"If we're going to be committed internally and stay unified in the process, there'll be a time when governments will come to us and give us the things that we aspire to," Braun says of council's sentiments back in the day. "And that's what really happened over here [with the CRRC]."

Since the funding announcement in April, Braun has been approached by leaders of other communities who are astounded at Niverville's ability to make things happen without division in the ranks. He attributes that to learning from past mistakes, a forward-thinking council, a younger overall demographic of residents, and, generally, people who now listen to each other without dogmatism getting in the way of progress.

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IN BRIEF

Ritchot Approves Business Incentive Grants

By Brenda Sawatzky

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Ritchot's council has decided to set aside \$25,000 from this year's budget to provide a funds-matching grant to Main Street businesses in the municipality for the enhancement of their properties. The money comes from the Economic Development Officer salary, a position which is currently vacant.

Grants of up to \$5,000 will be provided. Applications will be available through the CDC.

Council also approved the first reading of a Business Incentive bylaw which will be created to encourage new business start-ups in the municipality as well as the expansion of existing businesses which add value to their commercial property value assessment.

Duval reviewed the details of the plan, which included tax breaks for one to five years, depending on the valuation of the business. In the first year, all applicants would be refunded 100 percent of their property taxes. In the following years, if the business is eligible, the tax break would be reduced incrementally.

Home-based businesses or applicants who rent or lease will not qualify for the grant.

"It's a great way to initiate business in Ritchot to get commercial development going," said Mayor Chris Ewen. "It may not be a lot, but every dollar helps in your first five years of business. I really think this is something that will boost the industrial parks... I'm excited to start launching our marketing for this."

New Bothwell Celebrates Centennial

By Brenda Sawatzky

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

On June 22, New Bothwell residents past and present converged for a full day of festivities to commemorate the community's one hundredth year. A small event committee treated the crowd of about 400 to a memorable day which began with a pancake breakfast and concluded with one of the best fireworks displays ever to be seen over the town.

Edna Vogt says planning the event was a big undertaking... one that resulted in many smiles and memories shared.

The community supper, prepared by a group of local women, required the hand-pressing of hundreds of cottage cheese and potato perogies as well as the slaughtering of a pig for the farmer sausage barbecue. In keeping with the community's Mennonite roots, the dinner was served with heaps of schmaunt fat (cream gravy), corn, and coleslaw.

Throughout the day, attendees were kept busy with a paint party, baseball games, a beanbag toss, entertainment by Five Acres, and the comedy of Big Daddy Tazz. Kids horsed around on inflatable games or joined in on a community-wide scavenger hunt in search of a cash prize.

Of the four main committee members, Vogt says she and Irma Friesen were also on the seventy-fifth anniversary committee 25 years ago.

"We have a video from our seventy-fifth... and we had that going all day," Vogt says. "That's the best thing we could have done. You should have seen the people watching that. It was 120 minutes and some just sat fascinated because there were so many people [at this event that were also at that one]... It's just amazing to see how, in 25 years, people had changed."

At midday, the committee also unveiled an 80-foot mural which they'd commissioned from renowned artist Mandy van



Edna Vogt and Carol Tesluk, about to perform the ribbon-cutting ceremony with the town's new mural in the background. CHANTELE DUECK

Leeuwen of Winnipeg. The mural runs along the length of the community's recreation building and depicts many facets of New Bothwell's 100-year history.

A special ribbon-cutting ceremony was held at the mural. Carol Tesluk and 94-year-old Helen Kehler, New Bothwell's oldest living resident, were asked to cut the ribbon. Chantelle Dueck received a Volunteer of the Year award.

"On our seventy-fifth [anniversary], we did a humongous [affair]," says Vogt. "We had a homecoming reunion on the August long weekend and we sent out 1,500 letters to former students. We went very small scale this time. You just don't seem to have the volunteers you used to have. We wanted just a one-day [event] but also kind of special."

GATEWAY TO THE EAST RESERVE

While 100 years is certainly cause for celebration, the marker used for the community's anniversary is actually that of the beginnings of the Bothwell School District.

In 1919, a one-room schoolhouse was built near what was once known as Kronsthal, a small farming community half a mile west of the site New Bothwell sits on today. Kronsthal directly translates in Low German to "Crown Valley." The farmsteads were intersected by a major route to the city known to the locals as the Winnipeg Road. One of those farmsteads is still there today.

