

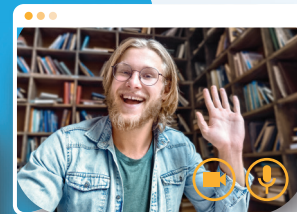
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## LOCAL NEWS

### Looking to Election 2022

■ All Manitobans will be going to the polls this October to elect new municipal councils. Are you thinking of running? We answer your questions.

Details on Pages 3-4, 12



## LOCAL NEWS

### New Four-Way Stop in IDC

■ A new four-way stop has been installed at an infamously dangerous corner in Île-des-Chênes. The corner of Dumaine and Old PTH 59 officially added a pair of new stop signs on May 12. It is hoped this will make the area safer for motorists and pedestrians.

Details on Page 8

## SPORTS & REC

### Niverville Dog Park Gets New Leash on Life

■ The expanded dog park in Niverville, displaced by the construction of the CRRC, will soon be ready for canine visitors.

Details on Page 16

## ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

### Podcaster Shines Light on Singer-Songwriters

■ A podcaster from Niverville has launched a new project to delve into the process of songwriters from around the world.

Details on Page 23



# The Niverville Fair Is Back!

» READ MORE ON PAGE 22

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## Election 2022: Should Local Governments Be More Diverse?

By Sara Beth Dacombe

sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

Manitoba will be holding a province-wide municipal election on Wednesday, October 26. In Niverville, Mayor Myron Dyck and the four current town councillors ran uncontested in the previous election and were consequently all elected by acclamation.

So far this year no new candidates have made their intentions known, leaving some residents to wonder if the next four years will be, politically, more of the same.

While change can feel unsettling, there are those who are asking whether it would be beneficial to see fresh faces on Niverville's council—and beyond that, some representation from people of more diverse backgrounds.

While not all demographic information has been released yet from the 2021 census, we know a few things about the population. It's the fastest growing municipality in Manitoba, the average age comes in at just under 32 years old (making our town especially young), and women outnumber men.

Four years ago, the 2016 census reported that most adults in Niverville were married and that the average household income was \$90,675. That year, many diverse cultures were represented in the community. The largest visible minority population in Niverville was Filipino, followed by Black and then Chinese persons.

There was also an Indigenous population that largely identified

as Metis.

Niverville is a unique community experiencing dynamic change and politicians here, as well as all across Canada, find themselves representing communities with a growing range of diverse needs.

Historically underrepresented groups—such as women, visible minorities, Indigenous people, members of the LGBTQ community, and people with disabilities—often struggle to find themselves in government.

### WHAT DOES NIVERVILLE WANT?

Several community members came forward to *The Citizen* to talk about what they would like to see in terms of representation in local politics.

None of them touted a specific demographic as being needed above any others, but they all said that they'd prefer to see change on council.

Chelsea Alderson is a relative newcomer to Niverville and a busy mom of three who works for a company in Winnipeg. For her, diversity in thought and perspective is important.

"I want a council made of people who represent the demographic of the area," Alderson says. "I don't care about diversity of sex or race as much as what phase of life someone may be in. I want to see someone who can represent the growing families in Niverville. Families with young children add so much to a community and council should make decisions that attract more families to grow the tax base, which maybe means businesses and jobs."

I think smaller communities tend to elect people from legacy families, which can cause a perceived conflict of interest when they're related to or are business owners."

Steven Cope is a long-time resident who has personally witnessed Niverville's population boom.

Cope says that it's problematic for council to go for such a long period without meaningful change. For him, it's an even bigger concern that there haven't been any new candidates willing to throw their hats in the ring.

"Niverville has pretty much exploded in population over the last few years, with the [current] new developments having been almost completed," says Cope. "With that, we've seen many new families move here, more and more of them visible minorities. Our council has been pretty stagnant up till now... there has been limited competition for sure for most of the elected positions."

Cope also feels some concern about the homogeneity of the religious and cultural background of the individuals who currently make up Niverville's council.

"I don't know how politically correct it is to say, but the positions have traditionally been white, Christian, and male-dominant, and I think with our ever-growing community more diversity is needed to reflect these new faces."

But while he would like to see a more diverse council, he doesn't feel the point of diversity is diversity itself.

(continued on page 4)



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## IN BRIEF

## New Cairn Marks Site of Immigration Sheds

By Sara Beth Dacombe

sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

On May 12, a crowd gathered two miles south of Niverville for the EastMenn Historical Committee's unveiling of a new landmark commemorating Mennonite history.

A cairn now stands on the site of the Shantz immigration sheds, where the first Mennonite immigrants to Manitoba settled. The cairn is located at the intersection of Hespeler Road 39N and Shantz Road 19E two miles south of Highway 311.

The cairn commemorates the crudely built immigration sheds, long wooden buildings which were erected seven kilometers directly east of the historical Mennonite Memorial Landing Site where the Rat and Red Rivers converge.

Four of these sheds were erected in 1874 to serve as temporary housing while the new Mennonite immigrants began to create permanent settlements on the East Reserve, the land set aside for them by the government.

The construction of these sheds was contracted by Jacob Shantz who had them constructed at a cost of \$3,000.

Despite a dismal forecast, the dedication and unveiling ceremony was attended by approximately 200 people, including representatives from the Town of Niverville, the RM of Hanover, Mennonite religious leaders and history enthusiasts, as well as and many who share Mennonite heritage.

(continued from page 3)

"The difficulty is getting people not only to run, which in itself is an issue it seems, but to find people who are ethnically diverse who are also qualified and willing to run for the positions available," he says. "I like diversity, but I also think it's important to elect the most qualified person, not necessarily just because they are of a different ethnicity. I don't think that does anyone any favours either. It's a tough situation here. I'm sure there must be some folks who would be willing to throw their hats in the ring to vie for an elected position on council."

As to who he would like to see on council, Cope says he would like to see some new business leaders nominated, but at this point he just hopes someone, anyone, will run so that the current councillors don't win by acclamation again.

"I don't feel it does the town any good to have no one but the incumbent bothering to run," he adds.

Barry Piasta is a local community leader who has a long history of volunteerism with organizations including Friends of the Dog Park, and previously with Niverville's Citizens on Patrol Program.

Piasta has a brain injury that left him with challenges that affect his speech, memory, and balance. He says that people with diverse levels of ability should have political representation, too, because it brings an important perspective to development, planning, and community programming.

"For instance, our sidewalks, some of them are at such an angle that you're almost falling off of it," Piasta says. "Someone with a physical disability will see things that someone without one will not. They have to see it every day, so it's in their thinking every day."

Though Piasta has considered running for council, he says there are barriers for people like him when working for the public.

"I have good days and bad days, and as the day gets longer, the harder time I have," he says. "That's physical, in a way, but it's more actually in the head. It's difficulty with speech, or focusing on one topic, those kind of issues. So if I

would run, I would need assistance, like a teammate or an assistant. And I'm already getting up there, at the age of 57, so I think it would need a younger mind."

Youth would be a benefit to council, according to Piasta, who suggested that Niverville could consider opening up a youth representative position to specifically invite younger people to get involved in community leadership.

Piasta would like to see a more equal ratio of women to men—and, in general, a better representation of what makes up the town's current demographics.

"Saying no to the old way of doing things is hard," says Piasta. "You need someone who is going to take the risk to say, 'Let's do it a new way.'"

Piasta says that a younger representative would be more likely to raise issues such as climate change, public health, isolation, and transportation, ensuring that these are taken into account when policies are debated and decisions made.

"Why can't we become known for that?" he wonders. "We need someone who is thinking like this now and is willing to take that jump now. What are we waiting for? Let's be the town that creates innovative initiatives now. Don't wait for tomorrow."

Another perspective he would like to see represented on council is a greater understanding of low-income families and the challenges faced by those whose basic needs are most affected by today's economic hardships, such as the cost of housing, gas, and groceries.

Piasta points to the "affordable housing" being advertised in The Highlands, with houses that start at \$300,000.

"How is \$300,000 affordable? If you're a young family starting off, that's hard to come up with at a young age still," says Piasta. "If you want to have an affordable home, you have to look at things differently."

Overall, Piasta is just hungry for change and a willingness to do new things.

"With a council that's been around this long, you get used to doing things with the same people

all the time. A maximum term would be nice."

### A DIVERSE PERSPECTIVE

The Town of Morris is one of Niverville's closest neighbours to the south. The two towns have many similarities, including a council made up of people who have served multiple terms in a row.

One notable difference is that Morris currently has an equal number of women and men.

Chris Hamblin is Morris's deputy mayor, and she is serving her first term. For Hamblin, diversity is important. She says that it's important to have diversity in thought and perspective at the local government level.

"Diversity, not just gender diversity, is important," says Hamblin. "Diversity of opinions. If you have that difference of opinion, you have a much broader input on issues, and that's where healthy decisions are made."

Hamblin has been involved in community leadership in various capacities for much of her life. She gravitated to serving in the agriculture field, participating in 4H at first, then in student council in university, and then in provincial organizations.

Agriculture is typically a male-dominated environment where women are outnumbered, similar to the situation many women face entering politics. She says this may be why she didn't feel intimidated to run for council. The fact that there were already women serving on the council may have made it easier, since she knew she wouldn't be the only woman there.

"Even if there weren't females, I still would've been comfortable because I felt my values or experiences were understood by the men there," Hamblin says. "But if you are coming to the council with a different background, that could feel intimidating."

Hamblin says that having women on council benefits a community because women bring a different view of how things are.

"Women sometimes take a different view of things, but not always," she acknowledges. "To me, it's not just a gender issue. It's

having a multitude of opinions on a subject so you know you've seen a variety of areas of insight. Different cultures and different religions will bring different approaches. There are so many aspects. And it's not any one group versus another. It's just diversity of opinion. And lots of councils don't have that."

In her experience on Morris's council, Hamblin says she's been in a lot of situations as the lone female voice. She also points out that the most dominant group in any community usually sees themselves best represented.

