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Welcome to Doctors Ostapowicz

ELSER LEE ARCHER
BARRY'S BAY

We welcome Doctors Daniel and Teresa Ostapowicz to the Valley. These internationally-trained physicians of Polish heritage began their practice here in November 2020 and have both been a part of this community in the past.

Teresa's Valley history starts with her family, as her father was a boy scout at the Kaszuby camp. Teresa has maintained longtime friendships with neighbours of the family cottage on Wadsworth Lake since she was seven years old. So it was a comfortable choice to set up practices in an area they were already familiar with, both having completed a medical rotation here in 2015. Teresa worked with Dr. Coulas, and Daniel with Dr. Atfield in Barry's Bay and Dr. Joo at Rainbow Valley Community Health Centre in Killaloe.

Following university in Canada, the couple met at Jagiellonian School of Medicine in Kraków, where classes were in English but patients were served in the Polish language. Both Teresa and Dan did advanced studies and residencies at Ottawa Civic and CHEO, as well as in the U.S. (Yale Medical Centre and the Mayo Clinic), so they come to the Valley with a wealth of experience. Even in American cities they learned to become resourceful physicians because local hospitals in some neighbourhoods lack necessary resources.

They explained what led them to establish a practice together in Barry's Bay. Teresa said, "Before graduating medical school in May 2016 we often were a team—it was natural for us to work together in our work life and home life when married. It was always our dream to raise our family together and open a practice. We believed that could work here."



Doctors Daniel and Teresa Ostapowicz with children, Laura (left) and Emilia.

Daniel said, "It's pretty special that it's the first Polish community [in Canada]. We both like the outdoors—I used to run ultra-marathons in the mountains out west and Teresa was a long distance runner in university. We love this area."

One often sees Drs. Teresa and Daniel Ostapowicz walking their children, Laura and Emilia, with the stroller or sharing roles as parents and doctors. During the interview they praised the local Emergency department describing a team of excellent nurses and doctors. They remarked on creative and resourceful medical services from Pembroke and Ottawa including

the EPIC system and other electronic medical records that allow a doctor to view critical information and imaging on demand. They also applauded telemedicine services that strengthen the relationships with larger area hospitals and provide increased access to specialists in the comfort of a patient's home or rural hospital.

All in all our two new Doctors Ostapowicz explained that taking over Dr. Atfield's practice in Barry's Bay and area allows them to provide a level of service expected in an urban centre while they can enjoy the benefits of a rural community they now call home.



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\$224,183.50 for Catch The Ace winner



Pat and Lorna beam for the cameras as they hold the cheque.

Lorna Leach and husband Pat Leach of Micksburg are no strangers to Barry's Bay. Over the years they've been here many times and had even recently visited to have lunch at the Ash Grove Inn.

But on Dec. 18 their trip to the Bay was for a very different purpose indeed. Lorna's ticket was drawn the evening before in the St. Francis Valley Health-

care Foundation Catch The Ace draw. Not only that, but her chosen number, 26, (son Nat's birthday is July 26) was the number of the envelope containing the elusive Ace of Spades.

That meant instead of just winning a substantial Weekly Prize of \$9,070 the progressive jackpot of \$215,113.50 was rolled into Lorna's winnings, so the amount on her cheque was \$224,183.50

MKC Director wins the 2020 Marilyn Alexander Tourism Champion Award

On December 17, 2020 the Ottawa Valley Tourist Association (OVTA) celebrated the winners of the 2020 Ottawa Valley Tourism Awards during a virtual event. OVTA Awards celebrate the dedicated, creative and passionate tourism operators and individuals in the Ottawa Valley.

