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## Madawaska Kanu Centre builds on success

DANIELLE PAUL  
MADAWASKA VALLEY

It's no surprise that the van Wijk family of the Madawaska Kanu Centre (MKC) and OWL Rafting are "reading the river" ahead. *The Current* recently met with Claudia and Stefani van Wijk to learn their plans for the family business as it moves into the care of a third generation.

MKC-OWL has been an Ottawa Valley business for 46 years since Claudia's parents, Christa and Hermann Kerckhoff—both Canadian champions—opened the world's first white-water paddling school at MKC in 1972 and OWL Rafting on the Ottawa River in 1981. Claudia and her husband Dirk took over the reins of both OWL and MKC in 1988 and have worked to make the family business one of Destination Canada's Canadian Signature Experiences (CSE) - the crème de la crème of Canada's international tourist attractions. The CSE designation puts MKC into an exclusive collection of once-in-a-lifetime travel experiences that Canada markets internationally.

To achieve this they and their daughters, Stefani and Katrina, spent every summer on the Madawaska and Ottawa Rivers running MKC and OWL respectively. Claudia explained how careful management and planning grew the business through four decades. Her parents taught her to always have a Plan B and the van Wijks have never expanded beyond what they could afford to do themselves.

That approach has paid off. From just 25 students in the summer of 1972, MKC will host over a thousand students this season.

When Dirk and Claudia began to think about handing over the family business to the next generation, friends in the MKC community quickly found them a business transition coach who helps executives transition at national



Claudia and Stefani van Wijk

banking corporations. Claudia and Stefi felt more confident about the handover after a few coaching sessions.

MKC hired their business transition coach because they acknowledged that they would not be able to do it as successfully by themselves, not just because of the limits of their knowledge but because of the emotional weight of transitioning a family business.

Stefi says, "If we do forget and maybe trigger each other emotionally, at least we have the language and a mutual understanding to fall back on. And we have someone to call up if we need to."

The MKC transition starts with Stefi becoming Director this year. Her parents are still equal shareholders/owners in the business, but the goal is to have Stefi as the owner of MKC. The two women expect that within the next five years the transition will be complete.

Initially their transition coach asked them to present three lists to each other: What are your highest hopes for the business, yourself and your child/parent?

That opening exercise alone provided clear boundaries and demonstrated their respective responsibilities. For example, Stefi's responsibilities include the staff. The coach asked if Stefi had signing rights on pay cheques. Claudia says, "Off we went to the Bank of Montreal in Barry's Bay. It was a really special kind of celebration because everybody in the bank knows me, so they all came to get to know Stefi and congratulate her." Stefani adds, "The last time that Mom had changed the signing authority on the cheques was 25 years ago and my grandmother's signature was on it. And she's passed away now."

—continued on page 2

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—continued from page 1 Both women already feel the benefits of the transition. Claudia says Stefani is really good at staff and customer interaction and finding that perfect fit for the customer. Stefi sees the healthy aspects of the transition as she steps into areas where her mother wants to pull back from. She says, “And when you see you are impacting on something and making a positive change, that’s when you become invested.”

Stefi says, “At MKC I get to work with the best staff. The people who are here are awesome. The people who come here are awesome. I’m so proud of the program that we offer because I genuinely see value in it and believe in its positive impact. I know what people are going to enjoy. I tell them: it’s going to

change your life.”

The MKC culture has had an impact on the local business community too. Over the years young people working at MKC have chosen to settle in the Madawaska Valley region. Entrepreneurial individuals from the paddling community have started local businesses such as Madawaska Coffee, Spring to Life Farm, and Seed and Stone Farmstead.

As for experience at teaching people how to paddle, Stefi is completely self-assured having grown up around instruction. She says, “It’s pretty powerful to feel that I have the support from both Mom and Dad to make decisions because they trust me.”

Claudia agrees saying, “Stefi is the future.”

*This article has been abridged for print.*

## Avoiding post-election blisters

ROGER PAUL  
MADAWASKA VALLEY

### Editorial

In the 2014 municipal election, 62.76 percent of Madawaska Valley voters participated. This compares to the provincial average which, according to Wikipedia, was 43.12 percent. This demonstrated a commendable commitment to the electoral process on the part of this community but it begs the question, will there be a similarly impressive turnout this time around?