"If you've got a population that's predominantly Mennonite, you typically get more Mennonites elected. That's just a reflection of the population and human psychology. If I'm voting for someone, I'm going to vote for someone who has the same background I do. They think they'll think the same as you and decisions will fall in line with what you want."

Ultimately, Hamblin says that although diversity is important, it's also important to elect a group of good decision-makers.

"We recognize the need for diversity, but sometimes the need for diversity is overshadowed by the need for leadership," she says. "That's not saying you can't have both. We have some excellent women in politics as reeves and mayors and strong leaders. Yes, you can have both, but it depends on getting the right people on the ballot."

To anyone from a minority demographic thinking of running for politics, Hamblin would give the same advice to all.

"You need to decide why you're running. What are the issues that are important to you? I don't think you should just run for council because you think you want to be involved in council. You need to have a little bit more of a platform. What are the issues you would work on and fight for? When you'd be on council, what will you want to put your time toward? If you come to council with some things that are important to you, you will bring better discussions to the decision table. You will also be more welcome and productive at the council table if you know what your priorities are."



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## Waste & Recycling Collection Change—July 1, 2022 For residents in the Blue Collection Zone

Effective **July 1st, 2022**, residents who are in the **Blue** collection zone will have their waste and recycling collection on **Tuesdays** instead of Thursdays. As usual, please ensure that carts are placed at the end of your driveway by 8:00 a.m. on your scheduled collection day and that carts are 3 feet from any obstacles.

A newsletter with the revised calendar for July to December will be mailed to residents in June. Information on waste and recycling along with the revised calendar will also be available on the Town's website [www.whereyoubelong.ca](http://www.whereyoubelong.ca).

Residents may also want to download the **Bristol Hauling app** for collection information and push notifications.

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# New Chamber Executive Driver Hits the Ground Running

By Sara Beth Dacombe

✉ sdacombe@nivervillecitizen.com

The Niverville Chamber of Commerce has a new executive director. Kylie Matechuk recently took the position and has spent her first months hitting the pavement, boardrooms, event centres, and floor spaces of local businesses.

If Matechuk has her way, a whole crop of newcomers will soon be getting more involved.

The Chamber is used to seeing four new businesses join on average per year, but 2022 has already seen 16 businesses join up.

## A FRESH START

In July 2021, Matechuk moved to Niverville from Thompson by way of Alberta. She has previous experience running a wellness centre in Thompson and began working in Niverville as a yoga instructor before accepting the part-time Chamber role.

As a single mom of two kids, Matechuk was looking for a fresh start in a growing community. As the fastest growing community in Manitoba, Niverville fit the bill.

Matechuk needed to be close to Winnipeg to be able to coordinate visitation with her children's father, who flies in from Thompson, so she had originally looked to the big city.

"I couldn't afford to live in Winnipeg," she says. "Houses had jumped in price. I was looking at the south end, and then I looked a little bit further south, and a bit further... It was very stressful, but my daughters each had friends who had relocated to southern Manitoba. One of them is in Mitchell and one in Teulon. So it was almost like picking a community out of a hat."

The driving factors for Matechuk ended up being access to a quality French school division (the DSFM) and a welcoming community.

"I came here with no plan," Matechuk says. "There were a few positions in the city that I wanted to work toward, but the reality of a 45-minute drive to the city and leaving my kids to make the commute, I never would have been able to do it."

Considering how much winter weather and flooding has impacted people's commutes in the past year, looking for local work ended up being the right decision for her.

Through her own business, Matechuk learned to develop social media strategies. She began to offer brand consulting and content creation services in addition to her work in yoga and wellness.

According to Matechuk, she loves hyping other businesses. To do this she's turned to social media, which she says she has been doing "since the beginning of Facebook."

And with the growing demand for digital marketing services, Matechuk says she has been transitioning away from her wellness business.

"That part [digital marketing] has actually blown up and taken over," says Matechuk. "So I'm doing that primarily now."

## CHAMBER ROLE

As she got to know people around town in her various roles, someone suggested that she apply for the job opening as executive director with the Chamber.

"I was actually working with the interim director as one of my clients, and she said, 'This would be perfect for you. Would you be interested?'" says Matechuk. "I'm very independent and have an entrepreneur mindset, so to be part of a corporate-type support position, I knew would be a challenge for me... The Chamber allows me to be in the know with the business community, and then make sure that businesses are supported however they need. I can be that liaison between the town and know what's going on, and help businesses access what they need as far as information and resources."

With the speed of Niverville's residential and commercial growth, Matechuk sees a need to offer more solid communication on how to build the current business community, not just attract new businesses.

One of the first goals she set was to increase the overall profile of the Chamber and better promote what it can offer.

"No one really understands the value of the Chamber, and that's why I'm here in this position," she says. "You have access to grant money. You have access to networking events, business planning resources, and more."

To spread the word, Matechuk has been going around town to meet business



Kylie Matechuk, the new executive director of the Niverville Chamber of Commerce.

owners in person. She has also taken to social media, because she saw very quickly that these platforms are being underused.

"The median age here is 31 years old, so 31-year-olds are on Instagram, and there's no Instagram presence for Niverville, not as much as there should be," she says. "I'm being more active about what we're doing and this also helps others see that they could be more active on there as well."

A second goal is to offer business education sessions. The Chamber has already connected with the Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology (MITT) to run training sessions on topics that are most useful to local businesses.

"We're here to help. So for example, if you don't know how to make an Instagram reel, we'll show you. If you don't know how to write a grant proposal, we'll show you. Or access to recruitment companies to help restructure your staffing or sustain staff... things that people want and need to know."

Thirdly, Matechuk says that she would like to see a needs analysis done to guide the Chamber's efforts for everyone's maximum return on investment.

She adds that she has spoken with the Chamber board about how the organization is disconnected from the tools needed to achieve growth, but they now have a strategic plan which Matechuk has been brought on to enact.

"They want growth and

they want a thriving business community, and now they have the means to do it."

## MARKETING NIVERVILLE

Matechuk feels that these initiatives are not only entirely within reach, they're overdue considering how much Niverville has grown in recent years.

"[The Chamber] has been around for all of the duration of Niverville, basically, but it feels like we're in start-up mode right now because there's been such an influx of community members," she says. "It's the fastest growing community in Manitoba. However, the business community doesn't match the amount of residents we have. Basically, people are coming here to sleep, but they're spending their money in Winnipeg."

Matechuk understands that many people still find it convenient to view Niverville as a bedroom community and run their errands in Winnipeg, but she is passionate about communicating the benefits of finding comparable goods and services right here in town.

"As someone who just moved here from Thompson, it took me a while to realize I can go to Bigway. I don't have to drive 40 minutes all the time to go to the city. Or we have a walk-in clinic. You can get your bloodwork done here."

Matechuk says that the inclination to spend one's money in Winnipeg extends from the small things to the big things, and that even entrepreneurs believe that business start-ups will be more profitable in the city. But in her

experience, she finds that it's extremely viable for business start-ups to come to Niverville and see success.

"I want that to be part of our job together—to say, 'We need more restaurant culture here. Or where can we get a croissant in Niverville so we don't have to drive into the city? Why isn't there a Booster Juice? Why isn't there a yoga studio? Why isn't there all of those things?'"

She sees the potential that exists in town, and for her it comes down to creating a culture of community.

"I love creating culture," she says. "So if I'm working for a company, or if I'm trying to help them, I want to say, 'Where is your community? Where is your culture? Who is your market?' And then get people excited about it... I want to create a culture that is so exciting in Niverville that even if I sell cupcakes, I want to be a part of the Chamber."

## POST-COVID

Returning to in-person events after public health pandemic restrictions lift is a relatively new challenges, and opportunity, facing Niverville businesses today—and Matechuk isn't wasting any time organizing them.

The Chamber just hosted its annual general meeting and awards night and she hopes to see a lot more events take place to increase the supportive atmosphere among the business community.

One way she hopes to set the tone of each event is by serving good food.

"I firmly believe if you want to create culture, you throw food at people," says Matechuk. "One of the first events I went to here, there were perogies. But they were not Ukrainian perogies. They were different. I still ate them. They were delicious. So if I throw an event, there will be food at it."

The emphasis on food is important, because networking comes more naturally when the atmosphere is set comfortably. And that's key when people are just deciding for the first time to return to in-person events.

"People are saying, another event? Okay, what's the benefit?" says Matechuk. "They want to go out, but they're still mentally drained. I'm trying

to tell people, 'Networking is huge. Please come out and talk to people. You don't know who you're going to meet.' They're going to get that fire back that's at the heart of all of us business owners."

But it's not all fun and games—and food—for Matechuk. She recognizes the reality many businesses are facing in a time of loan repayments, high interest rates, and economic uncertainty.

"I know what businesses are facing to afford the key things they need to be able to grow," she says. "And I am definitely aware of the reality that it takes time to optimize all aspects of a business... There are businesses here that are trying so hard on advertising and marketing, but it's not going anywhere. With marketing you constantly have to follow where people are going and what they're doing and their psychology. So I want to make sure that we are supporting business in that regard. Like, we see you're having an event and we want to do everything we can to get your business in front of your market. So put it on Instagram. That's where people are."

Matechuk thinks many people in Niverville still hold a very traditional view of social media. They may think there aren't a lot of business benefits to it. But this is a missed opportunity.

"A lot of people view social media like it's just playing. Like, my kid is 'playing on TikTok' or you're on Instagram 'talking to your friends.' Older generations say, 'Why are you playing on your phone?' But this is so important... and we are educating business owners on why it's important."

In the meantime, she's spreading the message that it's a great time to build a business here in Niverville. Despite rapid residential growth, the business community still has a lot of room to expand.

"We have three gyms here, and it's still not enough," she says. "We could use a yoga studio, a spa, grocery. I want to beat Steinbach to have a Costco here. I want Skip the Dishes here... I know it's hard, for the old-school Niverville people. They want to keep it small, but it's just not going to happen. People have money here to invest, and they have the drive to see it through."



