

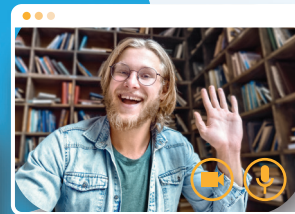
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LOCAL NEWS

School Division Makes Painful Budget Cuts

■ Budget cuts at the Hanover School Division will result in fewer teachers on staff when students return this fall.

Details on Page 7



LOCAL NEWS

A Small Town, Farm Kid Approach

■ An exciting new business has been growing in Niverville recently. Rogue Botanical, located in the industrial park, is making a splash in the world of cannabis production, churning out quality products that are being sold in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

Details on Pages 16-17

SPORTS & REC

Speedskating Takes Off in Niverville

■ The Eastman Speed Skating Club relocated from Steinbach to the CRRC in Niverville this winter and had a banner year.

Details on Page 23

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Local Fair Committee Announces Headliners

■ The Reklaws will be on the mainstage at this year's Niverville Olde Tyme Country Fair, scheduled for June 10-11.

Details on Page 24



Countdown to Red's Crest: Ritchot Ramps Up Flood Fight

➤ READ MORE ON PAGES 3-5

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Floodwaters flow over the road along Highway 200 north of St. Adolphe.

BRENDA SAWATZKY

Countdown to Red's Crest: Ritchot Ramps Up Flood Fight

By Brenda Sawatzky
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER
bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

As of Monday, May 2, a total of 130 evacuation notices had been issued to residents by the RM of Ritchot, and that number climbs daily as the river continues its steady rise. With the crest of the Red River expected to come between May 11–14, the municipality's flood-fighting efforts have kicked into high gear.

"I think about one-third of them

have evacuated," says Ritchot mayor Chris Ewen, who emphasizes that the evacuation of households in high-water areas is not mandatory. "It's up to them to make the decision if they'd like to leave or not."

Should residents choose to stay in their homes, the RM provides a checklist of items they should stock up on in the event that their road or driveway become impassable—items such as fuel, food, and potable water.

The municipality has also

stockpiled 300,000 sandbags for property owners to use, along with a sand station located at the St. Adolphe Arena. Already many sand-bag dikes have been erected across driveways and around homes in preparation for what is yet to come.

As in past years, the municipality and province initially provide subsidized hotel stays for those who choose to relocate until the floodwaters recede.


(continued on page 5)



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AGM and Business Awards

Our AGM and Annual Business Awards are coming up on May 12 from 5-8pm. This networking event is open to all business owners that are part of the Niverville Chamber. Our guest speaker from Lynn & Liana Designs, will be talking about how they accelerated their home business to exports and e-commerce, despite the pandemic.

If you are a business owner and are not part of the chamber yet and would like to attend, please contact chamber@niverville.com to register your business.

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The waters rise to the south of St. Adolphe, encroaching on homes, the highway, and the community dike.

■ RICHARD YOUNG

(continued from page 3)

During the first 72 hours after a household evacuates, they are put up at hotels around Winnipeg at the municipality's expense. They are also asked to save their meal receipts in anticipation of disaster financial assistance programs which may be announced at a later date.

After 72 hours, displaced residents are transitioned to Provincial Emergency Social Services for continued aid.

EVACUATIONS UNDERWAY

Christa Ferreira and her husband Jones have lived along the banks of the Red River since 2001. Once they received their evacuation notice, the Ferreriras chose to evacuate their property, which is situated along the stretch of highway between St. Adolphe and A Maze in Corn.

This is not their first rodeo. The couple was similarly displaced in 2009, and then again in 2011.

"The house is two feet higher than the 1997 flood level," Ferreira says, "but the driveway gets flooded, making it dangerous. My husband Jones works in the city, and even though I mostly work from home it is not recommended to stay at home when the house is surrounded with water."

Ferreira says that they have been really impressed by the quick action and support of the RM staff.

However, this doesn't fully mitigate the angst they feel over having to abandon their property for an unknown

length of time.

"My husband wanted to stay until the last minute because we just started our seedlings for the summer and they may not survive if we cannot attend to them for too long," says Ferreira.

They'd also hoped for more snow to melt before leaving, which would have allowed them to move some outdoor equipment to higher ground. Alas, they decided to leave knowing that delaying even one more night might mean having to drive through two feet of water, as it did when they delayed their evacuation back in 2009.

Angie Masse is the co-owner of A Maze in Corn, located four kilometres north of St. Adolphe along Highway 200. At the time of this writing, the couple was working around the clock to move everything portable to higher ground.

"We will officially need to be evacuated as soon the bridge goes under, as that is our last way out," Masse says. "Unfortunately, we have lots to do and the race is on."

Masse says that the farm equipment they rely on for their business would have been on high enough ground had the original predictions been accurate. Those predictions, which anticipated a flood of similar proportions to 2011, came before the recent heavy precipitation throughout the month of April.

Now the predictions have now been upgraded to 2009 levels—or higher.

"They are saying that we will most likely be evacuated



Highway 200, underwater.

■ TRINA BLIGHT



The community dike is closed north of St. Adolphe.

■ JOEY VILLANUEVA



Many roads are closed around the RM of Ritchot.

■ BRENDA SAWATZKY

for three to four weeks," says Masse. "[I'm] not sure where we are going at this point, but all of our animals have been moved out and now it is just us and the remaining items in question."

As for Ferreira, she's settling into a new routine in their

small hotel room and creating a makeshift office with her laptop on a small corner table. Her online business of product imports won't run at full capacity for a while, as long as there's no address to which her products can be shipped.

CITIZEN POLL

To what degree has the 2022 flood affected you in your life and everyday activities?

- ☐ Not much. Fortunately, I live far enough away from the river that I mostly just hear about it in the news or in conversation.
- ☐ Very much. The waters are close enough to my home that I feel threatened, or even have to evacuate.

We would love to hear your flood stories and learn how it is affecting our communities. Leave us a comment online.

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LAST MONTH'S RESULTS:

Have recent increases in food and gas prices put your budget under high pressure? (Vote online and tell us your story.)

Yes. With inflation at a 30-year high, I am struggling to keep up.

64%

No. Fortunately, my budget is able to absorb the burden of higher prices.

36%

YOUR COMMENTS:

It's hurting. We've had to sit down and figure out which services we can either cut or dial back. We've had to sell things that were important to us to keep us afloat. Rainy day fund pretty much depleted. We have never lived beyond our means. With Hydro prices increasing, things sure look grim. It's a lousy time to be a home owner. Our kids, and grandchildren will suffer the most at our generation's ineptitude across the board.

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HSD Introduces Second Year of Budget Cuts

By Sara Beth Dacombe

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

✉ sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

For the second year in a row, the Hanover School Division will be working with a smaller budget and fewer teachers.

The HSD budget for 2022–23 is one of the tightest budgets ever put forth by the division. It cuts 16 teaching positions, which Finance Committee Chair Rick Peters says was necessary due to a decrease in enrollment.

“One of our challenges is our reduction in enrollment over the last couple of years,” says Peters. “We’ve seen a number of students enter the homeschool route, resulting in the loss of around 600 students to total enrollment in the HSD.”

Peters explains that the division anticipated some homeschooling students to return in the fall of 2021, but not as many returned as division leaders thought. With the downturn in enrollment, provincial funding was reduced and the division was forced to make cuts.

Although the removal of 16 teaching positions is significant, Peters says the job cuts are not permanent and that the division is committed to hiring more to meet the actual enrollment needs this upcoming fall should the number of students increase.

He adds that the lost teaching positions come from the temporary teachers that the division hires each year—and that there has been no reduction in the permanent teaching staff.

“The reduction in staff will not be impacting the classroom,” Peters says.

Peters says that the 2022–23 financial plan was extremely challenging in terms of deciding which areas of the budget could be reduced without impacting students.



The Hanover School Division offices in Steinbach.

HSD

Other areas that will see cuts are IT infrastructure and transportation. HSD maintains one of the largest bus fleets in the province. Servicing 5,300 students and covering a considerable rural area, it is a significant responsibility to keep buses running and in good shape.

Peters says that the division tries to keep the fleet of buses up to date and they always aim to renew the fleet by budgeting to replace older units with new buses.

“It’s always a matter of balancing the needs and wants,” he explains. “If it meant keeping a few more teachers, we were willing to look at a lot of different areas to see what could give and that ended up being in transportation. We decided we could extend the life of some of our school buses, so we decided to purchase two less replacement school buses.”

A SECOND YEAR OF CUTS. WHY?