In 2014 there were thirteen candidates for council and two candidates for mayor. That degree of involvement and competition inevitably increased interest with more signage, more promotion, more knocking on doors, etc. There was also a spirited, well-attended all candidates meeting. This time around, however, there are only five competing for the four places on council and three candidates for mayor. This creates the risk that there will be less interest and involvement, but I

sincerely hope not. There are still local issues and challenges no less serious than those faced by voters in 2014.

There may be fewer candidates this time, but voters still have questions. To keep the conversation flowing, *The Current* has provided an online forum—a virtual “Town Hall” if you will. Readers can submit questions or points of view to the candidates, individually or collectively, inviting their public response. See Municipal election “Town Hall” forum on our website.

Let us hope that voter participation in the Madawaska Valley remains high. As Abraham Lincoln famously said, “Elections belong to the people. It’s their decision. If they turn their back on the fire and burn their behinds, they will just have to sit on their blisters.”

*Editor’s note:* At time of going to press, the online forum has been running for less than a month and over 100 question and answer exchanges have been posted. It has been visited more than 3,500 times.

### Notice to readers

The next print version of *The Current* will appear a little later so that we can give you more information about the upcoming municipal election on October 22. Watch for it around Thanksgiving. We will publish questions to candidates from readers without internet access on the online Town Hall forum. Please mail questions c/o *The Current* at P.O. Box 1097, Barry’s Bay, K0J 1B0.



## Letter to the editor

*Editor's note: The Current has received the following letter from a reader. It has also been printed in The Eganville Leader.*

Municipal elections are now upon us and the Township of Madawaska Valley is no different. Signs are being put up all over the municipality not only to remind us who we can vote for but to encourage us to get out and vote. Making an informed decision will impact our municipality for the next four years. It is important to know your candidates, their views on matters that concern you, and to ask questions and express your own opinions, so that they themselves know what could be expected of them. Geographically, our municipality is large and reaching residents, both seasonal and year round, can be difficult. We live in a digital world... so why not use the internet!

*The Madawaska Valley Current* has set up an online Municipal Election "Town Hall" forum to encourage residents and ratepayers to pose questions to the candidates that are of concern, regarding our municipality. The candidates then have the opportunity to express their opinions and views on each of the topics that are posted. I see *The Current* acting as a conduit between the two parties, providing information not only to the candidates but also back to the electorate.

All candidates are participating in this Town Hall except for three: Mayor Love and Councillors Maika and Pep-

linski. It is public knowledge that *The Current* and some members of Council did not, shall I say, see "eye to eye" on certain matters since *The Current* newspaper, online and print versions, began in January 2018. Participating in this forum gives these candidates the opportunity to reach out to a large number of rate payers and residents, and answer questions that concern everyone. Not only does this give them an opportunity to present their agendas but it also allows them to explain some decisions that were made during the past four years. Sometimes, that is all people want ... a simple explanation!

So, WHY THE BOYCOTT? To Councillors Maika and Peplinski, one, or maybe both of you, could be elected to council next term. Does it mean that, by not responding, we can't hold you accountable? Or is it, because you could be guaranteed a seat on council, you feel you are not obligated to answer questions? You are all being paid by our tax dollar and all readers are asking is that you respond, irregardless of the media outlet. Step up to the plate, put aside your differences, be responsible and use every opportunity to express your views and opinions so that we, the electorate, can make an informed decision in the coming election. Show us that you will represent the WHOLE of the municipality. You should be uniting not dividing!

Linda Neuman  
Madawaska Valley

## Open mic at the Station

From left: Mushana Schroeder and Jamie Manion perform during open mic session at the Barry's Bay Railway Station on August 10. Schroeder organized the sessions to showcase local talent.



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# Integrity front and centre at MV Council meeting

MARK WOERMKE  
BARRY'S BAY

All ears were on MV's Integrity Commissioner Guy Giorno at the Council Meeting on Monday August 13 as he delivered reports on three issues. Two of these were complaints he inherited from MV's previous Integrity Commissioner, Jack Rosien, whose termination by the Township led to a wrongful dismissal suit and undisclosed settlement.