# Niverville Mayor Plans to Run for Third Term

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

For the past 18 years, Niverville Mayor Myron Dyck has occupied a seat in council chambers. The first 10 years were served as a councillor, and the last eight he has fulfilled as head of council.

Come election day on October 26, Dyck hopes to continue in his role of mayor for another four-year term.

A lot has happened in the nearly two decades of Dyck's time on council. At least two impressive community accomplishments have book-marked his time there.

On the early end was the fulfillment of the dream to keep the community's seniors at home by creating the Heritage Centre, a unique, 10-acre aging-in-place campus which would eventually evolve to include a primary care medical clinic.

On the latter end of the spectrum was the completion of the \$20-million Community Resource and Recreation Centre.

Somewhere in the middle of all of that excitement there were also some rocky moments, like the cannabis plebiscite of 2019.

But during Dyck's years on council, Niverville became known for one more undeniable trademark: it was the



Niverville Mayor Myron Dyck.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

fastest growing community in Manitoba and, according to the most recent census, the fifth fastest in all of Canada. In less than 20 years, the population has tripled in size.

"I have a heart for this community and the people of this community," Dyck says. "I truly do care for each one and [I am] humbled and honoured to have had the privilege of serving them as mayor these past eight years. Being a part of Team Niverville, and in the role of mayor, there is still much work to do."

Some of the work he anticipates in the coming years is a plan for more affordable housing and the consideration of a fourth school location as the community continues to grow.

In terms of infrastructure improvement, Dyck plans to continue working together

with three bordering municipalities to realize the vision of a shared wastewater treatment plant.

Expansion of the town's medical and emergency services will be essential, too, as well as the addition of the new RCMP office.

And there's still much to think about as Niverville gets set to host the 2026 Manitoba Winter Games, for which they have first right of refusal after the 2022 Games were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some improvements will be needed to the sports facilities in Hespeler Park.

The feasibility of developing an RV park will soon be on the table, too.

As long as Niverville remains a destination for new families to put down roots, land acquisition will be

a top priority for council in the coming years.

The primary platforms of Dyck's 2022 campaign include building community, building relationships, and building destination.

Building community, he says, means creating support systems and opportunities for togetherness, and celebrating diversity and inclusion in order to build a thriving population.

As for relationships, Dyck adds that there's much to be gained from the 18 years he's already spent building connections with various levels of government, businesspeople and professionals, local volunteers, and town staffers.

As each of his four-year terms has come to a close, Dyck says he's turned to a simple pros versus cons analysis to determine whether he'll run again. After that, he checks in with his wife, children, and close friends to ascertain their ongoing support for his plan.

Finally, he seeks out some residents and local business owners for their perspectives.

"Once [that information] is all gathered, I make the decision," Dyck says. "And I have to say, once again, I am greatly humbled and honoured that those I have spoken with are not wanting me to quit and are in support of me allowing to let my name stand to serve as mayor for another term."

## IN BRIEF



✉ JOEY VILLANUEVA

## Province Sinks Money into Pothole Repairs

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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It's spring, and invariably that means it is also pothole season.

This year, after months of extreme weather, it comes as no surprise that there's nary a street in the entire province that isn't badly pocked and marred with nasty sinkholes.

On May 9, the provincial government announced its intention to sink a little extra funding into this summer's road repair budget.

The additional \$15 million for pothole repairs will be split between Winnipeg and the 137 province's other municipalities, with Winnipeg receiving the biggest cut at \$9 million.

"This funding will help our municipalities deal with the increased costs of road maintenance brought on by this unexpected weather," says MLA Ron Schuler. "[It's]

caused a significant increase in damage to our roads, and our government is committed to aiding municipalities in offsetting the costs."

Schuler is pleased to report that \$70,224.84 will go towards pothole repair initiatives in Niverville and another \$88,197.30 is designated for the RM of Ritchot.

As this funding is brand-new, CAO Mitch Duval of Ritchot says that it's still too soon to prioritize how the money will be allocated.

One frequently cited street of concern is Main Street in St. Adolphe. But since that road falls under provincial jurisdiction, Duval anticipates that the funds will be used in other places.

With flood efforts and washed-out roads still the RM's primary concern, it may be a while before the municipality can assess the full extent of the damage to their transportation networks.



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## IN BRIEF

## More Niverville Streets to Benefit from Tree-Planting Initiative

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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Residents of Niverville are about to notice a lot more green in the coming weeks.

On Saturday, May 28, 60 new trees will be planted along four streets: St. Georges, Kipling, Kirkland, and Hawthorne.

Shirley Hoult, representative for the local chapter of Communities in Bloom, says this will be the third summer in a row that Niverville has been the beneficiary of tree funding provided by TC Energy.

"Since 2020... they have generously provided \$20,000 in funding for our street tree-planting project, resulting in an additional 160 trees," Hoult says.

Getting the trees planted in one day, Hoult says, takes a small army and lots of advance planning.

The operation begins ahead of time as Communities in Bloom volunteers identify the streets in need of trees, communicate with the residents of those streets, order the trees, and organize delivery locations.

The Works and Operations Department then dig the holes and provide guidance to volunteers.

After planting, the Fire Department follows with their tanker, providing a thorough watering of each tree.

"Niverville Communities in Bloom volunteers, councillor Nathan Dueck, TC Energy employees, and town employees all work together to ensure the event is a success," Hoult says. "Residents receiving the trees volunteer their time to help plant and care for the trees [afterward]."

# New Four-Way Stop in IDC Draws Mixed Reactions

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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Residents and visitors who drive through Île-des-Chênes are viewing a new four-way stop with both hope and scepticism. The major intersection of Dumaine and Old PTH 59, once only a two-stop, officially became a four-way stop on May 12. The change is intended to provide an added level of safety.

"This intersection has had issues for a long time," says councillor Shane Pelletier, who lives in Île-des-Chênes. "There are close calls on a daily basis and there have been a few fairly substantial crashes there as well."

The new stop signs, complete with flashing red lights, now stop traffic headed east and west along Dumaine Road.

Pelletier says the extra signage should help southbound drivers who have a disadvantage when it comes to spotting traffic advancing from the west along the highway's S-shape contour. As well, it will help slow down traffic that's turning south onto Old PTH 59 and make it safer for residents entering and exiting the condo developments nearby.

But this intersection has long been problematic for pedestrians, too.

"Residents wishing to cross at that intersection, currently from any direction, face a huge challenge given the length of time they are crossing due to the [width] of both streets and current speed of vehicular traffic here," Pelletier adds.

Île-des-Chênes resident Shari Hanton is still shaken by the memory of taking a call from paramedics as they attended to her husband after he was involved in a near fatal accident at this corner on April 23, 2022.

Hanton's husband had just pulled off Highway 59 and was heading eastward through the intersection when his van was



The new four-way stop in Île-des-Chênes.

BRENDA SAWATZKY

struck by a northbound vehicle pulling a trailer. Hanton had the right of way.

"[My husband] was three minutes from home when he was T-boned," Hanton says. "[The other driver] was going at such a high speed that he knocked him off the road and into the ditch."

Hanton adds that her husband's van sustained \$23,000 in damage. His physical condition, though, is what's really taking its toll.

"The injuries my husband incurred are extensive," says Hanton. "There are issues with the whole right side of his body... He still is experiencing pain in his clavicle area, back, leg, and hands."

Currently receiving physiotherapy and chiropractic treatments, Hanton's husband has only been able to perform about 20 percent of the work he was doing before

the accident. As a self-employed individual, this means he now has to hire out for the other 80 percent to keep his business afloat.

Hanton and her husband aren't convinced that the new stop signs will make enough of an impact at this high-risk corner.

Linda LeBlanc lives in a condo immediately facing the intersection. She witnessed the aftermath of the April 23 accident, having heard the crash from inside her home.

It's far from the first accident or close call she's witnessed.

"I sent a letter to council eight years ago about the dangers of the intersection," says LeBlanc. "At that time it was a provincial matter, so nothing was done. I am pleased we have it now. We need to slow traffic going into town. [Also] there are more families walking now and we must protect

them."

The problem with the intersection, in her mind, is that too many people who are unfamiliar with the intersection have assumed it always was a four-way stop. As well, northbound vehicles moving at highway speed often fail to slow down to the posted 60 kilometres per hour speed limit as they approach town.

But according to some residents, the two new signs may cause a whole new problem for commuters coming home at the end of the day.

"One of the concerns we've heard is traffic backing up onto Highway 59," Pelletier says. "There is 250 meters of space from the new highway to the intersection, which should allow for plenty of vehicles to make their way through the intersection without causing said concern."

Still other residents are hopeful that a four-way stop is just the precursor to the traffic solution they say will best deal with the intersection's problems: a roundabout.

Pelletier doesn't disagree. The problem, he says, is that the stretch of Dumaine Road that runs from Highway 59 through the intersection and all the way to Main Street is under the province's jurisdiction.

He says council has long been trying to get the province to relinquish this stretch of road. The issue has been a thorn in council's side, he says, for years. The roadway hasn't seen proper repairs since 1972.

If the road were to be relinquished to the RM, Pelletier says council would make much-needed improvements to it through Ritchot's Main Street Revitalization Program.

For now, all the provincial government has agreed to is the installation of the two extra stop signs. However, Pelletier hopes the province will also see the need to soon install a proper crosswalk at the intersection.



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Niverville fire chief Keith Bueckert.

BRENDA SAWATZKY

## New Training Requirements for First Responders Could Threaten Program

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER  
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For communities like Niverville, which benefit from the lifesaving efforts of a local Medical First Responders (MFR) chapter, changes may be underway that, for some, pose a real concern for the future of the program.

Recently, the College of Paramedics—the governing body that oversees MFR training, education, and promotion—made a decision to increase the required hours that it takes to become certified as a first responder. As of this year, MFRs may be required to take more than 300 hours of training, up from the previous 120 to 150 hours, effectively doubling the amount of time it will take to complete the program.

