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LOCAL NEWS

New Details About Niverville Hotel

■ The developers of the new Blue Crescent Hotel, soon to begin construction in Niverville, have announced some new details about the property, including about the highly anticipated waterpark. We have new photos of the building's design.

Details on Page 4

LOCAL NEWS

Congratulations, Grads!

■ This month, our region sent off more than 130 graduates from Niverville High School and Gabrielle-Roy in Île-des-Chênes. Full details inside.

Details on Pages 3, 6-8, 22-23

SPORTS & REC

Providence Pilots to Play Home Games in Niverville

■ The Town of Niverville has made an agreement with Providence for their sports teams to play at the CRRC.

Details on Page 20

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Former NCI Teacher Publishes Debut Novel

■ Mark Reimer, who taught in Niverville for 10 years, is about to release his first novel, which draws from his real life.

Details on Page 21

Niverville to Host Its Own Junior A Hockey Franchise

➤ **READ MORE ON PAGE 18**

Bryan Trottier, Kevin Lansard, Jeremy Braun, Scott Wallace, Clarence Braun, Carl Fast, and Raymond Dowse.

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The

Citizen

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Niverville High School Marks Second Outdoor Convocation

By Evan Braun
✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

For the second year in a row, the Niverville High School marked its year-end convocation under sunny June skies, with public health orders forcing students and staff to curtail the usual indoor celebrations in favour of a curbside event.

Four rows of cars packed into the parking lot, each carrying a graduate and their friends and family. In total, 64 grads crossed the finish line on their high school careers.

“This is a very proud moment for our graduates, and of course their parents,” said Principal Kimberley Funk in opening the ceremony. “It is a time to reflect on the years gone by and celebrate the accomplishments of these young men and women.”

After introductory remarks, it didn’t take long to acknowledge the pandemic and its role in shaping the events of the last year and a half.

“This past year alone has been one of tremendous change,” said Funk. “The COVID-19 pandemic has changed how we work, learn, and interact with each other... Sometimes change is easy and exciting. Sometimes it’s difficult and unsettling. Each person handles change differently, but I think we’d all agree that this year was hard... Life is not always rainbows and ice caps. There may be times when change will make things tough. You’ll hit a bump in the road, or you might even drive right off the road and land in the weeds. If you find yourself in a situation when nothing seems to be going as planned, I encourage you to dig deep, persevere, and find the strength to come out on top. I am confident in your ability to do that.”

School board trustee Carisa Klassen then offered some pre-recorded remarks.

“First and foremost, congratulations to all of you on this accomplishment of transforming your hard work into one of life’s most memorable milestones,” Klassen began. “Students, this year’s graduation ceremony and celebratory festivities are less than ideal, and for obvious reasons. COVID-19 has



Niverville High School holds outdoor grad ceremony.

JOEY VILLANUEVA

drastically the nature of our relationships—specifically, its restrictions on being together. Ultimately, it has transformed the way we do everyday things. But you, graduates, have displayed character in your attitudes towards completing high school. Perhaps you’ve learned the meaning of self-care. Or how to manage solitary activities. Or did you learn a little more grace and understanding for others? Have you learned never to take freedoms or loved ones for granted? Have you learned to reflect on your value and your self-worth? Today we celebrate each one of you has been successful in your educational undertaking.”

Valedictorian Dorian Englisbee also struck a thoughtful chord.

“Throughout the last few years, I have seen us all grow as people,” said Englisbee. “I’ve watched as we all figure out who we are, as well as what we want to do in life, and how we want to move on in the future. I’ve watched as we have changed from immature children, to immature adults. To be able to watch those you care about grow and change is one of the things that not enough people cherish and is something that makes life beautiful.”

Englisbee went on to pay homage to the relationship the graduating class had with the teachers who made such an impact on them in their senior year. In the process, he succeeded in lightening the mood.

“We see our teachers almost as much as we see each other, and even though they are the authority figures in the relationship, it still

ends up feeling like they are our friends and people we can talk to and rely on,” he said. “Like if we are in ELA and someone drops something, we all look over in anticipation for the inevitable ‘You dropped that’ from Mr. Dombrosky. Or the playful yelling of Mr. Mehling that always ends up scaring people. Or the amazing dad jokes told by Mr. Toews. Even to the snappy remarks of Mr. Clark, he has always been quick and witty. Also the way Mr. Limpricht is constantly supporting and helping out with all school sports in whatever way possible. We would even have our own banter in some peoples’ classes, like when Mrs. Happychuk would turn up the Backstreet Boys and everyone would sing along.”

After the speeches, the grads were shown a montage of pictures from the year, including from photo shoots of them in formalwear.

Following the handing out of diplomas, the grads returned to their vehicles and participated in a parade through Niverville. Residents came out in significant numbers to cheer them on.

A few final words from Dorian Englisbee: “Before I leave, I hope that whatever direction life takes us, our paths will cross again. I hope we all achieve the hopes and dreams we have been working towards, and will continue to work towards. I hope that the relationships we form from this moment on are as joyful, meaningful, and caring as the ones that we have shared during our time together. Graduates of 2021, congratulations.”

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New Details Emerge About Niverville Hotel

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

The Blue Crescent Hotel previously announced to be built in Niverville is getting closer to construction, and the developers behind the project are ready to share some further news about what people can expect from the property.

Steel Creek Developers have now confirmed several new details.

"The hotel will have 75 rooms, complete with meeting rooms and several different room layouts, including our differentiated standard split room design, family bunkbed rooms, kitchenette suites, and more," says Trevor Rempel of Steel Creek Developers. "We also plan to have some additional intimate hospitality spaces that will be perfect for evening cocktails, such as for a wedding party or corporate group."

As previously announced, the Niverville hotel will be the fourth Blue Crescent property, with two others in Manitoba and one in Saskatchewan.

However, Rempel now says that the Niverville hotel will serve as the flagship for a larger design for the growing company.

Rempel also has more details concerning one of the most anticipated features of the new hotel: the waterpark.

"The waterpark will feature two large waterslides, a pool, a hot tub, and more," he says. "It will become an exciting local recreation venue that is sure to bring more visitors to the community."

While all these details of the property come together, the company is busily preparing to put shovels in the ground.

Construction is planned to begin in the late fall, and Rempel adds that the construction process will utilize pre-cast concrete panels.

Rempel says that since the original announcement in April, the business opportunities for the hotel have only been getting stronger and stronger.

"Ever since our initial announcement, we have become even more encouraged about the strong opportunities for this hotel business," he says. "We hope to work closely with other community businesses to ensure guests in Niverville come to realize what true small town hospitality is all about."

A key to the hotel's success will be the many event venues in the surrounding area, not to mention the brand-new Community Resource and Recreation

Centre just a block away. As of the start of July, the CRRC is opening its doors to with a soft launch, hosting a series of summer day camps.

"We are also encouraged by the new announcements recently, as well as those soon to come, regarding the other properties along Drovers Run and the level of investment confidence in the community that it represents," Rempel says. "The local community is going to play a big part in helping this become a great success."

A series of new photos, as well as a detailed animation video, showcase the property's design. Rempel anticipates that the visuals will help people get excited about what's to come.

"We hope that the residents of Niverville are excited about this building and what it represents," he says. "Niverville will now have a new modern hotel with great amenities. Just as we will be great ambassadors for Niverville, we hope that everyone helps spread the word."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ Watch an animation showing a detailed mockup of the Niverville hotel: <https://vimeo.com/564750247/e628bb883d>

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Grads of 2021 Reflect on Lost Experiences

By Jennifer Lavin

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Graduation season is here again—and graduates aren't getting the senior year they desired or deserved.

The last two years have been rough, and *The Citizen* spoke with three members of the class of 2021 to learn about the specific ways COVID-19 has affected their lives.