This is the second year in a row with cuts to teaching positions, IT infrastructure, and transportation.

In 2021–22, the division also submitted a smaller budget due to lower enrollment and the province’s local school tax freeze, which resulted in the loss of two full-time teaching positions and two learning coach positions.

Peters says that, overall, a tax freeze is felt as a decrease in the total money available to the division. School taxes—also known as the Education Special Levy—are intended to cover the financial gap created by partial government funding of the school division budget. There are no other significant means available to HSD to ensure that they are able to fully fund education services in our communities.

According to the HSD website, “The Board of Trustees recognizes that while tax increases are sometimes needed to maintain a high quality of education, annual marginal tax increases will have less budgetary impact on taxpayers than a large tax increase, followed by a temporary freeze. Spreading the required cost over time,

evenly and marginally, reflects a recognition of household budget pressures.”

BUDGET INCREASES

What didn’t get cut was the need for additional COVID expense relief measures, which are planned to continue or increase in 2022–23, such as cleaning protocols and supplies.

The budget also calls for a funding increase in the area of special needs. This aligns with a recent announcement from the provincial government to introduce one year of additional funding to support students with special needs in Manitoba schools.

The exact amount allocated per school is not known, but HSD says that their intention is to determine what is needed and hire additional staffing resources pending the amount received.

LOW BUDGET, HIGH EXPECTATIONS

HSD has one of the lowest budgets in the province when it comes to

what is spent on average per student. According to the HSD website, the average cost to educate one Hanover student is \$11,278. The provincial average is \$13,436.

Administration costs are also lower than the provincial average. Even though HSD is the eighth largest school division in Manitoba, administrative costs make up only 2.4 percent of the overall budget while the provincial average is 2.8 percent.

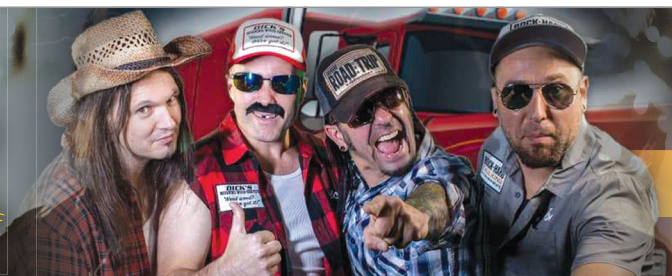
When compared to other school divisions, HSD’s local taxation is also below the Manitoba provincial average and has not increased with the rate of inflation.

HSD is subject to a provincially mandated education property tax freeze, so raising the taxation to levels comparative to the provincial average is out of the question.

“A large chunk of our funding comes from this local taxation, where the province has frozen that,” says Peters. “We are the eighth lowest in assessment value per pupil, which comes from overall property and business value, which means our ability to tax locally isn’t the same as other divisions. There are 29 divisions in the province that have a higher tax base than we do, but our mill rate is among the highest in the province.”

Peters says that budget planners take into consideration whether or not spending below average is a good thing or if Hanover residents should be concerned that less money is being spent on their students compared to other divisions.

“We do wrestle with this, with aiming to be fiscally responsible, which I feel we are,” says Peters. “We also know that getting more money from local taxation means our taxes would go up, but we don’t necessarily want to be the lowest.”



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The Fight for Health and Happiness: Rebooting Senior Services in Niverville

By Sara Beth Dacombe

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

✉ sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

The problem of social isolation for seniors was already a public health crisis before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the effects of isolation have undoubtedly worsened in the last two years, leading to increased loneliness, depression, and anxiety among our oldest citizens.

"We want to communicate a message of welcome and invite seniors to start coming back," says Damien Gagné, the coordinator for Niverville Service to Seniors. "If you can feel ready to do so, it's time."

Gagné says the program is once again looking to fill the void left when COVID-19 cancelled so much of the community's recreational programming for seniors—and they're looking to do so in new and creative ways.

THE EFFECTS OF ISOLATION

Service to Seniors has been around for more than 10 years. The group used to be known for its flagship program, the weekly meal offered every Tuesday at the Golden Friendship Centre.

Over time, however, Gagné says the program instead became focused on offering information services, help with paperwork, low-cost rides, volunteerism, and activities such as monthly educational workshops or outings, healthy eating, the walking club, and fitness groups.

When COVID-19 hit, the program was suspended. Gagné himself had to take a leave in order to provide care for his son.

Since his return, the lull in services, combined with intense public health restrictions, has produced enormous challenges. What had once been a thriving network of services designed to meet the needs of seniors had become inoperable.

"When I came back, it was almost impossible to get anyone to attend anything," says Gagné, whose office is located at the Heritage Centre. "I mean, we couldn't. Everyone was



Damien Gagné, the coordinator for Niverville Service to Seniors.

BREND A SAWATZKY

afraid. People were isolated and seniors became depressed."

Many seniors who Gagné was previously able to connect with lost touch with him, especially if they didn't live within the centre.

"Due to the restrictions, seniors living independently or elsewhere could not even enter the building. It really affected their ability to see me," says Gagné. "Conversely, working at the [Niverville Credit Union Manor] also gave me the ability to see what the residents there were going through. They were only allowed to see one or maybe two designated caregivers a week, for one hour only. No grandkids. The seniors were in shock. They had never experienced something like this."

Gagné says that he saw depression set in, and then frailty. The community's day program, which provides brain activities for seniors suffering the effects of stroke, dementia, Alzheimer's, or other physical or mental ailments, was suspended and exercises previously used to slow the progression of disease became inaccessible.

"Every day I would be sitting in my office in the manor, the phone isn't ringing, but I'm trying the best that I

can to reach out to people," he says. "The people I did talk to were often confused, depressed, and concerned. Every time I had an interaction, it was an interaction that broke my heart. And people started passing away."

Gagné says the lack of stimulation is a powerful thing. And it didn't just last for two or three weeks, it has lasted for years.

"Everyone needs a reason to live. It got to the point, even for me, where I was so burned out I could hardly function. My productivity had gone down. My thoughts were scattered. My social skills were reduced. And that's just for me, and I'm not a senior. Those challenges happened two- or three-fold for seniors."

Gagné says that every lifted restriction has been an opportunity to bring back some type of programming. But there is a long road to bringing back the full depth of programming they once had.

"When something would lift, we would try to plan an event or an outing, and then the restrictions would come back and we would have to cancel," he explains. "It got to the point where seniors no longer trusted that what we were planning would happen. So why would they make plans

to go? They disengaged."

However, the program is finally starting to pick up again. According to Gagné, a major change in mindset has taken hold since the onset of the Omicron variant.

"People are no longer afraid of the disease," Gagné says. "A lot of people have gotten it even after having gotten their vaccinations, and they've survived. Instead of being afraid, seniors have said, 'I only have a limited time left.' They're starting to go out, and I've been trying to light that fire and light that passion for life again. It's been hard, but I'm trying and I'm not going to stop."

PASSION FOR LIFE

Even before the pandemic, Gagné says a greater focus should have been placed on the issue of improving seniors' mental health.

"Seniors have a lot to deal with, and a lot of that often has to do with loneliness, physical aging, and coming to terms with reduced physical ability," says Gagné.

His experience with the local seniors population has allowed him to learn about the previous generations and their ability to cope with challenges or trauma.

"We have an older generation that didn't really focus on mental health," he adds. "Traumas would happen but get buried. People would self-soothe with drugs and alcohol, or maybe cut family off or whatever they felt they needed to do. A lot of seniors I work with also put a lot of their focus on faith to get them through. [Faith] is actually a saving grace and creates something positive to focus on."

Gagné says that he also draws strength from his faith.

"When you look at church services and those types of gatherings, it has given our seniors something to look forward to, and at the same time something to fight for during COVID."

One challenge relating to faith, however, is that it can foster a reluctance among some to be open to learning new things, which Gagné says is especially true when it comes to mental health. He says that the children of seniors are often taking the lead to inspire their elders to be open to viewing their overall health in new ways.

"I'm noticing a generational change, and there seems to be more openness to the science of mental health," says Gagné. "It's being talked about in public now more than ever, and that's a positive thing. There's been a lot of suffering in silence for a long time... but people are learning that you don't have to live [that way]."

He encourages people to make a mental health plan with members of their family, or with their support network, when they feel well. This can make it easier for people to ask for help at a later point in life when they aren't feeling well.

It's all about building resilience, Gagné says, and finding new ways to bring passion back into one's life.