## COUNCILLOR MAIKA APOLOGIZES

Giorno's most detailed report contained his recommendations about a complaint made by former Lakeshore Tennis Club president Bev Moore against Councillor Shelley Maika. The complaint stemmed from comments about Moore by the Councillor at a meeting of the Finance and Administration Committee on November 3, 2016.

## MOORE'S COMPLAINT

Moore claimed the Councillor's statements were wrong, damaged her reputation in the community, damaged the reputation of the Tennis Club and breached Council's Code of Conduct. It arose from remarks made by Maika, alleging that Moore had been improperly spending township funds in her capacity as Tennis Club president.

Based on his investigation, IC Giorno made the following findings:

- I find that the statements made about the Complainant were not accurate.
- I find as a fact that the Complainant was not buying or spending on behalf of the Township. I find as a fact that the Complainant was not purporting to make spending decisions for the Township.
- It follows, and I find, that the Complainant was not recklessly buying and spending and she was not going off tangent.
- I find that the Complainant was a dedicated volunteer and motivated by public and not self-interest.
- I find that the Complainant is transparent, forthcoming and committed to the cause of building up the club for the broader community.

Giorno concluded by recommending that although the conduct was not covered by the Code but rather by the Township's Procedural By-Law, Council nonetheless should apologize to Mrs. Beverley Moore for incorrect comments about her that were made during the November 3, 2016, meeting of the Finance and Administration Committee.

## MAIKA'S APOLOGY

Even though Giorno recommended Council as a whole apologize to Moore, Maika took the opportunity to do this herself and said the following:

"I acknowledge that the report, the findings of the report and the comments that I made in the meeting in the fall of 2016 did not contravene the Code, but I would like to take this opportunity to offer my apologies to Ms. Moore if my comments caused her distress...."

"It was out of frustration, in the specific moment of this meeting, that I invariably could have used a better choice of words that were more sensitive to Ms. Moore, and for that I do very much sincerely apologize."

## TRAINING RECOMMENDED FOR MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

Having determined that the offending comments should have been dealt with by the presiding officer of the meeting when they were made, Giorno recommended that "the Township provide training to all Council Members in the duties of presiding officers (under the Procedural By-law) to restrain Members within the rules of order and to enforce on all occasions the observance of order and decorum."

## COUNCILLOR BROMWICH ADDRESSES "ELEPHANT IN ROOM"

Councillor Bromwich asked Giorno about what he called "the elephant in the room" — costs:

"There's an awful lot of people out there who would like to know, how much an Integrity Commissioner costs on an issue like this?... 2016-03, what would that case have cost us at this point?"

The IC did not have specific costs for each complaint, but he did have totals



Guy Giorno, MV Integrity Commissioner

for the last two years.

Giorno charges \$300 per hour for his services. In 2017 he billed the municipality for 15.1 hours of work which totalled \$4,530 plus HST and mileage. To date in 2018, he has already submitted bills for 45 hours of work or \$13,500 for the five files he is investigating. He offered to provide the municipality with a breakdown of the costs for each file, and Love committed to making these costs public.

## MOORE'S RESPONSE

*The Current* interviewed Moore following the delivery of the Integrity Commissioner's report. She accepted the findings, but noted that reading of the complete document was important, as this would reveal significant details.

Moore specifically mentioned Giorno's reference to her requests, made shortly after the occurrence, for an apology and a retraction. Requests were sent to both Maika and Mayor Love, as well as the Valley Gazette which had printed Maika's comments. When no replies or corrections were forthcoming, Moore contacted municipal staff on November 21 to explore next steps. She was advised to complain to the Integrity Commissioner by preparing a package and submitting it to the CAO who would then forward it to Rosien.

More concluded her comments with a simple statement.

"I didn't want any kind of battle with the Township. I wanted to play tennis."

*Note: This article has been abridged for print. Readers can see the full article and all three IC reports presented at this meeting at [www.madvalleycurrent.com](http://www.madvalleycurrent.com)*



# Castaway Culture



ON MY DESERT  
ISLAND  
DOREEN YAKABUSKI  
CORNWALL

Since any survival skills I learned in Outdoor Education at MVDHS are long forgotten, I hope the necessities of life are easily attainable on my deserted island so my only worry is filling the hours.