"I think the year, even if it hasn't looked eventful due to not being able to go out and do things, emotionally it was very eventful," says Kierra Derksen, a graduate from Niverville High School. "They told us we would be online, and the best word to describe it was 'sucky.' We couldn't see our friends or our peers... It's eerie, just dead silence and icons on a screen."

Hayden Fast, another graduate in Niverville, also struggling with many aspects of remote learning.

"Applied math was a challenge," says Fast. "Trying to ask questions over 20 other students online was a nightmare. It's also hard when you haven't seen half your friends for a year. You're cut off from half of your family basically, which is tough."

Navigating their way through a complicated and confusing senior year has been a heavy burden. Throughout the year, their schedules have switched between full remote learning and partial in-person classes.

Aurora Begalke, a senior at École Heritage Immersion in St. Pierre-Jolys, says that this year's class has to mourn not partaking in the same experiences any other year's graduates would usually take for granted.

"The graduating class has lost every senior experience because of the pandemic," says Begalke. "Normally our school has lots of activities for the seniors as final celebrations for finishing. We haven't been able to enjoy a single experience this year because of the fact that everything has been taken from us. At my high school, normally the entire high school is at school and the seniors rule over the school. There is even



Kierra Derksen.



Hayden Fast.



Aurora Begalke.

a table that is the Grade Twelves' designated spot. It may sound a little foolish to mourn the loss of a table, but my class has waited three years to be able to have this table."

The senior table isn't the only ritual this year's class missed out on.

"In normal life, our school has Grade Wars, which encourage school spirit," Begalke says. "We normally get a ski trip. We go camping at the end of the year for a celebration. And the Grade Twelves would have a hiking trip, where we go hiking for a weekend."

Alanna Dunn, a member of Niverville's Parent Grad Committee, has a daughter graduating. She agrees that this year's losses have been heavy.

"My heart goes out to these kids, who have missed out on so many 'lasts' in their young lives," says Dunn. "Last band concerts, last time to play their favourite school team sport, last time to perform in their school drama production, last time to just hang out with their friends in class or on campus and make memories... Everything about school has been hard, even for those who are strong students academically!"

Fast has found the loss of athletics to be the most difficult.

"All sports came to a halt after five games, which ruined my year and a lot of other athletes' years," he says.

The year, perhaps, is not a complete loss—although it takes some deep introspection to get there.

For example, Derksen has managed to find a positive aspect to her Grade Twelve experience.

"I got to know myself more," says Derksen. "I got to grow stronger and find ways that work for me to do school, or ways to calm myself down when the world feels like absolute chaos."

Fast struggled to think of a positive. Eventually he was able to come up with one minor boon: "The only good thing I can think of is the fact that you can roll over, turn on your laptop, and do class from your bed."

As they reach the end of their high school careers, these young adults are now struggling not only with the loss of their senior year, but also the loss of a traditional grad celebration. The ceremony, the party, the laughter, the tears... they will all be missed.

Sue Thompson is the head of the Parent Grad Committee at Niverville High School. She explains that the 2021 graduation included a drive-in ceremony on Wednesday, June 23, for the graduates and their parents.

After the ceremony, there was a parade.

As far as having a full safe grad party, though, the future is uncertain. Thompson says that they have plans to move forward with one as soon as restrictions allow them to do so.

"We have been planning for quite some time now and are really excited to make this year's party like no other year," Thompson says.

The situation for Begalke at École Heritage Immersion is similar.

"Our convocation is going to look like a movie drive-in, where we are all sitting in our car as we watch each other accept our diplomas—and the only guests are our parents," Begalke says. "We no longer get to have dinner where we dress up in our dresses and suits, and we no longer get to have a safe grad to end the night."

Alana Dunn can attest to how difficult it has been.

"Planning for graduation has been a series of stops and starts," says Dunn. "As parents on the committee, we are planning with the hopes that we can have a group gathering at Whitetail Meadow at the end of the month, but we have watched the public gathering size allowance shrink instead of grow. What in past years has been a party with upwards of 250 people... well, the grad committee would be thrilled if we could at least plan for the grad group of just over 60 to have something, even without their friends and family included. We have collected fees from families in order to work with a budget, and have tentatively booked a photographer, a deejay, etc., but still we wait to give them the go-ahead that we can proceed."

Despite these many challenges, Dunn says that the grad committee has nonetheless received generous donations from dozens of members of the Niverville business

community. Because of these donations, if they are able to have a party, there will be an online auction to raise funds for lawn signs and to offset other costs.

"This gives the grads something special—the ability to win prizes—and a little something to get excited about," says Dunn. "It is a waiting game... and a very hard waiting game! We need to see that magic number for public gatherings move up to at least 60, which seems unlikely. We have relayed to parents and grads that we will look to have the party in July if we can, anything to offer some glimmer of hope that we can actually celebrate the way these kids deserve to be celebrated."

The graduates and the Niverville Parent Grad Committee are extremely grateful to the three dozen local businesses that have donated monetary gifts, supplies for the party, and/or prizes for the auction.

"But there is a huge sadness in me that I won't get one final goodbye party with my grade," Derksen adds. "I've known most of these people for 12 or more years—and after this, it's done. I may see them here and there, but we don't get that proper goodbye that helps people have closure with high school and their peers around them."


Still, the graduates of 2021, like any other year, have to contend with the reality that one can't go backward. As ever, graduation is about moving forward into a new phase of life.

"I would say that during a time like this pandemic, it really makes you reflect on high school and cherish those good times, like being late to class because you and your friends were laughing so hard in the parking lot," says Derksen. "Or even the bad times, such as not getting a great mark on a test that you studied so hard for. These memories, whether good or bad, made me into who I am today. So I am beyond grateful for my time in high school, and I'm excited to see what new memories will be made in the next chapter of my life."


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Council Green-Lights New Car Wash

By Jennifer Lavin

✉ jlavin@nivervillecitizen.com

At a meeting of Niverville's council on June 1, Harsimran Sandhu made a presentation about the new car wash he has proposed to build in town.

The car wash will have 12 self-service wand wash bays and one automatic wash bay with the potential for a second in the future. There will also be a detailing centre, a convenience store that sells primarily automotive-related items, and propane sales.

A unit will also be available for rent, which Sandhu hopes will be taken by someone with an automotive-related business.

The car wash will be built in the Drovers Run commercial area and Sandhu hopes to have it ready to open in September of this year. His plan is to continue building after it is open and finish the business completely in early 2022.

The members of council



Conceptual drawing and site plan for the Blue Buffalo Wash Factory.

📷 COURTESY OF HARSIMRAN SANDHU

had several questions before taking the vote.

Councillor Chris Wiebe asked if the water from the wash bays would be recycled, but Sandhu said that he did not have plans to do so at this time. Councillor Nathan Dueck expressed concerns about the amount of water a large car wash like Blue Buffalo uses.

To bring further clarity to the matter, CAO Eric King pointed out that the maximum

amount of water that could be used by the car wash would be 23,000 litres per day, which would represent one-fifth of one percent of the water available to the town.

These figures are based on the continuing expansion of the Spruce Drive Water Treatment Plant, which is expected to be fully upgraded in approximately two years.

Mayor Myron Dyck clarified at this point that when

the phrase "water shortage" is used, it is not a reference to the amount of raw water that the community has access to but instead a reference to how quickly the treatment plant can process the water.

When it came time to vote, Councillor Chris Wiebe recused himself due to a "plan conflict."

The remaining councillors voted unanimously to approve the business.

Gab-Roy Sends Off 2021 Grads

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

Collège regional Gabrielle-Roy in Île-des-Chênes held its annual convocation this year over a period of two days, June 24-25. The sun shone brightly, allowing the school to pull off the curbside convocation seamlessly.

"Our students came to their drive-thru grad, which was broadcast on Facebook

Live," says Vice Principal Joel Mangin.

That broadcast is still available to view, for friends and family of this year's graduates who wouldn't otherwise have been given the opportunity to attend in person.

In total, the school bid a fond farewell to 67 graduates this year.