Barry's Bay resident, Stefani Van Wijk received the 2020 Marilyn Alexander Tourism Champion Award, a commemorative award recognizing an individual OVTA member who is an active tourism champion for the Ottawa Valley. As Director of the Madawaska Kanu Centre—a three-generation family business—Stefani believes in working collaboratively and developing strong partnerships with local businesses and the community. "I'm so honoured to receive this award," exclaimed Stefani Van Wijk. "Challenges make us realize what's important in life



and this year appreciation for the wilderness and outdoor recreation has soared. We've learned so many things this year and I'm hopeful we can move forward in a way that cares more about each other, our unique needs, our health, the land and the watershed."

Barry's Bay's Sean Conway receives Ontario's highest honour

MARK WOERMKE
BARRY'S BAY

Residents of the Madawaska Valley and the riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, will be particularly interested to learn that Barry's Bay's Sean Conway has received this honour.

Conway, who was Ontario's youngest MPP when he was first elected in 1975, served Ontarians and his constituents until 2003 in a variety of ministerial and critic roles, as Government House leader and as Deputy Leader of the Opposition. Since his departure from elected politics, he has continued to offer his talent, knowledge and experience in a variety of roles.

In his Order of Ontario profile, Conway is acknowledged as having served Ontario with great distinction as a legislator, public policy expert, advisor, educator and author, and it is noted that his "captivating and legendary oratory" in the legislature earned him the respect of all parties.

When interviewed by *The Current*, Conway indicated that he had been made aware of his appointment a few days before Christmas when he was contacted by the Lieutenant Governor's office; the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Lisa MacLeod; and local MPP and Ministry of Resources and Forestry John Yakubuski, "I am very honoured to have been selected for this distinction and I want to thank all those who supported my nomination."

Characteristically, Conway acknowledged his deep Ottawa and Madawaska Valley roots, "The citation announcing my selection to the Order made reference to the fact that I seemed to enjoy making speeches. Growing up in Barry's Bay, I have to admit that I was greatly influenced by the very strong oratorical tradition of the Ottawa Valley. As a youngster, I listened to very accomplished public speakers like Joe Greene, Arthur Maloney, and Paul Martin Sr. who impressed upon me the power of the spoken word. My appointment to the Order of Ontario is a recognition of the rich and colourful oral tradition of



Sean Conway, above. The Honorable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario announced the appointment of 47 outstanding Ontarians to the Order of Ontario, the province's highest honour on January 1, 2021. Of the 47, 22 are for the year 2019 while 25 are for 2020. PHOTO: WM ENRIGHT

the Ottawa Valley and the remarkable men and women who made it."

Jayne Brophy of Pembroke, who was Liberal riding association president for a number of years and worked on many of Conway's campaigns, was very pleased to see Conway recognized, "Sean dedicated everything to working on behalf of the residents of Renfrew County and Ontario. He is an historian who relishes the history of our county and our province, and he uses his talents to make both a better place."

Barry's Bay's former mayor, John Hildebrandt, who has known three generations of Conway's family, was happy to see another native son recognized for his contributions. Hildebrandt spoke of Conway's "Valley common-sense," his encyclopedic knowledge of the area, and the fact that his position "never went to his head."

"In my mind's eye, I still see him speaking in the Legislature. Sean often found a way to drop the names of little Valley towns like Barry's Bay into his eloquent speeches. That made us feel good and helped put us on the map."

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Exotic animals and by-laws in Maynooth

CHRISTINE WALKER
MAYNOOTH

This past summer, exotic animal owners, Mark and Tammy Drysdale, temporarily housed most of their big cats with a long-time big cat owner in Renfrew County until the couple was ready to bring them to their new home in Maynooth in the municipality of Hastings Highlands. That day came on Wednesday, December 2nd with the arrival of the lions. The two tigers were scheduled to arrive on December 4.

The arrival of the Drysdales and their big cats has shone a spotlight on municipal laws — or the lack of — regarding exotic animals. Approximately half of Ontario's 444 municipalities have some type of exotic or restricted animal by-law. Having a by-law is not synonymous with having a ban on exotic animals; rather, these by-laws can be developed to regulate the standard of care, containment and safety, as well as to prohibit ownership.

