

The Citizen

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LOCAL NEWS

New Bothwell Petitions to Become LUD

■ New Bothwell's councillor is pushing for the community to become a local urban district. 201 signatures are needed.

Details on Page 13



LOCAL NEWS

Ste. Agathe Announces New Boat Launch Project

■ A boat launch in Ste. Agathe will soon make it much easier for local boating enthusiasts to get on and off the Red River. The project is part of a years-long master plan for the river.

Details on Page 14

COMMENTARY

The Controversy of Conversion Therapy

■ The federal government is trying to ban the practice of attempting to change a person's sexual orientation.

Details on Page 17

SPORTS & RECREATION

Local Race Car Driver Comes Up Big in France

■ David Richert, originally of Niverville, recently had a major career highlight while on the European racing circuit.

Details on Page 18



Code Red

The Winnipeg Metro Region—including Niverville, Ritchot, and Tache—face heavier restrictions.  **DETAILS ON PAGE 8**



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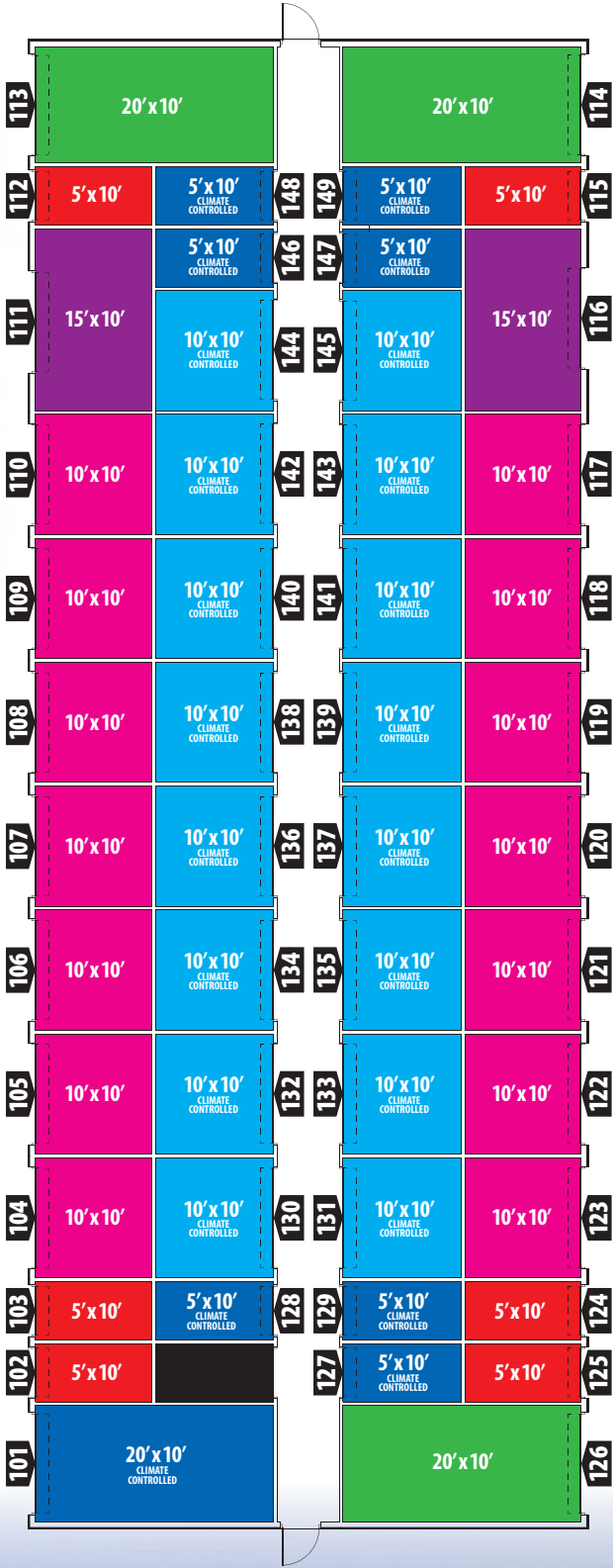
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DEPOSITPHOTOS

Niverville Council Grapples with Crime Report

By Sara Beth Dacombe

sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

Staff Sergeant Guy Landreville from the St. Pierre RCMP detachment appeared at a meeting of Niverville's town council on October 6 to present a report on how the town is doing on issues of crime and policing.

Overall, Landreville said that crime stats are down, though there has been some concern over whether this means crime incidents are actually occurring less often, or that RCMP are simply responding to fewer incidents.

He illustrated the situation at the St. Pierre-Jolys detachment, which is where Niverville's response calls are typically based. He reported that the station is short-staffed by about five positions at the moment.

Niverville mayor Myron Dyck suggested that the lack of officers may mean response times are lower or that incoming calls may not be followed up, which would indeed result in fewer crimes being officially registered.

To this end, a discussion was had by council about the possibility of adding a police officer out of the St. Pierre-Jolys detachment who would be designated specifically to the Niverville area.

However, RCMP practices require an on-duty officer to respond to calls wherever they come from, regardless of their designated area, so there is some doubt as to whether adding a Niverville-specific officer would be effective.

Council discussed other ways in which crime could be reduced in town and pointed out that they've seen some direct benefit from adding security cameras to various locations around town.

CAO Eric King explained that the town has approximately 20 cameras at nine different locations and that one camera has been useful just this past summer, in the case of a hit-and-run.

Councillor Nathan Dueck asked the opinion of Sgt. Landreville: "Is adding more security cameras going to help?"

"Absolutely," said Landreville. "The town camera's quality was excellent and helped solve the hit-and-run this summer."

According to Mayor Dyck, the town's cameras were purchased at a higher cost for this express purpose. It has been noted that security cameras typically provide only a grainy picture and are often inadmissible in court. Niverville's cameras were selected in consultation with the

RCMP in order to deliver high-quality images.

Landreville also reported that police interacting more often with youth, and possibly appearing in schools, could be beneficial in terms of decreasing crime in a community. There are ways to help foster this, such as the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE), more frequent RCMP presentations in classrooms, and hiring school resource officers (SROs).

According to the Government of Canada's website, the SRO program serves Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario and "is a collaboration between law enforcement officers and the school community in order to create a setting that is safe and secure, with a focus on prevention and early intervention activities."

Landreville said that is exactly what the program does, and that it is very successful when officers build relationships with young people.

"RCMP education in schools would be great," Landreville said. "Yes, a school resource officer would be great. Every step the community can take to be more involved with police is beneficial. We want to show that we care. And if we can communicate that to students from a young age, it is most beneficial."

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IN BRIEF

Local Operation Red Nose Chapter to Stay Home

By Evan Braun

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The volunteers and organizers behind the local chapter of Operation Red Nose, based out of St. Malo, have announced that they will not be running the program this December.

Operation Red Nose is a volunteer-based national program that acts as a formal designated driver service, providing safe rides for Manitobans throughout the holidays.

According to a news release, program coordinator Charmaine Gosselin says the decision not to operate in 2020 was difficult.

"The safety of our volunteers and clients is our number one priority, especially during this pandemic," Gosselin says. "Maintaining social distancing in vehicles and ensuring a safe environment for volunteers and clients would be nearly impossible. And while we want to continue to prevent driving under the influence, we trust that many Manitobans will be limiting their social functions this season."

In 2019, Gosselin says that ride donations and sponsorships helped cover the program's operating expenses, which exceeded \$20,000. Also, 484 individual people were provided ride services while 260 separate vehicles got home safely.

Drivers who volunteered during the 2019 season travelled to 15 different towns in the local catchment area on an average ride night.

"We fully plan to resume in 2021, as we hope this will only be a one-year pause," Gosselin adds. "While our volunteer-run service is free, the donations go toward the community hall in St. Malo. And so our goal will be to continue to fundraise for the improvements required at St. Malo's Iberville Hall for the following years."

Hanover School Division Deals with First COVID Cases

By Sara Beth Dacombe

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As of the end of October, a handful of schools in the Hanover School Division have experienced their first COVID-19 cases, including Niverville Middle School. Five of the division's schools, those in Niverville and Landmark, have moved to provide optional at-home learning.

Parents and guardians of students at Niverville Elementary School, Niverville Middle School, Niverville High School, Landmark Elementary School, and Landmark Collegiate recently received a letter from the division outlining the at-home learning options and new in-school safety measures.

"There has been minimal school-level transmission among the K-12 schools with confirmed cases," reads the letter. "Cohorts and other public health measures have been effective in mitigating the risk of transmission and informing contact tracing. Schools and administrators have implemented the public health measures consistently and have handled confirmed cases in schools with responsiveness, confidence, and a great deal of professionalism."

The new measures for the affected schools include medical-grade disposable masks for teachers and staff who cross cohorts, an increased effort to enforce two-metre distancing between students in classrooms, and a repurposing of space to further divide classes into smaller groups.