"Essentially, we had the students book timeslots," says Mangin of the format of

this year's ceremony. "They then showed up with their family in the car. They came out and we announced their awards and achievements. We did the cap and mortar ceremony and gave each student a rose to give to their parents as an act of recognition for their support."

To help commemorate the occasion, the school also hired a professional photographer to take photos of each

family afterward.

"We had staff directing traffic, taking care of the music, and there was even a cheering section made possible by our dedicated teachers," Mangin adds.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ To view this year's convocation, visit: www.facebook.com/ECRGR. DSFM

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Niverville Centennial Arena Damaged by Thunderstorm

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

At approximately 7:50 p.m. on July 5, a large thunderstorm passed over the rural southeast region, causing major damage to the Niverville Centennial Arena.

The roof over the back half of the structure lifted off in an extremely strong gust of wind, breaking it free and tossing it over the outdoor rink to the east of the building.

Within minutes, emergency crews were on the scene, inspecting the building as well as checking other nearby structures for damage.

Niverville's Public Works department was on site within a half-hour as well.

"Any time you deal with an emergency, the timing is never good," says Mayor Myron Dyck. "Having said that, we are in what we would consider the off-season for ice sports... so rather now than



Strong winds blew the roof off a portion of the Niverville Arena.

EVAN BRAUN

in January, I guess! We are thankful we had the outdoor rink, which you can see in photos contained a lot of the damage. Heaven forbid if we wouldn't have had it, what it might have imposed on other

people and properties."

Last summer, \$100,000 was spent to re-finish the exterior walls. This new damage, Dyck estimated, is in the range of \$25,000 to \$50,000.

Reports also came in of damage to nearby farm structures, downed trees, and damaged power lines in the neighbouring area.



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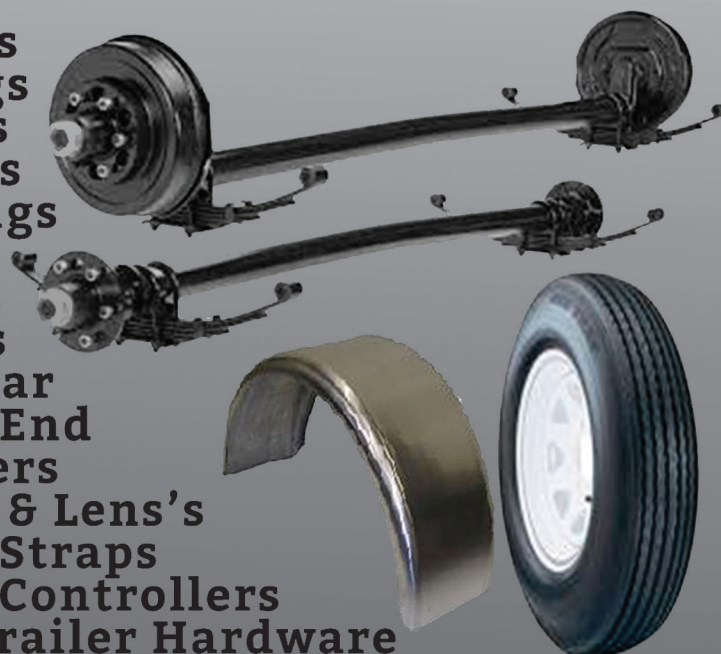
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The Niverville Community Gardens, to the east of curling club.

JOEY VILLANUEVA

Niverville Grows Community Gardens Project

By Jennifer Lavin

✉ jlavin@nivervillecitizen.com

There is a new option in Niverville for those who like to garden but don't have access to their own plot. The town's brand-new community gardens are open to anyone to rent for the season.

Cassandra Falk, the Camps and Recreation Programmer for the Town of Niverville, has taken the lead on the coordination of the community gardens.

"We recognized a need in the community and decided this was the perfect opportunity, as more residents are interested in doing their own gardening during this pandemic," says Falk about the decision to launch the project.

The 16 garden plots are located on the east side of the Niverville Curling Club. Eight of the plots are standard in-ground gardening areas

and are a spacious eight feet by 16 feet.

The other eight are conveniently raised beds that are four feet by eight feet in size.

Niverville's recreation staff will till and stake out the plots at the beginning of each gardening season. They will also keep an eye on the area to make sure the rules are being followed.

There are only a few regulations to be followed in the community gardens.

Most of these rules involve keeping your garden as free of weeds as possible, being mindful that your garden doesn't encroach on anyone else's area, and ensuring that your plants don't grow so tall that they block the sun from hitting anyone else's plants.

Gardeners are also required to have their space completely emptied out by September 30 of each year.

"The gardens are open to

anyone," says Falk. "For those who may not have the space to garden at their homes, this is a chance for them to grow their own vegetables."

At the time of this writing, there was only one unrented plot remaining—one of the raised beds.

Falk says that if it appears that more plots could be used by area residents, there is a lot of space for the town to expand the gardens.

"Our hope is that each year we can grow our community gardens," Falk says.

Either style of gardening plot rents for \$35 plus GST for the season.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ Anyone who would like to reserve a garden plot (one per household) or ask questions about the plots can contact recreation@whereyoubelong.ca

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The civic issues reporter will earn a base annual compensation of \$30,000 and operate on their own time as a freelance contractor. The position comes with significant job flexibility.

The Citizen

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The Citizen is a Niverville-based newspaper which is passionate about covering issues and events of importance to our community and our immediate neighbours. We primarily publish news pertaining to the towns of Niverville, St. Adolphe, Ste. Agathe, Île-des-Chênes, New Bothwell, Otterburne, and Tourond. We believe strongly in bringing our readers the most local and relevant news possible—in other words, the news that matters most to them and affects them in their daily lives.

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"Your prescription will be ready in 20 minutes," said the Walmart pharmacist, and so I had time to kill. I grabbed a cart and started walking the aisle, when out of the children's clothing section marched a young girl, about 9, crying and looking very distressed. I called out to see if everything was ok, but was ignored as she ran off. After raising 8 children there's enough parent left in me to recognize that this was not an emergency, but a little girl who was just denied a clothing item. As I made my way around the store, I noticed this girl intentionally hiding in lower shelves, first near the toys, then hardware, then pillows, then dog food, making her way around the perimeter of the store. It wasn't long before we heard the store intercom making the announcement that every one of us has heard.

CODE ADAM- THERE IS A LITTLE GIRL LOST IN THE STORE. Having noticed her movements, I calculated where she would likely be and sure enough, there she was hiding in a corner. I called to the manager of the store and paused to watch the family reunion in the main aisle. Code Adam originated from a 1981 abduction of Adam Walsh in a Sears store in Florida. This incident began the Missing Children's Safety Program by Walmart in 1994. I never knew that, for our English language incorporates many expressions and short phrases taken from the Bible. I always assumed Code Adam came from the first search for a lost person in the Bible when in Genesis 3:9 God called out "Adam, where are thou?" Adam and Eve, in disobedience to God's one command, had brought about separation from God. God's heart was broken as this curse of sin, now to run down like a polluted river to all future generations, was brought down to all man. The result was 1 Cor 15:22 where it says, "For as in Adam, all die." That is man's dilemma – Eternal separation from God, but that verse is not ended, for the last half tell us that "even so in Christ, all shall be made alive." Matt 18:11 says that Jesus came to seek and save those who are lost, and we're reminded in 1 John 4:14, "the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." Jesus Christ came to this world to provide the remedy for our inherited sinful nature. His miracles and His gracious life were proof of His divine power and merit, but these were not the solution. Our sin required death, and so He intentionally went to a Roman cross, and there willingly died. As He suffered there, we learn from the Bible that God was punishing Him for our sins. "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Jesus never sinned but took our place to endure the judgment we deserve. He died; He was buried; He rose from the dead. "Romans 6:23" For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. This gift is wonderful news, and you can receive it today. **Ron and Nancy Burley** www.sermon4u.com

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Vaccinated Manitobans to Be Entered into Summer Lotteries

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

Manitobans who are making the choice to get vaccinated against COVID-19 will be entered into a unique lottery this summer. Nearly \$2 million in cash and scholarships will be given away, further encouraging people to get their jab as quickly as possible.