Because I was an English teacher for 30 years, it'll probably come as no surprise that my first choice would be *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, preferably the anthology edited by David Bevington. I could enjoy once again my favourite dramas and finally finish reading all the history plays. (One volume equals one book choice, right?)

I would want the childhood book which made me fall in love with language: *The Wonder Clock* by Howard Pyle. Originally published in 1887, the book has 24 stories with typical fairy tale characters (mean ogres, talking animals, wicked witches) and 100 wonderful illustrations.

Being a lover of art, I'd opt for *Sister Wendy's 1000 Masterpieces* to provide pleasure for the eyes and food for the mind and soul.

As a devotee of Canadian fiction, I'd have to bring a favourite Canadian book, but I'd be hard-pressed to choose just one. I think I'd make a pile of novels by my top 10 contemporary Canadian authors (Joseph Boyden, Michael Crummey, Elizabeth Hay, Wayne Johnston, Lori Lansens, Mary Lawson, Ann-Marie MacDonald, Donna Morrissey, Michael Ondaatje, David Adams Richards), close my eyes and pick one. Of course, I also love short stories so I'd take *Selected Stories* by Alice Munro for her emotionally complex narratives about ordinary people.

Some humour would definitely be needed to keep up my spirits. For years, I listened to *The Vinyl Café* on CBC and loved Stuart McLean's stories. Stuart's voice was very much part of my enjoyment of his radio show so I'd pack one of his CD collections.

For music, I'd choose a CD with an extremely limited release. In preparation for our marriage (technically

an elopement), Jack and I compiled a CD of music we wanted played during and after the ceremony. That CD has traditional wedding music and favourite love songs, including ones in Polish and Dutch to reflect our heritage and "Forever and for Always" by Shania Twain, one of my former students. Listening to the selections on that CD would bring comfort.

The item I would want is a blank book to serve as a journal. I've kept a diary since I was 13, so writing daily is a necessity. (Attach a pen, please!)

Note: If I'm to be stranded for an extended period, may I take some 1000+-page tomes from my to-read stack: *The Sagas of Icelanders*, which I purchased

during a visit to Iceland; *The Tale of Genji*, often designated the world's first novel; and *Pan Tadeusz*, the Polish epic poem? Of course, then I mightn't even get to the island because the weight of my choices would sink any vessel!

About the author: Doreen Yakabuski, a Barry's Bay native, credits the Barry's Bay Public Library and the Madonna House Lending Library for cultivating her love of reading. After a career as an English teacher/teacher-librarian in Timmins, she and her husband, Jack Vanderburg, settled near Cornwall. Now, Doreen reviews books on her blog: <https://schatjesshelves.blogspot.com/>. She can be spotted in the Valley from time to time.



BOB CORRIGAN  
BARRY'S BAY

This is the local team that defeated Pembroke of North Renfrew to win the Renfrew County Championship c1959. Mike Nicholson was only a bat boy at the time of this championship but he obviously was influenced by this team and went on to win the league's Pitching Award in 1965 when he was only sixteen years old. If anyone can provide further information about this team or league, please pass in the information.

FRONT ROW: Leonard (Red) Sullivan with South Renfrew trophy; Mike Nicholson (bat boy). SECOND ROW: Mike Murray; Dominic Bielawski; Sidney Coulas; Bobby Crawford; Howard Etmanski; Raymond Zilney. THIRD ROW: Pete Etmanski (manager); Jackie Conway; Kenny Recoskie; Sylvie Bleskie; Andy Etmanski; Weldon Coulas; Jerome Cybulski.

NOTE: If you are interested in having a picture and story featured in The Madawaska Valley Current, please submit the information to Bob Corrigan c/o The Current, Box 1097, Barry's Bay K0J 1B0 (marked heritage photo. Originals will be returned.

# Opeongo Reader's Theatre opens Killaloe's Irish Gathering 2018

SUBMITTED  
KILLALOE

An enthusiastic crowd of thirty-five filled the Killaloe Hagarty and Richards Township Hall on the evening of August 16 to attend an Opeongo Reader's Theatre performance sponsored by the Killaloe and District Public Library.