While each school in Niverville and Landmark is finalizing its own plan to roll out at-home learning for those who have selected it, Hanover School Division superintendent Shelley Amos has said she is confident in both how the division has handled their first cases as well as how the province is helping schools handle the new protocols.

"Dr. Roussin has repeatedly pointed out that even though cases are on the rise in Manitoba, schools

are not the centre of concern for where the cases are spreading," Amos says. "So my confidence level is really good. I think there's been 80 or more schools across Manitoba that have cases identified, but very few have been determined to be acquired at school, so it's been determined it's very low risk, or moderate risk. Not high risk... So, in short, all of our measures are helping us in preventing spread in schools. Now with the new restricted plans in our five schools, there will be some tweaks, obviously."

HOW CASES HAVE BEEN HANDLED

In total, five schools in Hanover have reported cases of COVID-19: Niverville Middle School, Clearspring Middle School, Woodlawn School, Mitchell Middle School, and Kleefeld School. In these facilities, contact tracing has been carried out and rooms have been disinfected.

"Nobody wants to be the first case, and we've had four that we've dealt with now," says Amos. "We've expected them and we've seen these happen across the province. I feel good with the processes we've put together with staff and communication to the community and I feel like it's rolled out as we've wanted it to. It's not a process we wanted to ever have to use, but we had it in place for just such an occurrence and it has worked well... We had the opportunity to learn from other schools that have gone through this before us. Overall, I'm happy with how our principals have handled this."

No entire cohorts have been asked to isolate in conjunction with the cases at HSD schools—and up until the last week of October, no large groups of students needed to switch to at-home learning at the division's direction.

"There were certain individuals who were contacted and told to isolate by Public Health, but not an entire cohort," says Amos. "That is a decision made by Public Health, so when they contact the

principals, that is when we would communicate to cohorts. When they have done contact tracing, they identify who sits beside whom and who spent time with kids in other cohorts. That's how they determine who the close contacts are. In the three schools across Manitoba that have been in outbreak status, there were transmission or multiple cases that put a cohort in remote learning, but we haven't experienced that."

CHEMICAL USE

Hanover School Division has faced some public scrutiny lately, with parents expressing concern over the hand sanitizers available to students and chemicals used for cleaning.

One of the new cleaning protocols involves fogging, a process unfamiliar to most parents.

Amos says that the division wants to help people understand which products are used and why they have been selected.

"Yes, we have fielded a few calls for concern, but we feel confident we've been able to address them and provide the necessary information on what types of products we use," Amos explains. "We put out the name of the chemical that we use in fogging and [assistant superintendent] Leanne Peters put out a lot of info on what the chemicals are. Education is information and information helps concern to dissipate."

While the chemical names and procedures might be unfamiliar to parents, Amos says the products in use have been approved by Health Canada and conform to Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) safety protocols. The chemicals now used in schools are identical to the ones often used in other environments with vulnerable persons, such as hospitals.

WHMIS Safety Data Sheets on these chemicals are available to anyone who requests them from HSD. The division says they want to continue to help parents

understand what they're doing.

"We use the fogging or sanitization spray overnight in a manner that accounts for dry time, so it is dried and cured by the time kids come back to school," says Amos.

PARENTAL RESPONSE

Parents are reacting to the division's protocols in various ways. Many still express a high level of concern, especially with COVID-19 cases rising across the province.

However, most still agree that the benefits of sending kids to school outweighs the social isolation and complications that come with keeping kids at home.

Amanda Kipe is a parent of two students at Niverville Middle School. She says the transition to school initially went very well for her boys. Now that the first cases of COVID-19 have appeared, she continues to feel confident in the division's handling of the situation.

"With a child in Grade Five and myself having a compromised immune system, the [local cases] did give me a start," Kipe says. "However, I... want to believe the people in charge have more knowledge than me on what might be best regarding contacting the cohort or if the case is a close contact or not. And so far, we have been fortunate and have not had the sniffles or any sore throats ourselves."

It is yet to be seen how many families in Niverville and Landmark will opt for the at-home learning option recently made available. However, the Kipes have decided to continue with in-person learning at school.

"My kids thrive in school and in a structured environment where they can also see their friends," the mother explains. "It is hard to manage [at-home learning] when working full-time at home. In my opinion, I think Hanover is handling things well with their open communication and preparedness."

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IDC Shop Adapts to Support Local Businesses

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

In the summer of 2019, Brenda Chaput of Île-des-Chênes opened a new business, Fleuriste XO Flowers and Gifts, a full-service flower shop with plants and gifts, including a comprehensive delivery service.

Like many others who have launched new businesses in the months leading up to the COVID outbreak, it's been tough sledding throughout 2020.

"Opening a new business just before a pandemic was not ideal," Chaput says. "But it did force us to reflect on the goods and services we provide, and how we provide them. It became apparent early on that in order to survive we would need to be flexible and adapt without changing the vision of who we are, and who we want to be."

She says there have been a few positives amidst all the challenges and hardships, and one of them is a renewed community spirit and desire for people to support local small business.

"This is so true for our boutique," she says. "Previous to COVID days, much of our



Brenda Chaput, owner of Fleuriste XO Flowers and Gifts.

✉ BRENDA CHAPUT

1,000-square-foot store was used for meeting space and craft classes. We have now dedicated this space to supporting and promoting local producers and artists by displaying and selling their locally made products, such as candles, honey, bath products, pottery, jewellery, spices, candy, and gifts. With the closure of markets and craft sales, many producers lost opportunities to promote themselves and sell their merchandise."

At the shop, customers can find products from Dooryard Pottery

by Mike Astill and locally roasted PERK coffee beans (Île-des-Chênes), Crescent Acres Soap and Honey, as well as The Little Wood Chipper (Grande Pointe), DC Hot Sauces (St. Adolphe), Smooch Bath and Body (Lorette), Ferrmont Farms and Prairie Penguin Candles (Niverville), L&G Custom Creations (St. Malo), and Spice World, Tasty Tidbits, Soy Harvest Candles, and Mordens Chocolate (Winnipeg).

"The pandemic may have stolen some of our freedoms and choices, but it has not stolen our

freedom to choose where we spend our money," says Chaput. "For us, buying products from local artisans is a way we can contribute to healthy and thriving communities."

She adds that even in terms of the shop's main service—selling and delivering fresh flowers and plants—they support local as much as possible by purchasing fresh from local market gardeners and supporting area greenhouses.

The business has also expanded its delivery service, including to Winnipeg, as far east as Richer, and as far south as St. Malo.

"An anxiety still exists for us, as a new business, that consumers will forget how important their support is during these uncertain times," Chaput says. "And there is a real insecurity that if COVID infections continue to rise in the southeast, we could face harmful changes or closures to local businesses. As a small family-run business, we depend on its survival for ours. Just as every vendor in our boutique does. We are all in this together. The more we can collaborate, the stronger we all are."

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Difference-Makers Honoured in Video Series

By Sara Beth Dacombe

sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

At the end of September, enVision Community Living ran a video campaign called “Make a Difference,” in support of a fundraising effort to launch a new community living project for people in our area with intellectual disabilities.

The presentation showcased nine people from southeastern Manitoba who inspire equality, inclusion, and the value of all people, including two residents of Niverville, Barry Piasta and Zoe Bardal.

Originally, enVision had planned to host a large fundraising gala to coincide with the video series, but their plans changed due to COVID-19.

“This is a bit of an adjustment because this was originally planned to be a 500-person gala where we would present these awards,” says Lindsay Unrau, fundraising and promotions coordinator for enVision. “Due to COVID, we’ve had no other choice than to go virtual.”

enVision’s executive director, Jeannette DeLong, says fundraising is usually about bringing people together, but since that just isn’t possible right now, the not-for-profit group has had to think outside the box.

“So much of our fundraising is about bringing people together in a group, providing entertainment or food, and creating hospitality and fellowship. But we can’t do that, so this means totally shifting our brains,” says DeLong. “So we asked, can we still bring people together meaningfully, but virtually? It was April, just a month before the event, that COVID arrived. The videos, which were already intended as part of the campaign we had planned, were already in the works and we were on the verge of having the gala event when we cancelled. And



Zoe Bardal.

enVISION



Barry Piasta.

enVISION

now we’re actually reaching a crowd of people, but in a different way. It’s been interesting to see how new donors are coming up and old donors are shifting how they interact with us. Going virtual isn’t a bad way to do things—it’s just different. And it means we’re able to reach even more people and a different type of people.”

This is the second year for the Make a Difference campaign, which DeLong says seeks to honour community members who have taken steps to do things that celebrate inclusion and support the value of all people.

The funds raised will be used to create a fully accessible home that meets the needs of enVision clients whose needs change as they grow older. Some of these clients have mobility issues that need to be accommodated.

