

The Citizen

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LOCAL NEWS

Medical Clinic Comes to St. Adolphe

■ The husband-and-wife team of Mayowa and Lyness Fetuga are getting ready in the coming weeks to open the doors of their new primary care medical clinic, located in the same building as the St. Adolphe Pharmacy.

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LOCAL NEWS

How to Recognize the Signs of a Phone Scam

■ With digital theft on the rise and phone scams more common than ever, we talk to an expert about how to protect oneself.

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SPORTS & REC

Alpha Golf Tees Up

■ A new high-end golf simulator in Niverville provides a perfect opportunity for those looking to work on their game in a private, distraction-free setting.

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ARTS & CULTURE

Metal Worker and Film Maker Join Forces

■ A local metal worker with a focus on PTSD treatment is looking to collaborate with Jette Studios for a big mutual benefit.

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Nighthawks Continue Dominant Start

➤ READ MORE ON PAGES 16-19

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Farmer Marcus Loeppky talks with Wesley Ncube, MCC Manitoba's constituency relations coordinator. MCC / JESSICA BURTNICK

Local Farmers Participate in Initiative to End World Hunger

By Brenda Sawatzky
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER
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In 2015, the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) developed a unique initiative which brings farmer, sponsor, and the Canadian Food-grains Bank (CFGB) together into a unique collaboration called Grow Hope.

One decade later, their effort to respond to global hunger continues to build steam. The projects spans fertile farmlands from Ontario to Alberta.

Three local farmers have been generous supporters of the Grow Hope program: Grant Dyck, the owner of Artel Farms in Niverville; Marcus Loeppky, owner of Loeppky Farms in Ritchot; and Jerry Waldner of Crystal Springs Hutterite Colony near Ste. Agathe.

All have dedicated a portion of their fields to the Grow Hope campaign in 2025, anticipating that the proceeds of the harvest in those sections will make it into the hands of some of the world's hungriest citizens.

"I grew up watching my family

always giving back," Loeppky says. "I see how Grow Hope uses the work we do in such a valuable way. Look into it. Do some research and I think you'll be pleasantly surprised."

Dyck, too, sees the immeasurable benefit of programs like this one. "It's working directly with farmer and sponsor, [getting food] to those that need it," says Dyck. "I love the simplicity of it."

Like so many of MCC's valuable projects, this one requires collaboration at different levels.

Firstly, the farmer donates a specific acreage to the cause. Through the MCC platform, individuals or groups can sign up to sponsor one or more acres of land. This year's sponsorship came to \$350 per acre, which covers the cost of seed, fertilizer, and fuel.

At harvest season, the farmer sells his crop and donates the proceeds to the CFGB. This yield can net \$600 per acre or more.

In turn, the federal government matches Grow Hope proceeds by up to a four-to-one ratio, significantly multiplying the campaign's impact.

These funds help support emergency food aid and long-term

food security projects in countries around the world.

Through MCC, food baskets are delivered to displaced families. Others receive the tools and seeds they need to grow their own food, allowing them to send their children to school.

Since its launch, the Grow Hope campaign has raised nearly \$2 million to support global food security. "According to the United Nations, 343 million people are experiencing food insecurity today, driven by a wave of global crises including conflict, economic instability, and climate-related emergencies," the MCC website states.

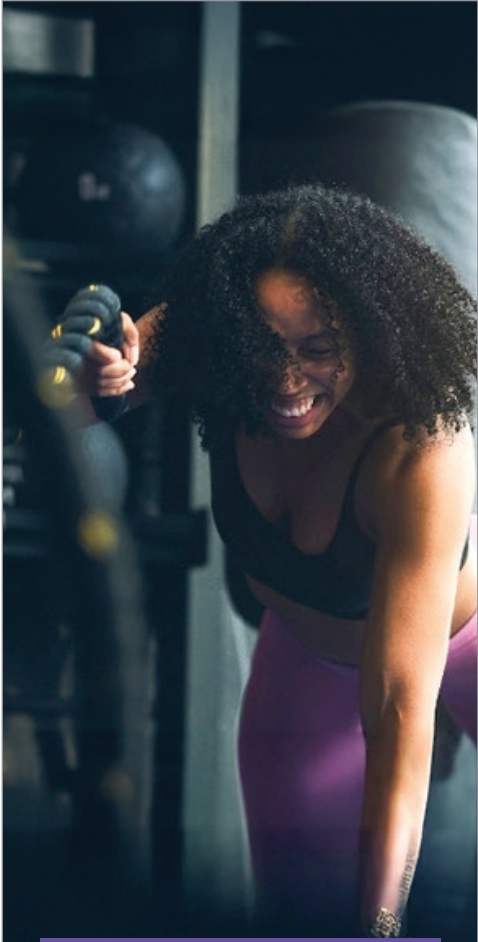
On Sunday, November 2, MCC Manitoba hosted a private event at the Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg where local farmers and supporters were able to reflect on their impact this year.

As the 2025 season comes to a close, MCC Manitoba invites new supporters to consider how they might get involved in the new year.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
www.mcc.org/growhope/manitoba

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Firefighters Prepare for Annual Perogy Fundraiser

By Brenda Sawatzky
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The annual Firefighters Perogy Dinner fundraiser is returning to the Niverville Friendship Centre on November 11.

Dinner service begins at 4:30 p.m. and ends at 7:00 p.m., or whenever food runs out, says fire chief Keith Bueckert.

“Come early, because by 4:30 there’s usually a lineup already,” Bueckert advises. “Plus, I think there’s a Nighthawks game that night, so we’ll feed you early and then you can get off to the game.”

According to Bueckert, this annual Remembrance Day fundraiser has been running for around 15 years. Most years, they’ve come to expect anywhere from 400 to 500 attendees.

While it’s a great way to support the local fire department, one can’t deny that the meal in and of itself is worth showing up for. The perogies are supplied by Country Perogy Shop from Kleefeld, a business that’s made a name for itself.

The perogies are served in the traditional manner—with a side of farmer sausage and topped off with schmaunt fat (cream gravy), made in house by Friendship Circle volunteers like Anne Hiebert.

“You’ll have to get there early for the [schmaunt fat] because we have run out of that,” Bueckert muses. “That’s been a bit of a sticking point for some people because it is a very popular thing.”

This year, dine-in isn’t the only option. Takeout will also be available if someone can’t attend.

There is no set fee for a meal. Everything is by donation, either cash or cheque. Tax receipts will be available for donations over \$20.

Proceeds from this year’s event will help the community’s firefighters purchase items for the new fire hall which town council is currently planning.

In previous years, the firefighter perogy dinner has raised anywhere between \$5,000 and \$7,500 over and above costs.



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Heritage Centre Fundraiser Focuses on Resilience

By Brenda Sawatzky
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On Tuesday, October 21, friends and residents of the Niverville Heritage Centre filled the atrium in support of this year's fundraising effort.

The goal this time around: \$87,000 in donations to improve lighting in the Heritage Life Personal Care Home and purchase an interactive virtual game for aging residents. As well, an expansion is needed for the facility's walk-in fridge.

By the end of the night, well over \$50,000 had come in.

Ron Parent, executive director, opened the evening with a welcome and overview of the Heritage Centre's progress over the past year. Since the pandemic, he said, many challenges have presented themselves and he expects more of the same in the coming years.

"We've all experienced moments that have tested us, whether personally, professionally, or emotionally," Parent said. "And yet we stand here today, not because the journey was easy but because we chose to move forward. Remember, resilience isn't innate. It's a skill honed over time, a perspective we adopt, and a legacy we create."

Among the successes, the Heritage Centre has effectively increased daytime supports

for assisted living residents to help delay their need for long-term care placement.

The centre has also collaborated with Marquise Hospitality, a Canadian-based culinary and hospitality service focused on seniors living facilities.

"We prepare over 200,000 meals out of our kitchen every year, whether it's feeding those who live in our personal care home, people attending events such as tonight, weddings or guests that visit Hespeler's Cookhouse and Tavern," Parent said. "We do so knowing that food is such an integral part of who we are."

The evening's keynote speaker was former Niverville resident Ben Sawatzky, who notably was the keynote speaker at the Heritage Centre's very first fundraiser back in 2004. His theme then was "the little town that could." Two decades later, Sawatzky's focus shifted to resilience and pushing through adversity to get to the other side.

Sawatzky has climbed the ladder from small town immigrant to successful entrepreneur in the lumber industry, but not without enduring some tragedy along the way.

On this night, he chose to highlight his father's journey. Nowhere else could he find a better example of resilience in the face of unrelenting adversity.

Born in Paraguay in 1928,



Ben Sawatzky speaks at this year's fundraising gala.

■ BRENDA SAWATZKY

Sawatzky's father described in his journals the extreme poverty of his early years. On laundry day, he wore a burlap sack while his single pair of clothes hung to dry. He recalled days of hard labour in the fields, rewarded with one slice of bread at the end of the workday.

As an adult, he was gifted two oxen, which he used to start a transport business, carrying goods from farms to markets 150 kilometres away. It was a ten-day journey each way.

He eventually upgraded to horses and the business succeeded—until suddenly his horses fell dead from snake bite.

Soon after, Sawatzky took ill, forcing a move off the farm and into the capital to find work he could do in a weakened state. He worked as a store clerk, making just enough to support his wife and first child and putting a little aside, day by day, to purchase a ranch and herd.

Unfortunately, a surgery required him to sell off that

cattle in order to pay the hospital bill.

"You would think this man would get discouraged and quit," Sawatzky said. "But that was never an answer for him."

Sawatzky's father wasn't back to work long before the owner of the store let him go to provide a position for his son.

Yet again, Sawatzky's father had to move his growing family and work while continuing to save. With eight children, he at last purchased farmland and put his oldest sons to work in the fields while he maintained his job in the city.

Unfortunately, two consecutive years of drought led to crop failure and the death of the few animals they owned.

"He had tried everything he knew, but he always spoke of this country called Canada," Sawatzky said. "He had one sister that lived there and he would always talk about this country of possibility without boundaries."

Hoping to change his fortune in Canada, Sawatzky's father sought to move his large family, now numbering 14. His immigration application, though, was denied. The reason? He would be unable to raise a family of that size in Canada with only a few farming skills, despite his eldest sons being wage-earners.

"He was devastated, but quitting was not an option," Sawatzky said. "He moved himself to Canada as an

immigrant, living with his sister in Grunthal, where he somehow got a job at the lumberyard."