Librarian Nicole Zummach, serving as MC, welcomed everyone and explained how pleased the library was to host this literary and historical show featuring Irish literature, humour and historical documents which gave insight into life in Killaloe and environs in the 19th and early 20th centuries. These included:

- the 1852 journal of Charlie Thomas the Hudson's Bay factor at Golden Lake
- an 1874 school inspection report on Hagarty School Sections 1 and 2
- three selections (Christmas in Killaloe, Killaloe law enforcement and Killaloe Picnics) from the writings of Killaloe's poet laureate, Martin Garvey.

In addition to the history, the ensemble consisting of Jane Corbett, Kris Marchand, Linda Shulist and Mark Woermke, regaled the audience with laugh-laden selections read with a good deal of the brogue. In these, the audience learned just how far a dirt-poor Irishman would go *fer a foin pair of boots*; how Dennis took the pledge; how Father O'Flynn addressed gambling from the pulpit; and how Daniel O'Connell waxed geometric. But all was not laughter, as more serious and reflective pieces about love and loss, fleeting youth and exile from one's homeland rounded out the evening.

Producer Barry Conway was very pleased with the show, the group's third and largest to date. He said, "We had an excellent, enthusiastic crowd turn out; proof that people new and old are very much interested in the rich cultural history this area has to offer." This he suggests, has implications for the future of the group: "... [W]hether it involves listening to those ancient Irish voices as we did here in Killaloe tonight or the



Pictured with Librarian Nicole Zummach are the Opeongo Reader's Theatre performers: (from left) Mark Woermke, Zummach, Linda Shulist, Jane Corbett and Kris Marchand.

upcoming Whitney show centred on 19th Century Algonquin Park explorers, the future of the Opeongo Reader's Theatre looks very promising indeed, if only because we know that local history matters as much as the great ideas found in classical literature."

Local historians Tom Connolly and Shirley Mask Connolly found the show to be a good balance between interesting Irish and local material. Mask Connolly said, "The talented readers were superb with dramatic and moving renditions."

Jane Stack Gutoski who attended with her sisters was enthusiastic in her praise for the show: "The Stack sisters all agree, it was spectacular. Thank-you to the Opeongo Reader's Theatre for the best kick-off to the Irish Gathering ever!"

Performer Linda Shulist felt this performance was magical: "I think we all hit a milestone on this journey. I am so happy to be doing this.... I shall always treasure these memories."

KHR Councillor Brian Pecoskie enjoyed hearing the stories and poems about local and Irish history and said that he and his wife, Elizabeth Burchat, look forward to future Opeongo Reader's Theatre shows based on other local historical themes. He said, "Thank you for researching, planning and presenting such an entertaining program. Thank you for coming to Killaloe to open the Irish Gathering."

*Editor's note: If you missed the performance, you can listen to the podcast. Just search for Opeongo Reader's Theatre on iTunes*

## Olympic gold in Barry's Bay

The Reid family was holidaying on Trout Lake when they learned of Team Jacobs' visit to Northern Credit Union. Ashton curls at his local club in Carp and is shown here holding E.J.'s medal. Above from left: E.J. Harnden, Ashton Reid, Ryan Harnden.





# Watersheds Canada Shoreline Assessment comes to Barry's Bay

AL BEST  
BARRY'S BAY

During the last week of July and the first few days of August, Watersheds Canada personnel were in Barry's Bay gathering data while drifting around on the waters of Carson, Trout, Lepine and Greenan Lakes. Watersheds Canada is a federally incorporated, not-for-profit organization and registered Canadian charity. Its vision is to bring people together to care for their lakes and rivers and provide healthy lakes and rivers that will support humans and wildlife for years to come.

The Carson, Trout, Lepine and Greenan Lakes Association provided expert guide services to Watersheds Canada personnel on the four lakes—we did not get lost once. In all, the shoreline on about 275 properties on the chain of lakes was studied and data was recorded. This data will be used to assess the health of the shorelines on our lakes and provide an individual report to each shoreline property owner. Reports may include recommendations to property owners for actions they may choose to take to improve their shoreline health and thus lake water quality. These reports will be available to property owners in the spring of 2019 and they are free online. "Free" is good!

As of 2017, 122 lakes had been assessed in Ontario, 15 had been assessed in Saskatchewan and two had been assessed in Alberta. Along with Carson, Trout, Lepine, and Greenan Lakes near Barry's Bay, Kennebec Lake in Central Frontenac and Mazinaw Lake in the Addington Highlands north of Kaladar have been assessed in 2018.

