

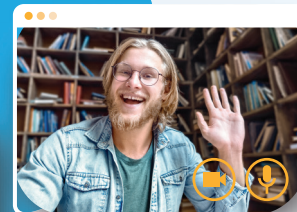
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## LOCAL NEWS

### Surgical Backlog Exact Heavy Local Toll

■ As the wait lists grows for delayed surgeries, many locals are worried about their personal health outcomes.

Details on Pages 4-5

## LOCAL NEWS

### Healthcare Workers Face Harassment

■ Workers in the healthcare field, in addition to facing burn-out, have been the subject of harassment in rural areas.

Details on Page 10



## SPORTS & REC

### MJHL Team Hires Head Coach

■ The new MJHL team in Niverville has taken a big step this month with the hiring of a head coach and general manager. Kelvin Cech, who previously coached in Winkler, brings with him a great deal of experience at the Junior level.

Details on Page 14

## ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

### Niverville Author Publishes New Book

■ Rochelle Moffit of Niverville has released a new book that focuses on the many challenges of caring for a sick child.

Details on Page 19



# Busy Niverville Intersection to Receive Traffic Signals

» READ MORE ON PAGE 3

RAY DOWSE

# A smarter way to save

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The intersection at Highway 311 and Mulberry Avenue will see upgrades this year. RAY DOWSE

# Busy Intersection to Receive Traffic Signals, Turning Lanes

**By Evan Braun**  
✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

Long-awaited improvements are coming to one of Niverville's busiest intersections.

Next year, the provincial government will share the cost of critical upgrades to the corner of Highway 311 and Mulberry Avenue.

The project is expected to cost \$1.9 million and will be split with the Town of Niverville.

"Our government is committed to working with municipalities and listening to Manitobans in supporting projects that will improve road safety and provide economic benefits to communities," says MLA Ron Schuler, formerly Minister of Infrastructure. "Niverville has one of the highest population

growth rates in the province and the need for increased infrastructure will enhance quality of life and strengthen commercial and residential sectors in the area."

This corner has become increasingly busy in the last year following the opening of the town's new rec centre, the CRRC. All traffic flowing to the CRRC, Niverville High School, Centennial Arena, and Niverville Curling Club eventually makes it back to the highway at this one location.

New traffic signals and turning lanes will be built to facilitate a high volume of traffic.

These upgrades are also expected to improve operations at the adjacent intersection of Highway 311 and Krahn Road, which is also subject to heavy traffic. The

commercial strip along Drovers Run, which is accessed from Krahn Road, attracts a steady stream of vehicles at all hours of the day.

"The announcement of these new lights at Mulberry and PR 311 is wonderful news for our community," says Mayor Myron Dyck. "This is a high traffic area near our new rec centre and our high school, so these lights will greatly improve the safety of area drivers and pedestrians."

Previously, a crosswalk was added to this location to help pedestrians cross the busy highway at Mulberry Avenue.

Schuler noted that these upgrades will help accommodate increased tourism and benefit community residents.

## The Citizen

Box 266, Niverville, MB R0A 1E0  
www.nivervillecitizen.com

**Managing Editor:**  
Evan Braun

**Sales Manager:**  
Ray Dowse

**Operations Manager:**  
Cara Dowse

**Design/Production Manager:**  
Dustin Krahn

**Contributors:**  
Evan Braun, Jennifer Lavin,  
Sara Beth Dacombe, Daniel Dacombe,  
Scott Stroh

**CONTACT US**

**Letters to the Editor:**  
editor@nivervillecitizen.com

**Advertising Sales:**  
sales@nivervillecitizen.com

**Classifieds/General Information:**  
info@nivervillecitizen.com

**Artwork/Ad Proofs/Graphics:**  
ads@nivervillecitizen.com

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## CITIZEN POLL

## Is Manitoba's provincial government doing enough to resolve the backlog of surgeries and diagnostic procedures built up during the pandemic?

- ☐ Yes. The government has appointed a task-force of professionals to address the problem, and they will get the job done.
- ☐ No. More needs to be done to ensure that not only is the backlog resolved, but it's resolved quickly.
- ☐ Have a more nuanced opinion? Leave us a comment online.

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### YOUR COMMENTS:

**Railers:** I think with the location of the rail line so near, as well as the easy ring to it, can become a great team name for Niverville. Also a good theme for games with a train horn idea for the goal horn, and I think an excellent train logo/jersey can possibly be formed in time. Maybe even get some idea of some sort of sponsorship from CN/CP. (One ECHL team uses the name and has a great logo)

**Blades:** I chose blades because of their skate blades of course but in this area we produce a lot of grain and grain has blades, as in blades of grass!

**Badgers:** I think The Niverville Badgers has a great ring to it. Badgers are a regional animal that are known for being fierce fighters! The word badger comes from bageard, referring to the white stripe on their head like a badge (Wikipedia). I think the goalie could have a really cool custom helmet with the stripes of a badger on it. I also think someone could come up with really cool looking jerseys and a mascot!! Go Badgers Go!

**Icemen:** The name "Icemen" allows for creativity from the board, fan and player level. From graphic design ideas, mascot options, colours and simply an easy name to remember that fits that hockey team name ring.

**Trackers:** Trackers would make it the TNT which could be said is Explosive! Or Dynamite! but also references that the town always has and is associated with the railway tracks. Also thinking this would lend itself nicely to various good logos and pics.

**Knights:** Town was named after Joseph Claude Boucher de Niverville who was a Chevalier - a horseman - a knight.

**Pizza Kings:** would be the most fitting name because the number one food industry in Niverville is pizza with six places to buy Pizza and one more to come.

**Eagles:** Niverville is fortunate to have so many eagles. I see them soaring over our town a lot. They are also representing of the Indigenous teachings and heritage of this Treaty 1 land.

**Northstars:** The North Star is the anchor of the northern sky. It is a landmark, or sky marker, that helps those who follow it determine direction as it glows brightly to guide and lead toward a purposeful destination. Similarly, Niverville is a landmark, a marker at a strategic site where in 1874 the Crow Wing Trail crossed the path of the proposed CPR Railway Pembina Branch, a site chosen by Joseph Whitehead for a railway station and settlement. The North Star also has a symbolic meaning, for it depicts a beacon of inspiration and hope to many, even as the generosity of Niverville residents has been a source of light and of hope to many.

**Express:** A tribute to the Express Lunch at Chicken Chef! And the railway tracks I guess.

**Bears:** When I moved to Niverville 7 years ago, I kept hearing of the Niverville Bear on Facebook, so I thought it might resonate with people that live here.

**Clippers:** Has a long history in this community, and it would be fitting to continue that with our incoming community owned Junior A team.

**Threshermen:** This name relates to Niverville's rich history of hard-working farmers working the land since the 1800's.

**MennoKnights:** pays homage to our Mennonite heritage with a contemporary twist (offers some brand recognition to Vegas Golden Knights) "quest for the cup" promotions all season and for playoffs (knights go on quests) Great Knight mascot options. Arena nickname could be The Fortress, The Keep, etc.

**Steamers:** This refers to the Steamboat "The International" that dropped off immigrants at what's now known as "Mennonite Landing" near Niverville.

**Rail Dogs:** I think this would be a great name because of Niverville's rail history with having the first grain elevator in western Canada.

**Fusion:** Metis significance to community, their language was created by fusion of 2 languages, those common to First Nations and French. Fusion=combining. People, sections of the community, cultures, all ages, all income levels, levels of athleticism, backgrounds. All parts come together in a community that supports in many ways and gives time and/or money for the team, made up of twenty something members plus staff of various backgrounds, but ONE TEAM.

# Surgical Backlog Exacts Heavy Local Toll

By Sara Beth Dacombe

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

[sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com](mailto:sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com)

Manitobans are facing a growing number of postponed surgeries and diagnostic procedures.

At last count, about 160,000 procedures had been cancelled or postponed. When compared to other provinces, Manitoba's backlog is large.

"Manitoba has faced more surgery disruptions than other provinces during the pandemic, and the cancellations continue as nurses are once again redeployed to support overwhelmed and understaffed ICUs," reads a statement released by Doctors Manitoba.

On December 8, the province established a taskforce to address the issue, but many in the healthcare field say the taskforce will not be effective in a timely manner.

"The taskforce has an unquestionably challenging task," reads the Doctors Manitoba statement. "Manitobans need to know how long their wait will be. We look forward to the government setting a target date to clear the backlog in the coming weeks."

### HIGH RISK OF CANCER

If you don't know anyone affected by the growing uncertainty over surgeries, the problem can seem abstract. But there are thousands of real people who feel trapped in an endless holding pattern.

A number of these people are locals, perhaps friends, family, or neighbours. They

aren't just upset at the inconvenience, although the inconvenience is great. Many are afraid that the delays could result in worse health outcomes.

Karen Cinq-Mars is a self-employed clinical social worker living in Ste. Agathe with three kids. She has been waiting almost a year for multiple procedures.

Her ordeal started in October 2020 when her mother was diagnosed with the breast cancer gene called BRCA1.

"There were always backlogs even before COVID, so it took until March 26, 2021 to get results," Cinq-Mars says. "They showed I was positive for the BRCA1 breast cancer gene, which elevates my risk to 80 percent for breast cancer and elevates the risk for ovarian cancer as well."

To mitigate this risk, her doctors recommended that she see a breast cancer surgeon, but the surgeon wouldn't see her until she had a recent mammogram.

In March, diagnostic services gave Cinq-Mars an October 2021 date for the mammogram, but she requested to be placed on a cancellation list and did receive an appointment for June 2021.

"Once I saw the surgeon, she referred me to a reconstruction surgeon as well, but at that time he said the delays in the surgeries would put me back until 2022," she says. "He couldn't give me a date, so I still don't have a date for the hysterectomy and the mastectomy. It's been over nine

months and these procedures would reduce my chances for cancer greatly."