He was away from his family for an entire year before his luck changed. He'd made friends with a local couple who owned an apartment complex in Steinbach. This couple, in a great act of kindness, transferred the title of their complex into Sawatzky's name, giving him a chance to demonstrate to officials his ability to support a family.

"Over the course of 20 years, he'd had six moves, six new starts, and [lived in] six communities. His steadfast determination to provide a better future for his family continued to give him hope and courage. His was a journey of perseverance and resilience."

Turning his father's story of endurance into a message of hope, the junior Sawatzky encouraged Heritage Centre administrators and supporters to forge on and never give up.

"It's no secret that you are an organization that is the envy of not only southern Manitoba but the entire country," Sawatzky said. "To get to [this place], it requires vision, skill, determination, and a strong will to achieve. But more difficult than getting to the top is staying at the top and the vast majority fail. Why? Because complacency sets in. We forget what it took to get here."

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The Call to Serve: A Guide to Running for Municipal Office Next Year

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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It is said that change is the only constant in life. But, as with the seasons, there are some things we can count on with regularity.

For example, elections.

Every four years in Manitoba, we take part in municipal elections. The next one is scheduled for October 2026. For many people, the municipal ballot box represents the best opportunity to effect change at the local level.

Whether you live in Ritchot or Niverville, openings for four councillors and one mayor will be up for grabs in one year's time.

Elections also provide the perfect opportunity for candidates to invest in their communities at the most seminal and decisive level.

Now is a good time to consider letting one's name stand. Or perhaps you'd like to tap someone's shoulder and plant a seed if you feel they'd make a great candidate.

Ritchot's mayor, Chris Ewen, has already announced his intention to retire from the position, meaning that interested residents should start thinking about what it takes to secure a nomination.

There are only a few legislative qualifications.

A person must be at least 18 years of age, a Canadian citizen, and a Manitoba resident.

They must also have been a community member or property owner for at least six months in the region where they plan to run.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

First and foremost, says Mayor Myron Dyck of Niverville, it's important to recognize the time commitment that's required before a person decides to run.

Whether in Niverville or Ritchot, attending council meetings takes up most of the time involved.

A member of council attends a minimum of four meetings per month. Public meetings are held



twice a month, once in the morning and once in the evening. During the alternating weeks, council meets for private sessions.

Each meeting can consume anywhere from one to four hours, unless it's budget planning season, in which case the annual process can last for two days.

"We're briefed from various departments during [private] meetings," says Dyck. "Or, if there's anything we're working through—let's say a developer comes and says, 'I want to bring a hotel but I'm not really sure yet'—we would talk about that."

Beyond regular meetings, council members are also expected to represent the community on various regional boards. For instance, the RSR Wastewater Cooperative.

Prior to meetings, Dyck says a council member may be required to read quite a few documents in order to come prepared.

All of these meetings, of course, require flexibility.

"There is daytime obligation," Dyck says. "I know of councillors who have worked Saturdays because they're taking Tuesday as their day off so they can [attend council meetings]."

A council member's responsibility doesn't end with meetings, though. Events frequently take place around the municipality that call for the attendance of at least one member of council.

All in all, Dyck estimates that five to ten hours per week should cover the time commitment in Niverville.

"If members of council have certain passions that they want to see go forward, that would be extra time over and above," says Dyck. "They might say, 'I want to bring a certain service to the community, so I'm going to do the research on that.'"

As important as flexibility, Dyck says, is having a sense of purpose. It's not uncommon for people to run with a specific end goal in mind.

In the last election, Niverville councillor Meghan Beasant ran on behalf of young families on a platform to research the feasibility of opening a community library.

These are honourable reasons to run, says Dyck, but they shouldn't be a person's primary motivator.

"We welcome people that have an interest in wanting to serve the community," says Dyck. "When you're in municipal government, it's not about money and it's definitely not about power. It is truly about giving back."

Of course, it goes without saying that a council member needs to be flexible in terms of doing what's best for the whole, not just a select group.

"We don't always agree or expect to agree," says Dyck. "Be prepared to have debate. There are times when we can beat each other up pretty good, but then we'll go for coffee after."

Before deciding to run, one also needs to realize that being able to

demonstrate a certain degree of magnanimity and resilience in the face of public confrontation is imperative.

"You have to be prepared to understand why something is being said and how it's being said without having your feelings hurt," says Dyck. "Having said that, we are a team. And when one gets a little more bloodied and has some stripes on the back, we do rally around and support [one another]. Council is a safe place to express yourself."

In the end, he adds that a position on council provides an excellent opportunity for growth and gaining a solid understanding of how communities and government systems work. For that reason, he encourages everyone to consider running.

"We need quality people. We need people of all walks of life and ages."

REMUNERATION

The remuneration, or income, received by a local council member is determined by the council of the day.

Currently, the mayor of Niverville receives an annual income of \$28,807. The deputy mayor takes home \$20,862 annually and the final three councillors each receive \$18,877.

Some stipends are available for travel to out-of-town meetings and matters of that nature.

The mayor of Ritchot has an annual income of \$47,778 while the councillors take home \$27,432. Beyond this, members of council

receive a \$30 remuneration for every hour spent carrying out municipal business, which includes driving time.

THE PROCESS

The operation of municipal elections is regulated by the provincial government, including the scheduled day on which it will take place. Every council throughout Manitoba is elected on the same day, with few exceptions.

The window to secure nominations opens six weeks prior to the election and runs for approximately one week.

At this time, potential candidates need to collect signatures from at least one percent of their region's eligible voters. These supporters aren't necessarily promising to vote for the individual come election day. Their signature simply acknowledges their support of the candidate's decision to run.

In Niverville, 25 advance signatures are currently needed. In Ritchot, the number is similar.

Once these signatures are received, the candidate must register with their municipality's designated Senior Election Official. This is usually someone who already holds a position at the town or RM office.

There may be a cost to register, depending on the municipality.

Provincial rules also govern the cost of running an individual campaign, including a candidate's advertising expenses. Every candidate is responsible for their own expenses and specific rules apply when accepting donations and holding fundraisers.

Concise record-keeping is required when it comes to financial contributions and expenditures related to a campaign.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ To learn more about municipal elections, visit: www.gov.mb.ca/mr/mfas/election.html

■ To contact the Town of Niverville: feedback@whereyoubelong.ca

■ To contact the RM of Ritchot: info@ritchot.com

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Husband-and-Wife Physician Team Opens St. Adolphe Medical Clinic

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

bsawatzky@nivervillecitizen.com

A pair of physicians are getting ready in the coming weeks to open the doors on the brand-new St. Adolphe Medical Clinic, significantly expanding primary care options for residents of St. Adolphe and the surrounding area.

The husband-and-wife team, Mayowa and Lyness Fetuga, are excited to open their family practice from the same building as the St. Adolphe Pharmacy.

Currently, Mayowa practices in Winnipeg while Lyness completes her residency in family medicine.

By November, Mayowa anticipates working out of the St. Adolphe Clinic three days per week with the intention of eventually making it a full-time practice. Lyness will join him at the conclusion of her residency.

The St. Adolphe Medical Clinic is the product of a 12-year dream for pharmacy owner Massoud Horriat. That's how long he's been retrofitting the other half of his building and seeking a doctor willing to practice there.

When the Fetugas met Massoud and learned of the opportunity, they were immediately moved by both the man and the community he serves.

"When I spoke to Massoud, he told me how receptive the people are here," says Mayowa. "Also, the dire need of doctors. People have to travel a considerable distance to see



Massoud Horriat, Lyness Fetuga, Mayowa Fetuga, Councillor Jason Bodnarchuk, and Ritchot CAO Shane Ray.

BRENDA SAWATZKY

a family doctor and that made me feel bad. I used to practice in the UK myself and, there, people literally just walk into the clinic to see their family doctor. And it's just a five-minute walk. If they have to drive 15 minutes, they're like, 'No, that's too far.'

He feels equally bad that elderly patients have to find a way to get to their doctor. In the UK, doctors still make house calls for aging patients.

There are only a few minor details to complete before the doors of the clinic can open. The facility has its own private, fully accessible entrance facing the street. Upon entering, patients are greeted by a large reception and waiting area. Two examination rooms are ready to go, both outfitted with new examination beds and furnishings.

In true Massoud fashion, the

clinical dream doesn't end here. If all goes well, he hopes to expand his building to make room for an onsite lab.

"This building, I hope, will provide full service for the whole community," says Massoud.

While Massoud owns the clinic space, the Fetugas will operate their medical practice as a separate entity from the pharmacy.

If there are any shortcomings with the Fetugas, perhaps it's the fact that they don't speak French. However, they believe that hiring a bilingual receptionist will help fill that gap.

In the meantime, between the physicians and the pharmacist, they are fluent in five languages, including some African and Indian dialects. According to Massoud, many families living in the community will benefit from their knowledge in these languages.

For a patient to transition from their current doctor to the St. Adolphe Medical Clinic, it's a fairly simple process of transferring files.

In the beginning, Mayowa suggests that prospective patients book a brief get-to-know-you appointment with him. If they feel that the relationship is a good fit, they are welcome to make the move.

"This is such a huge attribute to the community," says St. Adolphe councillor Jason Bodnarchuk. "I remember when I first got onto council, [Massoud] snuck me back here and showed me [his plan]. This is exactly what this community needs. We really want the aging-in-place [opportunities] to continue to happen and healthcare is a major part of that."

This new clinic won't only benefit residents of St. Adolphe, he adds. It will serve the entire municipality.

The Fetugas aren't deterred by the idea of practicing in rural Manitoba. If things go well, they say, they may just move their family of five to the community as time goes on.

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Niverville's Most Confusing Intersections: What Are the Rules?

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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If you're driving west along Niverville's Main Street, approaching the railway tracks, and you question whether to use your signal light in order to maintain a forward trajectory, you're in good company. This intersection has been confounding drivers and driver education instructors for decades.

It took the determination of one Niverville resident, Kylie Matechuk, to finally solve the mystery. In the end, the official province-endorsed answer is this: only signal if you're making an actual full turn onto an adjoining street. Otherwise, no signal should be applied.

"It's probably one of the most dangerous intersections in Niverville because of the train tracks," says Matechuk. "Every town seems to have that one spot."

Without question, this is an odd intersection.

At the west end of Main Street, just before the railway tracks, the median narrows to make way for a left turning lane onto First Avenue South.