Shoreline health is a major factor in the preservation of water quality. Vegetation naturally captures carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and this carbon can be stored in living plants and woody debris for decades. Natural shorelines are the best defence against erosion and they provide other benefits such as filtration of contaminants before they reach the lake, wild-

life habitat, and other aesthetic values. If natural shorelines are converted to hardened or manicured shorelines, resilience to climate change is reduced. A lake benefits or suffers from the cumulative actions of all the lake users within the watershed.

To echo a famous line: "Ask not what our lakes can do for us, ask what we can do for our lakes."



PHOTO: HARRISON HAINES

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### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We welcome letters to the editor. Send letters to [lettersmadvalleycurrent@gmail.com](mailto:lettersmadvalleycurrent@gmail.com) or *The Madawaska Valley Current*, PO Box 1097, Barry's Bay, ON, K0J 1B0. Please include your first and last name, address and phone number for verification (these will not appear in print; your name and municipality will). Please provide the title and date if you refer to an article in *The Current*.

If you are responding to an online article in *The Current*, please note that you can comment in the "Reply" box following the article. We monitor all comments to ensure these guidelines are followed. Due to volume, we cannot print every letter or respond to individual letters. Please keep your letter short, preferably 200 words or fewer. Be civil, even if you are writing to disagree with someone. We look forward to hearing your voice.

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# Twenty-two teams vie for MV Library Trivia title

DANIELLE PAUL  
BARRY'S BAY

Twenty-two teams battled for the coveted trophy at the Madawaska Valley Public Library Trivia Night on August 15 at the Royal Canadian Legion Hall 406 in Barry's Bay.

Master of ceremonies Brian Tyrrell kept players and spectators in order as he read the questions, announced prize draw winners and thanked the volunteers and sponsors who helped to maintain this popular fundraising event for more than 25 years. The quiz was composed of four rounds of 25 questions each, with the third round being a crossword puzzle. Library CEO Karen Filipkowski said the event raised \$1,984 through registrations and spectator fees.

This year's winners were the Blue and White team.

Runners-up were the Blackfish Islanders who had tied with the Blue and Whites for first place after four rounds but then lost by just one point in the tie-break round: Peter Fright, Doug De La Matter, Mark Jones, Peter Bradshaw, Shirley Hill and James Di Fiore.

## HOW'S YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF TRIVIA?

In case you're wondering how tough it is to answer one hundred trivia ques-



The Blue and White team from left: Jacob Afelskie (15), Peter Shaw (11), John Artymko, Nicholas Culshaw, Richard Shaw, John-Paul Shaw (13).

tions, here are the questions that gave the teams the most trouble: (See below for the answers.)

*Which river passes through Madrid?*

*In 1997 who set the Land Speed Record at 763 mph?*

Full disclosure from *The Current* Crew: Columnist Mark Woermke summed up *The Current's* performance, "The team

I was on achieved a solid level 3—the provincial standard—with 76 percent."

A fun fact is that 14 teams knew the answer to this question: In 2012 which Madawaska Valley Public Library book set the record for being stolen most often? Answer: *Fifty Shades of Grey*.

Filipkowski quipped, "I must have really been complaining about having to replace it so often."



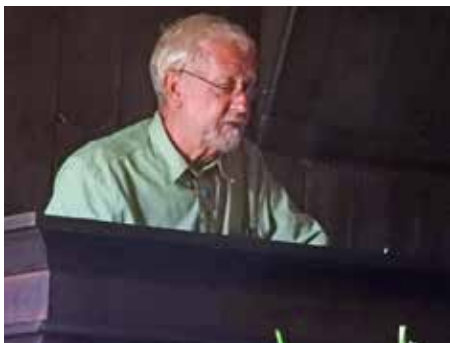
Reminder...

**Madawaska Valley Studio Tour**  
SEPTEMBER 29 and 30

TRIVIA ANSWERS:  
1. Which river passes through Madrid? (Manzanares).  
2. In 1997 who set the Land Speed Record at 763mph? (Andy Green).



# Crowd celebrates the little church on the hill



DANIELLE PAUL  
ROCKINGHAM

Glenn Allen, chairman of the Friends of Rockingham Church, welcomed a full church to the eighteenth anniversary celebration of the Restoration of the Rockingham Church on Sunday August 12.