For more than 20 years, Niverville has been running an active MFR program through the auspices of the Niverville Fire and Emergency Services.

According to fire chief Keith Bueckert, the number of emergency calls requiring MFR volunteers has been increasing in congruity with

the rapid population growth of the community.

"We average over 200 medical calls a year, and this year so far we are already at a call-a-day pace," Bueckert says.

He adds that the province has determined the average acceptable wait time for an ambulance should be up to 30 minutes for communities that rely on ambulance services from nearby towns.

Thanks to the MFR program, the average wait time for Niverville residents to be attended to by a medical professional has been reduced to 6 to 10 minutes, depending on the time of day.

But while Bueckert would be among the first to acknowledge the importance of advanced training, there comes a point, he says, when one has to decide if the expectations placed on the student are inhibitive to recruiting new MFRs—especially when they are volunteers who are receiving very little remuneration for the important services they provide.

So far the College of Paramedics has determined that any existing MFRs can be grandfathered into the new program and won't need the additional training to

continue what they do.

But Bueckert and others worry about what this change will mean for new volunteers considering the program.

"The proposed 300-plus hours for training could cause hesitation for new members to go out and get the training," Bueckert says. "This is a huge time commitment. Our members are all trained as fire-fighters, too, which is already over 320 hours of training to meet the requirements for the town... All this training takes time away from family, work, and social commitments."

In response to Bueckert's concerns, Niverville Mayor Myron Dyck took matters into his own hands this year.

Dyck made a motion at the annual Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM) conference, requesting that they lobby the province on behalf of the 17 municipalities who currently have active MFR programs.

Together with the reeve of the RM of Morris and the mayor of Headingley, Dyck sought a sympathetic ear with the province.

"When we reached out to the... health minister, we were basically given a very curt and short two-sentence answer

that 'It's not our problem. Talk to the College of Paramedics,'" Dyck says.

The trio of community leaders then met with the board of the College of Paramedics in early April. It is not yet clear whether their appeal will garner any meaningful results.

Mayor Dyck says that the general reasoning behind adding these hours to the MFR training curriculum is to equip new students with an even greater scope of medical expertise for attending to emergencies before the ambulance arrives.

According to Dyck, upon hearing this explanation from the board of the College of Paramedics, the mayor of Headingley aptly responded, "We'd all love to have a cardiac surgeon living in our basement, but that's not realistic."

Bueckert says that if the community values the MFR services, residents could help by putting additional pressure on their provincial MLA to help stop overregulation of the MFR program, which could be detrimental to the longevity of this lifesaving program.

### CITIZEN POLL

**Are you concerned that the new rules for paramedic accreditation could negatively impact service at the local level?**

- ☐ Yes. The increased time commitment required to become a first responder will discourage people from signing up.
- ☐ No. Requiring paramedics to have more on-the-job experience is a good idea and our local programs will have to cope.

Have a more nuanced opinion?  
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### LAST MONTH'S RESULTS:

**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.

87%

Very much. The waters are close enough to my home that I feel threatened, or even have to evacuate.

13%

### YOUR COMMENTS:

It's an inconvenience more than anything else. So long as you have been smart enough to make the preparations for this, nothing bad comes of this. If you weren't, that's too bad for you.



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## What to Know If You Run for Council or School Board

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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It's just a matter of time until street signs, flyers, and door-to-door canvassers are out in force, reminding us that a municipal election is imminent. On October 26, Manitobans will be called back to the polls to vote for their mayors, reeves, councillors and school board members.

A compelling election, one might say, are those in which our incumbents are challenged by fresh faces, new ideas, and interesting platforms.

In Niverville and Ritchot, it's been a while since most of our incumbents were faced with such a challenge. For most residents in these communities, there hasn't been a need for any municipal election in eight years.

Back in 2018, the entirety of Niverville's council won their seats by acclamation, since no challengers were nominated.

In Ritchot, three of five council members also won by acclamation. The only close race was the one that played out in St. Adolphe between Ron Mamchuk and challenger Keith Pearce; Mamchuk squeaked ahead by just 26 votes.

If you're a reader and are thinking about running either for council or your local school board, the time to prepare is now. You'll need to understand the requirements for registering as a candidate well before you consider campaign strategy.

To qualify, you must be at least 18 years of age, a Canadian citizen, and a registered voter within the town, municipality, or school division in which you plan to run.

If it's the mayor's seat you're after, or a position on the local school board,

registration is already open, with candidates being able to make their intentions known as of May 1. Starting June 30, registration will open for the positions of councillor.

Registration for all positions will remain open until September 20.

Each municipal council and school division has appointed someone as their Senior Election Official (SEO) whose job it is to provide residents with direction and supervision over the course of the election period. You can visit your municipal office or school division office to register and connect with the SEO in your community.

Once registered, you can kickstart your campaign. Each municipality sets their own campaign finance rules and will require you to keep track of your contributions and expenses over the campaign period.

Between September 14–20, your official nomination papers need to be handed in to the SEO or school division office and must include a minimum of 25 signatures from the voting public in your area who stand in support of your nomination. Only then can your name officially appear on the ballot.

But maybe you're thinking about the time commitment required if you win, and your rate of pay. Remuneration for council positions is dependent on what your current council has deemed fair. It's typically subject to cost-of-living adjustments with each annual budget.

A term on council means a four-year commitment. As for time spent fulfilling the role, Niverville mayor Myron Dyck says that it will average about 10 hours per week for a councillor and about 20 hours for the mayor.

In Niverville, a councillor's

pay comes to approximately \$17,000. The deputy mayor gets a bump up to \$19,000 and the mayor tops them all at \$26,000.

Responsibilities include attending at least two council meetings per month. At times it may also be necessary to attend conferences and spend a certain amount of time reading and researching in preparation for decisions that come up for vote.

In Ritchot, the mayor receives annual compensation of slightly more than \$40,000 plus an additional \$26.57 hourly to attend committee meetings. Councillors get paid around \$22,000 in annual indemnities, plus \$23.37 per hour for meeting attendance.

Ritchot councillor Curtis Claydon says that a large part of the pay covers the many hours each councillor invests by sitting on boards, such as Community Futures Triple R and others. He guesstimates that an approximate two hours per day is spent in this manner.

In times when the municipality calls a state of emergency, such as the current overland flood, more time is expected of the mayor and councillors.

As for school board positions, a trustee in the Hanover School Division would see an annual income of almost \$12,000. The vice chairperson comes in at almost \$13,000 and the chairperson is paid a little more than \$15,000 per year. Each position also receives up to \$900 to cover expenses.

Scott Bestvater, SEO for HSD, says that the time commitment for each position varies.

*The Citizen* did not receive a response from the DSFM or Seine River School Division.

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The Citizen



# Ritchot Council Denies Dog Breeder's Request to Expand Local Shibu Inu Operation

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER  
bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

In 2018, a dog breeder's request to open a business in Ritchot became a source of public outcry, but only after council approved the operation. The concern revolved around the philosophy that, as long as animal shelters are overrun with dogs, it may not be wise for breeders to have free license to add more to the system.

About three years after receiving her first business permit, Svetlana Shakhov, owner of the Shibu Inu dog-breeding kennel, located two miles north of St. Adolphe, came back to the bargaining table.

Earlier this month, Shakhov submitted a request for a conditional use permit which would allow her to ramp up her operation to 40 dogs. The original request, made a few years prior, was to keep up to 20 dogs. Council had determined that 15 dogs was the maximum they could approve.

Shakhov's son, Daniel, who lives with Svetlana and shares in the breeding operation, called into the May 19 council meeting by phone. His purpose was to answer any questions council may have.

Councillor Janine Boulanger opened the question period by wondering whether the demand for Shibu Inu puppies warranted a request for almost three times the number of dogs as before.

Daniel explained that the business advertises by word of mouth, through clients who are "obsessed with the puppies and the way the Shakhov kennel is run."

He expounded further on one of the things that makes their kennel unique. While the breeding site is equipped with a garage and barn, Daniel said that the dogs are mostly kept inside the house where the Shakhovs reside.

"The inside of our house is very empty because these dogs love to chew on couches or anything on the ground," Daniel said. "The majority of the time, they are in the house, like overnight or when it's raining, or too cold or too hot."

This raised further concerns by



A Shibu Inu dog-breeding kennel near St. Adolphe will not be allowed to expand their operation.

SVETLANA SHAKHOV

Mayor Chris Ewen.

"I have a hard time with this," Ewen told Daniel. "I think 40 is an excessive amount, especially inside your home. It's more [about] safety and animal welfare."

Councillor Boulanger, too, inquired whether they are accountable to any regulatory bodies in terms of the number of animals and space they require.

"We are registered with the Canadian Kennel Club and there's nothing regulations-wise that we have come across," Daniel responded.

Furthering the concern of animal welfare, Councillor Curtis Claydon asked about the process required to go from 15 to 40 dogs.

Daniel assured him that the females are bred only once per year. The majority of the breeders are female, with only a few males. As well, the Shakhovs have recently procured a pair of Shikoku Ken, a new pedigree they are hoping to begin breeding soon.

Both Ewen and Boulanger suggested that the accompaniment of a more thorough business plan may have helped council visualize the concept more fully. As it was, they said the proposal lacked convincing evidence.

"I just want to add that, when they came to us and asked for 20 [dogs], we said 15, and I think we kind of gave them clear direction as to how we felt and what we were allowing [back in 2018]," said Boulanger as the question period ended. "To come back just [a few] years later to ask for more than double... we've already debated

it and shared our thoughts."

Council voted unanimously to deny the permit request.

## SVETLANA: "COUNCIL LIKELY DIDN'T FULLY UNDERSTAND REQUEST"

The Citizen reached out to Svetlana for her thoughts on council's decision. Since she wasn't in attendance at the May 19 meeting, she was glad for a chance at a rebuttal, saying that council likely didn't fully understand her request before they denied it.

The reason for the need to house more dogs, she says, is not necessarily to breed more puppies. Instead it allows the kennel to continue to provide a home for the adult dogs once they have exceeded their breeding limit.