“With the Make a Difference campaign, we wanted to celebrate people from the community who are already making a difference,” says DeLong. “Because the more people who are just doing kind deeds, the more the door

is open to opportunity, and the more we are going to be able to accomplish our purpose toward including those with an intellectual disability.”

Barry Piasta, one of the people featured in this year’s campaign, has long been involved in community advocacy efforts, including his work with Niverville’s town council to create a Citizens on Patrol Program and his campaign to have traffic lights installed a few years ago at the intersections of Highways 59 and 311.

Piasta has also helped organize community New Year’s celebrations, facilitate dog adoption, and launch Niverville’s off-leash dog park.

The video featuring Piasta also provides a glimpse into the health challenges and physical limitations he lives with on a daily basis.

“I guess, in a way, I see how people look at people with a disability or a difference, because I have felt it,” says Piasta.

When Piasta was first contacted by enVision about being a difference-maker, his

first reaction was that there are many others who are more deserving of such an honour.

“Every person has something to offer in making the world a better place,” he says. “I think to be truly part of a community, you have to participate. Just do something! Talk only goes so far, but abilities are within all of us. The differences that we see in others are not an indication of their abilities.”

Another difference-maker, 12-year-old Zoe Bardal, was recognized for an idea she had to give away her hair to an organization that creates wigs for kids who have cancer. Some key relatives in Zoe’s life had gone through cancer and she was inspired to do something for those undergoing cancer treatments to help make their lives easier.

In the process of donating hair, Bardal soon learned that there is an additional cost to have the hair fashioned into wigs. She quickly decided to step up and fundraise to cover this cost as well.

“I found this one hospital in B.C., mainly for children

with cancer,” says Bardal. “I have lost a few people to cancer, and I have a grandma who survived in twice. The hospital gave me my own website... because it has to cost a bunch to make the wigs. So we started raising money.”

To Zoe Bardal, a difference-maker is simply someone who thinks of others.

“I think of the person who might get my hair as a wig to wear and help them feel confident and happy again,” she says. “I don’t know who will get it, but it makes me happy knowing it might help someone.”

Like Piasta, Bardal doesn’t see what she’s done as being a particularly big deal. She feels that any young person can do small things to make a big difference in the lives of others.

To other kids, she sends an encouragement “to see past differences and not tease or bother others because they are short, have a funny name, or have other differences. Be kind and treat them how you want to be treated. I try hard with my friends and kids at school to include other

people. Today I saw someone sitting alone, so we invited her to play with us. I choose friends who are kind and work with them to make school a happy place for everyone.”

According to DeLong, the difference-makers they’ve chosen are able to elevate the value of people who maybe at first glance are perceived as different.

“It’s really amazing how good people are,” says DeLong. “I think what’s striking is how people see the commonality in each other. Everyone is really the same at their core and deserving of the same things. And then by their actions, they show care and concern and increase a sense of belonging and inclusion. If I think about Zoe, for example. I think she saw an opportunity and she, at her young age, was able to connect kids who have cancer and other people in her own life she’s seen go through cancer. She’s kind and thoughtful and we were impressed with that. With Barry, he is tremendously community-minded. Despite the challenges in his own life, he has the ability to see the needs of others and step up and do things that improve people’s quality of life and safety. He cares deeply about the community and he has that sense of wanting to engage with creating community, and that sense of not being alone.”

Other difference-makers featured in the virtual fundraising event include Damaris Krahn, Merle Gadsby, Finley Hiebert, Justine Charette, Dennis Coley, Dusty Buchan, and a first grade class from Blumenort School.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Make a Difference video series can be viewed on the enVision website: <https://envisioncl.com/make-a-difference/>

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Hutterite Colony Reports Dramatic COVID Improvement

By Brenda Sawatzky

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This past August, clusters of COVID-19 began to breakout across the province after a summer with relatively few infections. The public's attention, for a time, turned to the situation on Hutterite colonies when Dr. Brent Roussin, at one of his daily press briefings, made the announcement that of the 236 cases at the time in Manitoba, 148 of them were connected to "communal living situations."

One of those outbreaks struck close to home, at the Crystal Springs Hutterite colony. Since that time, Ian Kleinsasser, a member of the Hutterian Safety Council's COVID-19 taskforce, is pleased to say that the measures taken at Crystal Springs have paid off.

In fact, he says that 100 percent of the community members who were diagnosed with COVID-19 have since made a full recovery.

"We are happy to report that COVID-19 numbers in our community have, after the initial infection, sharply decreased," Kleinsasser says. "Measures put in place stopped further spread within the community."

The Hutterian Safety Council's COVID-19 taskforce was established in March of this year to address the Hutterites' joint response to the pandemic. Members of the taskforce include spiritual leaders, educators, and business leaders from all three prairie provinces. Their mandate is to gather reliable information on the health crisis and work collaboratively with the provincial health departments in order to help Hutterite communities cope.

As one can imagine, following these provincial health directives is in many ways much more challenging to Hutterite communities than other populations, due to their

fundamental belief in approaching all aspects of life collectively.

"Our community, as all Hutterite communities, consists of a close-knit group of people intricately connected," says Kleinsasser. "We live, work, dine, and worship together daily. The increased isolation and separation necessitated by the COVID crisis has torn deeply at the fabric of our social existence as these are, after all, antithetical to our communal way of life. As a result, we have had to make adjustments to how we worship, eat, and work together."

"Fear, too, is a virus that can turn us against each other. Kindness, respect, and understanding are potent antidotes that help us bring comfort and healing to those suffering from illness, anxiety, and fear."

Ian Kleinsasser | Crystal Springs

At the outset, he says, communal meals at the Crystal Springs colony were completely suspended, with people opting instead to take their meals at home. Communal worship services were also suspended in favour of electronic broadcasts which people could participate in remotely.

As well, the use of masks and gloves were broadly mandated. Trips outside the colony were restricted to only the most essential, and those who took them had to first test negative for the virus.

"Like many Manitobans, the response to the crisis in our community and many others has varied dramatically," Kleinsasser says. "As human beings, we all deal with stressful situations in different ways. Some people become fearful, others turn to alternative news sources. Yet others give way to denialism. As a Christian people committed to living in close community with each other, we have had to balance the tensions between these different

perspectives. For the most part, I am profoundly grateful for the members of our community and how they have responded in the face of profound and unsettling social disruptions."

MEETING THE SCHOOL CHALLENGE

Come September, the colony was faced with a new challenge: how to adapt schooling for their almost 75 children who are traditionally taught by both Hutterite and non-Hutterite educators.

"In close consultation with Manitoba Public Health, it was deemed prudent to have non-Hutterite teachers start the school term by teaching remotely," says Kleinsasser. "This difficult decision was made to protect our non-Hutterite teaching staff in case of undetected, lingering infections. At present, we are tremendously grateful

to have all our teachers working in our school [again]."

Some communal activities have since resumed as well, but always with the current group size restrictions in mind.

At a time when Manitoba's infection numbers continue to skyrocket, Kleinsasser is buoyed by the fact that his community is witnessing a dramatic improvement. As well, he is grateful for the support they've received from friends, neighbours, and strangers who reached out with gifts and words of encouragement.

"These gestures are deeply appreciated," Kleinsasser says. "We wish to express our sincere thanks... In unprecedented times like these, the greatest gift we can give each other is grace and kindness. Fear, too, is a virus that can turn us against each other. Kindness, respect, and understanding are potent antidotes that help us bring comfort and healing to those suffering from illness, anxiety, and fear."

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October 2020: A Month of Escalating Restrictions

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

On Monday, September 28, the province announced that the Winnipeg metropolitan region—which includes many of the city's neighbouring municipalities, such as Niverville, the RM of Ritchot, and the RM of Tache—would be going to level orange on Manitoba's pandemic response system.

Similar restrictions had proven effective when they were applied to Brandon and the rest of Prairie Mountain Health during the summer. Gathering sizes were lowered and masks became mandatory in all indoor public places.

However, unlike in Brandon, the number of active cases continued their steady rise in the Winnipeg area. About two weeks later, conceding that additional measures would be necessary, the province announced tightened restrictions. Bars would have to close earlier, and take action to reduce noise levels.

More restrictions were on the way soon after: gathering sizes would have to get smaller, businesses would have to lower their capacity, and entertainment venues would have to close.

The situation came to a head on Friday, October 30, when the daily number of new infections skyrocketed 250 percent in one day, hitting 480. Granted, many of these new cases were the result of a backlog that had gone unreported during the previous week. But the news prompted yet another phase

of the pandemic: back to code red.

On November 1, code red kicked in for the Winnipeg metro region. Under these latest restrictions, restaurants are back to takeout and delivery only, and most retail is capped at 25 percent capacity. At gyms, in addition to lower capacity, people must exercise with their masks on.