Story has it that in 1877, Lord Dufferin, his wife Harriot, the

Countess of Dufferin, and their daughter Nellie paid a visit by horse and carriage to Kronsthal. William Hespeler and a delegation of four horsemen from the area greeted the regal party at an arch that had been created by the locals with pine boughs and a sign that read "Mennonite Reserve." The delegation led Lord Dufferin and his family through to their final destination. From that time, Kronsthal was considered by many to be the Gateway to the East Reserve.

By 1919, children of the Kronsthal area were able to attend school at the newly erected Bothwell School.

In 1936, the Bothwell Cheese factory was built across from the schoolhouse by two local gentlemen looking for a way to use up their excess milk. Shortly after, Vogt's parents, Peter and Elizabeth Hiebert, built a store near the cheese factory, and this is where Vogt spent her formative years. Milk was delivered in cans and doled out to shoppers. One-hundred-pound bags of flour were stored in a shed nearby.

Kronsthal extended to include homes that came up around the school and businesses. Vogt's father created a small makeshift post office in his store and made regular trips to Niverville to collect and sort the mail belonging to Kronsthal residents.

Eventually, the government agreed to allow for postal service direct to the area but requested a different name for the community.

Locals decided to assume the name of the school, but there was already a community called Bothwell in Ontario.

"The imagination didn't go very far," laughs Vogt. "So they said, 'Then let's call it New Bothwell.' So that's how it came to be."

Vogt herself is a fourth-generation New Bothweller. Her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren also attended school here. Her memories of New Bothwell as a child are still clear. One of her favourite childhood memories includes visiting the nearby cheese factory and filling small paper bags with fresh cheese curds right out of the vat. This was their candy.

"We grew up on cheese curds," she says fondly.

The small schoolhouse eventually burned to the ground in 1944. The children resumed school in a machine shed nearby until a new four-room school was built. In the 1960s, while the province was shutting down schools and amalgamating school districts, the New Bothwell Chamber of Commerce went straight to Ed Schreyer, provincial NDP leader, for a promise to let them keep the school in New Bothwell. A new school was built and, today, around 200 children attend from Kindergarten to Grade Eight.

New Bothwell made more progress in the 1960s, including paving the main streets and bringing hydro electricity to all homes.

But there's no question in Vogt's mind that the community's growth has stemmed largely from the cheese factory. She laughs at a story she once heard about a St. Pierre gentleman who was vacationing in Texas. When asked by a local Texan where he was from, the Texan had never heard of St. Pierre, but he queried whether it was close to New Bothwell.

Vogt still feels an intense sense of pride in her small community of about 600.

"When you [acknowledge] that your great-grandparents began homesteading here," she says, "that means your roots are pretty deep."

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Commentary

The Cannabis Store: What Is the Role of Council?

By Greg Fehr

When you consider what it's like to be a municipal council member, you realize quite quickly that this isn't a role for the faint of heart. It's a tough and unforgiving position. Most "simple" decisions are actually quite complex, and at any given time there's going to be people out there who think you're an idiot.

I know this firsthand, having spent my time at that council table, first as councillor and then as mayor. I've sometimes wondered whether public service should be mandatory for everyone in the community at some point, so that perhaps we could all experience what a challenge this can be.

Niverville's council faced a particularly great challenge this week with the public hearings in regards to a cannabis store.

In a brief and unusual glimmer of intelligence on social media, I actually saw someone correctly point out that council couldn't have made a decision that would have pleased the collective masses. Kudos to the person who made this comment, because it reminded me of two phone calls I took one day during my tenure on council. The first gentleman informed me that we were wasting his tax dollars on the mowing of ditches. The second informed me that we were setting a



poor first impression for visitors by not mowing the grass all the way to Highway 59.

Why was I reminded of this? Perhaps the similarities go beyond the fact that both the past and present story deal with grass.

While recent articles and commentaries have enlightened the masses about what happened at that July 23 council meeting, people's confusion about the role of council is a bit silly. It's silly that in this day and age we still have public notices written in legalese, when what the public really needs are notices written in plain language.

And it's downright foolish for members of the public not to take the time to educate themselves on how their government works. Heck, when I get my insurance renewal, I'm often confused by the listings of coverages and exclusions, so I get in contact with my broker and have it explained to me. That's not wisdom;

that's just basic prudence.