"Vaccination is the fastest way to overcome COVID-19 and safely restore our services and activities," says Premier Brian Pallister. "Urgency is important. We need Manitobans to get vaccinated to protect each other and protect our healthcare system. The sooner we get vaccinated, the sooner we can get our lives back. This lottery gives Manitobans even more reasons to roll up their sleeves—not once, but twice."

There will be two lottery draws over the summer. Every Manitoban aged 12 and up who has received at least one dose of vaccine on or before August 2 will be entered

automatically.

The second draw will take place on September 6 and include everyone who has gotten at least two doses by that time.

For each draw, seven individual prizes of \$100,000 will be given away—three to people in the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, and one each for people living in Prairie Mountain Health, Southern Health, Interlake-Eastern Regional Health, and the Northern Regional Health Authority.

There will also be 10 draws for \$25,000 scholarships to be given to young people between the ages of 12 to 17 across the province, for a total of \$250,000.

The government has assured the public that they have instituted a process to ensure all information used for the purpose of the draw is protected and secure.

Each draw will be held once the eligible immunizations have been entered into a provincial database after the lottery deadlines. Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries will be responsible for conducting the

lotteries and a third-party auditor will provide additional oversight.

"Trust and accountability are an integral part of every lottery, and we will ensure that all Manitobans can have confidence in the fairness and integrity of this process," says Manny Atwal, president and CEO of Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries. "As we have seen in other jurisdictions, lotteries can act as an incentive to encourage vaccination. We are proud of our role in the goal to get as many Manitobans immunized as quickly as possible."

This includes setting out how Manitobans who were vaccinated outside of the province may ensure their eligibility by reporting their vaccination to a public health office. Any Manitoban who wishes not to be part of the lottery may opt out via a simple process to be outlined in the near future.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ Further details about the Manitoba Vaccination Lottery can be found at <https://protectmb.ca/lottery>.

Maxime Bernier Arrested After Speaking at Niverville Rally

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

On June 11, Maxime Bernier, leader of the People's Party of Canada and a former candidate for the Conservative Party leadership, spoke in Niverville at lunchtime in Hespeler Park. Later in the day, he was arrested by the RCMP.

Prior to the event, Niverville Mayor Myron Dyck said that the police were aware of the event and would be on site to provide enforcement.

The provincial government released a statement advising people to stay away from planned rallies that weekend.

Bernier's itinerary had him popping up in communities throughout southeastern Manitoba.

"Enforcement officials are aware of and will be present at upcoming rallies planned for communities



Maxime Bernier.

across Manitoba that are in violation of the current public health orders," read a provincial government news release. "Officials also note that they have reached out to rally organizers to communicate

gathering size requirements and to reinforce 14-day self-isolation periods for any participants coming into Manitoba... Manitobans are reminded that should they choose to attend these rallies, they should be aware that they will be monitored, and that enforcement officials will be present to conduct surveillance and gather video and other evidence that will be used to lay charges."

Online photos of the Niverville event show about one dozen attendees.

"Just got another ticket for my presence at the Niverville event," wrote Bernier on his Twitter feed, "and the officer warned me that I could be arrested if I go to other rallies."

After speaking in Niverville, Bernier went to St. Pierre and was taken into custody.

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Manitoba Loosens Summer Restrictions One Week Early

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

At a news conference on Wednesday, June 23, Premier Brian Pallister and Dr. Brent Roussin announced that the first step in the province's summer reopening plan was ready to be implemented.

The announcement came as welcome news to many Manitobans, especially since it came one week earlier than expected.

The loosened restrictions took effect on Saturday, June 26 and will remain in effect at least until August 2, allowing many businesses and facilities to reopen at 25 percent capacity.

These new measures were triggered by Manitoba reaching and surpassing the first key vaccination benchmarks.

In mid-June, the first benchmark was set as 70 percent of eligible Manitobans receiving at first one dose, and 25 percent receiving the full two doses.

As of the day of the announcement, 71 percent of eligible Manitobans had received one dose, and 27 percent had received two doses.

Test positivity and hospitalization rates have been consistently falling in recent weeks.

At the time of this writing, the average number of daily cases has dropped back down to double digits after two months of very high numbers.

"Manitobans have earned an earlier reopening," says Pallister. "Together, we have beat back the

third wave and have booked first and second dose vaccinations in record numbers. After nearly a year and half of fighting COVID-19, it is time for Manitobans to regain their freedoms and enjoy a summer we all want, and have rightfully earned."

Pallister has added that the next phase of reopening, currently set for August long weekend, may be triggered early as well, if key indicators allow for it.

Manitobans who are fully immunized may apply to receive an immunization card two weeks after getting their second vaccine dose.

Holders of that card can now benefit from the following exemptions:

- Visit loved ones in personal care homes or hospitals.
- Participate in social or communal activities, if you are a resident of a personal care home or congregate living facility.
- Travel domestically for essential and non-essential purposes outside of Manitoba without the requirement to self-isolate on their return.
- Dine indoors at restaurants and bars with other fully immunized friends and family from outside your household.

Large-scale, outdoor professional sports or performing arts events may also allow fully immunized Manitobans to attend, subject to approval by Manitoba Public Health.

The province will work with

sports and arts organizations to implement proof of vaccination protocols for these events.

Additional benefits for fully immunized Manitobans will be announced in July, including increasing capacity for fully immunized people at weddings, funerals, as well as faith-based and other gatherings, based on continued vaccination rate increases and improvements in the province's overall COVID-19 situation.

Manitobans may also gather in larger numbers, dine out in restaurants and on patios, attend faith-based services, and go to gyms, hair salons, and retail stores in every region, with some restrictions remaining.

The full list of changes to the public health orders are as follows:

- Outdoor gathering sizes on private property to double to 10 persons, and to allow outdoor visitors to briefly access homes for essential activities (for example, to use a washroom).
- Public outdoor gathering sizes to increase to 25 persons.
- Retail businesses to open with increased capacity at 25 percent to a limit of 250 persons, with no restrictions on the number of household members permitted to shop together.
- Personal service businesses (hair and nail salons, estheticians, barbers, etc.) to reopen at 50 percent capacity, on an appointment basis only.
- Restaurants and bars to reopen at 25 percent capacity for indoors

and 50 percent for outdoor dining. For indoor dining, patrons seated together must come from the same household unless all patrons at the table are fully immunized. Patrons who are fully immunized and from different households may dine together. For outdoor dining, tables are limited to a maximum of eight patrons and can be from different households regardless of immunization status.

- Indoor faith-based services and organized community gatherings (including pow wows and sun dance ceremonies) to resume at 25 percent capacity to a limit of 25 persons with masks worn at all times.

- Outdoor faith-based and organized community gatherings to resume for up to 50 persons, provided distance can be maintained between households. Drive-in services continue to be permitted.

- Outdoor weddings and funerals may take place with up to 25 participants, in addition to photographer and officiants. Indoor weddings and funerals remain limited to 10 persons.

- Indoor dance, music, theatre, and other organized sports and recreation activities may reopen at 25 percent capacity to a limit of five persons, with no tournaments allowed.

- Outdoor dance, music, and theatre classes and other organized recreation activities may reopen for groups up to 25 people, with no tournaments allowed.

- Swimming and wading pools,

both indoor and outdoor, may reopen at 25 percent capacity.

- Gyms and fitness facilities may reopen for individual and group fitness classes at 25 percent capacity with three metres distance maintained between patrons.

- Summer day camps may reopen to a maximum of 20 participants in groups.

Despite these increased freedoms, it is still necessary for all people to continue following the COVID-19 safety fundamentals, including indoor mask use and physical distancing.