All sports and recreation programming has been suspended, and gathering sizes are limited to five guests. Non-urgent and elective surgeries and diagnostics have been suspended. Visitation at all Manitoba hospitals has also been severely curtailed.

Close to home, a case showed up at the Niverville Middle School in mid-October. A few days later, another exposure was announced at Gabrielle-Roy in Île-des-Chênes. Four people from Gab-Roy tested positive, from four different grade cohorts.

Clearly, the situation has continued to deteriorate.

Last week, Dr. Brent Roussin, the chief provincial health officer, delivered an impassioned overview of the state of Manitobans' fight against COVID-19. He made it clear that, at the moment, many people aren't doing their part to minimize contacts outside their household.

Dr. Roussin explained that a large number of the new cases were the result of large social gatherings, and many cases were linked to Thanksgiving, as well as funerals.

He provided a number of specific examples.

Some people had attended medical procedures without disclosing that they'd been close contacts of positive cases. An entire surgical team had to self-isolate as a result of this type of exposure.

In another case, someone attended a faith-based organization with a large number of people, then visited a personal care home where many vulnerable people were exposed to the virus. This led to an outbreak.

Many people, Dr. Roussin said, have continued to attend large social gatherings while symptomatic. People are going to work for up to a week, with symptoms, without being tested. Others have gotten tested but failed to self-isolate.

The overall message, according to Dr. Roussin, is very simple: if you were asked today to list all the contacts you've had in the last week, and you could not remember them all—then you've had too many contacts.

"We have pleaded with Manitobans to follow the fundamentals and to significantly reduce their contacts, and the numbers continue in the wrong direction," said Dr. Roussin. "It is our hope that these new restrictions will help to halt the spread of this virus in order to ensure our health-care system is there for those who need it. I hope that this is a clear signal to Manitobans, and in particular the Winnipeg metro region, that we need to stay home, keep our distance, and make a necessary collective sacrifice to protect all Manitobans."

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- ☐ No. The province hasn't gone far enough to curb the pandemic, and the numbers will continue to rise.
- ☐ Have another opinion? Visit our website to vote and leave us a comment.

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YOUR COMMENTS:

I think the school has gone above what is needed. Why are the teachers wearing masks outside? Why are children using hand sanitizer over 9 times a day? I think as parents we need to question the over-use of hand sanitizer and the reasoning behind why teachers have to where masks outside.

1 positive at a school and no further spread resulted. Speaks for itself

Gas masks and hazmats suits are an option.
-Stew P. Hid-Soi

Personally I think that my children are suffering under all the new rules. Just let them live!
-Amanda Kiss

I think they're doing too much. Give our kids their freedom back!

we use so much disinfectant in the schools, we have guys coming in with fogging machines during the overnight so no one is in the school. The Custodians are busy every night and disinfecting all the hot spots and every other spot in the school.

Very happy with how the schools in Niverville have handled the situation and the measures taken make me feel confident in sending my kids to school. Will it prevent covid from getting in the school? Not likely but I believe the spread will be minimal and easily contained. We are in this for the long haul and I see more and more innovative ways of dealing with the pandemic.

Niverville Council Protests Manitoba's Change to Paramedic Insurance

By Sara Beth Dacombe
sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

The Town of Niverville is setting out to overturn a recent decision by the provincial government that doubles the insurance coverage requirements for rural paramedics.

On October 20, council passed a resolution asking for help from the Association of Manitoba Municipalities to lobby the government to reconsider recent decisions made by the College of Paramedics of Manitoba (CPMB) which are being applied to all paramedic care professionals, whether they're employed by a regional health authority, a private agency, or work in a volunteer capacity.

The changes coming from the CPMB are threefold. Number one, the liability insurance provided for first responders by the town will be no longer be recognized. Two, the College is initiating a new \$550 annual registration fee for paramedics. Three, they are requiring licensed individuals to submit membership fees directly to the College, cutting out their respective municipalities.

The town feels these requirements will result in considerable new costs, which will be passed down to taxpayers, as well as financial inconvenience and red tape for first responders and municipalities.

"Our responders are currently covered under the town's insurance, and have always been," says Eric King, CAO for the Town of Niverville. "The College is new to

the province and is unilaterally deciding to add new requirements to our members who serve our community. They are requiring the responder to take out insurance which the town has already done on their behalf. Why are they needing to be double-insured? On top of that, if we were to accept the need for double the insurance, why couldn't we pay it directly on behalf of our members?"

The town employs approximately 14 first responders and estimates that the new regulations will add an additional cost to the town's budget—costs which

level of bureaucracy during a time when drastic cutbacks were being made to healthcare in Manitoba.

Trish Bergal, executive director with the CPMB, says the new requirements are in line with the Regulated Health Professions Act (RHPA), under the College of Paramedics of Manitoba Regulation, which says that a member who holds a certificate of practice must hold an approved policy of professional liability insurance.

Bergal says asking first responders to have their own liability insurance under the

professional liability insurance policy."

Bergal acknowledges that the College has received much communication on behalf of municipalities who have been impacted by this change. She has not said there's any chance of the College working with these municipalities to find alternate solutions.

"The decision of [CPMB] in relation to the type and amount of professional liability insurance is final," says Bergal. "The decision reflects best practice in a self-regulated profession and provides the public with the greatest assurance and protection."

"From our side, it looks like another level of bureaucracy aimed at not providing any additional benefit to the taxpayer."

Eric King | Niverville CAO

they have not accounted for.

"It is \$7,000 which has never been budgeted for, and therefore costs our residents more," says King. "So why can't we have a lower fee for a volunteer? And why can't this institution recognize municipal insurance? From our side, it looks like another level of bureaucracy aimed at not providing any additional benefit to the taxpayer."



The province established the CPMB on June 1, 2018, under the recommendation of former Health Minister Kelvin Goertzen to allow the self-regulation of paramedic services by paramedics in the province. At the time, concern was expressed over the government creating another

College, not under a municipality, is consistent with other self-regulated health professions. She says this is because paramedics have the ability to become self-employed.

"Under the current regulation, paramedics provide care under the complete medical oversight of a physician," says Bergal. "All care provided is in the form of a delegation. Under the RHPA, paramedics have an increased scope of practice, function independently, and work under their own certificate of practice. In addition, paramedics can take on self-employed roles. Therefore, in keeping with the College mandate to protect the public interest, paramedics must have their own

A provincial spokesperson for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) also provided a statement on the contentious issue between the town and the CPMB.

"Paramedics are highly skilled healthcare professionals who provide quality, life-saving care in communities throughout the province," reads the statement. "The profession has long requested self-regulation as a profession. Similar to all other self-regulating health professions in our province, this move requires paramedics to pay the cost of regulation through the collection of fees by the College of Paramedics of Manitoba via a fee structure. The College of Paramedics is setting out the regulatory fees for the profession. Some municipalities rely on volunteer services and may be asked to pick up the costs of the fees of the college and for the purchase of liability insurance."



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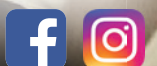
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Manitoba Hydro Phone Scam Targets Local Business

By Sara Beth Dacombe

✉ sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

In the last few months, a number of Manitoba business have been the target of a sophisticated telephone scam in which the callers pose as employees of Manitoba Hydro.

On October 16, Shereen Rashwan, owner of Bistro 290 in Niverville, says she very nearly became a victim of the scam. Around 10:00 a.m. that morning, she received a phone call which the call display showed as coming from Manitoba Hydro. The caller identified himself as an employee of Manitoba Hydro and told Rashwan that due to missed payments, a Hydro representative had been dispatched to turn off her utility immediately.

"I said that was impossible because we are set up as preauthorized payments, so if a payment was missed it was their fault, not mine," says Rashwan. "Then they said it was a deposit that I was owing from back when I started the business that was missing and there must've been a miscommunication. They said they had sent me three letters saying that payment was due. I said I had not received any of those letters, and they said they would send another letter, but their priority that day was to collect that payment so that they could remove the order to shut off my hydro."

Rashwan says she found the phone call very concerning, but it wasn't a good time to talk and she asked to call them back.

When she returned the call, the phone number this time did not display as belonging to Manitoba Hydro. When the call connected, she heard a pre-recorded voice answering machine. The voice identified itself as coming from Manitoba Hydro and the answering service had a numerical option system.

To Rashwan, this is part of what made the scam so convincing.

"The number they gave me to call back to deal with my 'specific issue' was not a Manitoba Hydro



The convenience store where Rashwan was directed to go.

SHEREEN RASHWAN

number, but it did have a pre-recorded Manitoba Hydro message that says, you know, 'Please press one for this or two for that,'" says Rashwan. "They had information on my business, they sounded very professional, and the fact that I called back and it was a Manitoba Hydro recorded answering machine was very convincing to me."