For those continuing westward, though, their lane appears to suddenly end, forcing drivers to switch a full lane to the left in order to continue on their way.

So the age-old question has been: should you signal because you're changing lanes or do you avoid signalling because your intended direction hasn't changed?

The question never plagued Matechuk until her daughter signed up for driver education with an eventual road test to take place in Niverville. Today's driver education course through Manitoba Public Insurance (MPI) is called Driver Z.

Realizing this odd intersection had the potential to result in deducted points, Matechuk set out to find the answer.

She began with a query on a local social media page. The nearly 60 responses were as varied as the people themselves.



To signal or not to signal? This corner in Niverville is notoriously confusing.

✉ BRENDA SAWATZKY

One indicated that they used to signal here until there came a day when a motorist in the oncoming lane assumed they were planning a left turn onto First Avenue South. The eastbound driver, thinking the way was clear, proceeded to make their own left turn onto First Avenue North, essentially cutting this driver off.

Another response came from someone identifying as a qualified driving instructor. The proper procedure here, they said with confidence, is to signal and shoulder-check since you're moving your vehicle three feet or more to the left.

A third party chimed in, indicating that they'd been deducted points on their own driver test for failing to signal.

Posing the question to her daughter's driving instructor, Matechuk was told that the student is required to shoulder-check and signal.

Other driving instructors seemed to agree.

That is, until the final moments before her daughter's actual driving test took place.

"We had hired another instructor for her readiness assessment," Matechuk says. "She said, 'Do not signal. It is not required. If you do, it'll be a mark against you for signalling

in an intersection.'"

Inside the CRRC, where Matechuk's daughter was connecting with her road test examiner, the examiner gave her the opposing answer: always signal and shoulder-check at this location.

While waiting for her daughter to return from the driving test, Matechuk asked a different examiner the same question. He disagreed with the first.

"He says, 'Why would you ever signal? You're staying in the [forward] lane,'" Matechuk says.

Matechuk's daughter didn't lose marks during her road test because she signalled, just as her examiner told her to.

Still, Matechuk wanted to settle this argument once and for all to get everyone on the same page.

She began by making a phone call to Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure (MTI). They told her it was not their jurisdiction and she could call the RCMP.

"The [St. Pierre RCMP] constable whipped out the Highway Traffic Act and he was looking at the intersection," Matechuk says. "He said, 'I don't want to give you the wrong information but, just looking at it, we would never stop you for not

signalling.'"

Making some phone calls on Matechuk's behalf, he called her back, admitting that there is no firm consensus regarding signalling at this intersection. He suggested that she call MTI, taking her full circle to where she'd begun.

Her next call was to the Driver Fitness branch of MPI. These are the instructors who provide driver testing for adults who have lost their license. But they passed the buck back to Driver Z.

"It really took some digging to find out who to talk to," says Matechuk. "I had multiple people in the MPI department that became so invested in this."

The official answer finally came when Matechuk received an email from someone at MPI's Driver Testing Operations.

"If a driver is traveling straight through that intersection in the right lane (westbound), no signal would be required going through the intersection as the vehicle's position does not change," they said.

Recognizing the necessity for a ubiquitous understanding of this fact, he assured Matechuk that everyone working in MPI's Driver Z program would be informed.

MAKING TURNS ON SOLID OR DOTTED LINES

One doesn't have to drive around Niverville long to realize that other rules of the road are often misunderstood or ignored.

Such is the case when making a right turn onto a street that has more than one lane heading in the same direction. Unlike the Main Street conundrum mentioned earlier, this rule is clearly laid out in MPI's Driver's Handbook.

"Right turns must be made from the right lane nearest the curb into the right lane nearest the curb of the other road, unless it's blocked within 30 metres of the intersection," the handbook states. "In that case, you can turn into the next lane nearest the right if no other traffic is approaching in that lane, such as a vehicle coming from the opposite direction also turning onto that street."

For example, when making a right turn off Main Street onto Fifth Avenue South, the driver is required to enter what everyone recognizes as the parking lane, the lane nearest the curb. The handbook says the driver must shoulder-check and signal to enter the straightaway heading south.

Another traffic rule that is often disregarded is the one referencing what makes for a legal turning lane. According to Manitoba law, a legal turning lane is identified by a dotted line separating it from the main lane. So if there's a solid line separating the main lane from the one on the right, the right lane cannot be used to make a turn.

Take, for instance, the lanes heading east and west at Niverville's most easterly traffic light. If you're heading east and you want to make a right turn onto Fifth Avenue South, a clear turning lane is created with the use of a dotted line to indicate such.

If you're heading west, though, and you want to make a right turn onto 5th Avenue North, there is no designated turning lane here, even though the shoulder is paved. To use the far right lane as a turning lane is an infraction because you have to cross a solid line in order to do so.



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Reversing Niverville's "Commuter Town" Image One Building at a Time

By Holly Dunphy

A new two-storey commercial space is taking shape in the heart of Niverville. The building at 106 Main Street will offer a range of office suites in a project could help to further dispel any lingering perception that Niverville is a bedroom community.

Joined to the west-facing side of the existing building, the nearly 2,500-square-foot addition is expected to welcome its first tenants in February 2026.

The first occupant and catalyst of the second phase's development, The Joy Smith Foundation, is a nationally recognized organization whose mission is to stop human trafficking.

The foundation, which is moving its operations from downtown Winnipeg, is part of a trend of out-of-town professionals commuting to Niverville rather than the other way around.

The building's owner, Garry Stratychuk, says he is committed to welcoming professionals whose work supports wellness, community, and philanthropy.

Stratychuk's business, ITI Financial, currently occupies the second floor of the existing building, which sees about six people commute from Winnipeg to Niverville each day.

"When this growth started, many



A large new addition is underway at 106 Main Street in Niverville.

HOLLY DUNPHY

would live here and work in the city, but now it's exciting to have people coming here to work from Winnipeg rather than the other way around," says Stratychuk. "The traffic coming here in the morning is easy, and easy on the way home in the evening. My staff loves it. Leaving here at 5:00 p.m.,

there is no traffic heading back to Winnipeg. With the Joy Smith Foundation joining us here, it means that roughly 15 more professionals will be regularly making the trip into Niverville."

The building's first phase, home to Niverville Family Chiropractic

and Stratychuk's ITI Financial, also accommodates Niverville's local food bank, Helping Hands, which serves Niverville, New Bothwell, Otterburne, and Ste. Agathe.

The second phase is designed to be aesthetically identical to that first phase, which was completed in 2017.

Work is being overseen by the same builder, Precision Homes. The only changes being made are material upgrades, including improved soundproofing.

"We knew that eventually Niverville would reach a population where services would move here from the city. They're now moving here," says Stratychuk. "When my wife Denise and I moved to town, our morning commute to drop our kids off at school went from two hours a day to five minutes. It's a far better quality of life for a family."

Recognizing that Niverville's progress hasn't always been straightforward, Stratychuk reflects on the challenges that shaped the town's growth.

"This was birthed with a lot of pain. There were people who didn't make it in town since the building first went up, because of all of these different factors involving the town's economy, but Niverville somehow just kept growing on its own, and I think that's because of the community."

Stratychuk says that while the second floor is already called for, he looks forward to seeing which professionals take up business on the main floor.

"I love watching people come to our town, build stuff, and create things that weren't there before."

Closure and Rehabilitation of Floodway Bridge Begins

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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Work on the Red River Floodway bridge along Highway 200 is now underway. On October 15, the bridge was closed to traffic and will remain closed until the project's completion

approximately one year from now.

According to Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure (MTI), the existing narrow passage across the bridge makes staged construction impossible to carry out safely, making a full closure necessary.

"Construction will continue throughout the winter months to

meet the project's anticipated completion in fall 2026," says an MTI spokesperson.

Once completed, the bridge should be serviceable for another 40 years. The new bridge design is expected to significantly widen the roadway.

Next to the bridge, a brand-new

parking area is being created for access to the nearby Duff Roblin Parkway Trail.

The highway closure will require approximately 12 months of detours for commuters who regularly use this route. MTI recommends travelling via Highway 75 or Highway 59 in the meantime.

In recent months, MTI made some intersection improvements at Highway 75 and Highway 210, at Highway 210 and Highway 200, as well as at Highway 210 and Highway 59 in order to accommodate anticipated traffic increases in these areas.

The total estimated project cost comes to \$38.5 million.

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Mayor Myron Dyck, Councillor Meghan Beasant, and local historian and teacher Ernie Braun, along with a contingent of Niverville's younger library patrons. **By Brenda Sawatzky**

Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony Held for Niverville Public Library

By Brenda Sawatzky
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It may be small, and it may be humble, but it was the centre of attention on Monday, October 27, as town staff and residents gathered to celebrate Niverville's first public library, a take-one, leave-one facility that went on to open its doors on November 1.

Located at the south end of the Centennial Arena, shelves of donated books now fill a cordoned off section, neatly organized according to genre.

Based on those genres, there is something in these walls to appeal to readers of any age.

Beyond the library walls are tables and chairs for guest use.

"When we want to do projects in this community, you kind of look at what the end goal is," said Mayor Myron Dyck in his remarks. "And you ask yourself, 'Can we do it all in one bite or do we need to do it in a series of bites and steps?' When it comes to a library, we look at the cost of space and operating and putting goods and services into it and say, 'That might be a few years away yet, but we can start

today."

Realizing that books are only a small part of what makes up a public library, Dyck reminded residents that programs that might have functioned here already exist at Niverville's CRRC, just a short walk away.

Those programs include neighbourhood storytime, a ukulele club, and a space for mini-creators. Currently, he adds, the Niverville recreation department runs 68 different programs.

While this library takes its first baby steps towards the hope of one day becoming something more substantial, Councillor Meghan Beasant is the proud parent overseeing its development. Beasant ran her election campaign three years ago on a promise to pursue the feasibility of a public library.

To develop into something more substantial, though, Beasant says there are very specific steps that will need to fall into place. First and foremost, it will require the formation of a library committee of volunteers that operate at arm's length of council.

"If this [library] does well, perhaps we can get interest back in the public to form that library

committee," Beasant says.

All the information and assistance, as well as some funding subsidies, are available through the provincial government's Public Library Services Branch.

In the meantime, council chose to adopt the current take-one, leave-one library model, thus keeping costs minimal and staff requirements low. The goal is to organize a band of volunteers to operate it with only one volunteer needed per shift. Already Beasant says they've gotten commitments from six local volunteers, but they'll need more.