The next vaccination goal is for 75 percent of all eligible Manitobans to have received a first dose, and for 50 percent to have received a second dose.

By the start of July, significant progress has already been made towards those goals.

That said, Dr. Roussin has warned that the pandemic is not over, and that every activity still comes with a degree of risk.

"While the case numbers and our health system are improving, the pandemic is not over and variants of concern, especially the B.1.617.2 (delta) variant, are still circulating," Dr. Roussin says. "This is why Manitobans need to continue to practice the fundamentals—washing your hands, physical distancing, wearing a mask, and getting fully vaccinated. Today's reopening fits with the public health advice on where we are in the fight against the pandemic and where we still have to go."



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Commentary

Risky Business: How Our Brains Assess Reward and Consequence

By Daniel Dacombe

Many people are afraid of flying. And really, why shouldn't they be? Climbing into a pressurized metal tube that soars thousands of metres into the air at hundreds of kilometres per hour powered by explosive fuel sounds like a recipe for disaster.

Ask anyone who has a fear of flying and they will cite these reasons, and draw a seemingly logical conclusion: if you climb into a plane, it's possible you will die in a plane crash.

For some, that outcome isn't just possible; they consider it likely. These individuals then climb into a car, truck, or SUV—a vehicle that is thousands of times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash.

It may seem strange that so many people are more afraid of flying than they are of driving even though every statistic tells us we should feel the opposite.

According to tried and true statistics, your odds of being in a fatal plane crash are roughly 1 in 9,821. Compare this to your odds of being in a fatal traffic collision, which is 1 in 114.

It isn't even comparable.

Yet when this fact is explained to someone who is afraid of flying, it doesn't seem to matter. The perception that flight is more dangerous may

remain.

This is not to draw attention to people who have an honest fear of flying.

It does, however, bring up some interesting questions.

Why do we sometimes become afraid of outcomes which are so unlikely? Why do we sometimes not seem to realize certain activities are risky when they actually are?

And most interesting, what happens inside us when we attempt to assess how likely a bad outcome is for the things we're thinking of doing?

When professionals like scientists, public health experts, and economists want to determine how likely it is that an event will have a dangerous result, they use a variety of methods to find out. They may look at statistics they've already gathered, they may engage in new research, or they may request data from manufacturers, doctors, or others in the field they are exploring.

Complex processes are used to assess possible dangers and benefits, and these results can then help inform public policy.

This is one of the reasons that smoking isn't allowed in public spaces; the assessment of the data shows that there is too much risk involved.

Risk assessment isn't just for

professionals, though. We're all doing it. And we've been doing it for as long as we've been on this earth.

In the field of psychology, this is referred to as risk perception: the process our brains undertake in order to determine the likelihood of a negative outcome from any given course of action.

Risk perception relies on factors such as cognitive processes (how we think), previous experience, available information, and observation.

Like any good scientist, we gather the data and make an assessment of how risky an activity is—and based on that assessment, we decide whether or not we will do it.

However, our own risk perception process can run into some serious snags... and we might not be aware of these snags if we don't look at the scientific data.

A famous psychological study in 1978 found that people tend to overestimate the risk of events that are unlikely to occur, and underestimate the risk of events that are in fact much more likely to occur. This study suggested, and later studies confirmed, that our brain's ability to engage in accurate risk perception can be impacted by unrelated factors.

1. Personality traits. Individuals who gravitate towards risky activities for fun or pleasure generally consider the associated risks to be less likely than they actually are.

2. Emotion. If an individual fears an activity or event, they generally perceive the associated risks to be likely.

3. Cognitive biases. Our brains use mental shortcuts to come to conclusions, which can result in those conclusions being arrived at incorrectly. This is especially relevant with availability bias, which is when information that is easy to think of or recall is given greater importance than new information.

4. Degree of understanding. The lower our understanding of an activity or field of study, the less likely we are to accurately assess how dangerous it is.

5. Perceived reward. If people experience pleasure from an activity (such as smoking), they are more likely to perceive the risks as low.

(A quick note about teenage brains and risk perception: during adolescence, our brains become heavily biased towards assessing risks as "low" and assessing the rewards from those same activities as "high." In 15 years of working with adolescents, I have explained this

to parents literally hundreds of times. This bias tends to correct as we get older, so don't worry... it gets better.)

Influence from the world and culture around us can also contribute to incorrect risk perception.

If the media you consume includes depictions of activities that appear risky, you may be less inclined to engage in them later. Few people would choose to watch the 1994 Keanu Reeves film *Speed* right before going on a long bus trip, for instance.

In the same way, bias in the media we give weight to can contribute to an inaccurate perception of risk.

One example of this has become especially relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic. When the increased risk of blood clots from certain COVID vaccines became known, many people pointed to this as a reason not to get the vaccine. For these people, the risk of getting a blood clot was deemed to be too high.

However, as experts were quick to point out, the risk of the vaccine causing a blood clot was only between 1 in 250,000 to 500,000. The data also shows that about 1 in 100 COVID-19 patients developed blood clots, and for those COVID patients who were admitted to hospital

the risk rose to 1 in 20.¹

This is just one example during the pandemic where unlikely events related to vaccines and public health orders were assessed by some to be too risky, when the data clearly told a different story.

While it isn't possible to completely avoid all risks, it is possible to get better at assessing them—and there are two steps we can take to improve our risk perception.

The first is to seek out experts. Not just the professionals who are saying what we want to hear. We need to look for the independently verified, acknowledged experts on the subjects we are studying.

The second is to know ourselves—to know our fears, our biases, and most importantly our limitations. This will help us to be more receptive to information that challenges our beliefs. And it may help us understand why we fear certain things in the first place.

CITATION

¹ Mia Rabson, "Doctors Say Getting COVID-19 Poses Much Bigger Risk of Blood Clots," *CTV News*. March 19, 2021 (<https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/doctors-say-getting-covid-19-poses-much-bigger-risk-of-blood-clots-1.5353995>).

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Sports & Recreation



Bryan Trottier, Kevin Lansard, Jeremy Braun, Scott Wallace, Clarence Braun, Carl Fast, and Raymond Dowse.

CARA DOWSE

Niverville to Host Its Own Junior A Hockey Franchise

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

As Niverville's brand-new Community Recreation and Resource Centre nears completion, the news can be told: Niverville will soon be home to its own Junior A hockey franchise.

The team's inaugural season will be played at the CRRC as part of the Manitoba Junior Hockey League's 2022-2023 season.

"Niverville is recognized as one of the fastest-growing communities in the province and the MJHL is thrilled to bring a new organization into this community, while adding another first-class and state-of-the-art facility to our league," says MJHL Commissioner Kevin Saurette.

Saurette also makes a point to recognize the significant commitment and efforts of Clarence Braun and the rest of the management

team who have been instrumental in helping to bring this franchise to Niverville.

"After some years of looking at the opportunity of entry into the league, I am proud that our efforts have come to this conclusion," says Clarence Braun. "I want to thank the support of our growing numbers of shareholders who are investing for the benefit of this not-for-profit community venture."

Braun adds that the Town of Niverville, including its council and administration, need to be thanked for being forward-thinking about the construction of the CRRC.

"We are grateful for their support as we look forward to putting together a team we can all be proud of," Braun says. "Lastly, thanks to former commissioner Kim Davis and to the present commissioner Kevin Saurette. We thank them for

their support through this process. We will endeavour to provide a quality product on the ice that will bring honour and respect to the MJHL and create the win-win scenario for players and for Niverville and the surrounding area."

A LONG ROAD

For a few key people, it's been a long road getting here.

"The initial dialogue actually started with the MJHL about 15 years ago," says Ray Dowse, who has been part of the project since its earliest days. "Back in 2007, I was part of a group of three people, including Clarence Braun and Kerry Church, who first introduced the former commissioner, Kim Davis, to Niverville, and some of the initiatives within our community."