"We need to find those reasons to live," he says. "A reason to live could be beauty, family, fitness, food, sharing a meal with others, art, music, prose... whatever it is, go full on toward it."

Gagné says this advice could apply to anyone, regardless of age.

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"It's time to reactivate our brains, which have been a bit more dormant than usual lately. It's time to find what sparks passion. And I really want to encourage seniors to take part in our programming. There is a positive value in it."

PROGRAMMING

To directly assist with improving the mental health of seniors, Niverville Service to Seniors has access to free counselling sessions through volunteers from Providence University College in nearby Otterburne.

Fitness activities are also proving to be popular as the program regroups. And the most popular fitness activity of them all? Pickleball.

"The most successful program right now is pickleball," says Gagné. "It's been huge! Seniors love it. The official seniors pickleball day is Wednesdays from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. They also have general pickleball open on Tuesdays, but it's been like 90 percent seniors on that day as well because they love it so much."

He admits that he regularly gets beat by 65- to 75-year-old seniors.

"On Tuesdays, anyone of all ages can come out and you regularly see seniors compete with the younger generations. There's entry level, or there are athletic-level seniors who are cracking it back and forth at a high level and it's really exciting. It's the kind of game where the more you play, the more excited you get about it. It's catching on and people get fired up about it."

Fitness for 55+ is a continuing program which features classes run by a qualified fitness instructor. The instructor leads the group in a series of active movements for all fitness levels, such as core and leg strengthening.

"There is also a focus on fall recovery," says Gagné. "So if

you fall, he teaches you how to get up, which is really important. Our seniors who attend this, even if they are super fit, it can challenge them and give their muscles a real workout. And seniors of lesser fitness levels have discovered it is really a life-saving program."

Gagné shares a story about one fitness student who reported a remarkable improvement to their health due to the community's fitness programs.

"She had arthritis and her body was just so sore. She could barely walk up the stairs anymore," says Gagné. "But when she discovered our fitness program and the walking club, she made a lot of friends, she got a lot more social, and she was able to get more active. The next thing

potential in hosting seniors events at the brand-new facility. "It's a great space, it's an active space, and it would be nice to put our activities where they belong. A fitness activity in the CRRC just makes sense."

Service to Seniors also operates a low-cost rides program, a transportation service which coordinates volunteers to drive seniors to assist with running errands or to get to appointments.

"Oftentimes, the children are working and they can't take time off to drive a family member around," says Gagné. "So it really helps out families who have that kind of issue. It's relative inexpensive, especially with gas prices the way they are. It's \$40 to the city, and the driver will drive them

from their home countries."

The cooking class would focus on healthy and affordable recipes, as well as new and exciting flavours.

"We want to offer something that is not just the ordinary around here, something that will spur on the passion of creativity and at the same time help people learn more about embracing and understanding new cultures," says Gagné. "Our town is changing and this is one way we can embrace that change."

Additionally, Gagné is happy to report that the meal delivery program is back. Service to Seniors has contracted with a company called Heart to Home Meals, a frozen meal delivery program made specifically for seniors.

"The company is located in Winnipeg and is a Canada-wide corporation, but they are locally owned," says Gagné. "They have a whole section on special diets. A lot of seniors have diets specific to celiac needs, lactose-free, or low sodium and [the company] has a section specifically for that."

Gagné hopes to be able to expand the Service to Seniors program even further to possibly introduce a fresh wave of creative programming for seniors in the Niverville area. He hopes to collaborate with local talent to lead arts-inspired activities, such as book clubs, origami, making Christmas decorations, stenciling, cardmaking, paint-pouring, and more.

"I want to reiterate the importance of not giving up," he says. "Fight for your health. Fight for your happiness."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To order meals or to inquire about any programs, Service to Seniors can be reached by phone (204-388-9945) or email (sts@heritagecentre.ca).



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The program is expected to take place from April to October 2022. Visit www.cn.ca/vegetation to see the list of cities as well as the updated schedule.

For more information, contact the CN Public Inquiry Line at contact@cn.ca or 1-888-888-5909.

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Local Superintendent Responds to New Education Plan

By Sara Beth Dacombe
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER
sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

At the beginning of 2021, the provincial government introduced a controversial education overhaul in the form of Bill 64.

This new legislation would have removed English-speaking school boards in favour of one central authority.

Then, after Premier Brian Pallister stepped down and Heather Stefanson replaced him, the unpopular bill, which was widely denounced by educators and the public alike, got scrapped.

Many breathed a sigh of relief.

On April 20, the province announced a new piece of legislation to replace it: the Manitoba K-to-12 Education Action Plan.

According to the government, this new plan sets out a path to implement recommendations made by the K-to-12 Commission on Education. Many initiatives from this plan have already been set in motion.

The plan is focused on ensuring access to high-quality and equitable education, preparing students for their future, supporting excellence in teaching and leadership, and strengthening the public education system in Manitoba.

One of the dominant features of the plan is the creation of numerous councils, taskforces, and review teams intended to ensure the Commission's recommendations are met.

For example, a new Student Advisory Council was established

in July 2021 and consists of 30 students, aged 14 to 18, with diverse interests, identities, backgrounds, and perspectives from across the province.

This group of students will meet with the Minister of Education, government staff, and education stakeholders to take part in critical discussions on the future of education.

The will provide insights and advice on current and emerging issues of importance to students.

The Hanover School Division has been allotted two representatives, both of whom are currently attending schools in Steinbach.

The K-to-12 Education Action Plan also lists seven other taskforces and special advisory groups: the Attendance Task Force, the Curriculum Advisory Panel, the Education Funding Model Review Team, the Indigenous Inclusion Directorate Advisory Council, the Minister's Advisory Council on Inclusive Education, the Parent Engagement Task Force, and the Poverty and Education Task Force.

The size of these groups ranges from approximately 12 to 24 members each.

The plan also states that "to facilitate a system-wide approach to planning, an Education Council will be established in 2022. The council will provide strategic guidance and advice on the implementation of the action plan and will support a focused process with partners and



Shelley Amos, superintendent of the Hanover School Division.

stakeholders on the monitoring and reporting of progress."

"I certainly do not recall an endeavour such as this one with as many taskforces, committees, and advisory groups in recent years."

Shelley Amos | HSD Superintendent

HANOVER'S REACTION TO NEW PLAN

While elements named in the new plan are already in motion, local educators remain in the dark about many of the specifics.

The new Education Council,

with its "system-wide approach to planning," has not yet been clarified with leaders in the Hanover School Division.

"We have not yet been made privy to the details, such as timelines, who, goals, objectives, etc.," says Shelley Amos, HSD superintendent. "We are aware of goals/objectives as published in the Action Plan."

Similarly, Amos says few details about the plan, including the eight taskforces and special advisory groups already in place, have been shared with educators.

"Limited information has been shared regarding the taskforces and special advisory groups at this point, so I find it hard to make any statement," Amos adds in acknowledgement that so far the details of the government's plan remain

sparse. "I certainly do not recall an endeavour such as this one with as many taskforces, committees, and advisory groups in recent years."

While the details may indeed be vague and Amos's ability to observe the taskforce groups at work is limited, Amos says that the division is so far pleased with some aspects that they do see in the plan.

"We are pleased to see Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning take a collaborative approach and honour experienced voices from the field," Amos says. "We look forward to a continued

emphasis on partnership with school divisions."

The plan exhibits few carryovers from Bill 64, focusing less on a drastic overhaul of the education system and more on emphasizing the quality of curriculum and delivery, as well as learning outcomes.

An aspect of the plan that Amos is most excited for is the new Framework for Learning, which the province says will "guide curriculum and assessment, development and implementation."

The Curriculum Advisory Panel for this new framework was established in September 2021 and Amos feels it will be one of the most positive and beneficial parts of the plan.

"The Framework for Learning is the right type of work to focus our energy on," says Amos. "We are excited to see a focus on competencies, as that aligns with our HSD Deeper Learning Plan. We believe there is a good opportunity for ongoing curriculum review as provided in the Framework with direct involvement from teachers."

As educators and the public continue to wait for more specifics, Amos says that she will be watching for further information on possible areas of new funding to support education needs throughout the province.

"We would certainly be eager to learn more regarding the new funding formula and how it will align with the pillars in the action plan, along with any provision for additional resources to the Hanover School Division," says Amos.



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IN BRIEF



Niverville Motorist Charged After RCMP Altercation

By Evan Braun

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

According to a news release from the RCMP, a driver has been charged after an altercation with a police officer in Niverville. The incident occurred on the afternoon of Thursday, April 7.