Living with a high risk of cancer means she needs to have a mammogram and MRI every year to ensure that if she does develop cancer it can be caught quickly.

"I did get an MRI on time, but I am worried that I won't get those diagnostic services, those protective measures moving forward if they get even more backed up," she says. "Coming up in June, I'll see if I get the mammogram when I'm supposed to."

While waiting, Cinq-Mars also developed an unexplained weakness in her hands and feet. She was able to see a neurologist and, through a cancellation list, receive another MRI which showed three herniated discs putting pressure on her spine.

"In April 2021, I was referred to a spinal surgeon and I still have no appointment for that," says Cinq-Mars. "But this didn't explain the problem with my feet. They thought it was peripheral neuropathy, which they think might be a genetic disorder, so I am on a wait list for an appointment to see a geneticist for that, and I don't have an appointment. If it's that, there's not a lot I can do to take care of it, but there's nothing I can do right now to stop the neuropathy and stop further nerve damage because there's nothing I can do awaiting the diagnosis."

Cinq-Mars is still waiting for a surgery date for any of her three surgeries.

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## UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE FUTURE

Due to these struggles, Cinq-Mars worries about what will happen if she develops cancer and has to go through chemo and other treatments, not to mention the spinal damage that could be occurring.

"I have kids I still take care of," she says. "I'm a single parent. So the impact of not getting the surgery in a timely manner could be drastic."

Cinq-Mars says that she is easily tired, doesn't have as much strength as she used to, and is unsteady on her feet.

"Any one of these issues can interfere with my ability to live," she adds. "I have a private practice, so I don't have insurance. I don't have disability insurance or short-term leave or sick time. If I don't work, I don't have money coming in to pay my bills. If I'm not up and about, I can't take care of my kids."

She is also frustrated with the difficulty in accessing care from family doctors, who are often only available remotely. Because of COVID-19, doctors are scheduling more phone and video chat appointments. In many cases, patients are apprehensive about going into the office in-person.

If you aren't an assertive advocate for your own health, Cinq-Mars says, you may find it's getting harder to receive adequate care.

"I think if you are unsure of yourself or even have a quieter personality, it's harder to speak up and say, 'This is what I want and this is what I need.'"

## FRUSTRATION AND BURNOUT

For anyone who's waiting for surgeries or treatments, Cinq-Mars has a few helpful encouragements when preparing for an appointment.

"Write yourself a list," Cinq-Mars says. "Get yourself in a chair in their office and don't get up from that chair until they've addressed your list... Don't take no for an answer. If you can bring someone with you, this may help. Doing it all on your own doesn't work. That's the main goal—don't try to do everything on your own."

For most of her in-person medical appointments, Cinq-Mars has gone by herself. But when seeing her surgeon, she was able to bring her partner along so he could hear firsthand what kind of care he would need to provide when she eventually has her surgery.

Privately, she receives the support she needs from family and friends, but Cinq-Mars can see the stress that is being shouldered by frontline healthcare workers.

"I have friends who work in hospitals, and nurses, so I see and hear about the stress involved about people who aren't vaccinated and who are increasing the volumes of cases in hospitals and still refuse to acknowledge COVID exists," she says. "When they were protesting in front of the Cancer Care building, that was incredibly upsetting for a lot of people. People with compromised immune systems had to go through those crowds to get care."

As for the taskforce that's been given the responsibility to resolve the surgical backlog, Cinq-Mars says it isn't enough. She points to the high level of turnover in the healthcare field, with people being asked to work in areas apart from their specialties.

"We all know what the issues are," Cinq-Mars says. "We've seen them for a long time and the government made cuts which escalated this crisis... This government

has a habit of making a worker do more and more with less and less, so all the qualified, seasoned medical professionals, social workers, doctors, nurses, homecare, or whatever, all the strong workers are leaving because they are burned out... Any study will show you that there is a lot of loss when you have staff turnover. It takes months to get them up to speed."

## "WE JUST NEED TO KNOW"

Some of the people impacted by the surgical backlog may be surprisingly young and fit.

Though not in a high-risk category for COVID-19, one middle school student from Niverville is awaiting a diagnosis and possible surgery to correct a knee injury.

Aidan Kipe tore his knee ligaments at school in April 2021. It took more than a week for the boy to be seen at an appointment with athletic specialists at the Pan Am Clinic in Winnipeg.

"Aidan was assessed as having an MCL, with a possible ACL tear," says his mother, Amanda Kipe. "The MCL tear is treated with a brace and will heal on its own. But an ACL tear can't be treated and needs surgery. So we were told we needed an MRI to figure out which type of tear he has."

Originally the Kipes were told that Aidan should have the MRI done within four weeks. They still have not been called for an appointment.

For Aidan, the wait is causing some anxiety and limiting his mobility.

"Aidan is more of an anxious boy, so he is constantly worried that something else is wrong with his knee even though it seems to be healed," says Kipe. "We're glad he does not seem to be in pain, but we

notice he still does not have strength in his knee. When he forgets about it, he acts normal. And when he remembers it, he takes extra caution in his activities... less running, less carefree jumping. He has use of the knee, but more so for my son, it is a mental struggle. So the unknown takes its toll. Just knowing yes or no would alleviate the mental stress."

Kipe says that technically you can go a long time without knowing whether you have an ACL tear, but it can lead to other issues in the future.

"It may be healed, but we just don't know," says Kipe. "So we're looking at quality of life down the road. If it is an ACL tear and it is not corrected with surgery when he is young, he will have a weaker joint. It may need to be corrected later in life or it may give out when it is stressed later on because we didn't know it needed to be fixed now. We just need to know."

In the meantime, although the Kipes haven't had many appointments throughout the pandemic—they are really only waiting for the one appointment—they say that it's clear how much frontline

staff is struggling.

"We can all tell they're trying their best, but they just need to hire more people," Kipe says. "We need more staff. All around, goodness, we need more."

## IMMENSE MENTAL TOLL

Danielle Brémaud-Edwards is another Niverville resident waiting for an important appointment. In her case, it's a hernia surgery, as well as a colonoscopy to diagnose the underlying causes.

"I have a hiatus hernia, which causes me a lot of pain and discomfort with heartburn, and iron deficiency anaemia for which we are searching for the underlying cause," says Brémaud-Edwards.

Her experience navigating the healthcare system right now has been extremely stressful. Entering hospitals, waiting for appointments, and observing the stress levels among healthcare professionals has her and her support persons on edge.

"It's horrible," she says. "We are constantly looking over our shoulders every time someone sneezes or coughs.

Depending where you go for emergency or urgent care, you don't even get looked at for the reason you're there. You're whisked away to an isolation room and get a test done for something that is nowhere near symptoms of COVID. And the three Winnipeg hospitals that have emergency rooms... are overwhelmed. Nurses and doctors are burning out."

She reports many common problems: having to wait, constantly wondering about what's going on with her physical health, and then living with the immense mental toll.

Brémaud-Edwards wants all frontlines healthcare workers to know that they are appreciated.

"We appreciate you and I know you don't hear it enough," she says. "We thank you for all your hard work."

And to anyone facing a long wait and uncertainty surrounding their health, she wants you to know you're not alone.

"Hopefully we will all get through this sooner rather than later."

Wishing you the Gift of Faith,  
the Blessing of Hope  
and the Peace of Love  
throughout the New Year.



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# Red River Cart at CRRC Speaks to Métis-Mennonite Connection

By Sara Beth Dacombe

sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

Métis and Mennonite heritage was on display as an authentic Red River cart was presented to the Town of Niverville at the Community Resource and Recreation Centre (CRRC) on Saturday, December 4.

Mayor Myron Dyck opened with a land acknowledgement, and went on to paint a detailed picture of the Métis and Mennonite partnership of the mid-nineteenth century.

"The Crow Wing Trail crosses right here," Dyck said of the old trade route that passed through Niverville. Its location was the reason Canada Pacific Railway contractor Joseph Whitehead chose this spot to build a train station. "It created a perfect chain of supply since [Whitehead] would send men and equipment and supplies from St. Boniface."

The expanse to the east of the Red River, to which Niverville served as an access point, was part of the land awarded to the Métis as one of the conditions for Manitoba to enter the Canadian federation.

As riverboat travel became popular, this land became ideal for early settlers, including the Mennonites who disembarked where the Rat River meets the Red. The Métis community became a valuable resource in assisting these newcomers.

"Métis men built the immigration sheds just south of here to house the first European immigrants," said Dyck. "The Métis men provided transportation, served as guides to the settlers who really had no idea where the land was where they were to reside. Métis men helped



Steve Neufeld, Kelly and Armand Jerome, Myron Dyck, Ernest Braun, Shirley Hoult, Roger Armbruster, and Clarence Braun. SARA BETH DACOMBE

in surveying the building sites in preparation for the construction of houses, also providing help in emergencies, natural remedies, and in general they were the people [providing help] to the Mennonites for the first decade at least."

## CART-BUILDING CHALLENGES

When space was first allocated within the CRRC to showcase the region's cultural heritage, local historians

formed a committee to prepare the exhibit.

On behalf of this committee, local historian and former high school teacher Ernest Braun approached the Town of Niverville about securing a Red River cart replica. The town committed to providing a timber frame structure to preserve the cart from the elements if the historical committee could secure one.

"All we needed to do was raise

\$5,000 and get a cart," says Braun. "The first one was no problem. The second, not so easy."

Braun approached cart builders Armand and Kelly Jerome about the possibility of building a Red River cart replica, but due to scheduling constraints at the time Armand had said they were unable to commit.

"He told me that in the foreseeable future, they were overbooked," Braun says. "And he didn't see how it

would work out, not in the timeframe we were looking at, for the opening of the cultural centre in September 2021."

The committee explored other options, but none of those panned out.

"And then the unthinkable happened," Braun continues. "On May 4, Armand called."