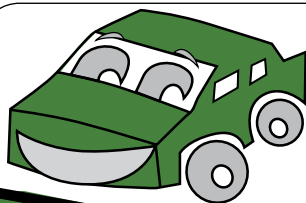
The peaceful woodland setting rang with a rousing congregational rendition of *The Church in the Wildwood* by Dr. William S. Pitts in praise of “the little brown church on the hill.” David Trafford accompanied enthusiastically on the ancient pump organ—his enthusiasm in part required because the bellows frequently suffer from ravages by mice.

Additional music was provided by Anna and Caitlin MacDonald. They were joined by their sister Emma Rose in a performance of her original composition “Feel the Wind” before Caitlin and Anna continued with their planned programme.

Gord Benner introduced this year’s featured speaker: author, geographer and travel writer Ron Brown. Brown, who was described by the CBC as “Nobody knows Ontario like Ron Brown” has written many books about the historical features of rural Ontario. He spoke about the legacy of ghost towns in Ontario, discussing early travel including settlement roads, and the introduction and decline of rail travel. He told tales of the lumber industry and stories about the joys and woes of pioneer life. Brown said the Rockingham Church will feature in his upcoming book which will update *Unusual Places in Ontario*. Brown was thanked by Dale Hamilton, one of many volunteers who worked hard to make the annual celebration a success.



Clockwise from top left: Featured speaker Ron Brown in the pulpit. The Rockingham Church. Sisters perform: Emma Rose, Caitlin and Anna MacDonald.



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## PORCH VIEWS

# The house that Jack built



MARK WOERMKE  
BARRY'S BAY

Barry's Bay has some historic homes such as the August Biernacki home on Dunn Street built by the parents of St. Hedwig's founder Monsignor Biernacki and which now serves as a college residence; the Opeongo Line home of Barry's Bay's first reeve Henry Chapeski which served as the Yantha & Yantha law office; the Hanora Murray house on Inglis, now the location of The Barber-shop; and the Thomas P. Jordan home at intersection of Kelly Street and Opeongo which is a private home. Each of these homes—and others in the village—have histories that are worth recording. Thankfully, members of the Barry's Bay Heritage Society have an interest in doing just that.

This, however, is the story of my own home because I recently had a very special visitor who helped me appreciate how the history of a home can help us understand our community's history and reveal what local life was like in the past. So this instalment of Porch Views is about the house attached to my porch—the house that Jack built.

I was delighted when Toni Lavigne-Conway arranged a visit with Marcie McNamara who lived in this house from 1938 to 1944 and her niece Joanne. It was a wonderful opportunity to verify stories I heard about the house. I hope it was an opportunity for pleasant memories for Marcie and Joanne. It was 74 years since Marcie and Joanne's father Len had left the house, and the visit provided surprising information for their family tree.

My Woermke grandparents bought the house from Jack Etmanskie in 1944 when they moved to Barry's Bay from Madawaska. Old deeds show that Jack bought the lot in 1922 for \$170 from John and Ellen Dooner who lived in the house that is now Pantry Savings. Twenty-two years later, my grandparents paid \$2400 for the house and prop-



George and Alvina Woermke on the porch around 1945.

erty. The house-story says something about local property value back then and one might wonder how prices fluctuated through the Roaring Twenties, Great Depression and World War II.

My mother recalled watching the construction of an addition as she walked to and from St. Joseph's School. She said that Mr. Etmanskie built the front section and then several years later added the back. My father told me that the house had been divided and two families were living in it when his parents bought it. My mother often talked about attending the wake for Jack Etmanskie's first wife. Mrs. Etmanskie was laid out in the front room with her child beside her in the casket. According to my parents, Jack Etmanskie remarried and moved to Northern Ontario.

Marcie was able to confirm all of this and add some details as well. She told me that Jack built this house before he was married. After the wedding, he and his bride, Catherine Yeretch, settled into their brand-new home. Sadly, Catherine died in childbirth in 1935 and Jack was left a single-parent to care for three-year-old Rita and an infant son Leonard. I told Marcie and Joanne

about the baby in the casket, but they thought my mother had been mistaken. However, several hours after their visit, and following their visit to the graveyard, I received a message from Joanne to let me know that a careful translation of the tombstone's Polish inscription revealed that an infant daughter named Teresa was buried with Mrs. Etmanskie. Joanne learned that her father had a twin sister who died at birth. This house's story reminds us how fortunate we are today—higher infant and mother mortality rates were a fact of life in the past.