HASTINGS HIGHLANDS

Presently, Hastings Highlands has no exotic animal by-law. This means the Drysdales are not breaking any laws by keeping big cats in Maynooth. At the Hastings Highlands Council meeting on December 2, Rob Laidlaw, executive director of Zoocheck Inc., said "...these issues are a lot easier to deal with up-front than retroactively."

If Hastings Highlands creates an exotic animal by-law prohibiting ownership now, the Drysdales will have a case for exemption (grandfathering) because the animals were living in Hastings Highlands prior to a by-law coming into effect.

The municipal government of Hastings Highlands has been criticized for not creating an exotic animal by-law to address the big cats living in Maynooth. In response to this, Mayor Vic Bodnar said at the Council meeting on December 2nd, "It is important for municipalities deliberating over exotic animals issues [to] do so in an informed way with appropriate due diligence."

OTHER MUNICIPALITIES COMPARED

Both Hastings County and Renfrew



The Drysdale lions in their Maynooth enclosure. PHOTO CHRISTINE WALKER

County are classified as upper tier municipalities that provide services to the lower tier municipalities in their regions. Hastings County, of which Hastings Highlands is part, does not have an exotic animal by-law.

Yet, some of the county's lower tier municipalities do; for example, the Town of Bancroft and Carlow-Mayo. Renfrew County does have an exotic animal by-law prohibiting ownership. However, the law has not prevented the big cat owner — where the Drysdales' big cats were temporarily living — from having these animals in the county for around a decade. This could be because the owner was grandfathered into the bylaw, the municipality is unaware of the animals, or some other unknown reason.

The neighbouring municipality of the Township of South Algonquin, which is a single tier municipality, also has an exotic animal by-law. (A single tier municipality is not a part of any other municipality and is responsible for its own services.)

In January 2020, the Ontario Government brought in the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act (PAWS). PAWS does contain animal welfare regulations and enforcement pertaining to exotic animals in Ontario. Currently, orcas and pitbulls are the only animals that can-

not legally be owned in Ontario.

The Drysdales have had multiple visits from PAWS to oversee that provincial regulations are being met and will be met in the case of animals that have not yet arrived. PAWS is empowered to conduct inspections of properties and animals to ensure welfare and safety are meeting provincial standards.

BIG PLANS

Ultimately, the Drysdales hope to open a safari experience that will educate people and allow them to observe the animals in their enclosures. "It's all about education," says Mark Drysdale. This type of animal business, exotic animal education, falls under the Regulation of Zoos Act which includes its own licencing, standards, and inspections. This Act passed its first reading, but went no further in the process to become law, making municipalities and PAWS the regulatory bodies.

Exotic animal ownership is a contentious issue that has caused passionate division in other communities. The areas of common ground are often the welfare of the community, animals, and environment. Hastings Highlands council has a difficult road ahead in choosing an effective path that will not cause a deep divide in its community and will address as many of the concerns from all sides.

Experts issue fresh health warning about wood burning stoves

ROGER PAUL
BARRY'S BAY

In December 2019 Health Canada published warnings about the dangers of emissions from wood burning stoves under the title "Wood Smoke." It emphasized that some groups are especially vulnerable, including people with heart or lung problems and children because their respiratory systems are still developing, and they tend to be more active and inhale more air.

Now, under a headline "Avoid using wood burning stoves if possible, warn health experts," *The Guardian* newspaper published details of a new report which adds to the growing body of research that reveals such pollution may be damaging every organ in the body with effects including heart and lung disease, diabetes, dementia, reduced intelligence and increased depression.

That report was issued last month by the Asthma UK and British Lung Foundation Partnership. Sarah MacFadyen, Head of Policy at the Partnership, stated, "We know that burning wood and coal released fine particulate matter (PM2.5) the most worrying form of air pollution for human health. It is therefore important to consider less polluting options to heat your home or cook with, especially if coal or wood is not your primary fuel source."