The Jeromes now told him that they could take on the project and have one ready before Christmas.

Armand, who is of Métis descent, grew up helping his dad build furniture and developed a fascination with Red River carts when he was first asked to build one over 20 years ago in St. Norbert.

"At the time I tried to find information on building a Red River cart and I managed to get a hold of a build print," says Armand. "My first lesson learned was 'Don't blindly trust blueprints.' Those blueprints were wrong. The parts were weak... and I knew no two Red River carts would be exactly the same, but I thought they should probably be close."

Just building a cart that looked the part was never the goal. Rather, he set out to achieve a vehicle that was as close to the specifications and quality of what was in use over a hundred years ago. Taking into account the exact degree at which the spokes should be attached to the wheel, and how to strengthen the cart rail so that the load didn't shift, was extremely important.

"I decided to conduct my own research," Armand adds. "I examined archival photos, comparing heights with the average Métis man at the time. I was made aware of a cart



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found in Minnesota and with the remains I inferred things like the correct way of constructing spokes to meet the wheels. There was a lot of trial and error. We believe these are the most historic and truly functional carts."

The Jeromes explain that the carts are made out of oak, black ash for sideboards and shafts, elm for the hubs, as well as birch for the baskets.

Sourcing the hardwoods locally was a considerable challenge.

"We did experiment using softwoods, but it cannot handle the stress," Armand says. "You need the amount of oak and ash in the Red River area, and there's also elm."

### RED RIVER CARTS CONNECT COMMUNITIES

The Jeromes and their cart-building efforts have connected them with the Métis Veterans' Memorial Monument in Batoche, Saskatchewan, the Winter Olympics 2010 in Vancouver, as well as many museums, historic sites, and amazing community events, including an 800-mile cart journey that started in St. Norbert.

Kelly presented a copy of the filmed documentary, entitled *The 800 Miles to Batoche*, to the Town of Niverville for their "education and enjoyment."

In turn, Mayor Dyck announced that the Town of Niverville had made

a monetary donation of \$3,500 to the Jeromes in support of furthering their Métis cultural efforts.

"Red River carts have the ability to bring people together to celebrate cultures and experiences," said Kelly at the Niverville event. "It is a labour of love for us and we sincerely hope your community will enjoy this cart for years to come."

Armand and Kelly have participated in numerous re-enactments of cart-pulling and driving them with horses or oxen.

Recently, Armand and Braun were part of an initiative to drive an ox-pulled cart from the Mennonite Landing to Niverville. That journey was marked with challenges ranging from difficult weather to the ox refusing to walk.

"It's been an honour to work with the Mennonite people," says Armand. "To re-enact the Mennonite Landing, depicting the Métis people assisting the newly arrived immigrants to Canada, we are proud to have the Métis culture proudly displayed here in Niverville. History repeats itself."

### RECLAIMING HERITAGE

It's a history that is newly important to one Niverville resident who attended the historical presentation after learning about her own Métis heritage for the first time.

Rose Steinke grew up in Otterburne, previously lived in The Pas, and now lives at the Heritage Centre with her husband Larry.

She first learned about a new branch of her family tree just a few years ago through her cousin.

"I even brought my Métis card to show you that I am," said Steinke with visible pride. "We found out by doing the family genealogy. I have a cousin that does that. She researches, and we found out that our great-great-grandmother was Cree."

Since then, Steinke's interest in local history has only grown. She's spent considerable time discovering more about the cultural ties she didn't know she had.

"Ever since then, I've had an interest in learning about the Métis," said Steinke. "It's amazing what they went through when they first came. They did a lot here and were an important part of establishing themselves and the area we know of in Manitoba. I was amazed."

Steinke encourages more Niverville residents to take a look at their family history to see if they have any Métis connections.

"I wouldn't be surprised if more people had a story like mine," she said. "You could have a whole side of your heritage you don't know about."

Steinke spent some time observing the Red River cart despite the

cold weather and making connections with others at the event.

### ONE OF THE LAST CARTS

The Jeromes are concerned for the future of cart-building and the trail drives.

The time they've spent in research, dedication to historical accuracy, woodworking materials, and caring for oxen and horses has come at a high cost.

"We're not sure what the future of cart-building will be after we're done," says Armand. "The work is hard, the wood is expensive, and we're not getting any younger. The artisans and animal care providers must be skilled. Will anyone in the future have the same passion?"

Braun agrees that the future is uncertain and full of challenges.

"At this point in time, cart-making is a lost art," Braun says. "And in view of imminent retirement, Kelly is incorporating every detail into a manual. This will be a priceless contribution to material culture of Manitoba and of the Métis. So we, the Town of Niverville, are the beneficiaries of what might be one of the last carts made by Jerome Cartworks."

Armand is proud to have had the opportunity to work on this important historical project.

"Having a Red River cart here to help future generations understand

the connection between the Métis and Mennonite will go beyond mere words," Armand says. "This, we hope, will be a lasting monument and we are privileged to be a part of the project."

### THE CART EXHIBIT

The museum exhibit on the second floor of the CRRC provides a detailed history for everyone who would like to retrace the local history of the Métis, Mennonite, French, and other immigrants who eventually settled in this area.

"[This cultural space] was designed to help us remember our heritage and our history," says Mayor Dyck. "It's an opportunity for our children and our children's children to ask questions about and say, 'How did this happen? Why did this happen? Who are we?' And so we are grateful to this wonderful idea and appreciate it so much."

The cart is positioned on a concrete pad at the south end of the parking lot in front of the Niverville Centennial Arena.

When warmer weather allows, the town will fund a timber-frame shelter to house the cart. They plan to coordinate with the Steinbach Regional Secondary School carpentry program to involve local students in the construction project.

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## IN BRIEF

## Local MLA Ron Schuler Removed from Cabinet

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

Local MLA Ron Schuler has served in cabinet since 2016. That tenure has now come to an inauspicious end.

On December 30, Premier Heather Stefanson announced in a press release that Schuler had been removed from his dual role as Minister of Infrastructure and Minister Responsible for the Manitoba Emergency Measures Organization.

Schuler has been replaced by Reg Helwer, the MLA from Brandon West.

On January 4, about a week after making the decision, Stefanson gave the reason: Schuler just was not on the same page as the government regarding urging people to get vaccinated.

"The public messaging from Mr. Schuler has not been necessarily consistent with the spirit of our government's efforts to get Manitobans fully vaccinated and continue to move forward on that front," she said.

Schuler has been involved in a months-long controversy over his COVID-19 vaccination status. He is the only Manitoba MLA not to disclose whether he has received a vaccine.

He has also repeatedly insisted that vaccination is a personal choice and hasn't prompted people to get their shots.

After the announcement on December 30, Schuler responded in a tweet from his official Twitter account: "Liberty has its price, today I paid for mine."

Stefanson has thanked Schuler for his service. He remains in the PC caucus.

# Unique Service Aims to Address Common Pelvic Problems

By Sara Beth Dacombe

✉ sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

Lynley Box of Niverville is a licensed physiotherapist who is bringing a unique service to the area.

Pelvic floor therapy is a specialized focus within physiotherapy that aims to improve the strength and function of pelvic floor muscles. The techniques are proven to alleviate pain, weakness, and dysfunction in the muscles—common conditions which can manifest as urinary incontinence and issues with sexual arousal and orgasm, among other things.

When Box finished her post-secondary training, she took a physiotherapy job in a hospital setting. After starting her family, she discovered a lot of the personal education she had received during her pregnancy and postpartum experience inspired her to make a change in vocation.

"I developed a passion for pelvic floor physio, which is likely part of the nature of someone like me having children and all that goes with that," says Box. "It was a whole new area of healthcare to learn about."

Box says that a physiotherapy clinic will typically offer treatment that focuses on the cardio-respiratory system, neurological system, and orthopaedics.

For the post-graduate certification required for pelvic floor therapy, Box needed to travel to an education provider based out of Toronto.

"It's just that kind of a niche area of physio," Box says. "Not everybody offers it, but so many people could benefit from it and it needs to be talked about more."

### WHO BENEFITS FROM PELVIC FLOOR THERAPY?

The struggles involving the pelvic floor are many and varied, but one of the most common is incontinence.

According to the Urology

Care Foundation, one in three women suffer from stress urinary incontinence at some point in their lives, and that number increases with age.<sup>1</sup>

"You see people and they are struggling with incontinence, but the question I have is, let's figure out what type of incontinence, because there's different types," says Box. "Men definitely do have pelvic floor issues, and I offer services to whomever needs, but they don't have as many as women do."

Box says that she often begins to see women experience a need for pelvic floor support during pregnancy.

"The pregnant population is a niche for this type of physiotherapy," she explains. "Sometimes people just have that pelvic girdle pain and they need help, or there are muscles that have become quite lax, or they have diastasis. Postpartum care is important, too, because depending on how the birth went, sometimes there is trauma associated with the body. It's not always a happy experience and then it triggers some things when you go back into an intimate relationship with your spouse."

Box says that Niverville is an ideal place to start a business like this one, which caters to women's needs.

"Niverville is growing," she says. "It's almost 6,000 people and pelvic floor physiotherapy is typically offered only within the Perimeter. There's nobody south of Winnipeg doing this. The population of Niverville is a whole lot of families. There's a whole lot of moms, and that's probably who I will be seeing most of. I offer services for those heading into menopause and there is a considerable retirement-aged population in town here as well."

### ATTENTION, LADIES: NO, IT'S NOT NORMAL

When we target areas of the body to improve our health, the pelvic floor is often overlooked, mainly because it involves body parts

that are highly sensitive and private.

Box feels that how we deal with these subjects, which are hard to talk about, are rooted in the language and behaviour we were exposed to when growing up.

"We tend to minimize a lot," says Box. "When you think back to how you grew up and the things you heard, how many times do moms go and jump on the trampoline with their kids? And the reason they're not jumping on the trampoline is because they're going to pee. They're going to have incontinence because their core is not working properly to hold it in."