Yes, the rules around municipal zoning make for a complex piece of legislation, but it boils down to a pretty straightforward principle: making sure that the use of a particular title is in sync with the neighbourhood and community at large. So either a property's use is permitted, conditional, or not allowed. If the use is permitted, no hearing is required. If the use isn't allowed, then a variation or rezoning is required.

The whole idea behind the idea of conditional use was to recognize that sometimes it's okay to go outside the precisely allowed use of a property. Sometimes it's not. And often it's okay as long as certain conditions and modifications are met.

Applying for a conditional use isn't a yes-or-no process, by design. Council has the ability to consider a large number of factors in making their decision, including whether the best interests of the community

will be met. They don't just consider the points of view of the few people who attend the hearing; they have to consider the entire community.

Viewing this as a pro- or anti-marijuana debate is oversimplifying it, and it's just plain foolish. To do so is foolish for a member of the public and foolish for a member of council.

We live in a confederation where, unlike our neighbour to the south, areas of responsibility aren't delegated by geography but rather through levels of government. Our federal leaders have deemed this substance saleable, just as they have tobacco and liquor. They have delegated controls and legislation to the provinces, who have in turn passed on local responsibility to municipal authorities.

It's not now the role of a municipal council to determine whether the feds have made the right choice; that role belongs to the people, who will decide shortly if our current federal

leaders deserve another mandate. But it is the municipal council's role to scrutinize each proposal brought to them and determine if all appropriate measures within the sphere of their responsibility have been put in place.

Simply put, the proponent of this conditional use application failed to answer some valid concerns. Were I still sitting at that council table for a conditional use hearing, be it for a home daycare or marijuana dispensary, if the applicant couldn't address my concerns then the use would not be passed. Period. That is the duty of council.

I say this as someone who has previously written in support of legalization. I'm hopeful that despite the missteps of government in implementation, legalized sales will result in less money funnelling into the hands of black market dealers, just as government-controlled liquor virtually eliminated the backyard booze stills of the past. I don't believe it will happen in the near future, but this is the first step in the process.

Council fulfilled their role this time around, and at this point I'll trust that they made their decision for the appropriate reasons within their scope of responsibility. And I trust that the community can accept it.

Until the next proposal comes forward. Because it will come, and may we all be better prepared.

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The 2019 Business Awards and Gala Event is set for Saturday, November 16th at the TransCanada Centre in Ile des Chenes. Give recognition to your favorite local business by nominating them for a business award at Nominate.RitchotChamber.com

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Back row: Mason Dearborn, Kennedy Morissette, Carter Fast, Seth Bunn, Jason Bunn (coach), Clayton Smeltz (coach), Stan Hiebert (coach), Niko Lemoine, and Seth Hooper. Front row: Noah Hudson, Cruze Janz, Jeremiah Martens, Tristan Cousineau, Ben Hiebert, and Ryan Smeltz.

CLAYTON SMELTZ

Niverville Wildcats Win Provincials on Home Turf

By Evan Braun

editor@nivervillecitizen.com

At the U11A Provincial Baseball Championships, held in Niverville's Hespeler Park from July 5-7, the home team came out on top. The Niverville Wildcats won an exciting 10-8 final against the Kleefeld Stingers on Sunday afternoon.

This is the second time in three years that Niverville has won the U11A Provincials.

The Wildcats entered the 12-team field on Friday morning with a nervous first game against the Carberry Royals. The Royals claimed victory in the close 5-3 match, which ended up being Niverville's only loss of the tournament.

"On Friday afternoon, the team resumed play against the Portage Phillies," says coach Clayton Smeltz. "The bats started to come alive and the runs came early and often as the Wildcats started to find their stride."

That game was ended after four innings with a score of 14-4, an example of the mercy rule in action.

On Saturday, the Wildcats faced Dauphin in a must-win game. Both teams had strong fan support, according to Smeltz, and it began as a close back-and-forth game. Niverville pulled away in the later innings, securing a 14-6 win and advancing to the playoffs.

Niverville's first playoff tilt was against the Brandon Cardinals.

"After the dust settled, Niverville won 14-6, setting up a semi-final matchup against Carberry," says Smeltz. "Behind great pitching from Seth Hooper, solid defence, and timely hitting, the rematch decisively went to Niverville in a 14-0 score, again in a mercy-rule-shortened four-inning game."