Rashwan says that she spoke to three different people in total, and everyone's directions to her about what to do was very similar. They were even able to text her a QR code with a Manitoba Hydro-branded text message showing her where and how to make her payment.

There were, however, a few warning signs Rashwan did pick up on. The first was her certainty that her Manitoba Hydro account was up to date. When she told that to the scam artist, that's when they changed their story.

The second warning sign came when she began to think she must have indeed forgotten to make the alleged deposit and asked how she could make the payment.

"They said they had machines set up around the city to take payment for Manitoba Hydro," Rashwan explains. "They gave me an address on St. Mary's Road [in Winnipeg] and said they would only accept cash at that particular kiosk. They had me convinced that I had missed this payment

somehow, and they had me convinced to go make this payment."

Though she didn't know it at the time, the address given to Rashwan was for a Shell gas station and convenience store. When she arrived, she thought this was odd, but proceeded to go into the building. She then saw the kiosk that the scammer had indicated. It was a Bitcoin ATM.

Bitcoin ATMs allow people to purchase cryptocurrency, an internet-based money system, by using their own cash, or sometimes a debit card.

"At this point, I got back into the car and looked up a Manitoba Hydro number on my phone," she says. "I found one on their website and called it. I got through to a representative and told them everything that had just happened. They said they had received three or four other calls recently that reported the same thing."

Rashwan did not complete the payment and confirmed with Manitoba Hydro that the scam had been reported to the RCMP for investigation.

Manitoba Hydro also confirmed that this is not how they would handle a missed fee or payment. In fact, all residential or commercial hydro disconnections are currently suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the Manitoba Hydro website, this type of scam has been happening since April

2020, when the pandemic started. Scammers would contact customers by phone or email claiming they had an outstanding bill and demanding payment. Failure to pay within thirty minutes would result in their service being disconnected.

Chris McColm, Manitoba Hydro's Security and Investigations Supervisor, says that the scammers appear to be taking advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We will never phone you and demand immediate payment by a prepaid card or a money order," McColm says. "We're all under a lot of stress and these scammers are trying to take advantage of that. These scammers are extremely convincing. With so many people at home, they're preying on our anxiety and hope we let our guard down."

Rashwan is relieved that she didn't get taken advantage of further, and that the only thing she really lost was two hours of her day.

"That was a two-hour experience I'll never get back," says Rashwan with a laugh. "But I was really mad."

Following this experience, Rashwan says she has learned a tip to help figure out if a phone scammer is trying to contact you.

"A scammer can show up on the call display as the organization they are fake-representing," she says. "But the tip I learned is, tell them you can't talk right now, but then call them back at that number. If you call them back at that number, you will see it is not on your call display as that organization and it may not even be a real number."

Manitoba Hydro says customers should call 204-480-5900 or 1-888-624-9376 if they get a call or email and are unsure if it's authentic. Customers can also send a message to the utility's Facebook or Twitter pages @manitobahydro.

IN BRIEF

Speed Limit Drops on Main Street Niverville

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

A speed limit change is coming to Highway 311 in Niverville. On Friday, October 30, Minister of Infrastructure Ron Schuler announced that the change is being made in the name of increased safety.

"The core value of our government is the safety of Manitobans and speeds that motorists travel greatly influence the severity of collisions and injuries or fatalities due to collisions," says Schuler. "The proposed speed reductions will improve the level of safety on Manitoba's roadways."

The speed limit on Highway 311 will be reduced to 70 kilometres per hour right to the western limit of town limits, to a point 200 metres west of the Krahn Road intersection. This lower speed zone will also extend to the east side of town, to a point 50 metres east of the Sixth Avenue intersection.

These changes are the result of a 45-day consultation period that began in August. The outcome of the consultation indicated strong support for speed limit reductions.

"Manitoba Infrastructure is committed to continually improving and introducing new safety measures to make Manitoba's roads safe," Schuler adds. "We want to ensure that people and goods are moving safely and efficiently across the province."

In the same announcement, the province also announced speed limit changes in Headingley and Springfield.

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MLA Ron Schuler announces grant funding for Niverville's new Heritage Wall.

SHIRLEY HOULT

Heritage Wall Receives Grant Funding

By Evan Braun

editor@nivervillecitizen.com

Last Friday, the provincial government announced \$6,000 in new grant funding earmarked to complete the Town of Niverville's Heritage Wall, to be constructed this month in front of the Niverville Credit Union parking lot on Main Street.

The Heritage Wall is one of several beautification projects underway in the community, spearheaded by the Niverville Communities in Bloom committee. Another of the projects, the Heritage

Pavilion, is now finished. A third, a community mural to be erected on the west wall of the post office, is only weeks away from its unveiling.

The Heritage Wall will depict a visual celebration of Niverville's history. The 64-foot long wall will be constructed in multi-layered metal, depicting Niverville's past, present, and future. It will also include interpretive designs to provide a brief written history of the community.

"We are excited to be a part of this venture in celebrating the Town of Niverville," says Ron Schuler, Minister of Infrastructure as well as the MLA

for the Springfield-Ritchot constituency. "This community is rapidly growing and bringing new opportunities to its residents and surrounding communities; being able to commemorate its past and recognizing its roots is always a good reminder of how a town can grow together and flourish in changing times."

Joining Schuler at the funding announcement was Rob Machulenko, Chief Officer for the Niverville Heritage Centre; Patricia Dutchak, representative for Communities in Bloom; and Henry Friesen, member of the Niverville Heritage Wall Committee.

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New Bothwell Is Petitioning to Become LUD

By Sara Beth Dacombe

sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

New Bothwell has launched a petition to become its own Local Urban District (LUD) within the RM of Hanover. Councillor Travis Doerksen is spearheading the petition that would see the community dictate its own electoral and administrative boundaries, set taxable mill rates, and create new positions for elected officials to more effectively govern the area.

Currently, Hanover's municipal council allows New Bothwell to set its own operating budget using a portion of the municipality's collected tax dollars. The amount of money available to New Bothwell is calculated based on the average mill rate of the other LUDs within the RM.

However, those living in Hanover's LUDs currently have a lower mill rate than those living in the municipality at large.

Travis Doerksen, the RM's councillor for the New Bothwell area, says that if the town becomes an LUD, its residents will end up with both a lower tax rate and the ability to direct those tax dollars towards the town's immediate benefit.

"For New Bothwell, essentially, we've been operating like an LUD, but still using the general rural mill rate to get to our budget number," says Doerksen. "Once you create an LUD, your members make decisions on mill rates, and your boundaries are more defined, so that decisions surrounding municipal taxation and how to apply those funds best within the boundaries of New Bothwell will all be part of the LUDs responsibilities. And the mill rates will likely be much lower."

Doerksen has taken the time to provide an approximate breakdown of the mill rates in the nearby LUDs.

"Mitchell is around 5 mills, Blumenort is just above 4, Grunthal around 4.5," he says. "And right now

the rural mill rate in Hanover is 6.179. So that's what the people of New Bothwell are being taxed at... In the end, if we would create a real LUD in New Bothwell, we would then take all of the proportioned and assessed taxes for our new boundary, and we would be able to create a budget to serve the whole community in a more targeted way."

Becoming an LUD and paying lower taxes may seem like splitting hairs to some, or it might lead to the town having less funding overall. But for those involved in forecasting growth and change in the area, an added benefit will be to see increased control by way of an active LUD committee. This committee can then direct tax dollars toward community services, essential maintenance, and development.

"In an LUD, your own community members from your own town make the decisions for today, tomorrow, and the future," Doerksen says. "When your local councillor sits on the LUD, which reports to but meets separately from the larger Hanover council, you start to see real progress. So from road repair to grass mowing, to community future development and capital planning, it keeps the local flavour in the community. You have real people from your community making those decisions."

Working on behalf of New Bothwell's future is Doerksen's passion, but he admits that he would welcome the help of a local LUD committee to create momentum for growth.

"Another benefit to becoming an LUD is to just bring in more energy," he adds. "Two heads are better than one; two or three voices are better than one. When there are needs to be addressed, a group of people has

a better ability to brainstorm and find solutions than just one person making decisions."

Doerksen acknowledges this is an ambitious initiative for New Bothwell, especially considering this is his first term in local politics. But it helps that Kleefeld is pursuing the same initiative.

"I was newly elected in 2018, but [the LUD proposal] has been a thought of mine for quite some time," he says. "With the recent developments both New Bothwell and Kleefeld over the last few years, and the growth being proposed in the future, it just makes sense to have these new committees to help guide the decisions."

"In an LUD, your own community members make the decisions for today, tomorrow, and the future... you start to see real progress."