Box says that another common phrase people have heard and continue to use is "I laughed so hard I peed my pants." It's not just children who use this phrase! It's adults, too, but the real reason why isn't quite so funny.

She says that it's common for people to have incontinence. Besides pregnancy, the body changes throughout life for many reasons, for both men and women, and those reasons are wide-ranging, including aging, long-term health conditions, accidents, or injuries.

"For women, hormones can play a part depending on our cycle, or how close we are to perimenopause or menopause," says Box. "It's common that incontinence can happen and there's reasons why it might happen, but there's things that we can do to minimize it and to make it better."

While Box says that it can be beneficial to normalize the human experience, it's absolutely not normal to pee when you cough, laugh, sneeze, jump, go up and down the stairs, or go from sitting to standing.

"Anytime you have urine exiting the body, but are not sitting on a toilet to actually pee, this is incontinence and it can be helped, regardless of how

old you are or how far you are postpartum," says Box. "Talking about it is huge because it makes you feel you're not alone. You always feel you're the only one experiencing this and you're not. That's the biggest thing to take away here. It's common, but it's not normal."

### APPOINTMENTS ARE SAFE AND INCLUSIVE

Box is accepting patients 18 years of age and up, male or female.

"And anywhere in between," she adds. "I will see anyone who is LGBTQ, and sometimes there are specialties in those areas. Paediatrics is another specialty, but I haven't done that as a focus."

Niverville Family Chiropractic has agreed to provide dedicated and private space for Box's practice. They offer online appointment booking, payment options, as well as virtual appointments which can be arranged to assist with getting a patient's medical history before a physical assessment.

Privacy is important to Box and she is confident that her clinical space provides a safe and structured atmosphere to conduct her practice.

She also says even phone appointments can be very beneficial, since a lot of discussions can take place on the phone in your home where you're comfortable.

"The space you're in is very important, because yes, this is very personal," Box acknowledges. "It is hard to open up and talk about what's going on, especially if you need to be able to tell someone, 'I can't have sex with my husband because it really hurts.' People don't really want to talk about that, so let's take the pressure off. We can sit, we can have a conversation, and you're in your home and I'm in mine, in our comfortable spaces. We can just talk about what's going on."



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**BUT WHAT IF IT'S AWKWARD?**

Besides awkwardness surrounding the subjects of incontinence, pain, or sexual dysfunction, a person can feel anxious just by thinking about seeing this kind of specialist.

Box directly tackles the reason people don't go for pelvic floor therapy: it feels invasive.

"My goal is, I don't want you to feel icky about it," says Box. "I don't want you to feel like you're being invaded. That's not cool. I'm not okay with that."

Box says that people may not know what pelvic floor therapy is or how it's done, and one way of overcoming anxiety about the physical exam is to provide a lot of information.

"Information is power and knowledge, and when you know more about something, you feel less nervous about it," she says. "If you're nervous about it, we're going to sit and talk about every single component of it, all your questions, until you've got them all answered, and then if you still need a week to think about it, great. And if you need a month? Great. If you're like, 'I really want you to take a look at me, but I'm still not ready for the internal exam,' no problem."

Box says that the physical exam is an important aspect of pelvic floor therapy, but there are still many techniques she can provide without having to do an exam.

She encourages people to think about the initial assessment in two parts: the discussion portion and then the physical examination.

And they can be conducted separately.

"There are always ways

we can help improve things, lots of lifestyle modifications, or little tweaks to routine we can recommend to help," says Box of how she treats people who aren't ready for a physical exam. "And if at any point that person would like to change their mind and eventually do an internal exam, like they are seeing results but just aren't quite where they'd like to be, then we can do that. There's no pressure."

**PASSION FOR HEALTH EDUCATION**

While acknowledging the common perception that physical exams are awkward, Box emphasizes that the main benefit of contacting a pelvic floor specialist is the life-changing amount of information she can provide.

"Education is really the primary focus when discussing pelvic health, because there's such a nervous system-mind connection with the pelvic floor. It's part of the nervous system loop," says Box. "So when there's a lot of stress happening, it gets tight. When things get tight, they don't function very well."

Box says that the pelvic floor picks up tension in the same way that your neck and jaw becomes rigid when you're under stress. And as you breathe in, your diaphragm should move down and relax your pelvic floor.

Aside from the diaphragm and pelvic floor, good core strength in one's front and side abdominals is also important.

"We do a lot of focus on learning, sometimes about simple things like breathing patterns," Box explains. "People breathe up high when they should

be breathing down low, so there's all sorts of desynchrony that just doesn't work well—and when it doesn't work well, they're prone to have more problems."

Aside from the physical aspect of her job, Box says that she also wants to make sure incontinence or pain issues are discussed in the context of the whole person.

"I follow the bio-psycho-social model, which is taking into account the entire person. It takes into account stress levels, emotions, experiences, education, and how their nervous system would function depending on their life situation as a whole picture. All of this is good information to have, which informs how I can best help someone."

Box feels an immense sense of passion and purpose for what she does. Pelvic floor physiotherapy can be life-changing, even life-saving, because people who have stopped enjoying life can start enjoying life again.

People who stopped working because of pelvic issues may even be able to return to work.

"I've had people who have had to stop working because their pain was so bad," she adds. "And then we do all sorts of education and we practice all this stuff and then they can go back to work. It feels so good to help, because you feel like you're actually making a direct impact on somebody's quality of life."

**REFERENCES**

<sup>1</sup> "Stress Urinary Incontinence (SUI)," Urology Health. Date of access: December 23, 2021 ([https://www.urologyhealth.org/urology-a-z/s/stress-urinary-incontinence-\(sui\)](https://www.urologyhealth.org/urology-a-z/s/stress-urinary-incontinence-(sui))).



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# Local Healthcare Workers Face Harassment

By Sara Beth Dacombe

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

✉ sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

An increasing number of healthcare professionals are experiencing mistreatment, harassment, and threats due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the overall rise in social tension.

On December 20, Doctors Manitoba released the results of a survey that showed nearly six out of ten doctors report similar incidents of mistreatment, including verbal abuse, threats, online bullying, and physical assault.

That survey was conducted in November 2020, which shows that the incidents of mistreatment are likely to be escalating amidst an already tense atmosphere in healthcare and putting healthcare professionals at further risk of burnout.

The survey reports that 57 percent experienced incidents of mistreatment over the previous month. More than half of the incidents, 52 percent, appear to be linked to the pandemic in some way. Also, the incidents are happening more frequently than a year ago, with 59 percent of physicians reporting increased frequency.

"We are asking all Manitobans to please be kind and respectful to physicians and other healthcare workers who are trying to provide care under very difficult conditions," says Dr. Kristjan Thompson, President of Doctors Manitoba. "COVID-19 has been hard for everyone. Whether you are frustrated with pandemic restrictions or you are facing long wait times to get a medical test or surgery, please don't take these frustrations out

on doctors. They care about your well-being and they are advocating for you each and every day."

## LOCALS EXPERIENCE HARASSMENT

Massoud Horriat, owner of St. Adolphe Pharmacy, knows firsthand what it's like to be verbally harassed on the job.

"Oh yes, I've had some experiences with that one, getting lectures or harsh talking," says Horriat. "One guy stopped by once a week giving me heck, because I started [offering] vaccinations. I was very, very early, one of the very first ones when they started vaccinations. One fellow would stop by once a week for about four or five weeks in a row, giving me lectures. Another guy was encouraging me to take the antiparasitic medicine because somebody in the [United States] or on Facebook said to do so."

Horriat says he can't recall how many times he has been forced to have these debates with customers, but it has happened "frequently." He has found it to be a discouraging trend, because he's doing his best to help people professionally.

"As much as it's discouraging, we are under oath and we see everybody as wonderful human beings," he says. "You have to do your best and help them to see reason, to reason with them and try to encourage them."

Horriat adds that it's been challenging to deal with people who are staunchly antivaccination. However, he has also been successful at talking to people who are vaccine-hesitant.

"I have two people today coming for the first time," he says.

Not everyone is open to dialogue, but when it comes to convincing the vaccine-hesitant, Horriat says that

he feels it comes down to being able to supply the correct information.

"First of all, deal with facts," says Horriat. "And know that it is so subjective. I can't give you an answer that will be the one for everyone. I would need to know more information about what they are actually thinking. Is there a phobia? Is there misinformation? And in every one of them, case by case, I would answer and answer."

Despite this, Horriat says that his experience in the community has overall been positive and that a few negative experiences aren't going to change that.

"I have such a wonderful community and the community is very supportive. That's very encouraging to me."

## SOUTHERN HEALTH SINGLED OUT IN PUBLIC APPEAL

Unfortunately, some of Horriat's more negative experiences are shared by other rural medical professionals. Despite the warm and welcoming stereotype most small towns enjoy, the survey shows that harassment is more common for practitioners in rural areas.

One doctor from Southern Health shared his experience and how it has changed over time specifically because of tension surrounding COVID-19.

"I've worked in the Southern Health region for decades and I've never seen anything like this," says Dr. Don Klassen, a family physician who works in Winkler and at Boundary Trails Health Centre. "I've heard from several physicians who are considering early retirement or relocation at least in part because of the threats and verbal abuse they've faced. Please know that physicians

are going through this pandemic with you, every step of the way, and we'll get through this together."

Doctors Manitoba has issued a province-wide public appeal for kindness and respect.

Many physicians are also encouraged by new federal legislation that's been passed in Ottawa with the aim of protecting health workers and patients from threats, violence, and harassment.

The new law makes it illegal for people to intimidate healthcare workers, impede access to medical facilities, or intimidate people accessing health services, including COVID-19 vaccinations. The new offences carry a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison.

Additionally, Doctors Manitoba published a safety guide earlier this year for physicians and healthcare organizations.