"Female dogs produce one litter per year, which can be anywhere between one to four puppies," Svetlana says. "They can only be bred for three years—maximum, four. So a single female usually has three to five litters per lifetime. We already have five dogs who are out of breeding, with three more this year, but we love them too much to let them go."

She adds that the need to keep 40 dogs at once will likely never arise, but they chose the number as a precautionary measure.

Regarding council's concern for animal welfare, Svetlana assures the public that the dogs undergo regular veterinary checks, which include tests specific to breeding. All the dogs are also up-to-date on their vaccinations. Every day they are fed a special raw meat

diet comprised of dairy, eggs, fruit, vegetables, and fish.

She describes the Shikoku Ken as a larger version of the Shiba Inu.

"They're incredibly rare as a whole," says Svetlana. "There's only 300 or so of them in Japan, their origin country. We're going to be only the second official breeder of them in Canada."

There's a wait list for both breeds, she adds, although the Shakhovs refuse to accept deposits lest the buyer have a change of heart and then feel stuck with a puppy they no longer want.

All potential buyers are required to fill out questionnaires which give the kennel owners an added level of comfort in knowing the character of the people who are adopting. The pups usually receive visits from their new family before they leave the kennel to ensure that bonding occurs.

Once they leave, the pups will have been dewormed and micro-chipped and will take with them a blanket that has the scent of their mother and siblings.

"After the rehoming, we stay in touch with our clients," says Svetlana. "Watching our puppies grow up is something we love to do."

She further explains that customers reach out from all across the nation to buy from the Shakhovs. Sometimes buyers fly in to pick up their puppy, and other times Svetlana or Daniel head out on road trips for personalized deliveries. Svetlana says they've delivered as far west as Vancouver and as far east as Montreal. On occasion, the little ones may also be transported to their destinations via WestJet Cargo.

Svetlana has since reached out to council, but says that she was told an appeal of the May 19 decision is not possible.

While she has been welcomed to apply again in the future, she says they made it clear that any reapplication would likely result in a similar decision.

"We will have to move out of the municipality to a different one, where we would be allowed to have a larger number [of dogs]," Svetlana concludes.

## IN BRIEF

### Crime Down in Ritchot

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER  
bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

A 2021 year-end report provided by Sargent Guy Landreville of the St. Pierre RCMP detachment indicates that, in general, crime in the RM of Ritchot saw a decline this year.

The most dramatic decrease in every single ward had to do with property crime. St. Adolphe had a decrease of 42 percent, and another 62 percent in Ste. Agathe. Île-des-Chênes only saw a 17 percent decrease, but this was in part due to one incident, according to Landreville.

"The one that stands out is Adventure Power Products [break and enter]," Landreville says. "We had four people charged with five counts of property-related offences."

In the region west of the Red River, along Highway 75, property crime was down by 70 percent.

Crimes against persons was also down, he adds. These include reports of uttering threats, domestic violence, and assault.

Landreville warns that traffic crime statistics will likely be skewed in this report due to COVID-19 regulations that made police enforcement and close contact with drivers difficult.

Since restrictions have begun to ease, Landreville says enforcement is up.

While most crime stats have seen improvements, Landreville adds that there is one stat that is definitely not heading in a more positive direction: fraud.

"Our frauds are starting to go through the roof," adds Landreville. "More and more sophisticated types of things we're seeing, some into the hundreds of thousands of dollars."

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## IN BRIEF

## Volunteers Needed for Flood Cleanup

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER  
bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Residents in the flood-ravaged RM of Ritchot are surely feeling a sense of hope as the far-reaching waters of the Red River retreat.

For many, though, a return to normal is a long way off when there's soggy sandbags and flood debris to deal with.

Ste. Adolphe resident and volunteer Kori Plesiuk, who helped mobilize volunteer sandbagging crews earlier in the flood fight, is back at for round two as she looks to assemble people to help with the cleanup.

"When it comes to cleaning up, we will need people again," Plesiuk says. "A lot of people will have debris in their yards from the river, such as garbage or giant logs, and it all needs to be removed."

Plesiuk is recruiting volunteers now and hopes people get in contact with her in the coming days.

With her own home nestled safely inside the confines of the St. Adolphe dike, Plesiuk says she has been motivated this spring to help those in need.

"As the water was rising, more and more people were posting online asking for help," she says. "Many have never lived in this area during a flood. I saw that need and wanted to help."

Last month, Plesiuk posted information on a community Facebook group. In no time, more than 100 locals responded. She saw individuals and whole

families show up. Every age group, she says, was at some point represented. Some dropped in and assisted with filling a few sandbags during their break while others spent the day.

"This community has never been shy about helping each other out," Plesiuk says with pride. "I love hearing stories of the flood of '97, where everyone helped everyone, and I believe it's the same thing here. People see a need and they want to help. It's what makes this community feel like one big family."

Employed as an educational assistant at Ecole St. Adolphe, Plesiuk has missed few opportunities to shine a light in her community since she moved to town in 2011. She's been active on the day-care and community club fundraising committees and sits on the board of the St. Adolphe Bible Fellowship Church.

She runs a community youth group and a soccer program alongside a friend. Plesiuk is president of the school's Parent Advisory Council and performs secretarial duties for Forging Ahead, a non-profit helping veterans and first responders with stress management and build coping skills.

"I'm just like everyone else," Plesiuk says. "No one wants to see a neighbour struggling or worrying about the what ifs. I can, so I do."

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ Anyone wishing to assist in flood cleanup efforts is invited to contact Plesiuk at kori.plesiuk@gmail.com.

## Niverville Budget Paves Path for Community Improvements

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER  
bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

The Town of Niverville's 2022 budget is replete with details about how this year's tax dollars will be put to use.

In order to make the numbers work, homeowners should expect to see a nominal increase on their municipal tax bill in the fall.

The increase will mean approximately \$58 more in taxes on the average home with an assessed value of \$287,100. The waste collection levy will remain the same as last year.

With massive financial projects like the construction of the Community Resource and Recreation Centre (CRRC) behind them, council is now shifting their focus to other areas.

When the town assumed ownership of Open Health Niverville in the spring of 2020, council's fundamental goal was to find more doctors to staff the medical clinic. With that objective well underway, their 2022 target includes adding a diagnostic wing and trained staff to improve services.

"The focus now would be more so on things like ultrasound, EKG, and... X-ray," says Mayor Myron Dyck. "Those are very much front and centre. Until now, the focus on health services has been on doctors because of the amount of people that we have that still need [a family physician]."

Category	2021 Actual	2022 Proposed
Municipal Revenue	1,071,737.62	1,131,794.49
General Government Services	561,771.42	640,175.52
Protective Services	1,289,294.19	1,387,801.09
Transportation Services	414,803.56	350,259.77
Environmental Health Services	12,994.90	43,070.00
Welfare Services	70,700.15	118,500.00
Other Services	130,285.31	112,100.00
Capital Expenditures	1,419,902.99	4,808,793.94
Total Expenditures	4,208,865.83	1,260,045.18

Unfortunately, Dyck says the diagnostic offerings will likely not include magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)—at least until there's an indication of adequate demand after the province's recent procurement of two mobile MRI units.

However, the province has granted Niverville a license for diagnostic services, which council hopes to act on. Part of the budget's \$1.5 million dedicated to general government services will be used for this purpose.

Also demanding attention this year is the need for increased protective services. \$550,000 of this year's budget has been designated for the construction of the new RCMP office, which will be located at the rear of the civic building. Completion of this new space is expected in April 2023.

Further to this theme, the CRRC will soon be prepped and ready to house a large segment of the population should a natural disaster or other crisis arise. Backup power to the CRRC will be provided by a large generator that is being relocated there from the water treatment plant.

Construction on the new traffic signals at the corner of

Mulberry and Highway 311 has already begun. Roadwork is expected to take most of the summer, although the signals themselves won't arrive until sometime next year due to a supply shortage.

A total of \$1.3 million has been designated for transportation, which will cover the cost of the upgraded intersection.

As well, funds will be available for the rehabilitation of Highway 311 between Arena Road and Krahn Road, street lighting along Krahn Road, and other smaller projects throughout town.

About \$125,000 will be directed toward environmental development. A portion of this will be paid out to Urban Systems, a community planning and development company, to perform a 30-year growth study on the town.

This study is expected to provide council with long-term projections of what will be required in terms of land and infrastructure if they are to sustain the town's current rate of growth. Based on data of the past 15 years, Niverville has been averaging almost 30 percent growth every consecutive five-year period.

"Does Niverville run out of space 20 years from now or does Niverville run out of space 50 years from now?" wonders Eric King, the town's CAO.

Having this math in front of council will give them an educated guess as to what they'll need to ask for when they next approach the neighbouring RM of Hanover to annex land.

On the subject of population growth, work is ongoing to expand the water treatment plant on Fifth Avenue South. That project is expected to be completed later this year. Once complete, Mayor Dyck says it will have the capacity to serve a population of 15,000.

Another project covered under this year's budget is an expansion to the compost facility so that it can accept a greater variety of biowaste. Council hopes to hire full-time staff to monitor the site.

Of course, after two years of restrictions on sporting activities, Mayor Dyck says that council is working hard to keep up with the recreational needs of the community in the coming months.

"At the end of COVID, it seems like families have come out gangbusters [to get] their kids plugged back in," Dyck says, noting that enrollment in every available activity is up significantly this summer.

Finally, capital investments purchases in 2022 will include a new culvert steamer and the replacement of emergency services equipment such as water and ice rescue gear and firefighter turnout gear.

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# Commentary

## The Life-Saving Power of Affirmation

By Daniel Dacombe

The advancement of LGBTQ rights in Canada has been a steady, if slow, progression. Once same-sex relationships were legalized in 1969—with Trudeau Sr. acknowledging that the state had “no place in the bedrooms of the nation”—the expansion towards equal rights was inevitable.