No experience is required, since books won't be officially logged in and out. The hope is that, if books are not returned, other books will be donated in an effort to help replenish stock.

For now, the humble space is already full with more books waiting in boxes, gifted to the new library by generous individuals. To accommodate more displays, council is considering adding rolling shelves that can be stored behind the library's locked doors when it's closed and moved out into the common area when it opens.

Instead of full-fledged library dedicated to Niverville specifically, another future option is a regional library. One year ago, Beasant joined other municipal leaders from around the southeast to discuss interest in such a project.

Attendance was good and interest seemed high, she said. Today, ten people in that group, represent communities as far apart as Niverville, Piney, and Ste. Anne. Together they're creating a proposal to bring back to their individual councils. Should there be a ubiquitous interest, a committee would be formed.

"A regional library doesn't actually have much of a definition," Beasant says. "Is it one location? Is it lots of locations? Is it a mobile vehicle? That's up to the communities involved."

For now, Niverville residents are encouraged to make use of the new lending library. Open hours will be announced on the town's website soon. Beasant is hopeful there'll be enough volunteers available to see it open during daytime, evening, and weekend hours.

"All are welcome," says Beasant. "I'm excited to see where this project goes."

IN BRIEF



Niverville Council Approves Film Studio and Farmer's Market

By Brenda Sawatzky
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Niverville's town council convened for their bimonthly public meeting on October 21. Three conditional use permits were considered along with one variation request.

Two new industrial park businesses were given the green light. The first was an application by Akram Kassem to open a shop that will provide light maintenance work on semitruck vehicles. He suggested to council that there is room for at least six semitrucks on the property at 460 Kuzenko Street.

It was requested by council that any vehicles being stored long-term be contained within an opaque fence.

In the same building, a request was made by a representative from IndigiVision Inc. to open an indoor film studio with outdoor storage for mobile production vehicles.

"We do a lot of Indigenous language and culture preservation work," the rep told council, indicating a focus on live music and television production for Indigenous artists.

The final conditional use application was submitted by the Niverville Chamber of Commerce. Their goal was to gain approval for an outdoor summer market beginning in 2026, running every Friday from 2:00 to 7:00 p.m.

"These events aim to bring together home-based businesses from the community in an outdoor market style setting," CAO Eric King told council. "They also serve to spotlight the Niverville Chamber of Commerce in order to promote visibility for local entrepreneurs and businesses."

The market would be located on a parking lot located between Arena Road and the railway track. The Chamber of Commerce has an experienced market organizer in mind to manage the event next summer.

Finally, Jennifer Neufeld of 195 Ritchot Drive attended council chambers to request a variance on her property's fence height, moving it from a six-foot maximum to nine feet. If approved, it would provide more privacy along the stretch of her yard which borders the new McDonald's drive thru.

All these requests were approved by council.



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Ritchot Creates Programs to Encourage Affordable Housing

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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This month, the RM of Ritchot announced two new initiatives designed to promote more affordable housing options in the municipality.

The first is a plan to sell or lease 1.29 acres of RM-owned land in Ste. Agathe to a developer who can demonstrate a plan to create affordable, supportive, and mixed-income housing.

The second is the launch of \$100,000 in funding through a new initiative called the Multi-Family Sustainable Housing Infrastructure Program (MFSHIP).

This new municipal program is made possible through the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and the federal government's Housing Accelerator Fund.

"We're creating the conditions to get housing built sooner," says CAO



Shane Ray. "By combining land opportunities with targeted infrastructure funding, we're supporting developers and community organizations who are ready to make an impact."

Until the end of this year, the RM will be accepting applications from interested developers for the property in Ste. Agathe, which is bordered by Samoiset Avenue to the east and Highway 75 to the west.

Council will reach the approval stage by the spring of 2026.

"I would fully expect these to be something that blends into the existing community," says EDO Ryan Faucher. "The side-by-side duplex type would be what I would anticipate here. That's really up to the builder or developer to promote. They can come up with any kind of design that fits that multi-family requirement."

According to Faucher, this stretch

of land is among the last available plots eligible for residential development in Ste. Agathe.

Based on a duplex or triplex standard, he sees anywhere from six to eight units fitting into this space.

Further to the release of that land, the MFSHIP is designed for developers of affordable housing builds anywhere in the RM.

Through this fund, a \$5,000 per-unit grant can be obtained, to a

maximum of \$50,000 for a project, and used towards infrastructure costs such as water and sewer installation.

These financial breaks are intended to trickle down to the consumer or renter.

According to CMHC guidelines, developers accessing funding are expected to restrict rental costs of their units to no more than 30 percent of the renter's income.

"Our goal here is to help provide housing to young people who are potentially looking for their first place," Faucher says. "As well, the seniors at the retirement end who may be downsizing and going onto limited pension incomes."

Results from a survey put out by the RM a year ago demonstrate that these demographics are struggling to find affordable local housing.

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Joy Smith Foundation Relocating to Niverville

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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Whenever an organization invested in humanitarian work needs more space in which to expand, it's a good problem to have. That's the case with the Joy Smith Foundation (JSF), and it's bringing the foundation to Niverville.

Currently located in downtown Winnipeg, the JSF works to expose human trafficking and provide aid for victims to escape, heal, and reintegrate into society.

Many of these victims are still children, 13 years of age or younger, having been pulled into sex trafficking via deceptive relationships they stumbled into over the internet.

The problem isn't just happening in someone's else's neighbourhood. According to the foundation, children from every neighbourhood in every community throughout the southeast are being lured every day.

"We believe very strongly that it takes a nation to stop human trafficking, and everybody has to be involved because it touches so many people," says Joy Smith.

The relocation of the JSF to Niverville is strategic. There's room in this part of the region, she says, for expansion well beyond their current office space.

Additionally, in the very near future, JSF anticipates putting shovels in the ground for a much bigger project, producing a first-of-its-kind facility in Canada, and possibly the world.

"We're moving our whole organization out there in the anticipation of the construction of our first National Human Trafficking Education Centre," says Smith.

According to Smith's daughter and foundation CEO, Janet Campbell, the facility will act as both a centre for education and training as well as a safe space for survivors to heal and reintegrate.

But the organization is taking it one step at a time. In February 2026, the JSF headquarters plans to make



Janet Campbell and Joy Smith.

© C/O JOY SMITH FOUNDATION

its move to the second storey of a newly built commercial space on Main Street.

But why Niverville?

"When you have survivors of human trafficking, you need to have a community that wants to help," Smith says. "And we want [the survivors] to be able to integrate back into the community."

Smith, a woman of faith, says that she prayed for guidance in deciding where the headquarters should relocate.

The fact that they were led to Niverville should serve as a big compliment to the community, she adds.

Both Smith and Campbell will have offices at the new location, along with about eight other staffers. Smith hopes to provide an atmosphere where locals can drop by, say hi, and ask questions about the organization.

One JSF staff member, Marilyn Chapman, already resides in Niverville. Others, like Joy, will have to commute. But an eventual move to Niverville isn't off the table for Smith and her husband.

A PANDEMIC OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

At present, the Joy Smith Foundation is the only independent national organization solely dedicated to ending human trafficking.

Since its inception in 2011, they've helped more than 7,000 victims regain their freedom and take back their lives.

Sex trafficking isn't easily infiltrated. Predators prey on children through social media and gaming platforms, posing as people of a similar age. School friends and acquaintances are sometimes paid by predators to collect and provide contact information for vulnerable kids, mostly girls.

It starts off innocently enough, but eventually these adult predators manage to collect enough information, including indiscreet photos shared under pressure, to turn to manipulation and threats.

Finally, victims are lured away from home to provide sexual services to strangers.

The business can net a predator

\$280,000 a year from one victim alone.

"Many people won't talk about it," Smith says of families who've been affected. "They can't speak about what's happened to them. [We remind them that] they are not defined by the criminals that do bad things to them. People can restore their lives, and this is what we want for them."

While education and prevention are among JSF's major mandates, equally imperative is the effort to provide restorative help.

But there's another aspect to human trafficking: forced labour. JSF has recently taken on this cause as well. The organization has funded billboards across the nation to expose the issue and reach victims.

Forced labour is a rapidly growing problem in Canada. Very often, but not always, the victims are recent immigrants. Experienced predators will lure them in with scintillating job opportunities and hard-to-refuse perks, only to put them to work without pay and only the barest essentials

to survive.

Without money, they are stuck working at the employer's mercy.

Recruiters of this kind often seek nannies, live-in caregivers, agricultural or construction workers, and truckers.

"My own parents were immigrants," says Smith. "So when people come to our country, they need to be welcomed and supported. We're the true north, strong and free. At least, that's what we're supposed to be."

SERENDIPITOUS OCCURRENCE

Once a schoolteacher, Smith turned to the political arena when she decided to work towards the creation of new Canadian laws to protect children from sexual predators.

She was first elected to Manitoba's Legislative Assembly and eventually moved to the House of Commons in Ottawa. It took years of dedicated work in both arenas to gain traction and be taken seriously.

Eventually, these efforts resulted in the passage of two federal bills.

Even so, the task remains daunting considering the magnitude of the crime. But ongoing miracles, Smith says, keep pushing her forward.

A serendipitous occurrence was when her daughter decided to quit her job and take the helm at JSF.

"I'm 78 and I was really worried about having to shut down the foundation," Smith admits. "Janet, who was senior vice president of a huge company, taking care of all of Canada and the U.S., came to me and said, 'Mom, I'm tired of making rich men and women richer. I want to do something meaningful with my life.'"

This was the impetus by which the foundation spread across the country.

Since that time, the organization has built important relationships with Canadian law enforcement and border control officers, all working towards a common goal.

Now, she says, volunteers are needed.

"We're spread so thin. We need more and more people with the growing crime rates in our country."

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Phone Scams: How to Recognize Them and Protect Yourself

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER
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If you own a phone, whether a land-line or mobile device, there's a high likelihood you've been targeted by scammers.

You know the ones. The stranger who texts and then attempts to continue the conversation when you tell them they have the wrong number. The credit card company that calls to inform you about unusual charges. The Canada Post parcel that can't be delivered unless you provide more information.

And in the time it's taken to list those few, new scams are being fabricated and perpetrated.

If you think you can't fall victim, think again. Digital crime now ranks as one of the most profitable forms of theft.