Kleefeld won the other semi-final, setting up an exciting provincial final between Kleefeld and Niverville, communities just 25 kilometres apart.

"The coin flip went to Niverville and the game began fast and furious with Kleefeld putting up three runs in the top of the first inning," Smeltz says. "Niverville responded with a three-run homerun by Jeremiah Martens in the bottom half of the inning. The fans that filled both sidelines were in for a great game!"

Gradually, Niverville pulled ahead, building an 8-4 lead after four innings. In the bottom of the fifth, Seth Hooper hit a two-run homer to extend the lead to 10-4.

Smeltz points out, though, that no lead is safe in U11 baseball.

"Kleefeld fought back in the top of the sixth and final inning, putting up four runs to bring the score to 10-8," he says.

When the final out was recorded, the potentially game-tying runners were stuck on second and third base.

"If you were outdoors at exactly 4:01 p.m. on Sunday and were wondering what all the cheering was

about, now you know!" Smeltz says. "Shoutout to Ben Hiebert and Ryan Smeltz, as they combined for a gutsy pitching performance in the final for the Wildcats."

A SUCCESSFUL WEEKEND

Aside from Niverville's strong performance, the weekend was hailed a success by the organizers.

"We estimate there were over 600 people attending the event on the weekend," says Rod Wolfe of the Wildcats organization. "The diamonds held up very well."

Wolfe pointed to the excellent condition of Hespeler Park going into the tournament, including a large number of mature, shady trees and the recently expanded parking lot on the south side of the park to accommodate visitors from around the province.

"We heard several positive comments from coaches and spectators about the diamonds and Hespeler Park in general," Wolfe adds. "The

town's operations staff did a great job in maintaining the diamonds and park prior to and during the tournament. Their help was a key part of the success of the event."

Wolfe also extended thanks to the network of volunteers who chipped in, many of whom hadn't officially signed up for volunteer duty. He says that this kind of event couldn't have succeeded without Niverville's dedicated baseball families.

"Thank you to our sponsors for their financial support, which helped us to offset the costs of the tournament," he says. "Sponsors were Von Ast Construction, The Great Canadian Dollar Store, Niverville Family Chiropractic, BSI Insurance, and Niverville Credit Union. Last but not least is a thank you to Niverville Physiotherapy for providing medical services for the tournament. Thankfully, there were no serious injuries, but they did attend to some sore shoulders, tweaked ankles, etc."



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Odin Peterson with his family in Kamloops, British Columbia.

RAY PETERSON

Niverville Teen Competes for Manitoba in Kamloops Tourney

By Gabrielle Taylor

While most teenagers spend their summers playing Madden NFL, 15-year-old Odin Peterson of Niverville travelled across the country to represent Football Manitoba on its U16 team in a cross-country tournament.

"I like playing with people I know, of course," says Peterson. "They're my friends. But I also like meeting new people. And with football, you do a lot of that."

From July 15-18, Peterson competed in the 2019 U16 Western Challenge on Team Manitoba in Kamloops, British Columbia. This four-day event allowed for carefully selected players from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia to compete against talents from other provinces.

Peterson may only be 15, but he already stands 6'2"—and his size contributes to his success.

"I was always a lot taller... and my size is how I got into

football," he adds. "I've always been the tallest in my class and tallest in my grade."

Peterson played hockey and basketball when he was younger but quickly discovered that his passion was football. He started playing when he was in the third grade, and eight years later it's become a passion of his.

"I'm sticking with football," he says, his enthusiasm evident in his voice as he talks about the game. "It's probably the sport I find the most fun, the sport I'm the best at, and the sport that I'm able to use my athletic skills the best at... I've learned a lot of skills. When you're there, you work with really good coaches... I've learned how high-level football players play and how much I need to raise my game when I play against guys like that."

Peterson's family took the U16 Western Challenge as an opportunity to spend quality time together and visit with Peterson's grandfather in Vancouver.

But the family also understood that not everyone has the same opportunities. To do their part to support others, they hosted two other young football players in their home in the lead-up to the trip. Together, the three teenage boys prepared for their tournament in Kamloops.

"Odin has gotten to show off this great town," says his mother Melissa.

Team Manitoba also held a week-long camp before they arrived in B.C., allowing for the team to get to know each other and explore the province.

Peterson now looks forward to sharing the skills he learned during the tournament with his team here at home. And he hopes to share more than just football knowledge with the community at large.