Travis Doerksen | New Bothwell Councillor

Local business owner Elle Funk is supportive of Doerksen's initiative. She runs New B's Café on Crown Valley Road, right in the heart of the community, and sees the benefits it would bring to both residents and businesses.

Funk is excited about the prospect of the town having more control over its road, snow-clearing, pedestrian crossings, infrastructure, and beautification.

"Before all this, I didn't know much about how our taxes are calculated and used," Funk says. "I didn't understand what an LUD does. Asking questions of our councillors has been very helpful."

Funk sees the prospect of increased commercial development as being an especially important consideration for the town—and

she certainly isn't concerned about the potential for competition for her business.

"No, I think there will only be greater support for local businesses if we grow," says Funk, who anticipates that more business would bring in more taxes that could be spent in town. "There will be more people interested in participating in town and spending dollars in town... This is a positive step for community growth and a positive step for our community in general. I don't see a downside to this step at all."

Doerksen says that commercial development is a big motivating factor for him. One of his goals as a councillor is to help bring more businesses to the community.

"It helps the residents here to have services that are closer to them," he explains. "It increases tax dollars right here for our community, and we all know that when we work together and pitch in together, we can have more community benefits."

The community needs a total of 201 resident signatures before the end of the year to form a petition. It will then be submitted to the municipality, which will bring up the issue with the province. Provincial certification is required before a new LUD committee could be formed.

Doerksen says that the RM of Hanover is supportive of the initiative.

"They are excited for us and for our community," he says. "We have five rural communities within our one municipality, and that's quite a few compared to other municipalities. This makes us very unique. It makes us appreciate our differences. The very different events and community flavours are all very specific

to our areas."

To sign the petition, residents can visit various locations around New Bothwell, including at the post office and New B's Café. A door-to-door campaign is also being contemplated.

Due to social distancing right now, communicating about the LUD initiative and securing signatures has so far been very challenging.

"At each location where there is a petition form, there is an information packet and a map, and some Q-and-A's to help answer the questions people may have about LUDs," says Doerksen. "It's very tough in these times to not to be able to bring people together for a town hall meeting or an info session. But we're doing what we can through our website, through social media, through the New Bothwell Facebook page, and word of mouth. We are trying to do our best in communicating to as many people as we can."

He says that an informational package will be mailed to all New Bothwell residents on November.

In the meantime, the campaign has been gaining signatures steadily.

"We're in the very beginning stages of this. It hasn't even been out a week and I think we're at about 20 to 30 signatures, but we need more," says Doerksen. "Any eligible voter can sign, and that means anyone aged 18 and over and living in the eligible area of the proposed LUD, which you will see on the map with the petitions. Whether you rent or own in our area, you can sign the petition."

Elle Funk invites anyone interested in the LUD initiative to come see the materials at New B's Café and sign the petition.

"We, as New Bothwell, need these signatures," she says. "If you live in the community, I think this is an important thing to do. Just come out and sign it."

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New Ste. Agathe Boat Launch to Boost Community

By Sara Beth Dacombe

sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

Thanks to a generous grant, Ste. Agathe will be developing a dock and boat launch project in the centre of the town along the west bank of the Red River. On Friday, October 2, the Ste. Agathe Community Development Inc. along with the Conseil de développement économique du Manitoba (CDEM) held a press conference at the Ste. Agathe Community Centre to announce the project.

The project includes road access down to the river from a new crescent-shaped road that will be built off Pembina Trail. A smaller road will then lead down to the boat launch, which will be constructed next an 80-foot floating dock, large enough to accommodate approximately four to six boats at once.

The committee responsible for the project says an engineering study has been done and onsite measurements and mapping are underway now that the project has received its funding.

The existing walkways in the area will also be built up, with added seating.

This project is the result of years of community planning to provide better community access to the Red River for the purposes of recreation and even tourism.

The location was chosen due to its proximity to the historic Cheyenne Boiler Monument and its surrounding walking paths. This monument consists of a model and an iron boiler from the steamboat Cheyenne that operated on the Red River during the 1870s and 1880s.

"As the boat was sinking on 2 June 1885, the boiler was thrown overboard," according to the Manitoba Historical Society. "In 1981, it was found during construction of a flood dike around the community and was recovered from the river."

The boiler is a symbol of how life was conducted in the past, centring around the necessity of the river.

Remembering the local history that brings the town together, the community



Claude Lemoine, Louis Allain, Joel Gagnon, and Justin Johnson at the site of the new boat launch. SARA BETH DACOMBE

formed a committee to oversee the Red River Access Project, with Ste. Agathe resident Joel Gagnon as chair.

"We're really trying to get across the theme of place-making," says Gagnon, who is also president of the Ste. Agathe Community Development Initiative. "We used to have a boat launch here, and I remember countless hours fishing as a kid. I want to see that happen again. We want to promote active and healthy living, and we want to make sure we're delivering on building a community with meaning. Having water as a theme and the Cheyenne as a theme is culturally important."

Alongside the health benefits is the possibility for tourism to generate income for the community as well. With access to the river, it's hoped that fishing and boating enthusiasts will frequent the area, bringing customers to the local gas station, stores, and restaurants. Kayaks and canoes will also be able to launch from the site. Winter-time activities include snowmobiling and snowshoeing.

The \$45,500 grant for the boat launch project comes from the Francophone Economic Development Organizations (FEDO), as part of the pandemic response investment of \$1.8 million for Western Economic Diversification Canada, announced by the federal government in July. Through the fund, the federal government is looking to ignite economic recovery for francophone businesses in the western provinces.

The CDEM has been the driving force behind economic development in Manitoba's bilingual communities

since 1996.

"The new fund is being administered by the four entities that represent francophone economic development in Western Canada," says Louis Allain, CDEM executive director. "CDEM's role is to collaborate and help coordinate the funding. Ste. Agathe was successful within the contest and they won the opportunity to get the funding."

Allain points out that all this recently announced development has been made possible due to a Red River master plan that was put in years ago.

"The dock was part of sketches and plans made years ago to bring life back to the Red River, and hopefully this project will be a sparkplug within the whole area and will help other communities to follow," Allain adds. "All communities from the U.S. border at Emerson, all the way to Lake Winnipeg, everybody has pitched in and we now have a shared vision of what the Red River should look like in the future. This community is a leader among all the others and we're really, really proud today to offer them this grant. It's a new push for them to realize their project."

Gagnon also acknowledges the extensive work that has been done to move this dock project forward.

"This is not something that just came out of the blue," Gagnon says. "This has been in the works for many, many years, and as such, the Ste. Agathe CDI took the initiative a number of years ago to see this project to fruition. So we're happy to be here at this point. Thank you to the committee members for all the

work, which was instrumental in seeing this project to where it is today. I'd like to highlight the support of the municipality as well. This project is to serve not just Ste. Agathe, but the greater metropolitan area. There is very much a lack of access to the Red River from the Winnipeg perimeter to the U.S. border, so we're very pleased for this project to see the light of day."

The mayor of Ritchot, Chris Ewen, was also present at the October 2 announcement and says he is really thankful for the visionaries who are putting effort into increasing tourism in Ritchot.

"What a great opportunity!" Ewen says. "I can't thank CDEM, AMBM, and FEDO enough for getting us together, because these are great projects for everyone who's involved in the area... Having a dock here will really bring more opportunities, more incentives, and more things to do in Ritchot. It will create a tourism vibe which I think we are lacking a bit in Ritchot."

Allain acknowledges that the banks of the Red River are temperamental, rising and falling each spring. He says that the engineers involved in the project are aware of the challenges and that this site was chosen specifically because it sits at the highest point in elevation along the Red River from the U.S. border to Winnipeg.

"It's a bit of an engineering feat to get this done, but we should be able to complete it on schedule," he says. "The river is low right now, which is good for construction. Mother Nature is cooperating with us this year. Construction will begin over the winter to be finished in spring."

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Let's We Forget

Women's Enterprise Centre of Manitoba

The Women's Enterprise Centre of Manitoba has approached the Niverville Chamber of Commerce to identify women-owned businesses in our community to participate in an intensive training program to help accelerate business success in the time of COVID-19. This is a free opportunity to step away and work on your enterprise, best staging yourself for economic recovery.

The perfect participant includes a women-owned or partnered business:

- Which has experienced business challenges due to COVID-19
- Is searching for strategies to increase profitability in their business
- Whose business opened before March 12, 2020 (preferably since September 2018)
- Willing to commit to the program dates and be an active participant

Through concentrated training with industry experts in a field of marketing, financial understanding, and operations, the Women's Enterprise Centre of Manitoba and our regional partners are looking to build resiliency, pivot business concepts and models, and exit strategies if required.

E-mail chamber@niverville.com for further details on how to participate in this valuable program.

Business Awards Nominations

Niverville Chamber of Commerce Business Awards Nominations Deadline is December 4, 2020. Time is running out to nominate an outstanding Customer Service business as well as Outstanding Business of the year.