The first same-sex marriage ceremony took place in Winnipeg in 1974, though it would be decades before it was formally acknowledged. The first Pride week took place in 1979. The first human rights case, over employment terminated due to sexual orientation, occurred in 1993. Then, a mere two years later, the Supreme Court ruled that freedom from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is a protected right under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Finally, same-sex marriage was legalized in 2005.

As our LGBTQ friends, family, and neighbours have begun to enjoy the same rights and privileges as the rest of us, one could be forgiven for thinking that the issue is well and truly settled.

Yet currently, significant debate continues to occur in the public discourse over the discussion of LGBTQ subjects with adolescents and children. Some religious figures and media pundits, especially those south of the border, characterize these conversations as a form of child abuse, claiming that discussion of same-sex attraction or gender identity is harmful to young people—or worse yet, that it may somehow convince them to become gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or nonbinary.

Claims are also made that discussing LGBTQ issues will cause mental health problems,



and proponents of this view often point to increased rates of suicide and mental illness in the LGBTQ community as “proof.” They say it’s better to ignore these subjects, ban their discussion in schools, and try to prevent young people from being exposed to the idea.

And as conversion therapy is still legal in many places, they also try to “fix” our kids if they think they might be different.

Even though conversion therapy is no longer legal in Canada, there are still many parents who, if their child brought up same-sex attraction, would respond negatively, actively discouraging their youth from “being gay” at one end of the spectrum or responding with physical violence at the other.

Many people would hesitate to respond positively, or even openly, to one’s disclosure of same-sex attraction. What these people may not realize is the cost that this response can have for that young person’s mental health.

It could even cost them their life.

Psychologists have known for some time that a parent’s response

to their child coming out as LGBTQ can have a significant impact on their mental health.

In 2012, researchers from Boston University and the University of Massachusetts, in one of the first studies of its kind, examined the long-term health and mental health consequences of parental responses to children coming out. They found that when parents responded negatively—with judgment or attempts to convince their children that they were wrong about being gay—it drastically increased the young person’s later experiences of depression, binge drinking, and illicit drug use.

By contrast, when parents responded affirmingly—with unconditional love, acceptance, and acknowledgement of their child’s identity—they achieved the opposite result. Their children only experienced rates of these issues on par with their heterosexual peers.

These results have been replicated many times in the years since. Multiple independent studies by psychologists around the world have confirmed it: when LGBTQ youth face parental rejection for coming

out, they face a range of mental health issues including depression, anxiety, PTSD, substance use disorders, and (most concerning) suicide.

LGBTQ youth who experienced affirmation from their parents experience significantly lower rates of all of those issues. The drop in suicide rates alone points to the incredible importance and effectiveness of affirmation as a response.

For transgender youth especially, having access not only to affirming parents and peers but also gender-affirming medical care dropped their risk of suicide dramatically. One Ontario report in 2012 found an incredible 96 percent drop in suicide rates for transgender teens when they experienced support and access to affirming medical care. If any other procedure or treatment had such a high success rate, it would be a standard approach in the medical community.

Contrary to the fears spread by some media outlets, no evidence exists to suggest that discussing sexual orientation and gender identity will somehow cause children

to develop those orientations or identities.

While there is no set age at which everyone comes out as LGBTQ, research in 2018 by psychologists from San Diego State University found that many youth who would identify as LGBTQ were aware that they were different, even specifically aware of their identity, well before high school.

Children are often keenly aware of what makes them different from the people around them, and since sexual orientation/gender identity are traits that are hardwired into our brains, it is consistent with the available research to expect that children will be aware of those parts of their identity even from a young age.

It’s not child abuse to have open conversations about sexual orientation or identity with children, nor is it harmful to respond with love and affirmation if they come out as LGBTQ.

According to recent surveys, roughly 5.6 percent of the population would fit within the LGBTQ category.

The likelihood that some parents reading this article already have an LGBTQ child and don’t know it is a virtual certainty.

It would be prudent to consider how we will have these conversations with our children now, and even more prudent to prepare to respond with love and affirmation before those conversations happen.

If nothing else, consider the tangible, life-saving benefits of affirming your young person’s identity. Treating your children with love, respect, acceptance, and affirmation is good for them; treating them with rejection, judgment, and condemnation is not.

We don’t need years of research to back this up. We’ve always known this.

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# Sports & Recreation

## Niverville Dog Park Gets New Leash on Life

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

✉ bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

Our region's furry, four-legged residents will soon be enjoying a leash-free run at Niverville's new and improved dog park thanks to community champions like local business RuffMutts, the Town of Niverville, and the provincial government.

Temporarily displaced by the construction of the Community Resource and Recreation Centre, the new off-leash dog park will be located on a larger plot of land immediately north of its previous spot next to the Niverville Curling Club.

"The land has already been graded," says councillor Nathan Dueck. "We anticipate topsoil and hydroseeding shortly, followed by new fencing and gating. [We'll] finish up this year with the placement of the dog obstacles and structures and the addition of trees for shelter."

Dueck says that \$60,000 will be sitting in the town coffers for the use of dog park development over the coming years. Half of that money came to the town thanks to a grant from the provincial government.

He envisions the possibility of adding a picnic shelter or water feature at the dog park down the road,



Councillor Nathan Dueck, Amanda McLean of RuffMutts, and Barry Piasta.

✉ CANDACE HAIKO

but ultimately council will turn to community pet champions like Barry Piasta for advice.

Piasta is the founder of Friends of the Dog Park and has been a tireless advocate for animals for much of his adult life.

"The Niverville Dog Park will remain a dog park like no other in

the province," Piasta says. "We have already had visitors from surrounding communities and as far [away] as Thompson and Minneapolis."

The owners of one local pet supply chain have been instrumental, too, in helping Niverville to become a pet-friendly community for residents and visitors.

Guy Britten, co-owner of RuffMutts, has found creative ways for his stores to collect donations which then get forwarded to much-needed local projects. He owns stores in Niverville, Altona, and Morden.

"We try and work with local rescues at all our locations," Britten says. "Manitoba Great Pyrenees is one we

work with often in Niverville. We also try and help with the Niverville Dog Park. During sales, we [partner with] rescues or people like Barry who work so hard at improving the dog park, and we give prizes for draws to help them raise money. We also have a loyalty point system in all our stores. People gain points on their purchases and can use it towards in-store discounts or as cash donations to the dog park or rescues."

Of course, RuffMutts's point donation system wouldn't be of much use without the thoughtful giving of the stores' clientele, whose pocketbooks open wider when it comes to giving back to beneficial causes that involve household critters.

On Tuesday, May 17, a cheque was presented to the Town of Niverville on behalf of RuffMutts for the express purpose of improving the dog park, which is ultimately town property.

An additional \$110 was collected in a donation jar at RuffMutts for the benefit of the park.

"The Niverville Dog Park has been a vibrant part of our recreation and economic tourism in our community," says Dueck. "With the additions [to the dog park] planned, we believe this will fill in a few more pieces of the puzzle that makes Niverville a place where you belong."

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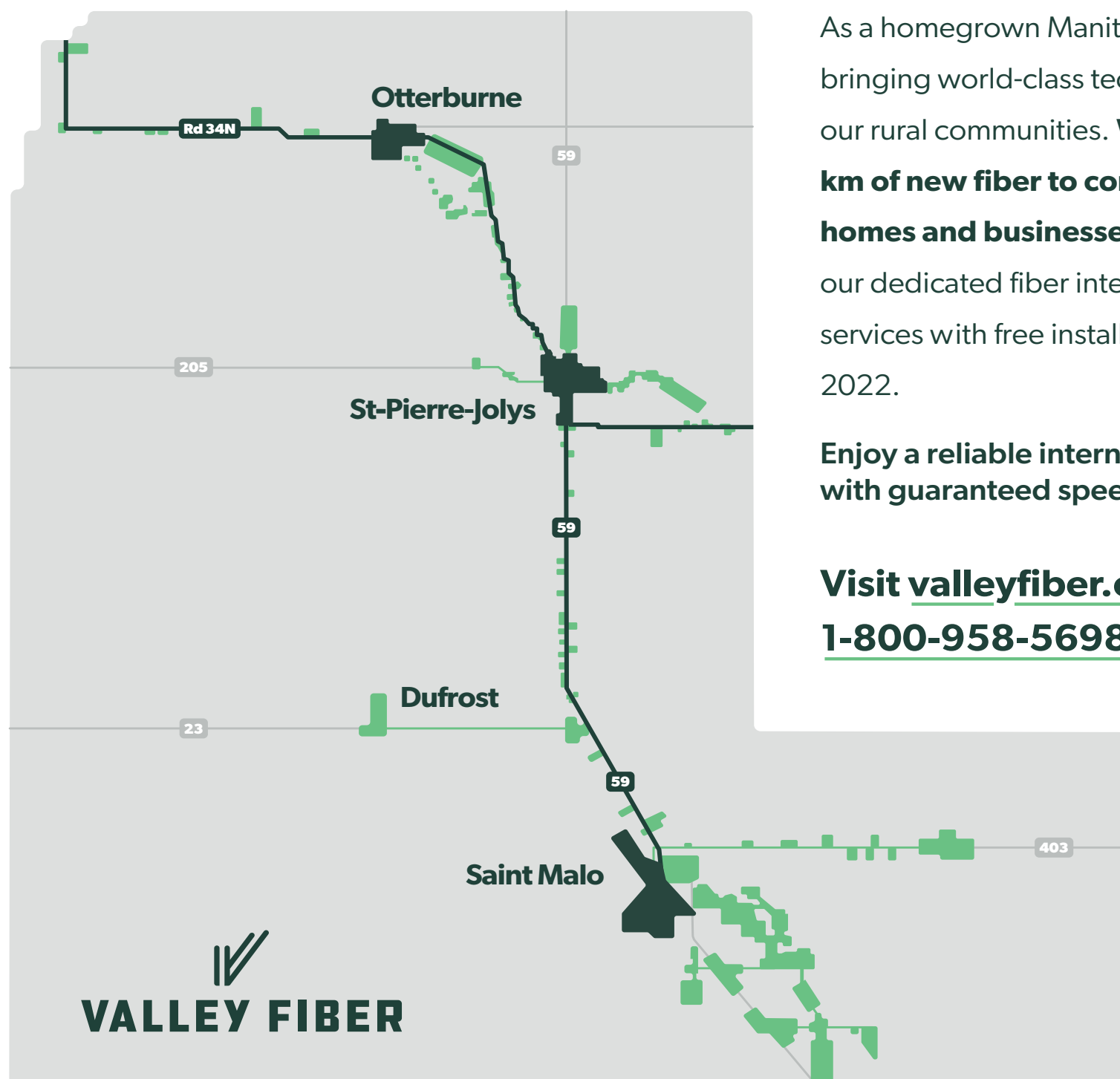
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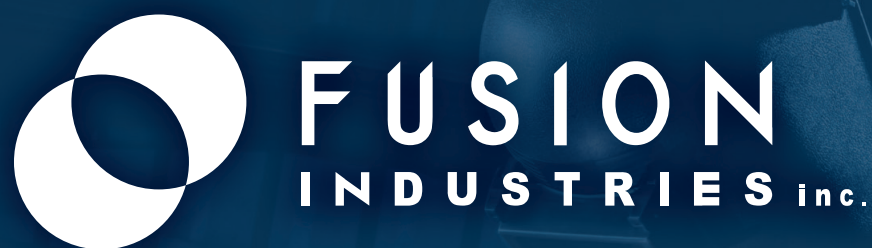
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Nighthawks board members Bryan Trottier and Ray Dowse, Mayor Myron Dyck, MLA Ron Schuler, Councillor Nathan Dueck, Nighthawks Head Coach Kelvin Cech, Deputy Mayor John Funk, and Nighthawk board members Tom Kleyson and Carl Fast.