At that time, Davis provided the nascent steering committee with

details about the league, budgets, and a rough outline of what would be required to start a team.

"Without real plans for a new facility, though, it was more just making introductions, collecting preliminary information, and planting a seed," says Dowse.

That seed took a decade to take a root. Eleven years later, that all-important piece of the puzzle—a new facility for a team to play in—took shape in the form of the CRRC.

In 2018, the Town of Niverville announced a \$5 million commitment to the CRRC. The first phase of the new high school was under construction and the outlook for a recreation facility was very positive.

Although the CRRC was close to being green-lit, a key point of consideration involved how many seats would be installed in the new arena.

"Several town councillors

attended a meeting together with Kim Davis and our small steering committee at a Boston Pizza in Winnipeg," Dowse says. "The commissioner was clear that the league required a minimum of 1,000 seats in our arena for a team to operate here."

The early plans for the arena included seating for approximately 600 spectators.

Through additional dialogue with council, it was decided that additional space would be created to accommodate the installation of more bleachers.

Also in 2018, a fourth member was added to the steering committee: Jeremy Braun. The next year, they were joined by Kevin Lansard.

In April 2019, the CRRC was made official with the announcement of federal grant funding, and the following month Kevin Saurette, current commissioner of the MJHL,

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attended the annual CRRC fundraising gala.

"With an arena completion date in sight, our steering committee then moved our efforts into high gear," says Dowse.

A SOLID PLAN

During construction of the CRRC, the steering committee has undertaken a significant amount of work.

First they incorporated as a non-profit, calling themselves Niverville Junior A Hockey Club Inc. and following a community ownership model. They wrote team bylaws, put forward a retainer to complete the shareholder agreement, produced a team mission statement, and began drafting operating budgets.

In 2020, the final members of the steering committee stepped into place: Carl Fast, Bryan Trottier, and Scott Wallace.

"Our committee has been very fortunate to have had the support of both league commissioners, past and present, as well as past team owners, current team and league management, players, scouts, and hockey people in general," Dowse says. "They've been willing to provide us with feedback that helped us develop a solid plan."

Dowse adds that two individuals have been especially instrumental in this journey: Tom Kleyson, former owner of the Winnipeg South Blues, and Grant Lazaruk, current president and governor of the Steinbach Pistons.

"Both of these gentlemen have provided our steering committee with a tremendous amount of guidance," says Dowse. "We are truly appreciative of their support and insight in helping to bring our Niverville MJHL dreams to reality."

So what does it take to operate a junior hockey team? The Niverville franchise will have a preliminary annual

budget of \$650,000, but this doesn't include start-up costs.

That's a middle-of-the-road budget for an MJHL franchise.

RECRUITING SHAREHOLDERS

A key part of the process has been bringing on community shareholders. There are two key groups, and Dowse says that both are essential.

"Class-A shareholders will assume the ongoing responsibilities for the team—operational and financial—and the board of directors will be selected from this group," he says. "We anticipate there will be between 35 and 50 class-A shareholders with this organization."

So far, the club has only reached out to potential class-A shareholders. There are already about 30 people who have made this commitment, and that number is expected to grow.

"Class-B shareholders are significant in that they help with the initial team start-up costs, but they will not have ongoing financial responsibilities other than initial share purchase," Dowse adds.

Class-B shareholders will also have an option to participate on the many committees required for the team's operation. The plan is to bring aboard approximately 200 class-B shareholders.

"There are many costs associated with a new team, as we have league fees, disbursement draft fees, equipment that needs to be purchased, and we have to hire people such as a general manager, coach, and support staff before we have revenue," says Dowse. "In addition to that, there is a significant amount of work with volunteers, systems, processes, signing players, scouting, and so on. We have outlined timelines for everything, but now that we are officially accepted it becomes real."

NEXT STEPS

The next step will be to establish a board of directors. From that point, the board will make decisions and set the course for the organization.

Other important upcoming steps include finalizing the team's bylaws and shareholder agreements, working on systems and processes, making the initial hires, forming committees and volunteer groups, hosting fundraisers, purchasing equipment, and developing marketing plans.

Then of course there's the hiring of a general manager and coach, which is expected to happen by November of this year. Once those people are in place, players can start to be signed early in 2022.

Naturally, the team will need a name, as well as sponsors. The initiative to identify a team name will kick off this September.

"It is a significant amount of work ahead," Dowse concedes. "But as we determine responsibilities on the board, we can begin to establish different committees and volunteer groups to get a lot of people start working together in the lead-up to opening day. Many hands make light work!"

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Dowse adds that community involvement will be crucial over the next year as the organization puts all the pieces into place to drop the puck for the first time.

One way in which the community can step up is to take the opportunity to billet a player, since many of the team's players will come from across Manitoba and Canada, including some even from outside the country.

Those who choose to be billeting families will provide players with a stable and secure home away from home.

"We would love for residents to begin to think

about that for themselves and their household," Dowse says. "I know many friends of mine who played higher-level hockey and lived with billet families. To this day, they still have strong friendships with those families many years after their junior hockey days are behind them. These players become part of the family, and their billeting experience typically has a lasting impression."

Dowse adds that this hockey club will have a profound effect on the community and the many people who choose to make Niverville home.

"We are looking to create an experience with this organization—players, management, fans, volunteers, and the community as a whole," he says. "We want players who are part of this team to understand the impact the organization will have on the community, and the impact they as players have as role models to the many kids in sport and local minor hockey programs. But we as an organization also want to create a team and an environment where players are excited to be here and are able to excel and use their time here as a stepping stone to pursue their passion with hockey and develop life skills that will stay with them forever. It would be amazing to see kids who have played in Niverville go on to have opportunities at university, NCAA, or at the highest level of professional hockey. We're excited to help create opportunities for these young athletes in our hometown, and hopefully we'll also have the opportunity to see some local talent play for this team and pursue their hockey dreams close to home!"

The Manitoba Junior Hockey League is one of nine Junior A hockey leagues in Canada and is a proud member of the Canadian Junior Hockey League (CJHL).

CITIZEN POLL

With the announcement of Niverville's MJHL franchise and the Providence Pilots playing their home games at the CRRC, what are your plans for game attendance?

- ☐ I plan to see most games, and maybe even buy MJHL season tickets.
- ☐ I plan to attend some games throughout the season, when it works for my schedule.
- ☐ I will only go to a game if I'm given free tickets.
- ☐ I have no interest in attending any games.

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LAST MONTH'S RESULTS:

Do you know a child whom you suspect has fallen behind this school year due to pandemic-related disruptions to education?

Yes.	No
74%	26%

YOUR COMMENTS:

Extroverts most likely had a harder time. But introverts most likely didn't. So it depends on your child.

As a teacher I have seen that challenges the disruptions have presented for students. I have seen many more cases of anxiety and mental health concerns due to the uncertainties. At the same time there are been some that have thrived at learning from home. Especially children with good support at home from parents have been able to navigate the challenges.

It's not so much the quality of teaching that's gone down - our teachers are still doing an amazing job - but the environment, conditions and constant changes have made teaching and learning extremely difficult. I believe even the kids who are 'doing ok' will eventually start showing negative effects of the lockdowns and rules. Kids are resilient but they aren't super human. I know so many children who are no longer their happy, confident selves. Two children come to mind who seemed to be doing exceptionally well through all of this who are now showing obvious signs of depression. One has parents who see it and are seeking help, the other is floundering in a very negative family situation (brought about by the lockdowns). I know three senior high students who quit school because they couldn't manage learning under these circumstances. It will be interesting to see the stats on school attendance next year compared to this year. I think we will see some interesting numbers.

The part time school model we saw in the first wave was working best in my opinion.



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Providence Pilots to Play Home Games at Niverville CRRC

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

The Town of Niverville has entered into a partnership agreement with Providence University to allow their athletics department regular use of the fieldhouse at the Community Resource and Recreation Centre.