Visit www.niverville.com for more information on how to place a nomination. You can also contact Brenda Desjardins, Executive Director at chamber@niverville.com or call/text 204-388-6140.

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They shall grow not old,
as we that are left grow old:
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nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun
and in the morning,
We will remember them.



Lest We Forget

Commentary

The Controversy of Conversion Therapy

By Daniel Dacombe

There's an old saying that warns, "The cure is worse than the disease." The implication is that the solution for a problem causes more harm than good.

This phrase made more sense back when the most cutting-edge medical technology available was to cover a person with leeches or cut off a limb at the first sign of infection.

Thankfully, medicine has advanced a great deal. While many treatments in our modern times come with side effects, sometimes significant ones, the cure is almost always preferable to the disease.

However, suppose you went to the doctor to discuss a condition and the doctor said, "We don't have any evidence that your condition is harmful. That being said, we do have a treatment. It's dangerous. In fact, it produces significant emotional and psychological distress. Some parts of it cause physical discomfort, and you'll have a high risk of suicide."

Hearing that, you may have questions for this doctor. Most prominent among them? "But surely this treatment at least has a reasonable chance of success?"

"Actually, there's considerable evidence to suggest the treatment does absolutely nothing it's intended to do," the doctor replies.

At this point, even the most enthusiastic patient would likely make their excuses and depart in a hurry.

If you can understand why our fictional patient wouldn't want to undergo the treatment being offered, congratulations! You then understand why conversion therapy is currently in the process of being banned in countries all around the world.

Conversion therapy, also known as reparative

therapy, is a practice used—typically employed in Christian counseling—to attempt to reduce same-sex attraction and replace it with opposite-sex attraction.

Conversion therapy grew out of the prejudices and preconceptions of Western culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which considered same-sex attraction to be a mental disorder and a sign of a diseased or troubled mind.

This resulted in years of attempts by psychologists, doctors, and religious leaders to "cure" same-sex attraction by various methods—some experimental, some dangerous, almost all ethically questionable.

Those who practice conversion therapy claim that same-sex attraction can be changed through the use of specific methods of behaviour modification, including shaming, aversion therapy, and in some cases physically painful stimuli. It often has a religious basis.

For many years now, conversion therapy has been derided as a pseudoscience, a set of practices that are claimed to be scientific but are instead based only on exaggerated, unproven, and often deceptive information.

Conversion therapy has been condemned by professionals in the psychological and medical fields around the world. These professionals have been raising the alarm about conversion therapy not only because of its poor—one might say almost nonexistent—success rate, but also because of its profound negative effects on a person's mental health.

As a mental health professional, those in my field can't be more clear: the evidence surrounding conversion therapy is overwhelmingly negative.

Multiple studies have shown little to no change

in a person's sexual orientation.

What conversion therapy does seem to effect, though, is mental health—and not in a good way. There is considerable evidence proving that undergoing conversion therapy is traumatic, and individuals who have undergone conversion therapy, especially as children or adolescents, are at significant risk of suicide.

By contrast, the research in favour of conversion therapy has been both sparse and shallow. While a few studies in the late 1990s and early 2000s showed some indication that conversion therapy could produce a measure of alteration in same-sex attraction, these studies were plagued with issues in their design and delivery, producing questionable results. In some cases, the results were gained by surveying paid employees of conversion therapy organizations, hardly an unbiased subject pool.

The use of conversion therapy to "cure" same-sex attraction is all the more concerning due to the fact that same-sex sexual orientation is not in any way a mental illness.

In 1973, the American Psychological Association (APA) removed homosexuality and same-sex attraction from its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) after being presented with evidence that challenged the preconceptions many people in Western society held.

The APA has since that time affirmed same-sex attraction as a normal, even healthy variation of human sexuality, and has condemned the use of conversion therapy as dangerous and unethical.

It is not just psychologists who condemn conversion therapy.

Prominent among its detractors are former proponents, such as John Paulk,

former founder of Love Won Out and chairman of Exodus International, both organizations that promoted conversion therapy and the change of a person's sexual orientation. Paulk denounced conversion therapy in 2013 after admitting it had not worked for him as he had previously claimed, and he formally apologized for the harm it had caused.

Several different individuals involved in Exodus International have gone on to speak out against their former work with the organization and several have admitted to lying about the effect it had on them personally.

On October 1, 2020, the Government of Canada reintroduced legislation on banning the practice of

conversion therapy here. That legislation is now one step closer to being written into law. This step, being repeated around the world, is absolutely crucial in protecting the health of LGBTQ citizens, especially children and adolescents.

Despite these positive steps, there are still some who pathologize same-sex attraction in our society—that is, they view it as a mental disorder or other negative personality trait. But as the research shows us, same-sex attraction is not a sign of a psychological problem and does not need to be treated as such.

Here is what research does say about the so-called treatment of people with same-sex attraction.

These individuals are at

an increased risk of experiencing stigma and rejection from their friends and families. The effects of stigma, rejection, and trauma are well-known and very damaging, and can result in an increased risk of depression, anxiety, and suicide.

But when these people are in supportive environments, enjoying loving relationships and being treated with respect and acceptance, they are as psychologically healthy as everyone else.

It seems clear the best "treatment" then is not pseudoscientific therapies.

Rather, the goal should be to treat others with respect, acceptance, and love—surely the same way we would all like to be treated in return.

Funny You Should Ask...

By Lesley Gaudry

Funny you ask me, Facebook... what is on my mind?

Well, I am stressed. I'm just waiting for the bomb to hit—to hear that one of my kids or another member of my family has been exposed or has developed COVID-19. This would put us on a lockdown/isolation round that would last for who knows how long and cause us to wonder how many other people we infected in the meantime. I wonder if we'll be able to fight easily or if there will be complications? My kids for the most part are healthy, but how is it for those who have children with health complications, or mental health challenges?

I'm thinking that I'm happy my kids are in school for their social, mental, and intellectual health. They love school and would rather be there than home-schooled. What do parents

do with children who have learning disabilities and aren't able to adapt as easily as others?

I'm also thinking about how lucky I am to be able to work from home—in my bubble, for the most part—and how grateful I am that my exposure is so much lower than others who have to go out for their employment, like justice workers, nurses, teachers, and other frontline workers. They do it each day with sacrifice. I wonder why so many of us forget that so easily?

I'm thinking about how lucky I am that I still have employment, that we can feed our kids, and pay our bills. I wonder how people who work in the service industry keep their sanity with the yoyo process of closed, half-open, open, half-open, closed, etc. They've had to endure this for the last six months!

I'm happy that my kids are able to participate in

some activities that help make life feel at least a little "normal." And I wonder how we can reach out to our seniors who are living in code red situations. Their lives are anything but normal.

I'm stressed and worried that I'm not talking about COVID and resilience enough with my kids and at the same time trying not to dwell too much on the negatives and raise their anxieties. I am trying to find a balance, and as a friend said, "We are stressed and blessed."

So you ask me, Facebook, what is on my mind? Just about everything, and I'm sure I'm not the only one.

Am I worried and stressed? Yes. Am I grateful for what we have right now to help us get through these weird times? Yes. Am I trying to find the balance? Yes.

What is on your mind today?

Sports & Recreation

Local Race Car Driver Wins Big in France

By Sara Beth Dacombe

✉ sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

Former Niverville resident and race car driver David Richert recently achieved a major career highlight by placing second at Circuit de Nevers Magny-Cours in France. The achievement comes after Richert signed a contract earlier this year with Inter Europol Competition, a Polish-owned racing team.

And even though COVID-19 travel restrictions decreased the number of races he participated in this year, Richert's love for high-stakes sport couldn't be higher.

Although Richert's racing operation has recently relocated to Poland, for now he is back in Manitoba, finishing off his 14-day isolation period after travelling from Europe. He'd anticipated completing one more race this season but now says he'll be in the province for a while given the intense travel restrictions, perhaps even until after the threat of COVID-19 has passed.

"This year everything just got disrupted with the COVID stuff. It makes it hard to travel back and forth too much," says Richert. "The hardest part of travel is you have to quarantine when you come home."

According to Richert, the European COVID response has been similar to the situation faced by Canadians. Even though things have opened up somewhat, people there are still avoid flying unless absolutely necessary.

"They shut down pretty much how we did, but then the European Union (EU) opened up some travel for some countries and Canada was one of them," he says. "We can mostly travel to Europe without quarantine, but coming back to Canada is different because it doesn't have any regulations currently to get around quarantine. So we need to self-isolate for 14 days each time we return, which is prohibitive to racing or doing business."

To get from Poland to the recent race in France, Richert says his team chose to drive, to avoid unnecessary delays—and also to avoid high-risk areas.