BY BRENDA SAWATZKY

# Nighthawks Score Provincial Grant for Upscale Arena Seating

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

MLA Ron Schuler joined the mayor, councillors, town staff, and community volunteers at the Community Recreation and Resource Centre (CRRC) on Tuesday, May 3 to make some big announcements—not the least of which is the welcome promise of a \$259,032 grant earmarked for an expansion to event seating at the new arena.

The grant will take a significant bite out of the half-million-dollar projected cost of the seating plan, which will be erected along the east length of the arena.

The upscale seating will face the existing bleachers and provide a night-out-on-the-town kind of feel, complete with bistro tables and a bar.

While this latest funding

announcement didn't come in time to assure completion of the project before the start of this fall's inaugural Niverville Nighthawks season, board members of the Junior A team now have the green light to kick the project into gear. They anticipate completing the multi-tiered seating area in time for season two.

"There's a reason that Niverville is the fastest growing community in Manitoba and the fifth fastest in this great country of ours," said Schuler. "It's because you attract people [by offering] things to do."

In light of this recent grant, Schuler and many others anticipate that the up-and-coming thing to do in Niverville for locals and visitors alike will be to converge on the CRRC for some rousing games of Junior A hockey.

Bryan Trottier, a member of the Nighthawks board, opened his brief address with a heartfelt

"whoop," a sentiment echoed by all those who'd been working tirelessly to see the project through to this point.

"This is really an exciting time for Niverville," said Trottier.

The arena upgrade will bring an additional 373 spots for sitting or standing to watch games. The first section will be similar to the existing bleacher area, only with bar seating that faces the ice and a row of bistro-style tables and chairs behind.

A few steps up will take you to the pub-style seating area, with a full bar which will be open during all Nighthawks games and special events. An even higher level will take you to the club room, thoughtfully dubbed "The Kettle," since a kettle is what you'd call a grouping of nighthawks.

The Kettle is likely to be among the most esteemed seats in the house as the floor area will extend

right to the edge of the ice, providing the best vantage point of all.

As for the special bevies that adult game-goers can anticipate, Trottier says the board has been collaborating with a local craft beer maker for a special Nighthawks brew that they can't wait to introduce to thirsty patrons.

Once the new section is complete, Trottier says the existing bleacher seating will be viewed as the family-friendly zone. Even so, the new section should not be seen as exclusive in any way.

"It'll be open for everyone," Trottier says. "When you come to a Nighthawks game, you get to pick which side you want to be on when you buy your ticket."

The quarter-million-dollar grant for arena seating comprises almost one-third of the new provincial money being doled out to the Springfield-Ritchot constituency as a whole.

## IN BRIEF

### Niverville Bolsters Rec Inventory with UTV and Trail Groomer

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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A utility terrain vehicle (UTV) and cross-country ski groomer are the newest pieces of equipment procured by the Town of Niverville thanks to grants and a private donation.

The approximate \$45,000 price tag was looked after through a generous donation of \$10,000 by the Daryl K. Seaman Canadian Hockey Fund and another \$14,390 from the provincial government's Building Sustainable Communities fund. The remainder was covered by the Games Capital Fund created jointly by the Manitoba Winter Games Committee and the Town of Niverville in preparation for the 2022 Games.

"It was through Sport Manitoba that we heard of the Daryl K. Seaman Canadian Hockey Fund at the Calgary Foundation," says Chantel Todd, Niverville's recreation programmer. "When the town was bidding for the 2022 Manitoba Winter Games, and before the committee was formed, the town applied for the fund at the Calgary Foundation for the purchase of the UTV."

Despite the cancellation of this year's games, Todd says the grant money was awarded anyway in order to provide the community's residents with professionally groomed ski trails as a legacy.

Niverville was awarded the honour of hosting the 2022 Manitoba Winter Games, which had been scheduled to run from February 27 to March 5.

Due to uncertainty regarding the pandemic, questions arose as to how to safely execute an event of this magnitude if the viral spread was still prolific in early 2022.

Training for the more than 1,500 athletes had also been compromised.

"Over the last 18 months, inconsistencies in competition and training opportunities had an effect on athlete development," reads a statement on the Sport Manitoba website. "Without regular training, conditioning, and recovery routines in this crucial stage, the risk of injury, mental fatigue, and overtraining were also factors in making this decision."

Niverville has since been granted the first right of refusal to host the 2026 Games, which take place every four years.

In the meantime, Todd says the UTV will still come in very handy for the creation of winter ski trails and park maintenance in the spring, summer, and fall seasons.



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# Student-Led NHS Charity Game to Improve Access to Sports Programs

By Sara Beth Dacombe

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On Friday, May 6, Niverville High School (NHS) held a charity basketball game to raise money to cover sports fees for local students. The event was organized by Grade 12 student Ethan Tomlinson.

As part of their Global Issues course requirement, students at NHS are asked to learn about fundraising and giving back to the community.

Many students organized fundraising campaigns using a variety of methods, like directly asking their friends and family members for funds, but Ethan decided to take his idea to the next level. He opted to organize a basketball game, with the money raised from ticket sales going to the Phys. Ed. department for students who can't afford sports fees.

"Lots of people had good ideas, but no one else had taken on something on a scale like I did," says Ethan. "The people in my class all did low-key initiatives, sending emails around to people they know or friends and family, but this was more of an interactive type of project. I wanted to get the whole school involved."

With the support of the school's administrative staff, Ethan invited the basketball team from Steinbach Regional Secondary School to participate, which created a friendly competition and generated wider interest in the game.

Tickets cost \$2 each and originally organizers set a goal to sell 100 tickets. When tickets sold out quickly, they decided to increase the number of spectators to 150.



NHS Grade 12 student Ethan Tomlinson.

NHS



The charity game underway.

NHS

"The turnout was way beyond what both Ethan and I were expecting," says NHS vice-principal Graham Sereda. "He had budgeted for about 100 people, but people kept buying tickets. So we capped it at 150, and we had 150 people all pay into the ticket sales, which was great."

The decision to not make tickets available to the general public was done to keep the crowd size manageable.

"I was expecting maybe 100 spectators," says Sereda. "Unfortunately we had to start telling people no, and then we upped the tickets and still sold out. We had to keep it small because we are committed to a maximum attendance in the gym. 'Some staff attended as well, but for this instance it was just great for students to come out and cheer for the teams.'"

Sereda says Ethan did all the planning for the event, but that the school's staff were happy to provide support.

"Part of his Global Issues project was to examine barriers in sport and look at what prevents people from being able to participate," Sereda explains. "One of the things that came up

very quickly was, what if you don't have the cash to do it? So Ethan came up with the idea to put on the game and collect funds through an entry fee, and the funds can go toward people for whom money is a barrier to participating in sports in school. This aligns with our school's commitment to provide equal opportunity to students in Niverville High School, so we threw our support behind it."

The SRSS also provided a donation in the amount of \$200, which is what a school would regularly pay to send a team to a tournament.

According to organizers, both teams played very well and it was a pleasure to host the SRSS players. It was a very close game with both teams leading at different times.

In the end, NHS pulled ahead to win. A highlight was scoring an exciting three-point basket in the final three seconds of the game.

"It wasn't to win the game, because we were up by two," says Sereda. "But that's how close it was. And when our team hit a three-pointer, it got quite loud in the gym at that

point. So we won by five."

Sereda says that the school would like to host more community events in the future, although it's good to start small.

"In the future, because we haven't done many school events like this before, we would want to invite students," he says. "Then the next idea would be to open it up to parents and the like. The atmosphere was so great! We're still a relatively new school and we haven't had these sorts of events in two years because of COVID, so part of the highlight was just feeling there was some school spirit back in the building."

Before the game could go ahead, Sereda says there were a lot of preparations to be made and it was not certain if the game would go ahead until very close to the event date.

"There were things that needed to be put in place, like minor officials for scorekeeping and shot clock and that sort of thing, and arranging gym time," Sereda adds. "For Ethan, he didn't really show it, but I think it was a little bit stressful."

Ethan says that the

hands-on learning experience gave him the opportunity to learn a lot about the challenges that can come with event planning.