"According to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre, between January 1 and June 30, 2024, there have been 15,941 reported victims of fraud in Canada, with \$284 million lost to fraudulent activity," states the Canada Safety Council website. "Given the nature of cybercrime, it is likely that instances are underreported due to victims feeling shame at having been ensnared."¹

Further, they say, over 350,000 cybercrimes were reported to police across Canada in 2023, a jump of 14 percent from the previous year.

It all begins with accessing your personal data, primarily your contact information. Every time an organization with which you're affiliated experiences a data breach, your personal information falls prey to someone with nefarious intentions.



DEPOSITPHOTOS

Hearing about new data breaches, these days, is almost as common as hearing about new scams. In the past year alone, Google, Apple, Facebook, WestJet, Canada Revenue Agency, and the federal government are among those who've been hit.

Closer to home, cybersecurity breaches have been reported by the Niverville Credit Union, various school divisions, as well as the RM of Ritchot.

SCAM EXPERIENCES

Countless locals are hit by phishing scams on a daily basis. Phishing is a term used to describe solicitation by

a scammer who poses as a legitimate business or organization.

In the last two months, Stacy McClinton says she's received at least a half-dozen fake job offers by text from someone posing as an HR rep from a popular online job search site.

"I'm not surprised scammers are using fraudulent job listings to collect information, and it makes sense that these scams have increased," McClinton says. "People are eager for new [job] opportunities."

She's never fallen for one, she says, but she assumes they might be out to trick people into sending money for training, equipment, or processing

fees, since most of the job offers are for work-from-home positions.

"It's unfortunate that scammers are using the hope of employment to prey on people who are genuinely looking for work," says McClinton. "In today's economy, where finding employment can be challenging, these tactics exploit vulnerability and trust, taking advantage of individuals at a moment when they are feeling hopeful and motivated."

For Rozz Nicole, dealing with phone scams has become a regular part of her routine.

"Yesterday I received a phone call and the person on the other end

advised me they were calling from WestJet Mastercard Rewards Fraud Centre," Nicole says. "It sounded very official to begin with. They rattled off my email address and my home address, which I thought was weird, but it was all correct. I checked the phone number on my call display and it matched the customer service number on the back of my WestJet card."

Citing fraudulent charges on her credit card, they indicated that a new one would be issued. All she had to do was verify, over the phone, the numbers on her existing card. That's when she knew it was a scam and promptly hung up.

"What if this is done to an elderly person that doesn't catch on and recites their credit card information," says Nicole. "The call sounded so legit, until they made some little mistakes."

To prevent this kind of thing, she adds, legitimate businesses and organizations need to do a better job of protecting the personal information they collect.

Alisha Sobering received a phone call from someone posing as a Google representative, wanting to sell her a subscription to the voice recognition option which would allow her to run online searches by voice command.

"It was presented as a company that works with the voice recognition for Bixby, Alexa, and Google," Sobering says. "I didn't give any payment info, but they did ask questions, trying to verify my identity."

EXPERT ADVICE

Michael Jensen of Ste. Agathe resident is an award-winning cybersecurity expert. Jensen has worked in

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cybersecurity for the federal government, including Canada's defence department.

"I wish we weren't living in such scary times," says Jensen. "I wish my profession didn't mean that I had to be constantly warning people of all the different ways that criminals are trying to steal from them. But the truth is that there is a lot of crime going on between phone scams and cyberactivity and there is a lot that people need to know in order to stay vigilant and keep themselves secure."

When it comes to phone scams, Jensen says perpetrators are mostly after money, not personal data. If you receive surveys or QR codes by text, then the goal is likely to get your personal data—data which might help reveal passwords.

It's difficult to make oneself less of a target for phone criminals, but most modern cellphones do have a way to report a suspicious call as a scam.

"The more people take the time to do this, the more it helps everybody," says Jensen. "You may have received a call from a number and your phone says 'Suspected Fraud.' This is because enough people have marked the call as a scam so the phone companies place that call into a suspected fraud category to warn recipients."

As well, he encourages people to report suspected scams to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre in order to red-flag them with the appropriate authorities.

There's a number of key things people can listen for in order to determine whether the call or text they're receiving is a scam.

These include requests for personal information. There might be a sense of urgency to act or the use of threatening language. Some make demands for immediate payment of an outstanding bill or suggest unusual payment requests like gift cards, wire transfers, or cryptocurrency. All of these are red flags.

Always be wary of unsolicited offers of prizes, estate inheritances, or easy money to be made.

You can protect yourself by not answering any calls from numbers you don't recognize. If it's an unfamiliar number, let it go to voicemail.

Use the call-blocking services offered by your cell service provider.

If you answer and the caller

claims to be from a bank or agency you deal with, hang up and call them back using the number listed on their website.

Never, ever, give out personal information over the phone, such as credit card details, personal identification numbers, or passwords.

Finally, practice scepticism with every incoming call from an unfamiliar number.

If you've ever received a scam call or text from a phone number with a local area code, or even a number that's familiar to you, it's called number-spoofing and it uses a technology called Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP).

Jensen says VoIP has been around for decades and was created for very legitimate uses.

VoIP allows employees who work remotely to make calls from their cellphone. It shows up on the recipient's call display as the company number. This feature allows survey companies to reach out to clients using the number of the company who hired them in order to ensure client engagement.

"It's not a difficult thing to do with the right equipment," says Jensen. "Unfortunately, scammers tend to take good tools and use them for bad."

New technologies and techniques keep upping the deception game.

For this article, Jensen covers four primary scams that everyone should be aware of.

1. VOICE-CLONING

Probably one of the scariest scams of late involves voice-cloning technology.

Made possible through AI, voice-cloning is an effective way for scammers to disguise their voice to sound like someone's family member or familiar friend.

It's been used to trick grandparents into believing they're having a phone conversation with their grandchild when in fact it's a complete stranger.

Typically, when they call, the pseudo-grandchild is in desperate straits, perhaps needing bail money after a drunk-driving incident has landed them in jail.

It's also been reportedly used as a tool to gain quick ransom money from someone when a would-be abductor claims to have their family member. The call comes in from what appears to be the abductee's cellphone number and the loved one's

voice is heard pleading in the background.

Oftentimes these calls are strategically placed late at night or in the wee hours of the morning, when the victim is tired and more likely to worry.

According to Jensen, voice-cloning takes just seconds for a skilled person to accomplish. A little research on the social media pages of the person whose voice they've cloned then leads the perpetrator to names of family members they can target.

"The best tip I have for this scam is for families to talk openly and agree on a safety phrase to prove that the person calling is real," says Jensen. "It should be more than a single word. It could be like, 'There just aren't any rock bands like Queen anymore.' Something that the family will remember but can't be easily googled about them."

If the suspicious caller can't provide the agreed-upon phrase, tell them you'll hang up and call them back. When you call directly, you'll reach the real cellphone and the real owner.

2. PIG-BUTCHERING SCAMS

When you receive a random text from someone who appears to have the wrong number, there's nothing random about it.

This scam doesn't hide behind soft euphemisms. It's called pig-butchering because they're fattening the proverbial pig before the kill.

In real life, the caller's goal is to gain your trust by establishing a relationship with you, spend time grooming you, and then, eventually, convince you to invest in a fake opportunity.

"This is a huge scam that is being mostly perpetrated from countries like China, Cambodia, and Myanmar, and they're targeting Canadians at an alarming rate. It's extremely successful and they are very tightly controlled operations. In 2024, it was estimated that this scam led to the theft of \$75 billion U.S. over four years. And what is even more tragic is that many of the people who are texting you are likely human slaves who were kidnapped and are being forced to work in compounds. There are many stories of people who accepted jobs to work in Myanmar or China only to be kidnapped and forced into these terrible operations where they are given multiple cellphones and call lists and are expected to make quotas."

Jensen says that these calls or texts should always be reported on the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre's site. It might very well be the only way for these people to regain their freedom.

3. QR CODE SCAMS

QR codes are a recognized tool used by many businesses and organizations to bring people to their websites quickly and effectively.

Restaurants use them to take you to their online menus. They appear on parking meters to help you pay with ease.

The ease of this technology, of course, isn't lost on scammers. QR codes can be sent via text from what appears to be a legitimate company for a legitimate purpose. Falsified QR code stickers are beginning to appear in bus terminals, doctor's offices, and on parking meters.

Before you know it, you've loaded a dangerous website onto your phone.

"My recommendation is to use QR codes as little as possible. Just type out the correct website address, which is often listed near the QR code anyway," says Jensen. "This is less convenient, but scam artists rely on your need for convenience in order to successfully scam you. Often just taking a few extra seconds can be the difference between being scammed and being safe."

4. SURVEY SCAMS

Most people tend to find phone surveys annoying. Still, Jensen says, it's been an effective tool for scammers.

Generally speaking, survey requests become more frequent around elections or major news events.

"When it's a scam, the entire goal is to determine if your phone number is active and also to pepper in questions that might be used later in order to scam you on a follow-up scam. Survey scams are rarely about the big score and more about reconnaissance for setting up a larger scam later."

The best tip Jensen has is to be very partial to the surveys you fill out, ensuring their legitimacy before you take part.

REFERENCE

¹ "Cybercrime on the Rise," Canada Safety Council. October 31, 2024 (<https://canadasafetycouncil.org/cybercrime-on-the-rise>).

CITIZEN POLL

Have you, or someone you may know, ever been the victim of a phone scam?

☐ Yes. Although it can be hard to admit, I have lost money to a phone scam, or at least I know someone who has.

☐ No. Although I have received suspicious calls or texts, I have yet to fall prey to these kinds of scammers.

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

In the ongoing saga of Canada's postal service strike, which side are you more likely to support?

Postal workers. These public employees provide an essential service that most people rely on to one degree or another. Let's negotiate fairly to get them back on the job.

18%

Canada Post. It isn't sustainable to operate the postal service at such a large perpetual deficit, bankrolled by the federal government. Big changes are needed to keep Canada Post solvent and competitive.

82%

YOUR COMMENTS:

I have a very hard time sympathizing with postal workers who already have great wages and benefits, particularly given that it is not a particularly high-skilled job. The issue with this union in particular is that there is no consideration for reality in their stance, ever... they always want more and nothing is ever good enough. Their employer is on the brink of bankruptcy and somehow they feel that warrants a massive raise for themselves. It seems incredibly tone deaf to somehow demand more and play the victim when all other signs say otherwise. I for one used to do a lot of mailing, however after this past year where Canada Post has been completely undependable. Myself and MANY others have now found alternatives and no longer have much need for the postal system. It's a shame that they continue to only see their own selfish needs and are incapable of seeing the writing on the wall. They are going to strike themselves into irrelevancy and many of them will likely lose their jobs after this exercise that is only forcing people to find alternative ways to take care of their needs. They are driving customers (and revenue) away and in many ways being their own worst enemy. For the lucky few who get to keep their jobs, they may get the raise they want. For the rest, they may find themselves looking for a job in the private sector where, of course, reality is something that has to be acknowledged.