The race in Magny-Cours, a racetrack that previously hosted Formula 1's French Grand Prix, was the first time Richert drove a Formula Renault 2.0 after having taken a career hiatus. He was very familiar with the car from driving it a few years ago, though, and he'd been



Race car driver David Richert, originally of Niverville.

RICHERT RACING

training with it again.

Still, he says it was a challenge to navigate the powerful vehicle.

"It was a difficult weekend because the weather conditions were not great," Richert explains. "It was raining sometimes. Then it was sunny part of the time, but the track was still wet. It was hailing even part of the time, and bits of ice were pounding off my windshield... it's such a fast car that if you haven't been used to it in race conditions for two or three years, it takes a bit to get used to the speed and have your body process the information while driving. The visuals come at you so quickly; it's a lot for your eyes to just process. So it's about building up your speed and getting confident in how the car will react while you're driving it. Every time you do a lap on the racetrack, you are learning your feel for the car in those particular conditions. But every lap, the conditions were different and developing, so it was very challenging."

Richert has a keen, analytical mind for racing and really enjoys connecting with how the mechanics of a car respond to the actions of the driver.

Despite his appreciation for driving technique, he says racing is not an exact science and there is no secret to explain how he placed so well in the challenging race.

"Simply put, I didn't crash," says Richert. "And I think I had a bit more experience than some of the other drivers there. I didn't take many risks

on the track, but some of the other guys were really aggressive. They ended up spinning and sliding off the racetrack. I managed to make some passes because of that. I tend toward driving more with my head than my butt, which is the saying."

Inter Europol Competition also made a last-minute decision to switch Richert's car tires from dry to rain tires, which may have helped him finish races two and three in sixth and seventh positions, respectively.

Put together, the results were enough to secure him a second place finish overall and the Auto Hebdo trophy, an award presented by a French newspaper to a driver whose performance on and off the track has been judged remarkable.

Even though Richert wouldn't describe the European racing circuit as overly lucrative, he says the finish will definitely help secure sponsorships and increase his team's profile.

"In Europe, there are rarely any cash prizes, and if there are they are really small," he says. "I got a bottle of champagne, which didn't taste very good, but I drank it because I earned it. And I got a hat. It's more the marketing side that is rewarding. I'll be able to get some good deals with that win because it gets people excited. I need people to know about what I'm doing so I can raise support to fund what I'm doing. In auto racing, you could literally be the fastest driver in the world, but if you don't have the backing to finance your entry to the

highest levels of racing, you won't even have a chance to participate... When you attract sponsors, you can simply do more."

Richert's continued success means he's looking forward to entering one of the biggest races in the world, called the 24 Hours Le Mans. It can be compared to the Indy 500, which most people have heard about, but the 24 Hours Le Mans is one of the world's oldest active sports car races.

Held annually since 1923 near the town of Le Mans, France, it is considered one of the most prestigious races in the world. One of the reasons Richert signed on with Inter Europol Competition is that the racing team has an entry into that championship.

It's safe to say Richert has come a long way from the day he first remembers seeing car racing on TV as a child.

"I grew up thinking hockey was the greatest thing in the world, like most kids in our area, I guess," says Richert. "Then I literally one day turned on the TV, saw a car race, and thought, 'That's so cool.' Eventually, I got the opportunity to see Formula 1 racing live and I just fell in love with it."

While his jet-setting lifestyle may seem exotic, Richert says following the opportunities presented to him in the racing industry has never been a career choice driven by the love of money.

"It has nothing to do with money. Truly, there are much better ways,

safer and faster, to increase money and wealth if that's what you're interested in," he says. "The fact that a human being has to control a machine at such a high speed intrigues me. I'm a competitive individual, so I enjoy a certain level of competition. I was always a shy and quiet guy, though, and I didn't even promote that I got into racing when I started. I realized very quickly that if I didn't learn to put myself out there, I wouldn't earn the sponsorships that can help me progress. Day in, day out, putting yourself in slightly uncomfortable situations was something I learned to do. Everything was a bit of a stretch to achieve this career, but I've enjoyed it."

Confidently negotiating sponsorships is a learned skill, as is speaking to the media. Public speaking induces fear in many people at the comparatively simple risk of saying or doing something embarrassing.

So how does someone who races at deadly speeds for a living control fear in the face of much higher risk?

"I think on the racetrack, I actually have very little fear. And it's not because I'm crazy," says Richert. "It's because everything I do is a calculated risk. I trust the car, I trust myself, and I trust the other drivers. Accidents do happen, but the risk level isn't what it used to be in racing. I get more nervous driving down the 59 Highway. In other areas of life, you start to get comfortable taking risks in life. You get comfortable speaking to the media, or speaking to a wealthy sponsor or business team, and eventually you start to get comfortable with that uncomfortableness. When your passion is so big for racing and pursuing success, it is motivating enough for me to push through my fear. And thankfully it's paying off for me to take those risks."

Richert may live abroad much of the time, but he's never forgotten his roots. He loves coming home to Manitoba and is happy to stay put for the time being. He also is conscientious to send a message of thanks to his home community and supporters.

"I receive a huge amount of support from people in the Niverville area and in Manitoba," says Richert. "Some people never forget you, and some people you never forget. It's nice to be able to reach those people who have supported me as my career has grown and changed. I'm very thankful."

Clippers Debut New Jersey, Hit Pause on Season

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

This season, Clipper Ice Sports in Niverville has hit the rink with its players showing off new jerseys—and along with them, a brand-new logo.

"In mid-2019, the executive started discussing new jerseys for the club," says Ashley Chamberlain, spokesperson for the board. "As we started to discuss replacing our jerseys, we thought maybe it was also time to update our logo. We looked at multiple options, and in the end it was a tough choice to make!"

Chamberlain says they sent out a poll to their membership this past May and the membership chose the final design.

"It was created for us by Silver Eye, a Steinbach-based company," she says. "CIS then purchased the logo design and ordered our jerseys from Pembina Source for Sports, a Winnipeg business which has been our apparel partner for a couple of years now and is owned by Niverville neighbour Kyle Johanson."

Travis Mason, the organizer's hockey coordinator, did most of the legwork in partnering with Silver Eye and with Pembina Source for



Sports in terms of settling on the final design.

GAMES CANCELLED, ARENAS CLOSED

Unfortunately, it's not all good news for the Clippers.

Due to our region going to code red pandemic restrictions on November 2, the Eastman Minor Hockey Association (EMHA) has advised that the league roll back its hockey operations.

Effective immediately, all league and exhibition games have been cancelled. The Niverville and Ste. Agathe arenas, both of

which are in the Winnipeg metropolitan region and thus are now at code red, will be closed for a minimum of two weeks.

"The situation is being monitored closely by CIS and our governing bodies," says Chamberlain. "When there is an update regarding return to play for our area, the information will be communicated immediately. This is a challenging time and this news is disappointing. However, it is hoped to be short-term."

HOW WOULD YOU KNOW?

I enjoy writing as a hobby. I think I have something important to write about. If there is anything that takes the enjoyment out of writing, it's a deadline. Today my fingers are on the keyboard, but they are not moving. There is a complete disconnect as my mind wanders back to yesterday where we sat at Boundary Trails Hospital and watched Nancy's mom (Nana) take her last breath. Age and cancer won the battle that she so valiantly fought. (Thank you BTHC for caring for her like a Queen). My mind wanders to those contacts of mine who knew her in years past and would appreciate knowing the news. My group text read "Nancy's Mom went to Heaven yesterday at 10:50". As I placed the phone down there was an almost immediate reply. The text read "How would you know?" Could this be a mocking challenge or is it a legitimate question? I took it as the latter, for I think many people ask the question, "How could anyone possibly know that two minutes after death, they could be in Heaven? Is 'She is in a better place' just a comforting cliché or is it real? God wants you to be sure! The Bible says: 'I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may KNOW that you have ETERNAL LIFE' (1 John 5:13) Suppose you were standing before God right now and He asked you, 'Why should I let you into heaven?' What would you say? You may not know what to reply, but what you need to know is that God loves us and has provided a way that we can know for sure where we will spend eternity. The Bible states it this way: 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.' (John 3:16) Nana was at one of her last medical appointments where the doctor gently informed her of her declining condition. 'Would you have a Hope?' he asked. 'Yes, I do' she replied. He asked to hear it and she replied, 'I trusted Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour many years ago, and I believe he died for my sins so that I can go to Heaven'. This is the HOPE of everyone who trust Christ as Saviour, for the hope of the Bible is not the hope that we have nice weather for the picnic Saturday, but a HOPE that is based on the promises of God and rooted in the work of Jesus Christ. It's a HOPE grounded in the rock-solid statement that 'He (God) who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall He not with him also freely give us all things. (Romans 8:32)' **Ron and Nancy Burley www.sermon4u.com**

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