Most incidents occurred in doctors' offices or hospitals, though there were some incidents that occurred on social media, in public places, and at physicians' homes.

Incidents of mistreatment appear to occur more frequently among physicians who are women, people of colour, and those working in family medicine.

## OTHER LOCAL HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS ON HARASSMENT

In Niverville, the Open Health medical clinic declined to comment about any specific issues surrounding harassment or abuse aimed toward healthcare staff and clinicians.

"At the clinic, however, we do have a zero tolerance policy for abuse directed toward our staff and clinicians," says Kristen Fyfe, business manager for Open Health. "Safety is our number one priority—for our

staff and for the patients. We support our healthcare colleagues who are bringing awareness to this problem in our province."

Gilbert Leung is the acting pharmacy manager for the Red River Co-op Pharmacy in Niverville. The business, located in the Heritage Centre, offers both COVID-19 vaccinations as well as the seasonal flu shot.

Leung says that the staff at their location haven't experienced any incidents of harassment from customers, but some customers have expressed frustration.

Customers are frustrated not that the pharmacy is offering the COVID-19 vaccine, but that the pharmacy is only able to supply a limited number of vaccinations.

People in the community want to be able to get vaccinated locally and not drive outside of Niverville. However, this pharmacy is only able to administer a maximum number of doses per day.

"We are offering vaccinations for the flu and COVID and the response has been very good," says Leung. "Originally, we ordered 150 doses of flu shot and they came in at the beginning of October and in a couple of weeks they were all gone. And every day we are getting phone calls from people in the community as well as other communities asking for the COVID vaccine because they want it done. We want to accommodate as many as possible, but we do have a limited supply."

Leung says that Red River Co-op Pharmacy has a harassment policy in place for their staff to follow should they encounter any increase in altercations with customers.

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# New Doctor Meets Temporary Need at Open Health

By Sara Beth Dacombe

sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

A new doctor has joined the Open Health Niverville team to provide same-day/next-day care. Dr. Henry Wood will serve the clinic in a temporary capacity to provide these services while three doctors are away on maternity leave.

Amidst a province-wide shortage of family doctors, Open Health Niverville has confirmed that the new doctor helps to meet only some of the ongoing needs in Niverville and the surrounding area.

"There is a high demand for same-day care, as there are still many people without a family doctor and limited walk-in care within close proximity," says Kristen Fyfe, business manager at Open Health. "We are working at doctor recruitment and hope we can offer expanded services in the near future."

Dr. Wood's temporary arrangement means he will not be taking on patients of his own.

"Dr. Wood is providing temporary family medicine coverage at our clinic with plans to stay until at least the end of February," Fyfe adds. "For that reason, he is unable to accept a patient panel of his own. His role at this time is to help fill a void while some of our other doctors are away on maternity leave, but we also have a high need for same-day care in general."

While same-day or next-day appointment slots are available to anyone, the clinic also reminds patients that it is not a walk-in clinic and that



Dr. Henry Wood

patients still need to make an appointment.

"Same-day/next-day care is similar to walk-in care," says Fyfe. "However, we don't want to confuse the messaging, as you still need to call in for an appointment. We are not able to accommodate patients walking up for an appointment as we are continuing to work at COVID-19 procedures. We continue to emphasize, however, that if you have cold/flu symptoms or you are a close contact to a COVID-19 case, you can speak to a doctor through a virtual or phone appointment first and the practitioner can determine whether an in-person visit is required."

Dr. Wood's position was secured with the help of Southern Health-Santé Sud's network of recruitment efforts.

"The clinic has a long-standing working relationship with Southern Health-Santé Sud and they work alongside us and many other clinics in the region with the recruitment of doctors.

We are happy that Dr. Wood's connection to the clinic was made in partnership with both Dr. Wood and SH-SS," adds Fyfe.

Open Health says that one of the three doctors on maternity leave is confirmed to be returning part-time in January.

## GETTING TO KNOW DR. WOOD

Originally from British Columbia, Dr. Wood moved to Winnipeg in the summer of 2021. He has a specialty in Family Medicine and is referred to as a general practitioner.

"This includes everything across the breadth of medicine from cradle to grave, which is why I love my job so much," says Dr. Wood, who has been enjoying the opportunity to get to know this community and its friendly people. "The people here have made me excited to work in this community. I've enjoyed meeting the patients and the staff at the clinic... It's great to work with such a multidisciplinary team including the other physicians, nurses, front staff, and the Southern Health team."

Being from B.C., Dr. Wood has a love of rock-climbing and encourages anyone interested in the unique sport to check it out.

"I have recently been getting into rock-climbing!" he says. "It's a great sport, as rock-climbers are some of the most friendly people you'll meet, not to mention it's a great form of exercise."



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Parents/Caregivers are encouraged to register their children as soon as possible. Early registration will assist schools in planning for the next school year and provide an opportunity for parents/caregivers and children to participate in welcoming events in the spring.

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# Commentary

## This Next Year, Let's Be Gentle

By Jennifer Lavin

✉ jlavin@nivervillecitizen.com

As we trudge into our third year of the pandemic, we're also limping into a brand-new calendar year—and many of us are thinking of making New Year's resolutions.

But as we struggle to keep afloat in this difficult time, it doesn't seem prudent to add another item to the to-do list.

So this year I'm choosing a different type of resolution.

I'm not aiming to lose 50 pounds, or land my dream job, or get out of debt. Instead my resolution is to be gentle. Gentle with myself, with the people around me, and even with (this is a tough one) my government. I'm going to put my focus on my mental health and try to be filled with grace for other people and their mental health.

According to the World Health Organization, prior to the pandemic countries around the world were spending less than two percent of their national health budgets on mental health.

This wasn't enough before the pandemic and it certainly isn't enough now.

"The pandemic is increasing demand for mental health services," reads a WHO news release from October 5, 2020. "Bereavement, isolation, loss of income, and fear are triggering mental health conditions or exacerbating existing ones. Many people may be facing increased levels of alcohol and drug use, insomnia, and anxiety. Meanwhile, COVID-19 itself can lead to neurological and mental complications, such as delirium, agitation, and stroke."<sup>1</sup>

Despite all this stress piled onto us right now, I've found that some people are trying to "positive" us out of this place.

"Good vibes only!"

"I choose joy."

"It could be worse."

"God doesn't give us more than we can handle."

These are some of the most common phrases we might hear from a person who spouts toxic positivity.

Yes, that's a thing. I like how one group of psychologists from the U.S. defines toxic positivity: "the overgeneralization of a happy, optimistic state that results in the denial, minimization, and invalidation of



DEPOSITPHOTOS

the authentic human emotional experience."<sup>2</sup>

Those of us who have suffered from anxiety or depression already know the dangers of toxic positivity. We hear "Just pull yourself up by your bootstraps!" or "You have nothing to feel sad about!"

But the thing is, you can't just smile your way out of depression, whether it's situational or the result of a chemical imbalance.

Telling people to just be positive is like telling them that reality simply isn't as important as your comfort... that there isn't any room for their humanness.

Not leaving space for someone's innate humanness is a dangerous road to travel. If you tell a person fighting to hold onto their sanity in this insane world to "just choose joy" and they can't do that, they may then feel guilt on top of the sadness. Now they feel like they're failing and that their bleak feelings are their own fault.

The world is so full of anger and hate and fear right now, and so many of us are truly scared. There's too much happening. We need to be gentle.

Oftentimes it's easier to be gentle if we try to put ourselves in someone else's shoes. That can be a little easier for me if I apply "spoon theory" to myself and those around me.

Spoon theory—sometimes called token theory, especially when applied to the neurodiverse—was developed by Christine Miserandino in 2003 as a metaphor to describe the amount of mental or physical energy a person has available for daily activities and tasks.

Here's the theory in a nutshell.

When you wake up in the morning, you should have your full slate of spoons, ready to use. Each activity

from the moment you get up until the moment you go to bed requires one or more spoons based on the amount of energy it uses. Even fun things require spoons.

The energy unit of a spoon can apply to physical exertion, but what about mental, emotional, and spiritual exertion? They all count too.

And once you're out of spoons for the day, you're pretty well useless. Depending on how exhaustion manifests for you, you may be unable to complete the rest of your daily tasks, or you may not be able to stop crying. For some people, running out of spoons makes them angry. For others, they might feel like they can't even add two and two together anymore.

Spoon theory also works well to describe how those with any chronic illness or developmental delay may struggle day to day. A person with chronic pain, anxiety, ADHD, autism, etc. may start the day with fewer spoons than they actually require to successfully get through the day... or they may use up more spoons than the average person.

As adults, we often try to hide when we're out of spoons—but it's usually really easy to spot in kids.

When my son was a toddler, I remember my husband and I taking him to the mall one day. He was fed and rested, he got treats, and he rode the little merry-go-round. He just had a grand time.

But after an hour or two of doing all this fun stuff, he began to cry. When the crying escalated to screaming and thrashing, we decided to take him home. He wailed the whole way back, unable to tell us what was wrong because he only had a five-word vocabulary at that point.

Finally we got home. I carried him inside and he immediately

stopped crying. He patted the floor of our entryway and said a new word: "ome" (home). Then he lay down right there on the tiled floor and just stared at the ceiling. He was perfectly quiet—and bear in mind that he was and is the loudest kid I know!

He was simply out of spoons.

That day was fun for him, so I couldn't figure out why he got so fussy after such a short time.

But as I thought about spoon theory, I understood. Getting angry at him or reasoning with him wouldn't have helped. At that moment, he was out of spoons. And the only place he knew where he could get more was our home.

The most efficient way to refill your spoon drawer is to go to bed. A proper night's rest should allow you to wake up with all your spoons ready to go.

Sometimes we can recoup a few spoons during a day by doing certain activities. For some it might be a nap, meditation, or prayer. For others it might be an intense workout or a run.