"There were a lot of moving parts I needed to organize, all while communicating with the refs, while going to classes and doing my classes all day. Staying in constant communication and juggling all of those things was really hard," Ethan says. "The hardest part of planning was actually finding referees to come. I couldn't get referees until the last couple days before the game. I ended up finding some sources from my coach about a ref here and there, and eventually got Matt Antonio and Mr. Hank Dueck to come ref."

Henry (Hank) Dueck retired from teaching at Niverville Collegiate Institute in 2014 and Matt Antonio is a youth pastor at Niverville Community Fellowship. Both felt a sense of satisfaction in coming back and giving of their time toward a good cause organized by a student.

But Antonio had a special connection to the game. In the year leading up to the

pandemic, he provided coaching services for an NHS basketball team—and they even qualified for the provincial playoffs.

Unfortunately, Antonio and the team weren't able to attend the high-level tournament because the event was cancelled. He says it was an incredible opportunity to serve as referee for the charity event and see some of the same players he coached.

"I've been a part of the community here for the last seven and a half years, and at the church in my role as youth pastor," says Antonio. "I coached Ethan two years ago and we weren't able to finish our provincials that year, so it was kind of a great way to honour him and honour that team that I was involved with two years ago. It was just a great opportunity to see the work Ethan had put into the event and feel the community spirit coming back."

Ethan says he felt a sense of personal accomplishment at seeing the event come together with such success.

"I'd never done something on this level before," Ethan says. "Seeing all the students come to a game and seeing all the excitement... we haven't had anything like this in two years due to COVID. To others, I'd say try it because not only is it a win for the teams, it's a win-win for everyone. It's for a good cause. The students all enjoyed the game, the other team enjoyed the game, and everyone who watched enjoyed themselves. I'd encourage students to step out of their comfort zone to organize something like this."

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# Arts & Entertainment

## What to Expect at This Year's Olde Tyme Country Fair

By Jennifer Lavin

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The Niverville Olde Tyme Country Fair is back. After two years of pandemic-related cancellations, the highlight of Niverville's summer is almost here.

This year, due to COVID-19, the fair will be running a more or less cashless event for both admission and liquor sales. The admission gate setup will be much like usual—with three gates on the west end of Main Street by the old post office and three gates on the east end by Wiens Furniture—but of the three gates on each side, two will be reserved for customers with debit cards (no credit cards), and only one will be open for cash.

Online tickets will be redeemable at the debit card booths. These booths will be clearly marked.

Advance tickets will be available at Niverville Bigway on Thursday, June 9 from 5:00 p.m. until close and on Friday, June 10, from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. Online tickets can be redeemed at Bigway as well.

The fun will start at 5:30 p.m. on Friday, June 10 when the gates open. At that time, the midway, Kids Zone, street market, and liquor sales will all open. Throughout the evening, there will be various shows and events to check out, and at 9:15 p.m. Niverville's own Catie St. Germain will perform at the TransCanada Brewing Beer Gardens.

At 10:15 p.m. and 11:15 p.m., Big Top Radio will perform their high-energy show on the Niverville Credit Union Main Stage. And in between, at 11:00 p.m., blackout fireworks will be set off from the Niverville Elementary School playground. Liquor sales will close at 12:30 a.m.

There has been one notable



📷 KAELEB VISRAM

change to Friday evening's festivities that fairgoers should be aware of: the Friday food fest will not take place.

"It is a big job on a normal year, but unfortunately it was a very difficult task to take on logistically with COVID-19, sanitation, safety, volunteers, etc." says Dustin Krahn, general manager of the Niverville Olde Tyme Country Fair. "We have focused on bringing in more great entertainment and a very busy schedule in lieu of this absence, though, and hope people understand the changes. There will be food vendors on site and we also encourage people to support them."

On Saturday morning, you can get up and head to the Niverville Credit Union parking lot for the Niverville Firefighter Pancake Breakfast at 8:00 a.m. The breakfast is sponsored by Niverville Chicken Chef and Negash Coffee. Although the breakfast is free, donations to the Niverville Fire Department are gratefully accepted. In case of inclement weather, the breakfast would move to the Beer

Gardens tent.

Plan to take a power nap, then get back to the NCU parking lot at lunchtime for the Niverville Credit Union barbecue. Free hot dogs and canned drinks will be available here from 11:00 a.m. until noon.

Once you're full of delicious food, you can find a place to settle into your lawn chair and enjoy the parade, which begins at 12:00. Many floats will be tossing candy for the kids, and all the candy will be peanut-free.

An addition to this year's parade will be the Emily Fast Memorial Bike Parade.

"For many decades, Emily Fast kicked off the Niverville Fair parade by encouraging the youngsters to come out with decorated bikes and costumes," says Krahn. "This always was the lead of the parade and is a big memory for a lot of people who grew up here and attended the fair in the early years. To honour her, the Fast ladies will be continuing that tradition."

Registration for the bike parade is free and prizes will be given out to all the participants.

The midway and street market will also open at noon, with the Kids Zone following at 1:00 p.m. Liquor sales will begin at 2:00 p.m.

One note about the Kids Zone: participants this year will be given a free kiddie ride at the midway.

A few other highlights to mention about this year's event include Double Vision Twin Magic & Comedy. Double Vision is a unique show featuring identical twins who will be performing stage shows and roaming the streets.

The Street Circus will be another highlight. Their website says they are "everything spectacular about going to a modern circus and everything fun and spontaneous about street performing!"

Another event to check out is the Fabulous Feud game show. This is a game played by two teams answering survey questions which will be delivered on a huge game

screen. Teams will score points based on how many people came up with the same answers as the 100 people who were previously surveyed. Think: *Family Feud*.

At 8:30 p.m. on Saturday night, Manitoba's own Emma Peterson will take to the main stage, followed by The Reklaws as headliners at 9:30 p.m.

"All in all, there are a few changes, but it will still be a very busy, entertaining, and memorable weekend," Krahn says. "There were a lot of new challenges—and obviously rising prices [on the back end], as everyone is accustomed to these days—but the business community and fair sponsors were absolutely incredible and really stepped up for the event yet again. I cannot encourage people enough to take a browse through our sponsors and make sure to thank them and acknowledge all that they do for us! We are very happy that at the end of the day we managed to add a lot of new great entertainment, while also keeping the price for attendance the same and not raising costs for anyone."

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ The fair committee is still on the lookout for teams of five or six people to take part in Fabulous Feud. Email info@nivervillefair.com if you're interested in participating.

■ To register or to get more information about the Emily Fast Memorial Bike Ride, contact parade@nivervillefair.com.

■ If you are interested in participating in the parade, you can sign up at www.nivervillefair.com/parade.

■ Fair volunteers will receive free admission and more volunteers are still needed. To sign up, please contact volunteers@nivervillefair.com.



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# Podcaster Shines Spotlight on Singer-Songwriters

By Jennifer Lavin

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It's not enough for Ian Krochak to sing and write his own music. He also wants to explore the minds of other singer-songwriters—and he wants to share that exploration with everybody.

Krochak recently started a podcast called *The Prairie Town Basement Sessions*. In each episode, he delves into the process of songwriters from around the world.

Krochak grew up in Winnipeg in a family brimming with artistic influences. Artists, poets, and photographers were part of his everyday life. As a 50-year-old now, he looks back at his childhood fondly and remembers sitting around the record player listening to the likes of Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, and Neil Young.

Speaking of his love of music and storytelling, he says, "I came by it honestly."

At age 14, Krochak began to learn to play the guitar, and several years later he was playing clubs around Winnipeg. Eventually he and his wife moved to Calgary.

Finally, in 2009, they decided to make Niverville their home.

Singing and writing moved to the backburner for a while as Krochak's career took off and he and his wife adopted a son from Ethiopia. But about three years ago, he began to immerse himself in music once again.

"During the pandemic it was a necessity to have a creative outlet," Krochak says. "Breathing life into these songs has been a lifesaver."

Krochak has released six singles since the pandemic began and says that the whole recording process has been very cathartic.

The pandemic gave him time to start writing again. He describes his own songwriting as being driven by nostalgia, reminiscing about road trips on the prairies and family memories.

The pandemic was also the



Podcaster Ian Krochak of Niverville.

impetus for him to begin *The Prairie Town Basement Sessions*. The podcast has allowed him to grow the audience for his music and be inspired by his fellow writers.

"I think [my songwriting] was kind of dormant," says Krochak. "But the beautiful thing about interviewing all these great songwriters on the podcast is, it's almost for selfish reasons, because I learn so much from them. There's such a common denominator in songwriters."

Krochak has found his fellow songwriters to be so friendly and approachable. As he found new music and commented on it, that artist would often listen to Krochak's music in turn and comment on that.

He says these commonalities became friendships and kinships... and he wanted to share these conversations with others.

"The podcast was just a natural progression," he says. "I thought, 'I

just want to actually talk to these people and find out how they're living and what was the catalyst for them to become songwriters and what's their process and what do they get out of it, what fuels them.'"

Krochak says that doing the podcast has been an enriching experience.

"I found that not only are these people approachable, but they're humble. They're humble and generous and that's been really uplifting for me."

Through this process, one of his goals is to create community for singer-songwriters. As he learns from the musicians he interviews, he is also able to give their music a wider audience. Some of his past guests have reached out to him after their episode aired and mentioned that their audience had grown because of their interview.

"That's the whole point," he says, "building that community."

*The Prairie Town Basement*

*Sessions* are literally recorded in Krochak's basement in Niverville. He handles all the technical aspects of the recording himself.

"There are things that I'll continue to refine about the podcast," Krochak says. "Like maybe make [the episodes] a bit shorter. But one thing I always like to do is to have musical content integrated within the podcast. It's one thing to tell the story, but it's another thing to layer in the music that you're talking about."

Krochak hopes that the podcast may eventually evolve into a songwriting series. He envisions live shows that showcase the process of writing music and how a song takes shape.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Listen to the podcast: <https://anchor.fm/ptbasementsessions>
- Listen to Krochak's music: <https://www.iankrochakmusic.com>

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