"[There's more than] just teaching and helping the other guys on my team with skills," he says. "You learn a lot of leadership skills."

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Local Golfer Wins Men's Amateur Championship

By Graham Schellenberg

As he prepares for the U.S. Men's Amateur Golf Championship in August, Niverville's Colwyn Abgrall has added another title to his name: 2019 Manitoba Men's Amateur Golf Champion.

Close into the final round at Quarry Oaks Golf Course on July 18, Abgrall birdied the seventy-second hole and finished two shots ahead of Austin Dobrescu of Shilo, Manitoba on his way to a final round even par 72, finishing the tournament with a two-under par 286 total.

Of the 80 competitors registered, Abgrall was the lone golfer to finish under par.

"It feels great to put my name on the trophy, especially at Quarry Oaks," said the Niverville product. "I was down in the front nine... but Austin made some mistakes and I was able to keep the ball in play and make my shots."

It was a rematch of sorts for the 22-year-old, who had finished second to Dobrescu earlier this year at the 2019 Golf Manitoba Match Play Championship held



Niverville golfer Colwyn Abgrall celebrates his victory at the 2019 Manitoba Men's Amateur Golf Championship.

COLWYN ABGRALL

at Breezy Bend Country Club in Headingley.

For now, Abgrall looks toward the 115th Golf Canada Men's Amateur Championship, held August 5-9 in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where the top seven championship finalists have been

invited to represent Manitoba. Colwyn says his flight is booked and that it's an honour to represent Manitoba in team play at the Canadian Men's Amateur.

He will get a few days off before heading to the U.S. Men's Amateur Golf Championship

in North Carolina, held August 11-18 at Pinehurst Resort and Country Club. Abgrall qualified for the event last month in Fargo, North Dakota.

Abgrall is no stranger to the U.S. amateur circuit, having golfed at the collegiate level while studying hospitality/tourism and golf management at Scottsdale Community College in Arizona, where he graduated in 2017. For the past two years, he has returned to Arizona during the offseason, golfing in amateur tour events across the state.

"These are some of the best players not only in North America but across the world," he says. "So I'm looking to go out there and do my best... My expectations are pretty low, to be honest. I just want to keep the ball in play and stick to the game plan."

At this point, Abgrall isn't sure what his plans are after the U.S. Amateur. There's some talk of turning pro, which he isn't in any rush to do. Other options include going to qualifying school or even returning to Arizona. For now, he's focused on the upcoming tournaments.

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Arts & Entertainment

Cheyenne Summer Fest Celebrates 30 Years

By Brenda Sawatzky

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Every July for the past 30 years, Ste. Agathe has lit up with two days of lively entertainment geared toward the whole family. This year on July 19-20, the Cheyenne Summer Fest celebrated three decades since its inception in 1989.

Eric Gagnon, chairperson of the festival's organizing committee, says that this year's itinerary was chock full of the traditional highlights residents and eventgoers have come to know and love, including the Pioneer Games, family baseball, a community supper, a social, and a pancake breakfast.

In commemoration of the 30-year anniversary, permanent signs were hung along Ste. Agathe's main street, Pembina Trail.

To emphasize the community's francophone roots, a variety of Metis and French traditions made their return.

The Pioneer Games are inspired by similar events at the Festival du Voyageur. Competitions included events such as jambette (leg wrestling) and sciage de pitoune (log-sawing). Nic Messner once again entertained attendees of the Pioneer Games and the pancake breakfast with some rousing Metis fiddling.

The pancake breakfast has been a long-time staple of the festival. The standout item on the menu is the sucre à crème, a Quebecois recipe made from sugar and cream. At the Cheyenne Fest, it's served hot and poured over homemade



The S.S. Cheyenne, which infamously ran aground near Ste. Agathe in 1885.

ERIC GAGNON

pancakes. Roseline Gagnon, Eric's aunt, is the hard-working chef behind the decadent treat.

"She's notorious in town for her sucre à crème," says Eric Gagnon. "It's awesome!"

In terms of sporting events, visitors also took in the annual horseshoe tournament or joined in on the family baseball.

"I know it's just a silly baseball tournament, but this is something that people look forward to and get pumped about," says Gagnon. "Friendly rivalries form. We've kept it so far as a family baseball tournament and the one thing I like about that is that it encourages us to get together as families. That's still a big thing in our town. There's still a very strong family component. Everyone kind of knows everyone."