Sports & Recreation

Nighthawks Continue Dominant Start

By Bill Burfoot

It would be an understatement to say that the Niverville Nighthawks are off to a fantastic start to the 2025–2026 season.

The team, currently on an eight-game winning streak, sits atop the MJHL standings with a 14–1–0 record. Not only that, but they're ranked the third best Junior A team in all of Canada.

OCTOBER 10 NEEPAWA TITANS, AWAY

Calyb Moore opened the scoring just 38 seconds into the game, knocking home a loose puck in the crease for the early lead. Ryken Arran picked up the primary assist, collecting his first point of the season.

The Nighthawks struck again later in the period when Merik Boles won a puck battle behind the Titans net and fed Hayden Wheddon in front, who flipped the puck past Neepawa goaltender Mathew Michta to make it 2–0.

That score held through the end of the first period, despite Neepawa outshooting Niverville 15–8. Goaltender Austin Dubinsky was sharp, shutting the door on the Titans.

Early in the second, captain Adam Vigfusson made an immediate impact after serving a penalty. Moments after stepping out of the box, he carried the puck into the offensive zone and dropped it to Wheddon. The initial shot was blocked, but the puck bounced right back to Vigfusson, who buried it to extend the lead.

Neepawa finally solved Dubinsky midway through the second frame. After winning a faceoff in the Nighthawks' zone, Keenan Skrupa's point shot was blocked, but Ty Kirk jumped on the rebound and beat Dubinsky to cut the lead to 3–1.

With a chance to swing momentum on the power play, Neepawa instead saw the game slip further away. Niverville forward John Scott blocked a shot at his own blue line,



The Nighthawks are on a roll, having lost only one game since the start of the season.

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broke in alone, and lifted a backhand over Michta's blocker to restore the three-goal cushion.

Niverville didn't let up in the third period. Neepawa had taken a late penalty in the second and the Nighthawks capitalized on the ensuing power play when Scott found Loik Leduc in stride. Leduc ripped a shot from the left circle over the shoulder of Michta to make it 5–1.

Scott wasn't done. He picked up his second goal and third point of the night when Luke Mackenzie fed him in the right circle. Scott snapped a quick shot past Michta.

The scoring was again capped off by the line of Wheddon and Boles. Thomas Phillips started the play, sending the puck to Boles behind the Neepawa net, and Boles once again found Wheddon in front for his second of the night.

Earlier in the day, the Nighthawks made a trade, acquiring forward Parker Rolston from the Bonnyville Pontiacs of the AJHL in exchange for a player development fee.

OCTOBER 12 DAUPHIN KINGS, HOME

Two of the MJHL's hottest teams collided Sunday afternoon at the CRRC

in Niverville—and when the dust settled, the Dauphin Kings had the upper hand.

The opening period saw the two teams trading chances, with goaltenders Dubinsky and Dauphin's Bryson Yaschyshyn making big saves to keep the game scoreless.

The deadlock was finally broken late in the first, when Leduc delivered a cross-crease pass to Panzer on the power play, who redirected the puck past Yaschyshyn to establish a 1–0 Nighthawks lead.

Just 27 seconds into the second period, a Madden Murray shot redirected to Havryil Simchuk at the side of the crease. He tucked it in to tie the game.

Dauphin took control from there. Early in the third, Cam Jansa fired a quick shot through Dubinsky's legs to give the Kings their first lead of the afternoon.

Niverville struggled to generate much momentum in the final frame, and when they did Yaschyshyn stood tall.

A beautiful individual effort from Murray extended Dauphin's lead midway through the period, as he moved around a Nighthawk defender at the blue line, skated in

on Dubinsky, and outwaited the sprawling netminder to make it 3–1.

Ash Mitchelmore and Quinten Fisk added late markers to cap a four-goal third period and seal the Kings' sixth straight win.

After the game, Nighthawks head coach Dwight Hirst didn't sugarcoat his team's performance.

"Credit the Dauphin Kings," Hirst said. "They came into our building and put the work boots on and kicked us to the ground. We didn't have a response in pace or compete... You can't play short-handed in this league and expect to win every night," he added. "Ultimately we had too many passengers on a bus going in the wrong direction tonight—and if that happens, you aren't going to win."

OCTOBER 15 WINNIPEG MONARCHS, HOME

The Nighthawks looked to bounce back Wednesday night while hosting the struggling Winnipeg Monarchs. Although the game looked like a mismatch on paper, the visitors made Niverville earn every inch.

Niverville opened the scoring just six minutes into the first period when Phillips connected with

Wheddon on a perfect cross-ice feed. Wheddon, parked at the side of the net, redirected the puck past Monarchs goaltender Austin Ball for his first of two goals on the night.

The Nighthawks extended their lead late in the first while on the power play. Once again, it was Wheddon doing the damage—and he did it from the same spot, finishing off a pass from Vigfusson.

After a scoreless second period, the situation grew tense for the home team. A double-minor for high-sticking, assessed to Jase Konecsni, gave the Monarchs a four-minute power play opportunity—and they capitalized early in the third. Winnipeg cut the lead in half when Andre Cho tipped a Nathan Forster shot past Niverville goaltender Ben Chornomydz.

Just 37 seconds later, newcomer Idris Alameddine made a great first impression on his new team with a stunning solo effort. Making his Monarchs debut, Alameddine carried the puck from his own end, split the Nighthawks' defence, and beat Chornomydz five-hole to tie the game at two.

But the Nighthawks' top line of Boles, Vigfusson, and Wheddon wasn't done. Following a failed Monarchs clearing attempt, Wheddon fed Boles behind the net, who quickly found Vigfusson in the slot. Vigfusson wasted no time snapping a shot past Ball for what proved to be the game-winner.

OCTOBER 18 SELKIRK STEELERS, HOME

In the first meeting of the season between these two top clubs, the Nighthawks came out flying, controlling much of the play in the opening frame with a 22–9 shot advantage.

Despite the early onslaught, Selkirk goaltender Ethan Sawyer kept his team in the game with a sensational first-period performance.

Niverville finally broke through on a power play near the midway point of the period. Steelers



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forward Kayden Turner was assessed a five-minute major for checking from behind after a dangerous collision with Vigfusson, who had to be helped off the ice and did not return.

Mackenzie, who took Vigfusson's place on the top power play unit, capitalized on the man advantage, knocking home a loose puck in front to give Niverville a 1-0 lead.

Early in the second period, Moore found a streaking Boles moving through the slot. Boles quickly sent a feed across to Wheddon just below the left circle, and he lifted a shot over a sprawling Sawyer to make it 2-0.

Selkirk pushed back in the third period. The league's leading scorer, Rohan Guevarra, drove hard, forcing a rebound that Remy Hlady buried past Dubinsky to cut the lead in half with just over eight minutes to play.

A pair of Niverville delay-of-game penalties gave Selkirk a two-man advantage late in the frame. After a sequence of key saves from Dubinsky, Hlady collected the puck behind the net and fed a pass out front to Steelers captain Owen Branson, who tapped it from the crease to tie the game 2-2.

In overtime, a tripping penalty to Lincoln Ponce gave Niverville a chance, and this time they made it count. Phillips tried to thread a pass to a streaking Dawson Zeller, but the puck caromed off a Selkirk defender's skate and snuck past Sawyer.

After the game, Hirst was far more pleased with his team's performance than previous matchups.

"The team responded in the right way tonight," said Hirst. "I thought we had a lot of opportunities tonight, but their goaltender Sawyer stood on his head... I thought our PK did a great job when we went down on five-on-three to give us a chance to get into overtime and win at home."

He also commended his team's depth after losing Vigfusson early in the game.

"When you lose a guy like Adam Vigfusson in that situation, especially early on, you don't really replace a guy like him, but it is a testament to the depth we've got upfront that guys can step into that role and contribute."

OCTOBER 19 NEEPAWA TITANS, HOME

Fresh off a hard-fought, emotional overtime win over the Steelers, the Nighthawks battled through fatigue to secure their third consecutive victory.

Despite the quick turnaround between games, Niverville opened the scoring early, just as they had the night before. Zeller's shot in the slot deflected off a Titan defender and landed perfectly for Kole Mears, who pounced on the loose puck and fired it past Neepawa netminder Zach Burleigh to take the early lead.

Burleigh was solid throughout the game, making 35 saves on 38 shots. However, the Nighthawks' line of Scott, Arran, and Max Dowse provided a spark for the team. The trio combined for a key goal early in the second period when Scott found Arran streaking down the left wall. Arran's quick shot rang off the inside of the post.

Midway through the period, Dowse nearly added to the Nighthawks' advantage when his shot from the slot rang off the crossbar.

But late in the second, Arran returned the favour to Scott, stealing the puck near centre ice and feeding Scott, who made a chipped the puck past a defender before sliding it between Burleigh's legs with just 20 seconds left.

"We needed that energy, especially in a game where we were coming off a quick turnaround," said Hirst. "That line brought it tonight. They played with energy, and they got key goals that put us in a good spot."

The Titans, however, came out in the third period with the momentum of a well-rested team. Just 34 seconds in, Jackson Kohut's shot from the point was deflected by Kyle Weisgarber past Nighthawks goalie Austin Dubinsky to make it 3-1.

Midway through the period, Neepawa narrowed the gap further when Tyler Wamboldt set up Talen Wallis, who then fed a quick return pass to Wamboldt, putting him in alone. Wamboldt calmly outwaited Dubinsky and slid the puck under his arm.

With time winding down and the Neepawa net empty, the Nighthawks had a chance to seal the victory but failed to capitalize. That would come back to haunt them when Keenan Skrupa took a drop pass from Logan

Paquette and rifled a wrist shot past Dubinsky to tie the game with 32 seconds left, sending it to overtime.

The extra frame settled nothing, forcing the game to a shootout.

Loik Leduc and Skrupa both scored for their respective teams.

However, after both goalies stopped the next two shooters, Niverville's John Scott stepped up and fired a shot past Burleigh blocker-side to put the Nighthawks ahead.