At approximately 2:00 p.m., an RCMP officer with Central Traffic Services conducted a traffic stop on Sixth Avenue South.

The officer approached the driver, who has been identified as 51-year-old Lyall James Hudson of Niverville, who became aggressive and threatened the officer. Hudson was advised that he was under arrest for uttering threats, and when the officer attempted to arrest him Hudson "actively resisted and began fighting the officer."

The altercation led the officer and Hudson onto the roadway, where a passerby stopped and assisted the officer to get control of the fight.

Hudson was arrested and placed safely into custody. He has been charged with assault on a police officer, uttering threats, and resisting arrest. The officer suffered minor injuries.

Grande Pointe Opens New Community Centre

By Sara Beth Dacombe

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

✉ sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

Residents of Grande Pointe in the RM of Ritchot celebrated the grand opening of their new community centre on Sunday, April 24.

Despite the wet weather, the Grande Pointe Homeowners Association (GPHA) hosted a successful event featuring wine and cheese, family activities, and crafting.

The event also included a ribbon-cutting ceremony with Ted Falk, MP for Provencher; Ron Schuler, MLA for Springfield-Ritchot; Chris Ewen, mayor of Ritchot; and Janine Boulanger, councillor for Grande Pointe.

The special guests all showed their support for the centre and congratulated Eveline Touchette from the GPHA on a job well done.

"The grand opening was a success," said Touchette. "Even though the weather was not favourable, the turnout was great. Over 100 people showed up to come and celebrate with us. The community was very well represented. New families with children and founding community residents were able to exchange stories."

The new building will serve as a space where families, recreation groups, and citizens of all special interests and ages can gather.

"It's exciting, given what has been a difficult and long time of not getting together," said Touchette. "And now it's time to get excited about the possibilities that the new space represents for all the families and businesses in the area."

Following the ceremony, guests were treated to lattes from Perk Coffee Bar and invited to visit with local sponsors about a host of possible events the community centre could welcome over the next few years.



Ron Schuler, Janine Boulanger, Eveline Touchette, Chris Ewen, and Ted Falk.

✉ EVELINE TOUCHETTE

Some local businesses had free draws and set up promotional displays, including Gotta GO portable toilets, Fleuriste XO Flowers and Gifts from Île-des-Chênes, and A Touch of Glass from Niverville.

The GPHA has been incorporated since 2003 and active since 1997. The community centre builds upon one of their most noteworthy initiatives: the development of the Grande Pointe Park, which is visited year-round by residents and guests from across the region. Recent developments to the park include a soccer pitch, a walking trail system along the Seine River, and a garage and warm-up shack.

"The park has been in development for the last 20 years," said Touchette. "It started with a shelter, baseball fields, a skating rink, a stage for outdoor entertainment, a garage to store our equipment, a skate shack, and restrooms to put on skates during the winter... and now a community centre. As the years went by, upkeeping all of the park was always done by volunteers with some help from

the RM."

The centre is the product of many years of fundraising by the GPHA. The group has hosted outdoor June events every year since 1997, including bingo bowling nights, bud spud steak nights, and more.

"Many, many grant applications were made for different projects," Touchette added, noting that GPHA representatives have applied for funding from all levels of government. "We have been waiting for this for a long time. The community is growing so fast. I am so grateful for the members of the GPHA that have persevered, that have kept the vision going. We have worked so hard."

The GPHA's next event will be a community baseball tournament on June 3-4, featuring a live band on the outside stage in the park, as well as beer gardens and food onsite.

FACILITY AWARD

On March 22, the GPHA received a letter announcing that they had won the Recreation Manitoba Facilities Award for the work com-

pleted on the new community centre. The award recognizes a recreation facility, individual, or group in Manitoba that demonstrates outstanding or unique innovations in providing places to gather, play, and connect.

Recreation Manitoba is a provincial group that shares the passion and spirit of recreation and is dedicated to enhancing the health and wellness of all Manitobans through the development and support of recreation professionals, practitioners, and volunteers. Their annual awards program recognizes excellence in the field of recreation, parks, and leisure.

The Facilities Award presentation will take place at the Annual Recreation Provincial Conference on Friday, May 6. The GPHA has been invited to give a presentation about their community work and the projects they've completed.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

More information about upcoming events and how to rent the Grande Pointe community centre can be found on the RM of Ritchot's website.



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A Small Town, Farm Kid Approach: Rogue Botanical Innovates in Crowded Cannabis Market

By Jennifer Lavin

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

✉ jlavin@nivervillecitizen.com

John Fayed and Matt Tkachyk are farmers at heart. They are small town boys with a passion for agriculture and cannabis.

The pair are co-founders of Rogue Botanical, a licensed producer of cannabis-based products based out of Niverville.

Fayed grew up near a tiny town in Manitoba and his family owned a seed plant.

"My dad grew a lot of specialty crops and he'd try out plants that you can't spray [with pesticides] because you don't know what would or wouldn't harm the plants," Fayed says. "If you can't spray, you just have to let everything grow. And to get rid of what you didn't want in the plot or fields, you would have to walk up and down the field and pull out the weeds. That's called 'roguing.' So our name goes back to our farming roots."

Cannabis production is very strictly monitored in Canada. Tkachyk says that Rogue had to build their entire production facility, then provide an evidence package to Health Canada proving that they had complied with each and every rule and regulation.

And there are a lot.

Then they had to wait until Health Canada got to their file. All this after having spent a great deal of money to create the local facility in the first place.

"The original application that we developed was 800 pages long," Tkachyk says.

"And that was just the application," Fayed adds. "Then you get to the evidence package. The evidence package is like objective proof to



Matt Tkachyk and John Fayed of Rogue Botanical.

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[Health Canada] that you are actually ready to go. They want to see all your rooms. They want to see videos of all your cameras that are on site."

Health Canada requires that every inch of a cannabis operation be covered by high-quality surveillance cameras. The surveillance footage from Rogue's cameras is crystal-clear, not the grainy, fuzzy picture one is used to seeing.

According to the pair, Rogue Botanical is also a business of passionate people. The team of around 15 staff believe in their product and have a strong desire to create the highest quality product they can.

Although Tkachyk and Fayed

have agricultural experience, when they decided to form Rogue Botanical they knew they needed to find someone with a background in cannabis specifically. They managed to hire a grower who is a seasoned veteran at the art and science of growing cannabis.

"We take the art of our master grower and then we try and turn it into a repeatable, scientific, agricultural approach," says Tkachyk.

"[Our grower] had acquired some unique genetics over the years," Fayed says. "When any growers were able to get their hands on those genetics, that come from different parts of the world, there was incentive not

to share. So they didn't. It's become a real advantage having those unique strains that you can't get just anywhere."

Fayed explains that there are two types of cannabis producers: corporate and craft. He says that Rogue prides itself on being craft cannabis producers.

"Everything we do is based around producing the nicest flowers that we can," Fayed says. "We don't take any shortcuts."

Fayed and Tkachyk say that they talk to customers and retailers every day. They listen to what their customers want and focus on that. That may mean they don't grow a

wide variety of cannabis strains; instead they focus on producing the very best, most desirable strains at any time.

"Our ultimate goal is to produce cannabis that our customers like," Fayed says.

Rogue Botanical's products are now available in approximately 100 stores in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Although cannabis is federally regulated, each province requires different paperwork and licensing procedures. So far these are the two provinces Rogue has focused on, but they say that they will look to expand into other markets as the company grows.

Different products also require different licensing, so for now Rogue is sticking with cannabis flower instead of producing oils or edibles.

Rogue Botanical is also set apart from its competitors by the way they grow their plants. They depend on the sun to provide their plants with heat and light. In fact, they are the only cannabis growers in the province to use only the sun.

Their website puts it this way: "Equally important to the amount of sun received in Manitoba is the quality of it, specifically the ultra-violet (UV) rays."

Tkachyk explains that plants react to the daily light integral (DLI). The DLI is based on the amount of light, intensity of the light, and duration of the light.

He describes the light in an average restaurant, for example, as having a DLI of about two. Standard grow lights would provide about a 43.

The sun itself provides a DLI of about 65 to 70.

"Each plant is looking to protect itself on a regular basis from the harmful UV rays," says Tkachyk. "So it's going to develop those terpenes



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and those oils to protect itself from that light—and that's what you want in the product. You want the flavour of the terpenes... You can't replicate the power of the sun."

What are terpenes, you may ask? It's a word you'll hear a lot in the cannabis world.