New this year was the

Fris-nok tournament. The game is simple, requiring two bottles balanced on two poles and a frisbee. Each team works at knocking the opponents' bottle from the pole.

While live entertainment has played a role in past festivals, based on community feedback from the past year music for the Hawaiian social and dance party on Saturday night were provided by local deejay Derek Shelest.

"We always try and promote local talent and local artists," Gagnon says.

And while all that was going on, the kids were kept busy with a petting zoo, a slip-n-slide, a jewellery workstation, and bubble soccer.

On Friday night, a parade proceeded up Pembina Trail, followed by an old-fashioned bonfire with campfire songs and s'mores at Cartier Park.

The first night closed with a colourful fireworks display at dusk.

Guests stayed hydrated and fed at the beer garden and canteen as well as the Saturday night dinner provided by Lucky Luc's.

FESTIVAL ORIGINS

If you're a newcomer to Ste. Agathe, you might not be aware of how the Cheyenne Summer Fest came upon its name.

It's a fascinating story that locals love to share.

In the late nineteenth century, a steamboat called the SS Cheyenne made its regular trek up the Red River, sailing past the tiny community of Ste. Agathe, transporting goods and people between Winnipeg and St. Paul, Minnesota.

In 1885, the Cheyenne

made its last voyage, beached by a boiler which had exploded when the craft was just off the riverbank near Ste. Agathe. The boiler was thrown overboard and the steamboat was towed to Winnipeg, where it was retired.

Almost 100 years later, in 1981, H. Baudry Construction of Ste. Agathe unearthed the famous boiler from the depths of the dirty river, had it restored in Winnipeg, and returned it to its new home. It now sits on display along Pembina Trail.

Just a few years later, members of the community kicked off the inaugural Cheyenne Fest at the site of the boiler, donning yacht caps.

"It sort of just became a part of the town since then," Gagnon says. "I make the joke, 'Not a lot happens here,' but when something like that

does happen, which is this historical moment, we try and remember that."

A few years ago, the community also began the Ste. Agathe Hockey League, calling their trophy the Boiler Cup.

THE COMMITTEE

Gagnon is a three-year member of the Cheyenne Summer Fest committee.

"Our committee is super awesome," Gagnon says. "It's a really well-run machine... with a dedicated group of committee members."

Some of the members, he says, have been with the committee since its beginning 30 years ago, but he's also pleased with the way the younger generation has stepped up to the plate to keep the festival rolling along year after year.

"If you look at our committee, I think half of us now are under 30," Gagnon says. "That's something I've tried to push for, that the younger generation is coming in... and making sure that we're doing our part now for our community."

Gagnon and his committee are also committed to keeping the event affordable. Entry costs just \$5 per person for the entire weekend.

"It's dirt cheap," says Gagnon. "We see it as a way that this festival can continue. We want to make our festival as accessible and inclusive as possible."