So when you're on your last errand of the day and the store is about to close and the cashier can't find the price on your item and you want to go "ome," that's when the gentleness needs to kick in. You are probably flat out of spoons.

And when you're beating yourself up because you didn't finish that to-do list, or you snapped at the kids, or your boss snapped at you, be gentle with yourself. You're tired and that's okay. It's expected that you should feel tired in that moment. Please go easy on yourself.

L.R. Knost, noted author and parenting expert, said it this way: "Gentleness is not weakness. Just the opposite. Preserving a gentle spirit in a heartless world takes extraordinary

courage, determination, and resilience. Do not underestimate the power of gentleness because gentleness is strength wrapped in peace, and therein lies the power to change the world."<sup>3</sup>

"Gentleness is not weakness." This is so true... but neither is gentleness easy. At the end of the day, gentleness can be one of the toughest things to drag out of our exhausted bodies and minds.

However, gentleness does have all the power in the world.

Robert Anton Wilson, a science fiction writer from the 1970s, wrote these next lines about a different time and place, but for me it rings true now more than ever.

"Under the present brutal and primitive conditions on this planet, every person you meet should be regarded as one of the walking wounded. We have never seen a man or woman not slightly deranged by either anxiety or grief. We have never seen a totally sane human being."<sup>4</sup>

So maybe this year let's aim low. No lofty goals to change ourselves from top to bottom, but instead the tiny (yet ultimately huge) goal to be nice. To be kind, be soft, be patient with the people around you and with yourself.

Most of all this year, let's be gentle.

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# Time for a Check-Up

*How do we maintain our psychological health during a pandemic that never seems to end?*

By Daniel Dacombe

Here we are, facing new waves of COVID-19 with a health-care system already under heavy strain. And it has to be acknowledged: we are tired. Tired of restrictions, tired of division, and more than anything else tired of the looming threat of a virus we've been living with for nearly two years.

Having to spend another holiday season with social distancing and smaller gatherings has been one more discouraging blow upon many, adding to our exhaustion.

This fatigue is exacerbated by the knowledge that had vaccine uptake been higher and distribution more widespread, both locally and around the world, we may not be seeing the most recent resurgence in cases, nor would we be seeing such a new and concerning variant.

And of course this knowledge only creates more division, more exhaustion, and raises new fears that we'll never get "back to normal."

It's no surprise that at this stage of the pandemic we're seeing sky-high rates of mental health issues.

In this space, we've talked in the past about how to help our kids be resilient during times of stress and uncertainty.

But as adults, what about our own resiliency?

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), a national community-based organization that for more than a hundred years has been dedicated to mental health promotion, maintains a "mental health meter" on their website. Rather than screening for specific mental illnesses or other aspects of negative mental health, this mental health meter measures four areas related to positive mental health.

**The ability to enjoy life.** How much satisfaction and pleasure do you derive from your everyday life? This is a challenge for many of us these days as our favourite activities may not be safe for us to do with the people we want to see.

**Resilience.** How quickly

do we "bounce back" from challenging circumstances? Over the past two years, we've all been expected to weather many disappointments and troubles, and keeping that up over the long term is emotionally draining.

**Self-actualization.** Are we able to realize our potential and reach personal goals? This is difficult to do when many of our plans have been put on hold since the pandemic began.

**Flexibility.** Do we have the ability to accept change and adapt in response to situations that arise in our lives? With COVID impacting every area of life, we've all had to pivot in response to the changes thrust upon us.

While it isn't a strict scientific tool, and absolutely should not take the place of a professional psychological assessment, this tool can be a useful way of letting us know when we might need to make some adjustments to our lives.

If you score fairly low on the mental health meter, or if you're finding it challenging to feel psychologically well at this stage of the pandemic, here are a few ways you can turn things around.

1. Grow your (healthy) coping skills. It's no surprise that substance use, gambling, and other methods of unhealthy coping have been on the rise during the pandemic.

If you find yourself turning to methods of coping that could cause problems of their own, it might be a good idea to look to healthier methods—and do so without self-judgment. Perhaps those coping methods were working for you at one point, but it might be time to put down the bag of chips and look into hobbies, exercise, or meditation to help centre yourself.

2. Seek out (safe) supports. This is not an encouragement to throw caution to the wind and unwisely gather in large groups in homes or machine sheds.

Rather, it's a suggestion to do two things.

First, when it's safe to do so, spend time with people who care about you. If you're fully vaccinated, then spending

time with other fully vaccinated people (following all recommended restrictions) could be a good way to improve your overall mood.

And second, if you recognize that you're struggling right now, please reach out for help. You can talk to a friend or family member who cares about you. And if necessary, reach out to a professional.

The most important thing is to be honest about how you're doing, because none of us can be resilient and flexible all the time.

3. Be (accurately) informed. Information overload abounds these days, and much of the information we're exposed to is contradictory.

For example, much of the online debate has revolved around the effectiveness of the vaccines. As we've seen recently, some individuals who have been vaccinated can still become infected with COVID (although it's almost always with milder symptoms).

The resulting confusion about how vaccines work—and the nature of immunity—have led some to conclude, erroneously, that the vaccines are ineffective or unsafe.

Thankfully, the other side of the debate is supported by significant evidence, course-corrects when faced with new information, and grows in understanding of the pandemic over time. Listening to experts and following their advice remains the best path out of this for everyone, and this can help us to feel less overwhelmed and hopeless.

4. Make (positive) choices. Finally, the best way to improve our mental health during this time is to make choices that contribute to a swifter resolution to the pandemic.

As before, the safest and most socially responsible choice is to ensure that you and your eligible family members are vaccinated. That is our best chance at ending this sooner and allowing the resilience we've built in ourselves to carry us through.

Until then, let's remember to keep checking in on each other.

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# Sports & Recreation

## Niverville Hires Its First Bench Boss

By Scott Stroh

The Niverville Junior A Hockey Club has found its head coach and general manager. The decision was made last month to hire Kelvin Cech, a highly experienced Junior hockey coach.

Cech is a familiar face around the MJHL, having previously been head coach of the Winkler Flyers during the 2019–2020 season.

“It was awesome to come in and learn the league here,” Cech says. “Unfortunately due to COVID, I wasn’t able to fully finish a season. But it was phenomenal to get around and meet the different personalities in the MJHL. I love this league, and I love how each team competes hard every single night. It truly is a league where anyone can beat anyone on any given night.”

For his year in Winkler, he was named Coach of the Year by the MJHL.

In 2020, Cech was selected to serve as the coach of the MJHL’s U18 team at the SJHL-MJHL Showcase in Regina. The event is an opportunity for the best Junior players from Manitoba and Saskatchewan to compete head to head, with 60 players attending from each league.

Cech grew up in Edmonton, where he remained until 2012 when he moved to Vancouver. There, he served as the assistant coach of the University of British Columbia Thunderbirds for three seasons.

He will now complete the current season at the West Vancouver Hockey Academy before assuming the full-time role in Niverville on April 1, 2022.

“We are excited to have Kelvin on board to head up the hockey operations side of our team,” says Clarence Braun, spokesperson for the Niverville Junior A Hockey Club board of directors. “We look forward with great anticipation to the opening of the 2022–2023 season in September.”

Braun adds that originally the



Kelvin Cech, the new head coach and general manager of Niverville's MJHL team.

KEVIN LANSARD

board was looking at hiring two different people to fill the head coach and general manager roles. However, after meeting Cech they knew they had found the right man for both jobs.

Cech says the interview process was thorough, lasted a few months, and ended with him getting a call from Kevin Lansard, a member of the

Niverville's team board of directors.

“It wasn’t a surprise, as I thought the process was going pretty well,” Cech says. “It built up to a point where, after my final presentation, Kevin called and let me know that a contract offer was coming. It was a whirlwind, and very exciting.”

Upon being given the good news, Cech flew to Manitoba and spent a

few days in Niverville, familiarizing himself with the town and taking a tour of the CRRC, the club's new home.

“My initial thoughts when I first walked in is that it's a beautiful state-of-the-art facility,” he says. “For a Junior A arena, it's the perfect size. It's going to be a really exciting atmosphere for the town, a great place to

bring the family to watch hockey. I've been around the MJHL before, and to me this is as good as it gets.”

Cech is particularly excited to be working with this team's ownership group, who he says have demonstrated a great attention to detail.

“For example, we spent 15 minutes on the bench, talking about whether the bench needs to get raised up or not,” he remarks. “For me being vertically challenged, I really appreciated that! Details like these are representative of the care that the ownership group, the town, and community have put into this brand-new building.”

Since the announcement earlier this year that an MJHL franchise was coming here, anticipation has been building in Niverville and the surrounding area. Cech is excited to see this momentum, and to see the community come out and support the franchise when they first hit the ice next fall.

Of course, one of the first orders of business will be recruiting players.

“I would say that our team is being built on character and competitiveness,” he says. “This is how we're going to go about the recruiting process. We are looking for those men who have good character, who will be good teammates on and off the ice.”

He is confident that Niverville can build a competitive team right out of the starting gate.

“It's going to be an upbeat group of young men who want to compete every night,” Cech says. “The people behind the scenes who are putting the product on the ice, to me this is the right way to build. It doesn't matter who you are or where you come from, you're going to be welcome here. We want you to come and enjoy this experience with us. There's going to be some ups and downs, as this is a new team, but it's going to be fun at the rink each and every night, I can guarantee that.”

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## Executive Director Employment Posting

The Niverville Chamber of Commerce is in search of an Executive Director.

The mission of the Niverville Chamber of Commerce is to encourage sustainable economic development through advocacy for and support of local business. Our guiding principals that shape the actions and behaviour of the Niverville Chamber of Commerce include advocacy, integrity, sustainable growth, business-focus, community, collaboration and prosperity.