Healthline describes them like this: "Terpenes are naturally occurring chemical compounds found in plants and some animals. They're responsible for the aromas, flavors, and even colors associated with various types of vegetation. In terms of cannabis, terpenes are what make certain strains smell or taste different from others."¹

Not only does harnessing the power of the sun improve Rogue's product, it's also environmentally friendly, as they don't need to draw as much electricity.

The sun isn't the only hard worker at Rogue Botanical. The cofounders each put in long hours every day and surround themselves with the best of the best. Agronomists, biochemists, plant biologists, entomologists... they use them all.

Their master grower, with his wealth of experience, understands that the plants are living organisms and require proper care to reach their potential. His process involves taking cues from the plants to guide the growing process, not unlike a farmer of any other commercial crop.

Tkachyk says that he has seen the grower get goosebumps from a perfect plant, a plant that's growing just the way he wants it to after all his hard work.

Currently, Rogue has multiple products available in retail stores throughout Manitoba. These products include "Gold" (Sativa), "Runtz"

(Hybrid), and "Hindu Kush" (Indica).

Packaging these products for the retail market will be the purview of Rogue Botanical's sister company, Rogue Processing.

"Rogue Processing applied for a standard cannabis processing license with Health Canada on January 14, 2022, with the intent to become the first dedicated cannabis co-packing facility in Manitoba," says Graham Taylor, the president of Rogue Processing. "The 2,000-square-foot facility is fully constructed in Niverville, across the road from our cultivation partners at Rogue Botanical."

Rogue Processing's license is expected to be approved later this spring.

Rogue Processing will use a nitrogen infusion packaging system. They will package dried cannabis flower in a peel-top can and replace the air in the can with nitrogen.

This process, Taylor says, "optimally preserves product integrity, is attractive to consumers, 100 percent recyclable, and complies with all Health Canada requirements."

Taylor says that he has so much to be proud of in this young company. His business plan won the top award at the 2022 Stu Clark New Venture Championship: Graduate Edition.

"Rogue Processing has also been approved for the Manitoba Small Business Venture Capital Tax Credit," Taylor says, "providing a non-refundable Manitoba tax credit of up to 45 percent to individuals and corporations who acquire equity capital in our eligible Manitoba enterprise."

Taylor says that in 2017 the cannabis industry was non-existent, other than black market sales. By 2026,

cannabis is expected to be an \$8 billion industry in Canada.

"There's a lot of opportunities and room for growth in this market," he says.

When a country decriminalizes or legalizes cannabis, there is often an immediate shortfall in the amount of product available to the consumer.

Taylor is aware of this and says that they are prepared for that eventuality as other countries inevitably begin to legalize.

"Because of our licensing and abilities, we would be in a great position to serve other countries too," says Taylor.

Rogue Processing will be the first Manitoba company specializing in packaging services for Rogue Botanical and other producers interested in their services.

"It's been so great doing business in Niverville," Taylor says. "The community has been so supportive and welcoming and we're just so happy with where we've set up our operation. We just rave about how great Niverville has been."

Fayed hopes that Niverville feels the same way about Rogue. "We're a couple of small town farm kids. We grew up in small towns, we went to fall suppers, we're community-minded guys. We want to do good things for the community."

"Rogue is just a farm kid approach," adds Tkachyk. "A small town, farm kid approach."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

¹ "Cannabis 101: What's the Deal with Terpenes?" Healthline. Date of access: May 1, 2022 (www.healthline.com/health/cannabis-terpenes#what-they-are).



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Please be advised that a general municipal election will be held on October 26, 2022

Prospective municipal election candidates must register with the Senior Election Official (SEO) during the registration period before they may begin to accept contributions, incur expenses, fundraise or borrow money for their campaign.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that I will be receiving candidate registrations:

- For the office of head of council: Between May 1, 2022 and September 20, 2022
- For the office of councillor: Between June 30, 2022 and September 20, 2022

At the Municipality of Ritchot office, 352 Main Street, St. Adolphe, during regular business hours (9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday to Friday).

To obtain a registration form contact the S.E.O. at the telephone number or email listed below.

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Dated at St. Adolphe, Manitoba on May 1, 2022
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Veuillez noter que l'élection générale municipale se tiendra le 26 octobre 2022.

Les candidats potentiels pour l'élection doivent s'inscrire avec le fonctionnaire électoral principal durant la période d'inscription avant de pouvoir accepter des contributions, d'engager des dépenses, de collecter des fonds ou d'emprunter de l'argent pour leur campagne électorale.

UN AVIS EST DONNÉ que la période d'inscription pour la mise en candidature :

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Au bureau de la municipalité rurale de Ritchot, 352, rue Main, Saint-Adolphe de 9h à 16h (du lundi au vendredi).

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Province Announces Local Community Grants

By Evan Braun

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

✉ editor@nivervillecitizen.com

On May 5, local MLA Ron Schuler announced almost \$900,000 in provincial grant funding to support local organizations in Niverville and the RM of Ritchot.

"These funds will help contribute to and strengthen our community," says Schuler. "I'm proud that our government continues to support important community organizations such as these."

The Niverville Junior A Hockey Club—a.k.a. the Niverville Nighthawks—will receive a particularly large amount. The club is being granted \$259,032 to help pay for an expansion to the CRRC's event seating.

Bryan Trottier, a member of the Nighthawks board of directors, says that the Town

of Niverville initially made the club aware of the grant opportunity in early December 2021. The town proceeded to help them write the grant application and assist with the process.

"We received support letters from Mayor Myron Dyck, Rage Ringette, and Clipper Ice Sports," says Trottier. "These letters of support were an important part to receiving this grant."

As well, the Town of Niverville will receive a total of \$78,781 for the purposes of recreation, grounds maintenance, and community beautification. Parts of this total will be used to upgrade Opa's Park and develop the Niverville CPR Well Historical Park.

Thirdly, the Niverville MCC Community Assistance Centre is being given \$23,940.

The list of beneficiaries in the RM of Ritchot is extensive.

The RM will receive \$133,205 for various projects. Of this total, \$115,00 is earmarked for the previously announced expansion of the civic offices in St. Adolphe. The remaining \$18,205 will go towards the revitalization of Ste. Agathe's Perron Park, grounds maintenance, and community beautification. Funds will also be allocated to public works and recreation.

The Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre near Île-des-Chênes will receive \$117,228 for animal care, office work, and an expansion to its education program.

The Ste. Agathe Community Development Inc. has been given \$80,038 for grounds maintenance and the revitalization of Cheyenne Park.

The IDC Club Inc. will get a total of \$71,750 for outdoor rink and sports court revitalization.

In nearby Grande Pointe, the Grande Pointe Homeowners Association is receiving \$36,724 for outdoor enhancements, as well as grounds and building maintenance.

The Seine River Minor Ball Association, too, will be given \$28,513 for improvements to baseball diamonds and grounds maintenance.

Additionally, \$25,000 has been allocated to the St. Adolphe Sports Centre for the purchase of an arena dehumidifier.

The TC Energy Centre will receive \$18,442 for accessibility and safety upgrades.

Elsewhere, the Ste. Agathe Culture and Community Centre is being given \$11,250 for air efficiency upgrades.

And finally, the Ste. Agathe Arena will get \$9,500 for upgrades to their facility and equipment.

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Commentary

Smartphone Addiction and the Brain

By Daniel Dacombe

Years ago, when cell phones were relatively new, people grew concerned that using them might cause harm to our brains. Specifically, the fear was that cell phones might emit deadly radiation, such as microwaves that killed brain cells or caused cancer.

Studies conducted since that time have established no clear link between cell phone usage and brain damage, eliciting a sigh of relief from many people—including CEOs of cell phone companies. It would seem that cell phones are perfectly safe to use.

At least when it comes to deadly radiation.

We've learned a great deal more in the years since, and some of what we've learned is causing us to revisit whether smartphones are in fact good for our brains.

Most will have noticed that people appear to spend more and more time on their phones. Although we do use them to make calls or send texts, we also use them to read the news, surf social media, play games, and access hundreds of apps that can consume hours of our day.

Some of us find these incessant demands on our attention irritating; you may have heard someone talk—or yourself talked—about needing to unplug, delete social media, and spend less time chained to our devices.

Others, however, may feel differently. We jump at every notification, we always have our phones in our hands, and we pull our devices out in



DEPOSITPHOTOS

the middle of conversations, unable to put them down for long.

And when we can't be on our smartphones, we start feeling anxious and uncomfortable, looking for excuses to go and pick them up again.