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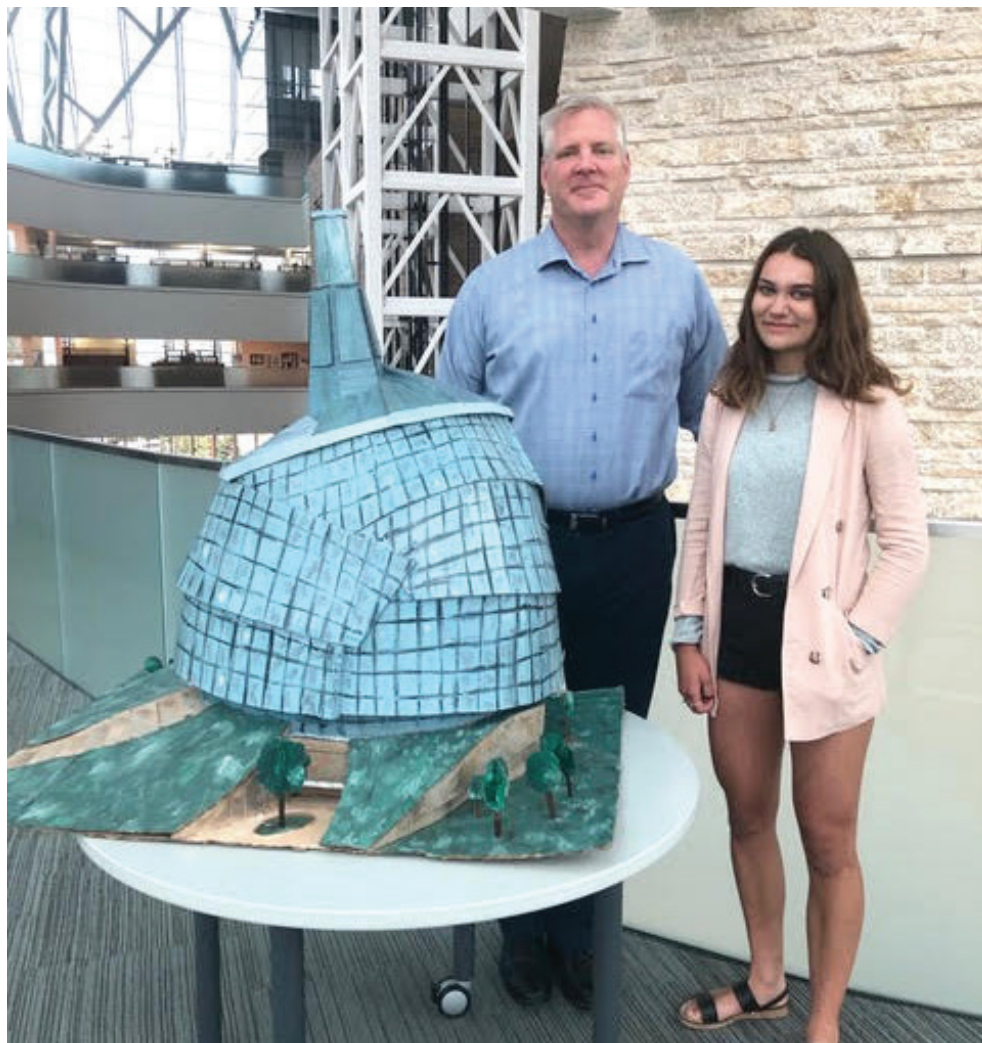
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Human Rights Museum CEO Dr. John Young with Maddie Thompson of Niverville

CMHR

Artist Crafts, Presents Model of Iconic Human Rights Museum

By Liz Byron

Maddie Thompson of Niverville has her sights set on a career in architecture, and an assignment from her Grade 12 art class has her on her way.

Thompson, who graduated from Niverville Collegiate earlier this summer, was tasked with creating five original art pieces.

One of them was a large model of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR) in Winnipeg. She named the piece *1948*, after the year that the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

"It took me almost two months to build it," Thompson says, recalling the creation process. She started by amassing a large quantity of cardboard and hot glue, and then began creating her pattern.

Undaunted by the museum's unusual shape, Thompson says she used images of the museum.

"I went on Google Maps to take screenshots of the building, and started drawing out each piece I would need, making sure to label them," she says.

The CMHR was designed by world-renowned architect Antoine Predock, who is known for his use of unusual shapes and angles, and his sculptural style.

Thompson says that the ability to put one's personality into a building is one of the things that interests her most about architecture.

"[Architecture] gives a different kind of artistic freedom," she says. "Architecture is always evolving. Many art forms stay similar throughout the years, but architecture is always changing with new design ideas and trends."

The design of the building isn't the only thing that drew Thompson to the CMHR as the basis of her project.

"It's more about what the building represents in general," she explains. "Inside are stories and lessons to be

learned about human rights, the spreading of awareness as to what is truly going on in this world. With this piece, I didn't want to only represent an issue with the world but also a solution."

All of the art she makes deals with issues facing the world, she adds, such as climate change, peace, or human rights.

For Thompson, awareness is key.

"Sometimes we take our rights for granted and don't notice that others in the world don't have the same privileges as us," she says.

After her class's art show wrapped up, Thompson gifted *1948* to the CMHR. While there, Thompson, who will be attending the University of Manitoba in the fall, took a moment to pose for a photo with CMHR President and CEO Dr. John Young.

1948 is now on display in the back of the museum for the enjoyment of museum staff and volunteers.



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Fifty Years of Frog Follies

By Brenda Sawatzky

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

On July 11, the St. Pierre-Jolys Frog Follies was back for another four days of summertime fun, and with it a full line-up of family events to celebrate the festival's fiftieth year. Best yet, all this entertainment was enjoyed at no cost for entry.