OCTOBER 24 STEINBACH PISTONS, HOME

In this battle with their closest East Division rival, Niverville got on the board early when Jaden Mah carried the puck into the Steinbach zone and found Panzer streaking toward the front of the net. Panzer buried it past Pistons goaltender Chris Quizi for a 1-0 lead.

Moments later, the game came to a halt after a frightening incident. Pistons forward Zhenya Miles was hit from behind by Scott, and he stayed down for close to 40 minutes. Both teams' trainers attended to Miles until paramedics arrived. He was then transported to hospital for precautionary evaluation.

Following the lengthy delay, both teams struggled to regain momentum.

But midway through the frame, Niverville doubled their lead when Rolston scored his first goal as a Nighthawk. Leduc made a beautiful move around a defender and fed Rolston at the top of the crease for the tap-in.

Moments later, Wheddon made it 3-0. Collecting a loose puck behind the Steinbach net, he circled to the bottom of the right faceoff circle and ripped a shot over Quizi's glove.

Steinbach responded just over a minute later when Ryan McDonald finished off a Logan Mehl feed on a two-on-one rush, beating Dubinsky blocker side to cut the deficit.

Dubinsky stood tall the rest of the way, stopping 32 of 33 shots to backstop Niverville to their fourth straight win.

OCTOBER 25 STEINBACH PISTONS, AWAY

For the second straight night, the Nighthawks got the better of the Pistons. Niverville

came out flying in the opening frame, controlling much of the play and outshooting Steinbach 20-7. Their pressure paid off early when Moore picked off a pass at his own blue line, raced into the Pistons' zone, and fired a shot past Quizi.

Late in the period, Niverville doubled their lead as Zeller picked up the puck on the wall, moved behind the Pistons net, then set up Mears in front of the net. Mears tucked home his first of the night to give the visitors a 2-0 edge heading into intermission.

In the second, Cullen Ingebritson found room on the left side, moved into the Nighthawks zone, and found a streaking William Picklyk in the slot, who snapped a shot under the glove of Dubinsky to get the Pistons on the board.

Less than a minute later and with the home crowd still buzzing, Brody Green tied the game with a quick release off a faceoff.

However, the Nighthawks regained the lead before the period ended when a Leduc shot from the point deflected off Pistons defenceman Rory Gilmour and past Quizi, re-establishing Niverville's advantage.

The Nighthawks killed off an early penalty to start the third, then struck again. Wheddon found open ice in the slot between a pair of Pistons defencemen and lifted his shot over Quizi.

The Pistons answered back on the power play just three minutes later when Evan Gradt's point shot redirected past a screened Dubinsky to make it 4-3.

The back-and-forth game only got more intense as the game wore on.

Midway through the period, Niverville capitalized on a turnover by Quizi behind the net, who lost the puck in his skates. Zeller pounced on the loose puck and fed Mears in front for his second of the night, extending the lead.

With under four minutes to play, the Nighthawks failed to clear their zone, allowing Brett Kaiser to find Green wide open in front of the Nighthawks net. Green spun, and instead of shooting found Gradt at the side of the net. Gradt buried his second of the contest and gave the Pistons life.

(continued on page 19)



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NOVEMBER 9 @ 3:00 P.M.



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(continued from page 17)

Despite a strong late push, the Pistons couldn't find the equalizer and the Nighthawks held on for the 5-4 victory.

OCTOBER 28 SELKIRK STEELERS, AWAY

Midway through the first period of this contest with the league-leading Selkirk Steelers, Nighthawks forward Arran got hooked while on a breakaway, earning a penalty shot. Arran then beat Steelers goaltender Ethan Sawyer blocker-side.

Late in the period, the Nighthawks' top line struck on the power play. Vigfusson worked the puck to Wheddon down low. Wheddon slid a pass through the slot to a waiting Boles, who buried a glove-side shot on Sawyer to make it 2-0 heading into the intermission.

Selkirk had a golden chance early in the second to cut the deficit when Evan Mayer found himself alone in front, but Dubinsky sprawled across the crease to rob him with a desperate arm save.

That stop proved pivotal. Moments later, Moore had his shot stopped by Sawyer, but Mears snapped home the rebound home for his third goal in two games.

Tensions flared soon after when a fight broke out between Zeller and Selkirk's Carson Brooks. The incident led to both players receiving game misconducts.

However, Brooks's instigating penalty gave Niverville another power play.

It was a costly penalty, as Mah found some space in the right circle before ripping home his first MJHL goal to make it 4-0.

The Steelers finally broke through in the dying seconds of the second period, when Wyatt Witham beat Dubinsky with less than a second remaining to make it 4-1 after two periods.

The third period remained scoreless, sealing this statement victory for the Nighthawks.

NOVEMBER 1 NORTHERN MANITOBA BLIZZARD, HOME

After a pair of big road wins, the Nighthawks returned to the CRRC to take care of businesses versus the Northern Manitoba Blizzard.

It didn't take long for Niverville to strike. Arran, who

had scored on a penalty shot in the team's victory over Selkirk earlier in the week, was awarded another penalty shot against the Blizzard. This time, he slid a backhand past Nick Kunyk to give the home team a 1-0 lead.

Minutes later, Moore doubled the advantage, finding a loose puck in the left circle and snapping a shot over the glove of Kunyk.

The two-goal lead was short-lived, though. Just 14 seconds later, Blizzard captain Kelton Kellerman's point shot found its way through traffic and past Nighthawks netminder Chornomydz, cutting the lead in half.

Northern Manitoba then tied the game midway through the period when Kayne Pawlick stole the puck at the Nighthawks' blue line, broke in on a two-on-one, and fired a shot to silence the CRRC crowd.

But late in the frame, Vigfusson restored the lead with a beautiful individual effort. Carrying the puck from the corner, he weaved through defenders before lifting a backhand past Kunyk to make it 3-2.

The Nighthawks took control late in the second period when Leduc split the Blizzard defence and attempted a pass that deflected off a stick and forced Kunyk into a tough save. The rebound popped out to Parker Carrier, who buried it from in tight to extend the lead.

In the third, Niverville put the game out of reach as Boles and Wheddon added goals.

"We came out pretty quick and pretty hungry, but we kind of let them get back into the hockey game," said Hirst. "When you get off to the start we have, and have the record we have, you're going to have teams that want to take you down, so you have to be prepared for their best every single night."

NOVEMBER 2 DAUPHIN KINGS, HOME

This Sunday afternoon match-up carried extra weight for the Nighthawks, who came in with just one blemish on their otherwise perfect record: a 5-1 loss to Dauphin back on October 12. Since that setback, Niverville had rattled off seven straight victories.

In what felt like a playoff game from start to finish, both teams locked down defensively.

"I think that's just a game where you stick with the process and you just keep working it until finally it comes through," said Hirst. "That's a game that not only for fans, but also coaches, reminds me why we do what we do."

Dauphin opened the scoring six minutes into the first period. As Leduc tried to carry the puck out from behind his own net, it slipped free to Dauphin's Ethan Stewart, who snapped a shot past goaltender Dubinsky to make it 1-0.

That lead held up for the majority of the game.

Both teams traded chances through the next two periods, with Dauphin maintaining their slim lead until late in the third.

With just over five minutes left in regulation, the Kings looked poised to extend their lead after a Nighthawks penalty put them on the power play. But the momentum instead swung dramatically in Niverville's favour.

Zeller, celebrating his twentieth birthday, stripped the puck from Dauphin's Maden Murray at the Nighthawks' blue line and raced in alone. He made no mistake, beating goaltender Justin Perreault to tie the game short-handed and ignite the home crowd.

"We preach so much in practice about the active stick and stick on puck, and Dawson did exactly that," said Hirst. "He stole the puck and he was gone."

With the energy still buzzing, Niverville's top line went to work. After both Vigfusson and Wheddon's shot attempts were blocked from in close, a bouncing puck found its way to Boles at the top of the crease, who batted a backhand past Perreault for the game-winner.

"Part of our game plan is getting to the hard area in front of the net," Hirst said. "And what does it end up being? The game-winning goal being scored from in the crease. It's being rewarded for sticking with the process."

The win was Niverville's eighth in a row, a franchise best.

"I'm sure to the fans it looked like a tight-checking affair, and to us that's what a playoff game looks like," Hirst added. "There's a lot of good things that came out of tonight's game—not just the win, but recognizing what those games feel like as a player."

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Community Champion: Michael Oman

By Brenda Sawatzky
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER
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If the greatness of a community is best measured by the selflessness of its members, then the town of St. Adolphe is in good shape. And it's true, at least if resident Michael Oman has anything to do with it.

For the past 15 years, Oman has poured his heart, and virtually every minute of spare time, into volunteering towards community initiatives. And if sports opportunities don't exist in St. Adolphe, he's not afraid to create them.

Oman has been the face of the St. Adolphe badminton club for years. What started as a few adults playing on occasion is now an active club with 90 to 110 participants.

According to Danielle Peters, the RM's community

engagement coordinator, Oman's program is both inclusive and multigenerational.

"It fosters a safe and welcoming environment for everybody," says Peters. "We help with the registration, but it's all him really."

Oman collects a membership fee from attendees, taking nothing for himself. The fee covers liability insurance and new equipment.

Twice per week, he's there to set up and take down nets as well as instruct and coach the many schoolkids who attend.

So valued are volunteers like Oman that Ritchot Recreation nominated him for the Recreation Manitoba awards.

"Mike is a good friend of Ritchot Recreation," Peters says. "He's a dedicated St. Adolphe resident and is very active in the community. He's a community leader who

consistently demonstrates his passion for recreation and community development."

According to Peters, if something needs improvement in the community, Oman is pretty quick to point it out and share ideas on how it could be done better.

For Oman, being a community member means making an investment in it. It's an ethic his father demonstrated when Oman was a child growing up in Pine Falls.

"He was involved in everything," Oman says, "whether it was the volunteer fire department, town council, the snowmobile club, or the arena and managing the hockey teams."

By the time Oman was a teenager, he too was volunteering as a coach for kids sports and refereeing.

When Oman moved to St. Adolphe with his wife and

sons, his life revolved around sports, coaching as many as three hockey teams at a time as well as little league baseball.

When his sons' interests turned to badminton, Oman set to work developing a competitive and skill-building club in town, open to all skill levels. The sport took off such that both the winter and summer clubs now fill up in a hurry.