Some experts have taken to calling this "smartphone addiction." While that may not be an official diagnosis, it is a growing problem for many people in our increasingly online world.

Signs of smartphone addiction are similar to the signs of problem gambling and may include: spending increasing amounts of time on your smartphone; craving your smartphone during times when you cannot access it; being preoccupied with or excessively checking texts,

messages, or other notifications; turning to your smartphone as a distraction when you experience unwanted feelings such as sadness or anxiety; experiencing time loss while using your phone (hours go by without you realizing it); reaching for your phone without making a decision to do so; and using your phone persistently despite the real-life consequences of doing so, such as in your relationships or at work.

Some of us might be asking, "So what? What harm is done by spending so much time on our phones? After all, it's just wasting time, isn't it?"

This may be true for some of us. But for those who have begun to develop a psychological dependency on their devices, there may be

real, physical consequences.

A study published in the scientific journal *Addictive Behaviours* looked at MRI brain scans of individuals who exhibited problematic behaviours related to their cell phones.

They found dramatic changes to the grey matter, especially in the insula cortex and temporal lobe, parts of the brain that are connected to, among other things, emotional regulation, self-awareness, memory formation, and motivation.

These scans revealed that individuals with symptoms of smartphone addiction demonstrated a loss of volume and function in these areas of the brain, similar to those who had been diagnosed with substance use disorders.

The concern is even greater for

children and adolescents, due to their vulnerable, developing brains.

This MRI study has given us among the strongest indications yet that problematic smartphone use can be harmful. Unfortunately, because this study hit the news just weeks before the COVID-19 pandemic, its significance was lost in the grand scheme of our collective consciousness.

Finally we're starting to discuss what this research might mean for us, and how we can make changes to ensure we don't develop a problem connected to smartphone use.

Therapists, psychologists, and behaviour experts have weighed in on smartphone overuse and offered suggestions for bringing our smartphone use down to healthier levels.

They recommend taking a break from screens for a defined period of time, setting limits for yourself on how much you will be on your phone (for example, there are apps that will monitor your screen time and alert you when you've reached your limit), keeping your phone plugged in while you're at home and only checking it at specific times, and charging your phone away from your bed so that it isn't within reach while you're trying to sleep.

Most of us, even those who don't use our smartphones in an unhealthy fashion, could benefit from these tips. Perhaps consider trying them and seeing how easy it is to do so. If it's more of a challenge than you expected, it might mean that it's time to get a bit more serious about reducing your screen time.

Your brain might thank you for it.



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Sports & Recreation

Nighthawks Update: Community Ownership, Shareholders, and Season Tickets

By Jennifer Lavin

✉ jlavin@nivervillecitizen.com

As the Niverville Nighthawks continue to gear up for their inaugural season, their board of directors is excited to announce that members of the public will soon be able to own a piece of the team.

“The new MJHL team that is set to start play in Niverville this fall will contribute to the identity of this community, proudly representing this region on a provincial stage, and hopefully someday at the national tournament,” says Ray Dowse, vice president of the board. “There will be a lot of contributing factors helping this organization get on its feet. However, a critical piece is the people and organizations who choose to join the Niverville Nighthawks community ownership group.”

Community ownership means that the team is effectively owned by the members of the community, both individuals and businesses who choose to invest.

Because the organization operates as a non-profit, Dowse says that those who invest should do so “with the understanding that the greatest return will be the positive impact it will have on the community and region as a whole.”

The community ownership model has seen great success in junior hockey. Dowse suggests that this is because it engages such a large segment of the population of each team’s community.

“And when things need to get done, it promotes cooperation and collaboration between the many different stakeholders,” he says.

There are two types of shareholders in the Nighthawks organization: founder shareholders and legacy shareholders. Both are essential to the club’s success.

The founder shareholders will be the backbone of the Nighthawks. Each founder shareholder will have voting rights, and the group will collectively assume the team’s operational and financial responsibilities.

The team’s first board of directors has already been chosen from the founder shareholders. All future board members will also be chosen from this group.



Nighthawks board members Jeremy Braun, Ray Dowse, and Clarence Braun. © JUSTIN BRAUN

The cost to become a founder shareholder is \$10,000. That money will be used for team start-up and operational costs.

So far nearly 50 founder shareholder positions have been secured, with more under consideration.

“Having a significant number of shareholders such as this backing the organization is positive for the Nighthawks,” Dowse says. “It creates a very strong foundation for the team to work from going forward.”

He adds that becoming a founder shareholder comes with several significant benefits.

Founder shareholders will have the first chances to secure team sponsorships, season tickets, and exclusive events and merchandise.

“The board of directors is currently finalizing our shareholder agreement, and we anticipate our list of committed founder

shareholders will be made official in the coming weeks,” Dowse explains.

The second group of owners, legacy shareholders, will also play a significant part in the organization.

“Although legacy shareholders will not have voting rights, they will receive regular team communication, copies of annual team financials, and the option to secure season tickets and passes to team events before being offered to the general public, along with some team merchandise.”

Although there are many opportunities to be involved with team operations, legacy shareholders will not be required to foot any additional financial responsibilities or obligations other than the initial purchase cost.

The cost of a legacy share is \$1,400. Of that cost, \$1,000 is eligible for a tax receipt from the

Town of Niverville. The majority of the funds raised through these legacy shares will be used directly for infrastructure at the CRRC.

The Nighthawks have a goal to attain 250 legacy shareholders, which would raise \$250,000 for the CRRC.

The infrastructure currently required is a second bleacher system, this one on the east side of the arena around the player boxes, as well as a new permanent dressing room for the exclusive use of the Nighthawks.

“The development of the plans, material purchase, and all the costs of installation are to be borne by the Nighthawks,” Dowse says. “The plan has been established and we are working through final pricing. Our goal is to get started on construction once sufficient funds have been raised.”

Additional legacy shareholder information will be available in the first week in May.

The season ticket waitlist for the Nighthawks will also open in the first week in May. The first opportunity to secure season tickets will go to the founder shareholders. After that, legacy shareholders will get their turn.

At that point, any remaining seats will be offered to those on the public waitlist.

Tickets for the existing bleachers on the west side of the arena will be assigned seating.

The soon-to-be built east side bleachers will be general admission, with no assigned seating.

Dowse says that there is still a need for a more billet families for Nighthawks players.

For those who are interested in volunteering to help Niverville’s new team in any other way, the team will soon put out a volunteer call.

There will be many opportunities and the board plans to create a list of volunteers and their specific areas of interest.

“We are looking to create an experience with this organization—players, management, fans, volunteers, and the community as a whole,” says Dowse. “It’s very exciting to be part of something like this. The opportunity to join the team as a shareholder is definitely unique.”

IN BRIEF



Local Race Car Driver Notches Big Win in Hungary

By Jennifer Lavin

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Niverville’s own David Richert has won the Drexler Automotive Formula 3 race at the Hungaroring, a 4.381-kilometre motorsport racetrack near Budapest, Hungary.

Richert says it was a challenging event due to some car and health issues. There was also a fair bit of rain, which added to the difficulties.

“It was a lot to take in for the first weekend back in a race car,” says Richert. “So I am extremely happy to come away with some trophies and a great result.”

Richert grew up on a farm just outside of Niverville. In 2001, he attended a United States Grand Prix Formula 1 event at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

“I looked down at the cars screaming by and decided it would be a heck of a lot more fun to be down in the cars driving, rather than up in the stands watching,” he says. “I guess you could say it was that, coupled with the fact everyone told me it would be impossible for a farm kid from Canada to ever get the chance to do it, which really drove me forward.”

Now, 20 years later, Richert has gone from racing go-karts in Manitoba to formula cars in Monaco.

The Drexler-Automotive Formel Cup is Formula 3 Racing and holds races in six different European countries.

Formula racing is known as some of the most intense auto racing in the world. It’s defined specifically as open-wheeled, single-seater, motorsport road racing, particularly with four-wheeled cars.

The cars in F3 can reach speeds up to 300 kilometres per hour and accelerate to 100 kilometres per hour in 3.1 seconds.

F1 is the fastest, most expensive, and most prestigious level of Formula Racing. F2 and F3 use somewhat less powerful cars, but there are more drivers and the races are often very close and very intense.

“I’m excited to participate in the Drexler Automotive Formel Cup for the 2022 race season,” Richert says. “Driving a quick Formula 3 car on some incredible race circuits throughout Europe will be an excellent experience and great training for the future. The next race coming up is at the historic circuit in Monza, Italy, from April 22–24, so I am excited to keep working hard towards the next event.”