The Executive Director role oversees daily operations for the organization, such as; administration and bookkeeping, planning meetings and events, and building and maintaining relationships with the business community. Success factors for this position include having strengths in organization, communication, and relationship building. The individual would ideally have comprehensive computer skills, an understanding of business, and a passion for the community.

This position will be a part-time position with an anticipated start date of February 2022.

If this sounds like it could be a fit for you, or someone you know, please send your resume to [nivervillechamber@gmail.com](mailto:nivervillechamber@gmail.com)

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## IN BRIEF



## All Four Gab-Roy Volleyball Teams Earn Provincial Medals

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

For the second year in a row, all four volleyball teams at Gabrielle-Roy in Île-des-Chênes have struck paydirt.

The Junior Varsity Boys, Junior Varsity Girls, Varsity Boys, and Varsity Girls each excelled during the regular season and qualified to compete in their respective provincial championships.

"As the tournaments approached, all four of the Les Roys volleyball teams of Collège régional Gabrielle-Roy teams were ranked in the provincial top ten of the MHSAA," says Michel Lavergne, coach of the Varsity Boys and JV girls squads. "They all came back with an impressive haul of medals."

The JV Boys came out on top, capturing first place and gold medals. The JV Girls and Varsity Boys both fought their way to the championship game, finishing in second position. The Varsity Girls succeeded at taking bronze.

In recent years, coaches Daniel Lother, Roger Vermette, Michel Lavergne, and Roger Turenne—all teachers at the school—have helped elevate the volleyball program to new heights.

"We should also note the support of our alumni, Derrick Sabourin, Nicolas

Carter, and Yvan Boisjoli, who also helped coach our teams to success," adds Lavergne. "Rachelle Muller and Todd Neumann were also an integral part of the coaching staff."

Several players stood out because of their performances at the championships and were named to the provincial all-star teams, including Kalen Nordick and Yannick Dupuis of the Varsity Boys, Makayla Wiebe of the Varsity Girls, Bethany Carter and Katrine Ferguson of the JV Girls, and Joshua Bartlett and Benjamin Doan of the JV Boys.

Also, Maxime Vermette was named the most valuable player in the Varsity Girls tournament.

"In addition, four of our players have been selected to the grad all-star squad," says Lavergne. "They are Nathan Fillion (power), Yannick Dupuis (setter), Cabrel Sorin (power), and Kalen Nordick (middle). They will all be recognized on Saturday, December 11 during the Manitoba Volleyball Association Grad All-Star Banquet."

Moreover, Lavergne himself is to be awarded the title of AA Coach of the Year by the Manitoba Volleyball Association.

# Clippers Excel in Return to Ice

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

Minor hockey has taken off again in Niverville, and so far the 2021 season has turned out to be one of the most exciting in many years.

"With missing a full season last year, everyone was excited about getting back on the ice and providing the youth of Ste. Agathe and Niverville a season to remember for a lifetime," says Travis Mason of Clipper Ice Sports.

Another source of excitement has been settling into their new digs at the Community Resource and Recreation Centre.

"It created a different atmosphere during our conditioning and tryout skates, allowing us to get started earlier than normal," Mason says.

Yet more excitement came when the players got to don their new jerseys, featuring the new Clippers logo.

"Feedback has been great on the logo and jersey change," Mason adds. "Teams look intimidating when they hit the ice and take that first warmup lap."

This fall, the organization was once again able to schedule and plan home tournaments, and so far the Clippers have played host to two events. Having two sheets of ice has allowed them host larger tournaments that bring more visiting teams into town.

The first even was held November 19–21, for the U11 teams, and the second took place December 3–5, for the U13 teams.

At the first tournament, the U11A Clippers make it to the final but came up short in a very close match against the Fort Garry Flyers.

"The Clippers played together as a team and battled



The U13A Clippers.

TRAVIS MASON

hard all weekend," Mason says. "Nash Smook was selected as the team's MVP for the tournament."

In the B Division, Lorette beat the St. Boniface Seals 3–1 to capture the gold. The Kenora Grey Knights defeated the Île-des-Chênes Elks to win the C Division.

At the second tournament, the U13A Clippers captured gold, giving up only five goals in five games.

"Their biggest challenge was their opening game, which ended in a 4–4 tie with the Carman Cougars," explains Mason. "They ended up defeating Steinbach 6–1 in the finals to capture their gold medal."

Mason cites the team's strong defence all weekend, adding that goalie Levi Brandt was selected as tournament MVP. The offence was led by Hayden Hyduk, Maddex Mason, and Trae Worrell.

"The team has really come together as one and the results are showing, as they have been piling up the wins all season," Mason says. "The team was focused and set a goal earlier in the week that they were coming in to win

this tournament."

The U13B Clippers lost in the semifinal to Springfield, although Mason points out that they managed to wear Springfield down, as Springfield then went on to lose the final 8–0 to the Brandon Wheat Kings.

The C Division was won by the Kenora Copperfin Crusaders, who glided to an 8–1 victory.

### NEW NAME

To help mark a new era in local minor hockey, the organization made the decision this year to give the local tournaments a new name.

"We wanted to name our tournament the Niverville Heritage Classic to acknowledge and honour the long-standing history and legacy that the founding citizens have left for present-day Niverville residents," says Kevin Boone, tournament coordinator for Clipper Ice Sports. "Our goal is to make the Niverville Heritage Classic a recognizable tournament that surrounding communities want to be a part of. Announcing the name change alongside the first time many would

step into our new facility just felt right."

Boone worked together with Sherisse Fast and Ester Raftis to carefully plan these tournaments, of which there will be two others later in the season.

The next event, for the U9s, will be held January 14–16.

"We would like to thank them for the wonderful job they did, along with the hockey parents that helped get silent auction prizes, tournament donations, and volunteer schedules together," says Mason.

Mason also wishes to thank BSI Insurance, who is this year's title sponsor. There is also a platinum sponsor for each age group, and the first events were supported by DMM Energy and Fusion Industries Inc.

"Both tournaments so far were a great success, as the buzz in the CRRC was like no other," Mason finishes. "The ice surface was full of smiling faces and arena halls filled with screaming and laughter. The feedback from all the visitors were positive and the new CRRC was the centre of attention."



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# Short List Selected for Local MJHL Team Name

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

Last year, the board of directors of Niverville's new MJHL hockey franchise launched a public engagement process to hear ideas about what to name the team. Now, the team name submissions have been whittled down to a short list of 12 potential names.

"We received nearly 300 submissions with a lot of very creative names and feedback," says Ray Dowse, spokesperson for the board. "We truly appreciate the number of people who have shown interest and passion for this new organization."

Some of the names on the short list are clear-cut, options that received a significant amount of initial support. Others may have received a fewer number of overall submissions, but Dowse says they absolutely warrant serious consideration.

Dowse adds that the board also received draft logos, video clips, and detailed explanations for why certain names are particularly meaningful.

"The board is incredibly humbled by the overall response and level of engagement from the community and region as a whole!" Dowse says.

Now that the short list has been prepared, the time has come for people to vote on which name they like best. Once again, the voting can be done through the Citizen poll—and voting will continue until January 9.

"At some point after that, an announcement will be made with the official team name," says Dowse. "Then the work begins on finalizing the team logo, colours, etc."

He clarifies that this isn't necessarily a case where the name with the highest number of votes will be selected. Rather, greater consideration will be given to names with the greatest amount of public support.

Ultimately, the final decision will be made by the board.

"All those who submit entries will be eligible for random prize draws of a pair of tickets or team merchandise," Dowse says. "There were ten randomly selected

names from the initial group of entrants who will be notified in the coming weeks what they have won."

Each of the 12 names on the short list are described in alphabetical order.

## NIVERVILLE CLIPPERS

There is a deep history in the community—indeed, the region—when it comes to the Clippers name.

Whether it's minor hockey, senior hockey, or the Hanover-Tache Junior Hockey League, the Clippers are synonymous with Niverville. Players from this town, as well as Ste. Agathe, don the Clippers jersey each and every winter.

What did people have to say about it when submitting it to the naming contest? For one thing, "How can it be anything else?" Another benefit is building continuity within the community, and giving minor hockey players a tie-in to the big local team.

## NIVERVILLE EXPRESS

A number of team names drew a connection with the Canadian Pacific rail line that passes through the centre of town. An alternate option which almost made the cut was the Niverville Railers.

In addition to honouring the rail line, some voters suggested that the train theme also ties in to Niverville's history as the home of the first grain elevator in western Canada.

Another hockey fan says that sounding a train horn could be a fun way of celebrating goals.

## NIVERVILLE ICE DOGS

Not only does this name play up the ice surface on which the game is played, but also the frigid weather that's so characteristic of hockey season.

Proponents of the Niverville Ice Dogs reference the overall sound of the name as well as the strong possibilities for logos and mascots.

## NIVERVILLE KNIGHTS

Another popular submission, there is some local history attached to this name. Niverville soccer teams in the 1970s and fastball teams in the 1980s have gone by the Knights, as well as minor hockey teams in Ste. Agathe.

## NIVERVILLE NIGHTHAWKS

This turned out to be a very popular submission, with many people citing its catchy sound. What is a nighthawk? It's a medium-sized bird with a particularly striking look while it's in flight—and many people seized on this characteristic for a potential logo.

## NIVERVILLE NITRO

This name was selected for the short list due to the ease with which it rolls off the tongue—and it would certainly be a unique name.

The obvious reference is to high speed, or something that generates a large amount of power. Pound for pound, nitro fuels result in greater power and speed than traditional gasoline. The Niverville Nitro would be strong, fast, and relentless, representing the community with pride.

## NIVERVILLE NORDIQUES

In French, the word Nordiques translates as Northerner. This should resonate with any Canadian who's proud of the nation's hockey heritage.

The name itself is most familiar due to the old Quebec Nordiques who played in the NHL. When tied in with the name of our local community, it does have a nice ring to it.