Oman says he gets only a one-month break from it every year. That's in September.

With this level of dedication, it's hard to imagine that any significant compensation comes from it. But Oman says his reward is watching students in his program turn their skill levels around.

"A lot of the kids aren't jocks," he says. "They come and realize, 'Hey, this is fun.' But confidence-wise, they don't really have it yet. Then

they improve and they end up in gym class and their game is on. We've had a provincial champ or two every year from this community."

It's also thanks to Oman that athletes from around the province are discovering St. Adolphe, in large part due to the 18-hole disc golf course. It was a sport Oman and his wife discovered during the pandemic years.

"The great part about this game, compared to regular golf, is it's free to play. You don't have to book a tee time. You don't have to rent a cart or pay green fees. You just show up and play."

Oman found just the right acreage along the riverside in the St. Adolphe Park. The problem was that the park had become badly overgrown and neglected. Nothing existed here except a poorly utilized

walking trail.

When he proposed the project to Ritchot Rec, they fully got behind the idea.

"I took all the posts off my kids' trampoline, pounded them in the ground, and put flags on them," he says. "My mom makes all my flags for me. I used my dad's riding mower and cut trails through the grass and weed-whacked to make greens and tee pads."

Eventually, official tee baskets arrived thanks to the RM's efforts. Between Oman and the public works department, the course is now one of the most fun and challenging ones around, used by individuals and leagues from all over.

Oman says it's easy to see where improvements could be made to give the St. Adolphe course an edge. He's played the course himself at least 200 times in the last ten months.

Alpha Golf Tees Up High-End Simulator

By Brenda Sawatzky
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If you're considering hanging up your clubs for the season, you might want to reconsider. In the coming weeks, Niverville will welcome Alpha Golf, an indoor simulated golf experience that's almost as realistic as an outdoor course.

Located at 501 Pauls Street in the industrial park, the private golf lounge offers space for anywhere between one to four people. The room contains \$50,000 worth of golf simulator equipment, a couch, a bar, and bar stools. There's also a big-screen TV.

Alan Castell and Niverville native Faron Trippier are the venture's co-owners.

"Faron wasn't a golfer and, until four years ago, neither was I," Castell muses. "But I had a scholarship in volleyball

and football in college. So when I got into golf, it was really with a religious fervour so I could beat my friends."

Castell's competitive spirit drove him to install a golf simulator in his backyard.

He and Trippier soon saw the value in having a private practice space where one's swing wasn't being scrutinized by players of higher skill levels.

The idea of Alpha Golf was born in no time.

"This is about the golf," Castell says. "We're not about the noise, the drinks, or the social atmosphere. This is for people that want to learn or practice."

It's also for friends who want to show up and enjoy a casual game in half the time.

Putting his expertise in technology to good use, Castell settled on an Asian manufacturer called PGM. The simulator boasts a massive 18-foot



Alan Castell, one of the owners of Alpha Golf.

© C/O ALPHA GOLF

curved screen.

"Most screens are about two-thirds of this size and they're flat," Castell says.

The high-tech equipment allows for virtually no latency between when you hit the ball and see it in action.

Mounted to the ceiling are cameras that record the shot and instantly communicate

the details to the system.

"They record at 2,000 frames per second, so it's very realistic. It will show you your swing path and your face path and the way the ball went."

Following a shot, you can see the ball's speed, carry, distance, and launch angle.

Setup of the tee and ball are automated. The tee and

ball rise up from beneath the floor when the player's ready. Near the player's feet is a foot programmer, used to adjust tee height and other features.

After the screen is struck, the ball rolls into a trough and back into a holding container.

Nearby, a console with a touchscreen monitor allows users to fully customize their experience. There are literally hundreds of top-rated courses from around the world available by simulation. Players can also choose their difficulty level and game mode—like, for instance, golf scramble.

Mounted to the side of the console is a third camera that allows players to pause and play back their shots.

"If there was a golf pro that wanted to bring somebody in for training, this gives them the ability to see what the shots look like."

The floor of the simulator is set up with three terrain options—fairway, rough, and sand.

Golfers will bring their own clubs, although rentals will be available if needed.

Castell and Trippier are working to get licensing to allow users to bring their own alcohol. They hope to provide QR codes in the lounge for every Niverville restaurant should users get hungry midgame.

Once open, Castell says the lounge will be available for around-the-clock use, every day of the week. This way shift workers can enjoy a little down time in the lounge when their shift is through.

The Alpha Golf website will soon be up and ready to take online bookings. The cost to use the lounge will be \$50 per hour.

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Mike McAulay is taking a leadership role of the Canada West at this year's Junior A World Challenge.

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Nighthawks GM to Represent Canada West at Junior A World Challenge

By Bill Burfoot

The Niverville Nighthawks will have a strong presence on the international stage this December, as the team's general manager and director of scouting, Mike McAulay, has been named Director of Operations for Team Canada West at the upcoming 2025 World Junior A Challenge.

The announcement was made by Hockey Canada, confirming McAulay's role in helping assemble and support one of Canada's two national entries in the tournament.

The event is set to take place December 7-13 at the Colisée Vidéotron in Trois-Rivières, Québec.

Also joining McAulay from the MJHL is Josh Gratton, head coach and general manager of the Winnipeg Blues, who will serve as an assistant coach.

McAulay, who has helped lead the Nighthawks since their inception in the MJHL in 2022, calls the opportunity special.

"It's a tremendous honour to be a part of Hockey Canada," McAulay says. "Any time you can pull on a Team Canada jersey is a special moment. It's special for the players, and for the organizations they come from in the MJHL."

The Nighthawks have a solid track record of involvement with Team Canada

West. In 2023, the team was represented by forward Nathan Brown, head coach Kelvin Cech, and physiotherapist Justin Giesbrecht. That squad went on to capture gold with a dominant 7-2 win over Canada East in the championship game.

"The Nighthawks have been well represented on this stage in the past, both as players and staff," adds McAulay. "I'm really excited to continue this run."

The World Junior A Challenge showcases top Junior A talent from around the globe, and this year's four-team lineup includes Canada East, Canada West, Sweden, and the United States in a ten-game tournament.

The lead-up to the tournament will include several pre-tournament matchups. All games from the tournament will be livestreamed via HNLive.ca, with the gold medal game airing on TSN+.

Since its inception, the World Junior A Challenge has been a major platform for identifying future stars. Of the 17 gold medal games played to date, 13 have featured a Canadian team. Canada West has an impressive track record, winning gold six times (2006, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2017, 2023) and medalling in 12 of the 17 tournaments. Meanwhile, Canada East continues its pursuit of a first gold, having earned silver eight times and bronze once.

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Arts & Culture



Juliette Hagopian and Cameron Bennett are pitching a collaboration of mutual benefit.

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Metal Worker and Movie Maker Join Forces

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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There's strength in numbers, it has been said, a sentiment that rings all the more true when it comes to business collaborations.

In recent weeks, an especially unique collaboration came to light between Cameron Bennett of Forging Ahead Inc. and Juliette Hagopian of Jette Studios. The hope is that together they can make a bigger impact.

"She's an amazing lady," Bennett says. "She's an artist, too, and we both kind of click on our ideas. We both also like the can-do attitude that Niverville has."

Hagopian's dream of creating a film production campus in Niverville is already underway. Earlier this year, she invited the public to join her in the grand opening of her 25,000-square-foot

soundstage.

As for Bennett, he's a veteran of the Canadian military who discovered a love for metal crafting. It's become an outlet for him to work through symptoms brought on by his post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

After developing traditional blacksmithing skills under the instruction of a world-class instructor, he created a backyard workshop in which he and other PTSD sufferers can release stress in productive ways. The venture has been so life-changing that he turned Forging Ahead into a charitable organization.

Like Hagopian, he's a dreamer whose end goal is to see Niverville become the location of a world-class facility. He imagines a local school that offers instruction in many disciplines, including painting, sculpting, woodworking, stone masonry, and blacksmithing. It would also

offer a full range of wraparound services, such as psychologists and social workers.

To make this happen, Forging Ahead will require major financial support—and Bennett has been actively working to garner this support.

Recently, Bennett says, his social media specialist suggested that a documentary about his non-profit would go a long way towards pitching his idea to a broader audience.

And that's where Hagopian comes in.

Such a documentary could take years of produce, he acknowledges, but he's in no rush. The biggest dreams take time to come together.

Since meeting, the pair have landed on another idea that could be of mutual benefit. Jette Studios needs a production building in which to create movie props and backdrops. Bennett

needs a bigger facility for his learning centre.

"The idea that we are pitching is to [build a] production set studio on the side of the big [soundstage]," Bennett says. "Forging Ahead could do its standard blacksmithing and traditional work here."

Another mutual aim is community beautification.

"We want to go in together to develop a park, trails, art, and sculptures," he adds. "That would also be filmed and documented to promote the charity, Niverville, and southeast Manitoba."

Bennett has long envisioned such a park and believes that Niverville would be the perfect location. Through it, he says, would run a trail of heroes to commemorate the many veterans, first responders, and law enforcements officers who live with PTSD as a result of serving their country and fellow man.

IN BRIEF



Niverville Foundation to Host Community Candlelight Concert

By Brenda Sawatzky

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

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The Niverville Foundation is inviting locals of every age to join them on December 2 in the Heritage Centre atrium for their first annual community candlelight concert.

The festive event will feature music by the Niverville Community Choir along with Manitoba pianist Melissa L'Heureux. The doors will open at 6:30 and there is no cost to attend.

"We've been [working] on getting awareness out there on the Niverville Foundation," says board member Annette Fast. "There were so many people that really didn't know about us. So we're giving back to the community with this choir and giving [the choir] a chance to kick off the Christmas season."

According to Fast, the Niverville Community Choir is a relatively fledgling group led by director Susan Simco, who also works as a teacher at the Niverville Middle School.

"She started this choir about a year ago and they're fantastic," says Fast. "I heard them at Maranatha this spring and I was just so taken by them."

Apart from this all-adult choir, Simco also leads a locally based youth choir.

Along with great choral music, guests of the December concert will also enjoy a sing-along opportunity as well as a chance to light a candle for a passed loved one.

Events such as this one exemplify the foundation's motto, to be "rooted in community."

Since its beginning more than 30 years ago, the Niverville Foundation has raised over \$1.3 million for projects that promote health and well-being in and around Niverville.

Most recently, they played an integral role in purchasing a mobility van.

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