Although training will continue to happen on campus in Otterburne, the Providence Pilots volleyball, basketball, and futsal (indoor soccer) teams will play their games in Niverville starting this fall.

"Otterburne isn't that far and we're only separated by a few miles," says Niverville Mayor Myron Dyck. "I believe that this just further strengthens our region and lets people in our province, and those beyond our provincial borders, know about this region and what is going on here... We're very excited about this."

Dr. Kenton Anderson, President of Providence University, was on hand for the announcement.

"I'm grateful to my team that has worked so diligently alongside your team, Mr. Mayor, to work out the details," says Dr. Anderson, who just began his term as president a few weeks ago on June 1. "It's a cost-effective solution for us at Providence. Also, and I'm new to this, but what I've been hearing about Niverville is pretty exciting. This is a progressive community—you're looking to the future and looking for opportunities to grow and prosper and allow the people of the town to flourish. We just want to be part of that. We're close neighbours, and we're friends,



Providence President Dr. Kenton Anderson and Niverville Mayor Myron Dyck at the front doors of the CRRC.

EVAN BRAUN

and we're going to work together."

The partnership agreement, which has been in the works for more than a year and will remain in effect for up to 25 years, will assist in offsetting the costs of construction and the ongoing operations of the CRRC.

Mayor Dyck says the agreement is a big win for Niverville taxpayers. He adds that the two parties worked to ensure that the agreement benefits everyone in an equitable way.

"The partnership agreement gives Providence the court time and the space that they need while still also allowing residents of Niverville the time they need for what they wish to do, recreationally or competitively," says Dyck. "We wanted to work with them, but not at the expense of the residents and taxpayers that have contributed to the project. We believe that there is a very healthy balance that has been struck here."

This sentiment was echoed by Dr. Anderson, who added that he hopes that Nivervillians begin to feel as

though the Pilots are their own local team to come out and cheer for.

Roughly speaking, the agreement will give Providence use of the fieldhouse about 20 hours per week from September to March. None of the university's athletics programs extend beyond the academic year.

Many of these hours, Mayor Dyck clarifies, will take place during non-peak hours when the CRRC might otherwise not see high demand.

"When you're talking about revenue for the facility, you ask, 'When are people most likely going to be here?' It's evenings and weekends," says Dyck. "Providence is able to utilize non-demand hours, which is key. But they will definitely have some demand for evening games and weekend games, and that will be up to our facility manager to schedule."

Dyck adds that the town's goal is to keep the CRRC revenue neutral, although it's understood that there will likely be a deficit at first.

"Our goal is to be net zero, but

because we're providing an opportunity to people in the community to be able to do things that they might have to otherwise leave a community to do, there's an intangible benefit to all of that."

There is also a great deal of economic spinoff to hosting games and bringing in players, coaches, and fans from both across the region and even other parts of the country.

Those economic advantages will only become sharper once the Manitoba Junior Hockey League team begins playing out of the CRRC in the fall of 2022.

So far, the demand is high for use of the facility, Dyck says.

"Yes, the demand is there," he says. "People are coming out of the woodwork, saying, 'Can we play there?' We say that we want them to, but we're trying to balance things. This was built first and foremost for the residents and people of Niverville."

So where will the opposing teams

and fans be coming from? According to Scott Masterson, Providence's Chief Operations Officer and Athletics Director, teams will be visiting from across Canada, and even from the United States.

"We are in the Manitoba Colleges Athletics Conference," says Masterson. "And then that conference is also now a member of the Canadian Collegiate Athletics Association (CCAA), which is the national body in Canada."

Masterson says that the CCAA will be holding its men's volleyball national tournament in Manitoba in 2025, and the Pilots may be able to place a bid for Niverville to host it.

"One of the questions we've had of this facility is, would it be sufficient to put in an application to host the national championships here?" says Masterson. "We believe we can. There's other schools that have the right to bid for Manitoba as well, but we're hopeful that we would be able to host the national championships here in Niverville, which I think would be massive."

In addition to Canada, the university's teams also play in the National Christian College Athletics Association, an American league.

"We've been doing that for the last 20-plus years," Masterson says. "Our soccer and basketball teams are playing in that conference, and it gives us a chance to compete against U.S. schools and earn our way to a national championship down in the U.S. as well. So now we have a U.S. and a Canadian national championship opportunity."

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Arts & Entertainment

Former Teacher's Debut Novel Draws from Real Life

By Jennifer Lavin

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Mark Reimer's life hasn't been without tragedy, but he has taken the combination of joy and sorrow he's experienced and channelled it into crafting a novel that draws on the character traits of some of the amazing people he's met in his lifetime.

Reimer grew up in a blended family. His father, Reverend Ben D. Reimer, lost his first wife, leaving him with eight children to raise. His dad then remarried and the new couple had three more kids, including Mark.

"When I was young, I had many social strikes against me, so it was easy to lose myself in reading," says Reimer.

He says he wrote many short stories to pass the time in grade school, then resumed writing short stories while in his thirties.

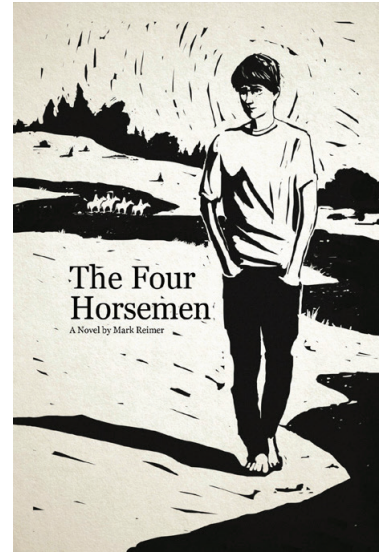
In 1989, Reimer was hired to teach at Niverville Collegiate and taught there for ten years. He describes this time as the highlight of his career.

"I felt that the rapport I was able to create with students was my strongest asset at that time in my career, and I invested major amounts of energy into understanding and trying to be supportive and encouraging to students in my class," he says. "I built connections with students that continue to this day, with some of those friendships continuing to inspire me in my present life choices... Those extended years of connecting with students is what made my time in Niverville so special. I have not taught in another place where I had that sort of connection to my students."

After retiring from teaching,



Mark Reimer, who taught for ten years in Niverville, is releasing his first novel, based on aspects of his real life.



MARK REIMER

Reimer travelled to Ecuador where he started the Manitoba to Ecuador Project in 2011.

Then, finally, he had time to write. "I have some friends who know my family's story—the good, the bad, and the ugly—and they encouraged me to write it in such a way that I could also address the evolution of faith that they observed all around them," says Reimer. "That resonated with me, as I have lived in and taught in religious communities and have frequently had questions addressed or conversations with students about their lives and observations too."

Reimer wanted to write fiction, but he had so many family members, loved ones, and former students whose stories he wanted to use. He needed to figure out how to write this book without revealing secrets or offending friends.

He says he soon settled on what

he thinks of as a winning strategy.

"I would use what I know, with sufficient adaptations and adjustments to the stories so that no one would be able to point to a character and say, 'I know that person!' or 'I am that person!'"

For the foundation of the story, Reimer used his own family structure—a preacher who is left to care for children alone after his wife dies.

"Walter Rempel is a preacher in the book. He is not my father, or at least not only my father," Reimer says of his book's main character. "He represents all the people who I've met whose faith is a 'certainty' that has all the answers to all the questions. Elizabeth is not my mother, in that she asks questions and pushes against the status quo of beliefs. None of the children in the story are fully me, nor my siblings. To quote movie disclaimers: any similarities

between these characters and characters in real life is purely coincidental. Although it's not really coincidental. I've blended between five and 25 people I've encountered into each one of the characters in the story."

At least one of the characters became a source of personal healing for Reimer.

He was a foster parent for a time in the 90s, and he lost his foster son to suicide.

"While writing, I found myself weeping even before I realized I was writing elements of my foster child's story into one of the characters."