## NIVERVILLE NORTHSTARS

A number of people suggested the Niverville Northstars. In many cases, it was because of the literal north star in the sky. It also has a symbolic meaning, of course, as a beacon of inspiration and hope.

But perhaps the biggest reason to choose the Northstars is its connection to local history. This was the name of a team that played here many years ago, competing at a high level in PeeWee and Bantam hockey. Some of those players still live in the area and have passed on a proud hockey tradition to the next generation.

Niverville isn't the only local community with a connection to this name. The Île-des-Chênes Northstars was a senior team that went on to win the 2003 Allen Cup.

## NIVERVILLE RAIL HOUNDS

The Rail Hounds—like the Ice Dogs—incorporates a

couple of popular name components. Once again, it references the local rail line, but it also includes an animal. An animal, of course, can make a big impression when it comes to designing an effective logo or mascot. A hound is known for its acute senses, and also its gift of stamina.

## NIVERVILLE ROADRUNNERS

Speaking of animals, the Roadrunners is a somewhat off-the-radar selection, but it has potential. The roadrunner represents speed, of course, and one's mind immediately goes back to the old Bugs Bunny cartoons and the infamous Wile E. Coyote.

This name also speaks to Niverville's unique location, positioned directly between the two major highways of southeastern Manitoba: Highway 59 and Highway 75.

## NIVERVILLE THRESHERS

A significant number of people want the team to pay homage to the community's agricultural roots, which go back to the 1800s. Other nominations included the Harvesters and Pioneers, but Threshers came out on top.

One person even sent in a mock-up logo for the Threshers.

To those not in the know, a thresher is a device that separates the head of a stalk of grain, then further separates the kernel from the rest of the head. It's also the name of a type of shark with a scythe-shaped tail.

## NIVERVILLE TORQUE

Finally, this unique submission has a solid sound. The word torque symbolizes strength and power, and it's also a measurement of the maximum force that can be generated when something is worked hard.

For example, when a vehicle has more torque, it's capable of doing more challenging work.

In the context of a hockey team, the goal is certainly to generate as much torque as possible with players displaying a hard work ethic and determination for on-ice success.

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## IN BRIEF



## Niverville Junior Varsity Girls Win Provincials

By Jennifer Lavin

✉ jlav@nivervillecitizen.com

Niverville High School's Junior Varsity Girls volleyball team has completed an undefeated season with a win at the 2021 Provincials.

Coach Graeme Buys says that the season was an exciting one, full of close calls and ups and downs in the quality of play. The Niverville Panthers were ranked number two behind the first-ranked Westgate Wings throughout the season and eventually met for one last showdown at Provincials.

At one point in the first set of the finals, Niverville was down 9-2, but they rallied and won a close game.

They lost the second set badly, however, bringing the fate of the season to rest on one final set.

The last set in volleyball normally only goes to 15 points. To win, a team has to be ahead by two points, which can result in extending the set.

At one point, Niverville was up 14-11. Buys says that they thought they had the game in the bag.

But the Wings rallied and the game became a nailbiter.

In the end, the Panthers defeated the Wings 17-15.

The JV team is made up of Grades Nine and Ten girls, but last year there was no competitive volleyball due to COVID-19. The result was that this year's Grade Nine girls hadn't played any volleyball since their Grade Seven year.

Buys says that despite this, they did an amazing job stepping into the team and meeting the standards needed to excel at the Junior Varsity level.

"I was so encouraged by the development throughout the season of those who didn't get to play as often," says Buys. "I felt so impressed with their hard work and improvement. And some became regular contributors on the court by the end of the season despite missing an entire year of play."

Buys says that his team was led by three key players: Anika Buys, Eva Davis, and Isabelle Voth. All three young women are top players at this level.

Voth and Davis were both named tournament all-stars and Anika Buys was named Most Valuable Player.

Coach Buys says that all three of these titles were well deserved, but that any of the three could have been named MVP as their work was equally stellar.

He adds that Voth, the team's only setter, was plagued by injuries and deserves extra credit for her hard work. She played with her arm and hand taped up, taking ibuprofen to get through the games.

Buys stresses how proud he is of all the girls.

"Volleyball is not an individual sport," he says. "So without the contributions by all the team members, this wouldn't have been possible."



Niverville High School's Varsity Girls volleyball team.

CARL FAST

## Niverville Varsity Girls Finish as AAA V-Ball Champs

By Jennifer Lavin

✉ jlav@nivervillecitizen.com

The Niverville High School's Varsity Girls have won their AAA Provincials, under the guidance of coach Carl Fast.

Fast says that the number one highlight of Provincials for him was that the entire team managed to play and contribute to the victory.

"It was a complete team effort," he says.

The Panthers won all their sets during the round robin portion of the competition, and Fast says the team went into the playoffs with confidence.

"In the playoffs, we knew that any team could win, but if we played to our potential,

we were the best team in Provincials."

That confidence served them well as they dominated the quarterfinals against the Stonewall Rams.

Fast says he was slightly nervous about playing Stonewall, as he knew they had an excellent team that had knocked the Panthers out of contention two years earlier at Junior Varsity Provincials.

But the girls pulled off two big wins, taking the first set 25-11 and the second 25-14.

In the semifinals, the team went up against the Swan Valley Tigers and lost their first set 25-23. They came back hard, though, and won the next two sets 25-14 and 15-5.

In the finals, Niverville

met Léo-Rémillard CSLR, which had just knocked off the second-seeded Neelin Spartans in a tight match.

"We knew they would give us everything we could handle," says Fast.

The Panthers won the first set 25-16, but then dropped the next one 25-23. The girls won the final set handily with a score of 15-4.

"In that final set, Melissa Zapp just took over with a very difficult serve that Léo-Rémillard couldn't handle on that day and the rest is history," Fast says. "The hard work the girls put into this tournament was obvious, but a highlight was in the third set in both semis and finals when Melissa Zapp served 10 straight points

in both matches."

This year was Fast's final one at Niverville High School, and he says he has many exciting moments to look back on. He's especially proud that this team only lost two matches the entire season.

Coach Fast says that each and every girl on the squad played incredibly well this season. But at Provincials, three Panthers were singled out. Malia Thiessen was voted Most Valuable Player and Melissa Zapp and Aysia Richards were named tournament all-stars.

"This is the best high school girls team I've coached," Fast adds. "And the future is still strong next year!"

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# Arts & Entertainment

## Author's Book Focuses on Challenge of Caring for a Sick Child

By Jennifer Lavin

✉ jlavinn@nivervillecitizen.com

A Niverville woman has a new book out this holiday season. Rochelle T. Moffit's *Through It All* tells the autobiographical story of how she lost a child but managed to live through the grief and pain and come out the other side with her life, marriage, and joyful spirit somehow still intact.

Moffit says that she had a good start to life and grew up in a happy family.

As she grew older, though, she began dating and fell into an abusive relationship.

In that relationship, she felt that she needed to devote all of herself to her boyfriend or she would lose him. In the process she pushed aside her faith, her family, and her friends.

Eventually she became pregnant, but her abuser punched her hard enough to cause a miscarriage.

She was so deep into this abusive relationship that she wasn't able to leave, even after this tragedy.

Later in the relationship she attempted to get pregnant again—unsuccessfully. She was left devastated, believing that her first miscarriage had caused irreparable damage.

"Later I realized that not getting pregnant was actually God saving me from a life I would regret," Moffitt says.

In the book, Moffit shares many other stories of God's grace over her life, but the main story begins when she got pregnant for the fourth time. By that point, Moffit had married a man named William and together they had two daughters. Life was good.

But on the day of her daughter's second birthday, Moffit fell down a flight of stairs. She was four months pregnant.



Rochelle Moffit of Niverville.

ROCHELLE MOFFIT

The next day, Moffit began to bleed profusely and rushed to the emergency room. The doctor, she says, was very cold about her circumstances. He told her, "You're having a miscarriage. Just get on with life."

That's when a kind nurse stepped in and determined that Moffit may not have been miscarrying. The nurse advised Moffit to get an emergency ultrasound.

Through that ultrasound, she

found out that she was not miscarrying but rather had suffered a placental abruption. An abruption is when the placenta begins to pull away from the uterine wall.

She was put on strict bedrest and she and her family simply had to wait to see whether her body would heal itself.

Moffit made it through that pregnancy and had a boy she named Hayden, although he was born

critically ill with his umbilical cord wrapped very tightly two times around his neck. He had profound cerebral palsy, no gag reflex, no ability to blink, and couldn't breathe on his own. His muscles were rigid.

"We were told Hayden would never leave the hospital," Moffit says. "Never breathe on his own. Never open his eyes or utter a sound. But [he went on to do] all this and so much more."

Nonetheless, Hayden succumbed to his disease at the age of two.

Moffit believes that her book tells two great truths. The first, she says, "is that God never leaves us—even when we have walked away... The second truth is that we don't have to wait till we are in heaven to obtain God's fullness of joy. We just need to learn to change our way of thinking and see our everyday [life] as being blessed."

That being said, Moffit makes it clear that she doesn't believe Christians can't be depressed or shouldn't grieve.

"There seems to be a lot of judgment cast on Christians if they suffer from mental health issues or grieve too long," she says. "Some have said that if you have either of these conditions, so to speak, that you have lost your faith. Nothing could be farther than the truth. We all live in this very fallen world, and we are all still a work in progress."

Moffitt believes that while everyone could benefit from reading this book, she wrote it specifically to help parents who have a sick child or who have lost a child.

She feels that her openness and candidness will help people get through the very worst of times.

Knowing everything she knows now, she says she still wouldn't go back and change anything about Hayden's life or her time with him.

"Hayden was born the way he was born for reasons only God knows," she says. "But so many lives were changed for the better."

Ultimately, Moffit says, the book is about the reality of the life she's lived.

"I feel people don't need fake; they need real. They need to see that it is okay to be broken and hurt, but that God wants us to move past the hurt to joy."

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