Marcie's father Felix Recoskie died when she was young, and she and her widowed mother Veronica (Chippior) lived in a house on Dunn Street. When her mother married widower Jack Etmanskie in 1938, Marcella, as she was called then, became part of a blended family and moved into this house. Marcie's first memory of the house was being told to quiet down while playing with her stepsiblings in the kitchen. It was right after the wedding and while the adult guests were celebrating in the front rooms, she and her new stepsiblings were getting to know each other.





Marcie McNamara in the kitchen.

Marcie spoke of her stepfather fondly: "He was very loving and good to us, and I always called him dad. I remember once someone, referring to us children, asked him which ones were his. 'I don't know why you would ask that, they're all mine' was his response."

Blended families aren't new. They existed in the past, but perhaps for different reasons. Other homes in Barry's Bay could tell stories about this too.

Sometime after they moved in, perhaps after Jack took a job in Northern Ontario, the house was divided to accommodate two families. "We lived in the back part of the house and an Irish family, Nixie Conway, lived in the front. It was not too long, though, until we all moved to Temagami." Marcie explained that Jack was a millwright and sawmill foreman and he had to go to Northern Ontario to set up sawmills for the war effort. "So we had to sell the house and move up North." Many homes in Barry's Bay saw families make serious sacrifices and adjust to big changes during World War II.

Marcie told me, "I remember meeting your grandparents when they came to see the house. We were told to be good by mother. They had to leave their home in Madawaska because it was flooded when the Bark Lake Dam was built." Marcie's memory was bang-on.

My grandparents owned a home on several acres just east of the railway bridge for 25 years, until, like some other families in Madawaska, they learned their property was to be expropriated as a result of the flooding from

the construction of the hydroelectric dam at the foot of Bark Lake. Homes, churches and schools were moved to higher ground or demolished and rebuilt, but my grandparents decided to move to Barry's Bay where my grandfather became CNR section foreman. They were compensated for their land, but they sold the house to Barry's Bay builder Johnny Glofcheskie who tore it down, shipped the lumber to the Bay by rail, and used it to build the old rectory at St. Lawrence O'Toole. Our house-stories are part of the larger history of the geographic Madawaska Valley from the very lumber of which they are constructed and the re-use of materials, to the occupations of their inhabitants, and to the socio-economic reasons that prompted their sale or purchase.

When I took the ladies on a tour of the house, Marcie made a number of observations which revealed how different life was in the past—privacy and possessions were in short supply and there were no amenities like municipal water.

"When we lived here there were no cupboards in the kitchen, just a big cabinet in the corner.... We had three beds in this room, two doubles and a single. One for mother and father, one for the girls, and the single for Len... We slept in the upstairs porch on hot summer nights... There were cisterns to collect rain water in the bathroom and the basement. When it rained, my mother had to divert the water from the eaves-troughs to the tank and cistern, and then shut them off when they were full."

Sitting in the kitchen where Marcie had spent so much time, we had a chance to have a cup of tea and talk more. She told me about her life: childhood in Temagami, teenage years in North Bay, and a happy married life with her late husband Vince McNamara in Toronto. I also learned that after years in Northern Ontario, Jack and Veronica Etmanskis retired to Barry's Bay and lived on Kelly Street.

It was a great privilege to host Marcie and Joanne and share stories about the house and the people who have made it a home. We parted with good memories, new information, and a greater appreciation for how the story of a house can connect us to events and people in the history of our families, village and broader community.

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# August in the Valley

## Killaloe Craft and Community Fair



From left: Sons of Zebedee perform, Washboard Hank leads the parade.

## Taste of the Valley



Clockwise from top: busy scene at the Station, Les Spurrell's handmade furniture, David Smallpiece's produce.

## Madawaska Valley Horticultural Society Flower and Vegetable Show



Clockwise from left: Peoples' Choice Awards to Ritsuko Honda and Bob Corrigan, Scarecrow by Wendy Zakrzewski, Honda's Best in Class design.