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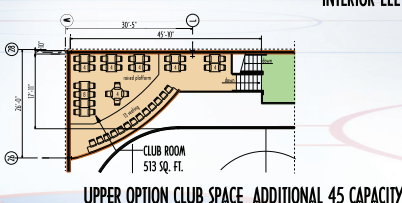
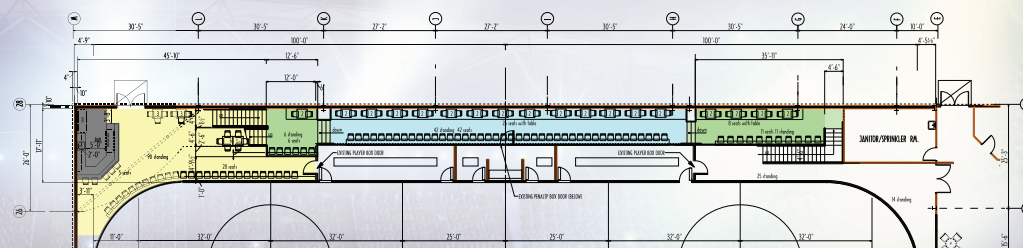
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Speedskating Takes Off in Niverville this Winter

By Jennifer Lavin

✉ jlav@nivercitiz.com

The Eastman Speed Skating Club (ESSC) relocated from Steinbach to the Community Resource and Recreation Centre in Niverville this year, and Vice President Cassandra Tetrault says that the move to the large, brand-new facility has prompted a significant increase in interest and a growth in the club's membership.

Tetrault played hockey for many years, but after the birth of her second child she quit the sport. Three years ago, she decided to try speedskating with her then-seven-year-old daughter, and they both fell in love.

Only three years after she began speedskating, Tetrault attended the Masters International Short Track Meet (MIST) this year. The MIST Games usually happen every two years—in the years when there isn't a World Masters Winter Games—but these games were delayed by a year because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This year's Canadian event was held in Calgary, but the games are held all over the world. The MIST games are open to anyone over the age of 30 who is registered with a national speedskating governing body.

The MIST games were a tremendous success for Tetrault, who set new international masters records in her age category for the 500-metre, 777-metre, and 1,500-metre distances. She finished first in the 35–39 age category and second overall in the Women's Open category.

"It was such an amazing experience and I look forward to doing another Masters competition in long track next season," Tetrault says. "It was an honour to skate with masters skaters from all over the world demonstrating such dedication and passion toward speedskating."

Tetrault says there is a lot to love about the sport, like the ongoing challenge of learning better technique, striving for new personal best times, and the endurance component.

"I love that it is a lifelong sport that we can do as a family," she says. "I get to share this passion for skating with both my 11- and six-year-old daughters. I also love the community around the



Willa Dowse of Niverville.

▣ CARA DOWSE

sport as I have met so many great people that have become good friends. Lastly, I really appreciate... that the sport can be done in a competitive or non-competitive atmosphere."

Another member of the ESSC is Rachel Spridzans, a 17-year-old from Lorette. Six years ago, Spridzans just happened to see a flyer for an upcoming event where people could try speedskating. She also fell in love with the sport.

"I love that [speedskating] is a sport that requires a lot of drive and resilience," says Spridzans. "It's something that you really have to throw yourself into. And if you're not a thousand percent in it, I don't know if you'll be able to keep going."

Spridzans has competed in the Canada Cup twice as well as in the Canadian Junior Championships. In the Canadian Junior Championships, she notched three new personal best times and was ranked twenty-third overall in Canada.

The very next weekend, she

earned two new personal bests and was ranked fifteenth in the 500-metre and nineteenth in the 1,000-metre.

Spridzans is currently on the provincial speedskating team but hopes to qualify for the national team in the next few years.

"The Olympics is the goal," she says, "but I'm taking it one day at a time."

To say Willa Dowse, another local competitor who is in her first year, loves skating would be an understatement.

The 12-year-old member of the ESSC started skating on her family's backyard pond when she was only two. Later, she played hockey and ringette, then figure-skated for four years.

"Willa had gone to a couple of 'Come Try Speedskating' events in Steinbach over the last few years," says Willa's mother, Cara. "And when her figure-skating coach moved on to another line of work during COVID and the ESSC moved to Niverville this year, it was the perfect time to try it again."

"I love the speed and competition involved in the sport!" Willa adds.

The CanWest Canadian Youth Short Track is a national short track speedskating event held for 11- to 15-year-old-skaters across western Canada. Skaters need to qualify in their own province before attending CanWest.

Willa qualified to attend CanWest this year and took home a bronze medal in the 400-metre race. She also qualified for the long track nationals in Quebec City, but her family decided not to attend that event this year.

Finally, 12-year-old Kaylee Siemens from St. Jean also participated in CanWest this March despite having only joined the ESSC in December.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For anyone interested in learning more about the sport or trying speedskating, contact Eastman Speed Skating: eastmanspeedskating@gmail.com, www.facebook.com/eastmanspeedskating

IN BRIEF



Kayden Jarvis.

Nighthawks Hire Development Coach

By Scott Stroh

This past month, the Niverville Nighthawks hired a hometown player development coach to join their growing staff. On April 20, the club announced that Kayden Jarvis of Winnipeg has come aboard.

Jarvis's role will be develop local talent that comes to the Nighthawks via the MJHL draft and other means.

Jarvis spent two seasons as a player in the MJHL, taking the ice for the Winkler Flyers from 2014 to 2016. More recently, he has been on staff with the RINK Training Centre in Winnipeg.

"Kayden brings a wealth of knowledge and a creative approach," says Kelvin Cech, the team's head coach and general manager. "Jarvis is a great guy. He's got great character. This is his life, his full-time profession. He's from here, he knows the area, and he knows the players that are coming up through the system."

A key component, Cech adds, is that Jarvis is highly adaptable and knows what's most important in players from a skills perspective.

"Another great thing about him is he knows how to apply that to today's players, and those coming into junior hockey," Cech says. "He's a great asset for me to have for the guys to learn and to go back to the basics, as that is the kind of stuff that shows up when it counts the most."

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Katie Knebel

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Arts & Entertainment



The Reklaws, a.k.a. brother/sister duo Jenna and Stuart Walker, will headline the Niverville Olde Tyme Country Fair this summer. Homegrown talent Emma Peterson will open for them.

The Reklaws to Headline Niverville Fair

By Jennifer Lavin

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After two years of pandemic shut-down, the Niverville Olde Tyme Country Fair is planning to make a triumphant return to southeastern Manitoba this summer—specifically, on the weekend of June 10–11.

One of the highlights of the fair, which closes all of Niverville's Main Street for the weekend, is always the live music.

This year will be no exception,

with Canada's own The Reklaws headlining the show.

The Reklaws are composed of Jenna and Stuart Walker, a brother/sister pair from rural Ontario. At the moment they're burning up the Canadian country music charts.

The Reklaws have received three JUNO nominations, four CCMA's, seven Gold singles, five Platinum singles, and a Gold-certified debut album.

They also have the most domestically streamed debut album in

Canadian country music history.

OPENING ACT

Opening for the Reklaws will be Manitoba's own Emma Peterson.

Peterson is making a name for herself in Canadian country. In 2016, she participated in Country Music Television's Chevy Chase Contest where she was named one of the top four finalists in Canada.

In 2019, she won the Emerging Artist Award at the Manitoba Country Music Awards in Winnipeg.

Listening to country music on the radio spurred a lifelong passion for Peterson. At ten or eleven, she convinced her parents to buy her a \$50 guitar—but in her hometown of 600 people, there was no guitar teacher.

"After school I would go to my room and watch [guitar lesson] videos again and again, trying to figure everything out," Peterson says.

Peterson has a day job too, as a nurse who spent nine months working in a COVID-19 ward.

"Music and nursing are in a weird

way kind of connected," she says. "In both, you're really trying to give to other people. Music is therapy."

Peterson knows it's been a long time since most people have been out to go see a live show, so she is excited to hit the stage.

"I was super excited to be playing the Niverville fair in 2020, but then [the fair] was cancelled so I feel like I've been anticipating this show for two years. You can expect high energy, lots of fun, and some good country music!"

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Niverville Entrepreneur Launches Virtual Art Gallery

By Sara Beth Dacombe

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Niverville entrepreneur Rory Hiebert's vision goes beyond reality. "Virtual" isn't really the right word for his new venture, which he describes as a 3D art experience. Indeed, there is nothing virtual about it.