"You can just wander around and see all of the entertainment for free, including the big acts," says Faith Desharnais, president of the Frog Follies organizing committee.

Live bands took the stage, such as the 90s rock troupe Keep the Change, blues band The Grifters, and back by popular demand, Free Ride, a 50s and 60s tribute band.

For sports enthusiasts, the slo-pitch and ultimate frisbee tournaments took place on Saturday and Sunday. For thrill-seekers, Freestyle Motocross and Elevate Skateshop hosted heart-stopping demonstrations of some of their most daring stunts on motorbike and skateboard.

Kids were kept busy all weekend with endless activities under the big tent, where they could check out the petting zoo, Madame Diva, LuLuBell the Clown, and Eric the Juggler, known for his chainsaw-juggling act.

"A number of years ago, we actually received an award for having the best children's activities in a Canada-wide magazine," boasts Desharnais. "It's a huge tent and it's all under there."

FROG-JUMPING

Of course, the festival's trademark event—frog-jumping—gave every age group a chance to get hands-on with the local amphibians and win some cash prizes.

This long-standing tradition is what put St. Pierre-Jolys on the map



Faith Desharnais, president of the Frog Follies organizing committee.

BRENDA SAWATZKY

50 years ago when the community hosted the first Canadian National Frog-Jumping Championship.

It all began with a group of locals seeking to celebrate the community's rich francophone heritage—and their unique approach didn't go unnoticed. On July 14, 1970, the community festival was paid a visit by Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Charles, who helped them launch the very first St. Pierre Frog Follies.

The mayor at the time, Fernand Lavergne, sent out a challenge to politicians and mayors of other Manitoba towns to compete in the contest. Well-known judges and magistrates showed up for the judging.

The winner of the first-ever frog-jumping contest was Albert Driedger, reeve of the RM of Hanover. His frog, Georges, jumped 7 feet 1.25 inches.

Since that time, the frog-jumping

contest has been the focal point of the annual festival.

The event kicked off on the Thursday night before the festival with the catching of frogs. Children from the area were encouraged to arrive at Maplewood Golf Course at 6:00 p.m.

"The frogs are treated well, they're fed [a special diet], they're kept in a cool area, and they've got water," says Desharnais of the frogs' treatment over the course of the festival.

Every year the committee must apply to Manitoba Sustainable Development for permission to catch the frogs. They receive a Wild Animal Capture permit, which allows them to capture only Northern Leopard frogs for use in the contest. The festival staff are required, as well, to return the frogs back to the place where they were caught and provide a full report to the government agency at the close of the

weekend.

"We have permission [to catch] up to 100 [frogs], but we don't usually manage to catch that many," Desharnais says.

The truth is, the frogs aren't just treated well, they're treated with a certain kind of reverence. Once caught, the frogs become known as the "athletes." Each contest participant can select their athlete and give it a name.

During each contest, the athlete is gently held in place at the starting point and, when released, gets three jumps before their ending point is carefully measured and documented. A trained emcee gives the start call and keeps the participants and gathered crowd cheering.

Desharnais says participants get really invested in the event, developing techniques like drying off the front feet for better grip and

encouraging their athlete without the use of physical contact.

Children's and adults' frog-jumping competitions took place on Saturday afternoon. On Sunday, the frog competitions were open to local business sponsors and VIP dignitaries.

At the end, a Grand National playoff took place with cash prizes at stake in every category.

If you're wondering how the small village of St. Pierre-Jolys, with a population of just over 1,000, can host an event of this magnitude at no cost to the attendee, Desharnais says it's all thanks to the amazing sponsorship by local businesses, churches, and the village council.

Local groups, too, are what makes the committee's job easier. The St. Pierre-Jolys Chamber of Commerce provides a full supper on Saturday night. Each Chamber member is responsible to provide one menu item and attendees can expect a loaded plate of food for just \$6. The proceeds are donated back to the festival committee.

As well, one local church has managed the entire tent of children's activities for many years, a local recreation group is organizing this year's social at the arena, and even the Cinéma Station is providing a free showing of Dumbo on Saturday night.

Small fees are collected from entrants at each of the contests. Frog-jumping, for example, costs \$5 and the cake- or watermelon-eating contests just \$2.

Desharnais said that they generally expect about 1,000 attendees each day of the festival. She also suggested that at least half of those tend to be residents of other communities who come out to enjoy the festivities.

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