The title of Reimer's book is *The Four Horsemen*, and he chose that title for some very specific reasons.

"The four horsemen of the apocalypse were standard teaching ideas in my home when I was growing up, as a way of linking the biblical book of

Revelation to the world in which we lived," he says. "The usual symbolic meaning of those four horsemen are war and conquest, plague, famine, and death. Traditionally they are used to explain the coming of the end of the world. In my book, those large, expansive reaches are redefined to become familial and social conflicts, which then become the framework of the conflicts faced by the fictional Rempel family."

The novel takes place in south-eastern Manitoba, in a small, conservative, religious area.

As a result, it will ring many bells for local readers.

But the themes of the novel are heavy: one character needs to learn to accept her sexual identity in an intolerant church, another character is abused, and there is stress in the large blended family.

Ultimately, Reimer says that his novel is about "navigating faith when the reality does not fit comfortably with church teaching."

Reimer is currently waiting for a confirmed date for the printed copies to arrive. Once he has this date, he will confirm more of his launch and marketing plans.

He plans to have at least one event in Niverville, as a local couple have agreed to host a reading in their backyard some time in early September when in-person meetings are once again permissible.

He is also considering a "Thank you for the memories, Niverville" event combined with a reading/launch event. That celebration would also be held in early September, following the Labour Day weekend.

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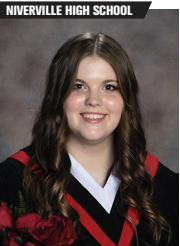
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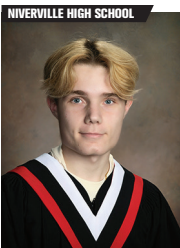
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FUNK



MACKENZIE
FUNK



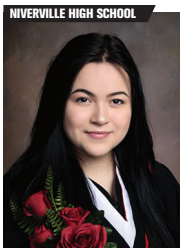
RILEY
GROSS



MARCUS
HARDER



SAMUEL
HARDER



DAPHNE
HENRIQUEZ-SAVAGE



CATHERINE
HIEBERT



HAYLEY
HIEBERT



KATHRYN
HIEBERT



LIAM
HIEBERT



SAMUEL
HILDEBRAND



JETT
HORNING



GLORIA
JANG



BLAZE
JOHNSON



ALIA
KEHLER



KEZIA
KLASSEN



HALEY
LAFRAMBOISE



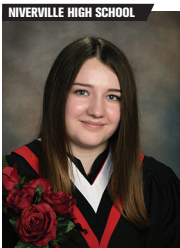
DANIEL
LOPES



RORY
MICHALUK-CUMMINGS



COLE
MURDOCK



SARAH
NEUFELD



ANDREW
NICKLE



ANTHONY
NISSSEN



ELIJAH
PASTOOR



WILLIAM
PATERSON



MORGAN
PENNER



NTHABISENG
PETERS



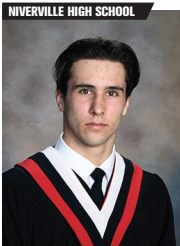
B'ELANNA
PIASTA



CONNOR
REDEKOP



NEMCHEL
SARMIENTO



KYLE
SAWATZKY



ADAM
STOTT



BRENDAN
THOMPSON



CAIGE
TOWNS



SARAH
WAHL



DAYNA
WIEBE



ELLA
WIEBE



JANAE
WOLFE



STEFANIE
ZACHARIAS



JULIANA
ZEILSTRA



COLLÈGE RÉGIONAL GABRIELLE-ROY



GABRIELLE
ABRAHAM



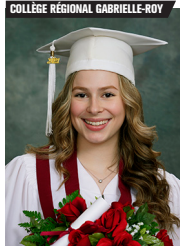
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ANDERSON



DOMINIC
BALCAEN



DÉRICK
BEDARD



ALISZ
BELANGER



NADINE
BELLEMARE



RÉAL
BELLEMARE



SYDNEY
BOISSONNEAULT



GABRIELLE
BOULET



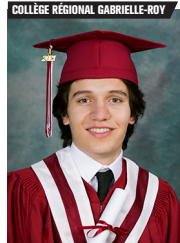
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BOURGUIN



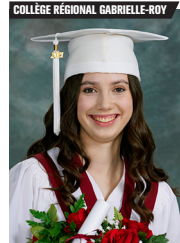
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NICOLES
CARTER



MATHÉO
CASSAGNE



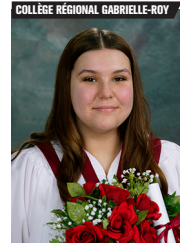
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CHAMMARTIN



REECE
CLARKE



STÉPHANE
COMEAU



JOCELYN
CURRIE



JULIEN
DANNEELS



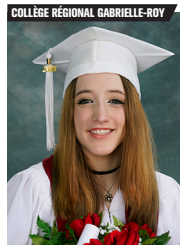
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DAVID



KATE
DAVIDSON



JANELLE
DE ROCQUIGNY



EMMA
DEQUIER



THOMAS
DEQUIER



JULIE
DERBOWKA



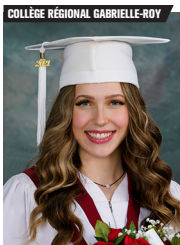
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DESAULNIERS



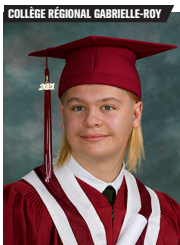
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BRIANNE
DOHERTY



MAKAYLA
DORGE



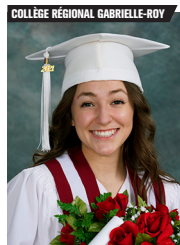
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DOSTIE-CHARETTE



NICOLAS
DUBOIS



ANI
FERGUSON



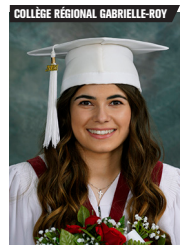
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FERGUSON



REAGAN
FRIESEN



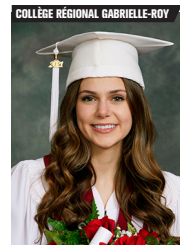
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GAGNON



BRYNNA
GUMIENY



ADRIEN
HEBERT



MILA
HOULE



JAMIL
HRIECH



ALEX
HUBERDEAU



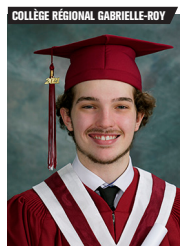
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JOHNSON



CABREL
LABOSSIÈRE



VINCENT
LAING



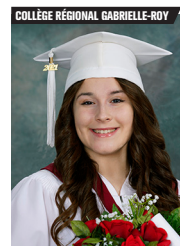
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LAMBERT



XAVIER
LECOCQ



DYLAN
MANDZIUK



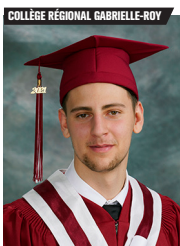
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MARCOUX



CÉDRIC
MARTEL RAFFARD



CAITLYN
MCWILLIAMS



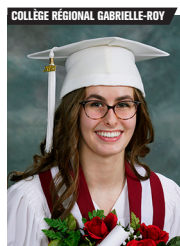
KYLE
MELO



RISHA
MILAN



BRAEDEN
MOGG



MACKENZIE
NICOLAS



MEGAN
NORDSTROM



MIGUEL
PALUD



ZOE
PELLETIER



MELISSA
POIRIER



MICHELLE
PREJET



ANNIKA
RITCHOT



MATHIEU
SENECAL



ALEXANDRE
TETRAULT



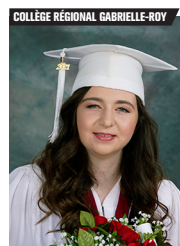
NIKOLAS
TOUPIN



JEREMY
VACHON



DECLAN
VERMETTE



THÉRÈSE
VERMETTE



JEREMIE
WEIR



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