Art is many things to many people, but throughout the COVID-19 pandemic one thing it has not been is accessible.

ThreeSixty Nation is an online marketplace and gallery designed to help creative individuals share their artistry through the medium of virtual reality (VR). VR employs a computer or television setup combined with a set of specialized goggles to simulate an audio/visual experience for the user. The effect is that someone feels like they're in a completely different space from the room they're actually in.

VR has been steadily growing in popularity throughout the entertainment, education, and corporate sectors for its immersive qualities.

Since people were finding it more difficult than ever to go into real-life art galleries, Hiebert saw the potential in bringing art "out" of these traditional spaces.

To increase awareness of VR and give the public an opportunity to try it out, Hiebert organized a pop-up VR art gallery on April 24 at the Public Brewhouse and Gallery in Steinbach.

"[This] was the launch of the 360n Gallery with my project, ThreeSixty Nation," says Hiebert. "It was an incredible experience and was received really well by all who attended."

Hiebert says that most of the people at the open house had never tried virtual reality before, so watching their first reactions to VR was greatly rewarding.

"The 360n gallery can now be viewed online, but to see its true potential as an immersive experience it really needs to be viewed in a VR headset," he says. "That is where the 360n pop-up galleries are going to be a great opportunity for people



Rory Hiebert helps new-to-VR users explore his online art gallery

✉ KAELEB VISRAM, MAST CREATIVE

to view the gallery's true potential. Each pop-up gallery will have several VR experiences available for people to try out and see the gallery and the artworks being promoted."

When viewed online on a computer or in a virtual reality headset, the user can enter the gallery and use controls to walk around. Users can observe a seating area and "walk" right up to walls where art is hung, with descriptions next to them, just like in a real art gallery.

An especially unique feature are 3D "spheres" which the user can walk into. Inside, the user finds themselves in a sort of globe with a 360-degree panoramic photo spread out all around them.

Hiebert first developed the idea to use 360-degree video and photography to promote artists and creativity back in 2016.

"Unfortunately, after beginning the first few projects, my camera was stolen," Hiebert explains. "Which led to me shelving the project. Since then, the market in virtual reality has

been developing at an exponential rate, and I recently decided to pick the project back up again to begin pursuing a formal career as an emerging artist, curator, and creative producer. I am now partnering with artists that I know and hold in high esteem to begin curating and promoting their work."

So far Hiebert is launching the project independently, though he is organizing a variety of crowdfunding initiatives to generate additional support.

"I am bootstrapping the costs involved in programming and developing a VR platform, which I seek to launch on Steam, Oculus, and other VR platforms," he says. "And each pop-up gallery and event will provide an opportunity to crowdfund for the goals of ThreeSixty Nation, with funds going directly towards the artists involved, and to contribute to the cost of developing the future platform of the 360n Gallery."

ThreeSixty Nation will host pop-up galleries throughout the

summer. Hiebert is welcoming any interested venues, businesses, and groups to consider hosting a 360n pop-up gallery and sponsor events to promote the work by local artists.

Local artists are also invited to connect with Hiebert about the possibility of showcasing their work online.

"ThreeSixty Nation will be spending the next few months creating new content for the 360n Gallery," Hiebert says. "There is currently an open call for artists on our website to submit an application to be included in new gallery features. I will be partnering with various groups of artists to collaborate with and develop different types of 360 video and photography projects to feature in the 360n Gallery. These artist features will then have pop-up galleries at different venues to share and showcase the works created."

IMPORTANCE OF ART

Art has always been important to Hiebert, who enjoys music and

graphic technology.

"As an audio engineer, graphic designer, and creative producer, I have always found fulfillment in designing projects and running events, whether for music, art, business, or speaking engagements," says Hiebert. "Using different technologies as tools to create marketing materials and content to be shared has been a passion of mine ever since I first got my hands on our family's first computer back in the 90s."

Opening a brick-and-mortar gallery was never in Hiebert's plans, but combining art, technology, and business was. That said, Hiebert never considered himself destined to be a business owner.

"For many years I have worked as a creative producer as a side gig, but I never considered myself much of an entrepreneur," says Hiebert. "I recently realized that I had been limiting myself in my potential... I have come to believe that anyone utilizing their talents or skills in pursuit of any type of project or endeavour is a natural entrepreneur."

Hiebert believes that creatives shouldn't count themselves out of becoming meaningful contributors in the business world. Anyone thinking about pursuing what they love, he says, should remain sensitive to possible partnerships that may come their way.

"It's just a matter of finding the right market or opportunity to share their vision or work," says Hiebert. "With ThreeSixty Nation, I hope to be able to collaborate with other artists and creative individuals in partnering towards expanding our sphere of influence and reach new opportunities and potential in the art industry, together in a collective way."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The pop-up VR gallery presented on April 24 is now available now to view online. Future event tickets and information can be found on the ThreeSixty Nation website: <https://threesixtynation.space/>

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A Narrative of Hope: New Novel Celebrates Rural Diversity

By Jennifer Lavin

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K.R. Byggdin may not technically be Mennonite, but you'd never know after reading their book, *Wonder World*.

Byggdin grew up in Niverville and still seems to have their finger on the pulse of the small, predominantly Mennonite towns that dot our province. They say they are "Mennonite by osmosis."

In the acknowledgements of *Wonder World*, Byggdin calls the book "a complicated, queer love story to the prairies."

And that is indeed how it reads.

The main character, Isaac, grew up on the prairies but then moved to the east coast. A death in the family sees him return to his small Manitoba town and brings back all the joys and complications of life there.

Isaac and his pastor father are estranged due, in large part due to Isaac's sexual orientation. His grandfather, one of the only family members who Isaac believed actually cared for him, has passed away.

There are some similarities between Isaac and Byggdin's journeys. After graduating from Niverville Collegiate Institute, Byggdin attended university and met their future spouse, who was from the east coast. The two married and made their home in Halifax.

Once in Halifax, Byggdin says they began to conceptualize the novel.

"I had all these little moments of realizing that I'm still in Canada but I'm in a very different region and culture," says Byggdin. "That made me kind of reflect on my childhood here in Manitoba—the things that were difficult, the things that I really loved, some of the foods I really miss."

Byggdin started writing the novel in 2018. Reflecting on their time in the prairies, they realized that processing that time of life could be done in an artistic way.

Soon the novel began to take shape.



K.R. Byggdin, formerly of Niverville, has published a novel about life in southeastern Manitoba.

✉ K.R. BYGGDIN

In 2011, Byggdin was working a summer position in Niverville as the town's youth job coordinator. That position was based out of the town's administration office.

They recall that one day Mayor Greg Fehr came into the office and handed Byggdin a book he thought Byggdin would enjoy.

That book was *A Complicated Kindness* by Miriam Toews.

"My first thought was, 'Good Christians don't read Miriam Toews,'" recalls Byggdin. "Because that's what I'd heard! But at the same time I thought, 'I really like Greg and Greg is saying to give it a try, so I might as well.'"

Reading that book was thrilling for Byggdin.

"It was the first time that I could say that I understood these streets or this culture. The first time that I could understand so intimately what someone was writing about. That was the first time it hit me that books don't have to be set in London or New York or Paris. Books can also be set in places like

southeastern Manitoba."

Byggdin says that one of the things they appreciate most about Mennonite culture is the closeness of families and communities.

"There is a powerful sense of belonging and inclusion that can come from that," they say, adding that they also appreciate the food of the Mennonites. "Platz, vareniki, farmer sausage... I had to learn to make my own cottage cheese vareniki in Halifax!"

However, growing up in this place also came with challenges when it came to accepting an important part of themselves.

"The difficult thing, though," they say, "is that growing up in a religious context, I didn't always feel as though I could express or even just internally accept myself as a queer, non-binary person. I felt like those two things had to be at odds. With writing this book, I wanted to challenge the idea that you cannot be queer and Mennonite or that you cannot be queer and rural Manitoban."

Byggdin says there have always been LGBTQ2S people in our small towns. It's just that we haven't traditionally talked about them.

They say they are hoping to keep the conversation around this topic open.

"These identities are not at odds with one another but can actually coexist and make a community stronger by embracing that diversity," Byggdin says.

That diversity doesn't just apply to LGBTQ2S people, either.

Byggdin suggests that the same idea applies to neurodivergent people or immigrants or various other groups.

All these people are here. We just need to acknowledge them and their contributions to our society.

"Southeastern Manitoba belongs to everyone," they say. "I wanted to write a story that provides a pathway of a hopeful future. A narrative of hope."

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