Dr. Nick Hopkinson, Medical Director at the Partnership, said both indoor and outdoor pollution caused by wood burning stoves caused serious health issues from breathing problems to an increased risk of heart attacks, strokes and lung cancer.

If you do use a wood burning stove because you have no other choice, it is recommended that you observe the following procedures:

- Keep your flue open to allow plenty of oxygen in while using your stove.
- Start your fire with clean newspaper or dry kindling.
- Only burn clean, dry wood that has been properly seasoned.



Both indoor and outdoor pollution caused by wood burning stoves caused serious health issues from breathing problems to an increased risk of heart attacks, strokes and lung cancer. PHOTO: PEXELS.COM

- Don't burn particle board, treated wood, stained wood, painted wood, or wet wood.
 - Never start a fire in your wood stove with gasoline, kerosene, charcoal starter, or a propane torch.
 - Burn hot, bright fires.
 - Let the fire burn down to coals, then rake them into a mound towards the air inlet and stove door. Don't spread the coals out flat.
 - Keep the doors of your stove closed at all times unless you're tending to the fire.
 - Remove ashes from the stove on a regular basis.
- Be sure to also follow MV Fire Department's tips for safety concerning smoke alarms, as follows:
- Under the Ontario Fire Code, every home in Ontario is required to have working smoke alarms.
 - Homeowners must ensure that smoke alarms are installed between sleeping and living areas. They are also required to maintain the smoke alarms in working order.
 - In rental accommodation, the obligation to install and maintain smoke alarms in operating condition falls to the landlord. Landlords must also provide smoke alarm maintenance information to the occupant of each unit.
 - It is an offence for any person to disable a smoke alarm. This requirement applies equally to homeowners, landlords and tenants.
 - Failure to comply with the smoke alarm requirements of the Fire Code can result in a minimum fine of \$235.

Local resources during lockdown

The province may have ordered a lockdown until January 23, but that doesn't mean you don't have access to local businesses and organizations. *The Current* has compiled the following alphabetical list of Madawaska Valley retailers and organizations, grouped by community. Customers can contact each business that they are interested in to obtain hours of operation, physical distancing protocol, curbside pickup, etc. Essential businesses (grocery stores, pharmacy) are also listed.

Note: this list is NOT exhaustive. You may email any updates to madvalleycurrent@gmail.com

BARRY'S BAY

A.V. Locksmithing, 613-756-5128

Access Work Service, Please email info@accessworkservice.ca for house cleaning, snow removal

Afelskie Shoes, 613-756-2615

Andrea's Pet Salon, 613-602-6599

Ash Grove Inn, 613-756-7672

Barry's Bay Chiropractic, Dr. Colette Szalay, 613-756-6000

Barry's Bay Dairy, closed for the winter

Barry's Bay Home Hardware, 613-756-2794, or email orders to bbcustomerservice@homehardware.ca

Barry's Bay Legion Branch 406, reopens January 23, 2021, at 2pm

Barry's Bay MacEwens, 613-756-3614

Barry's Bay Metro, 613 756 7097

Barry's Bay Shell, 613-633-7750

Barry's Bay Outfitters, 613-756-9009

Bay Coin Laundromat, 613-210-0550

Bayberry Design, 613-756-2580

Baybud Cannabis, 613-756-1230

Bayroc Drywall, 613-633-2818

Benson Auto Parts, 613-756-0888

Cat Nap & Lazy Dog, 613-756-5328

Charlie D's, 613 756-7162

Church Street Flowers, 833-977-3377

Cloud Nine Web Design, 613-281-9999

Co-operators Insurance, 613-756-2667 (phone only, leave message)

Dairy Freez, 613-756-7116

Easton Accounting and Tax Services, 613-281-2510

Eugene's Complete Auto Glass, 613-756-7009

Eve's Escape Spa, 613-401-4595

Gift It Gray, TEXT orders/enquiries to 613-227-1717

Greg Kelly Insurance Brokerage Ltd, 613-756-0066 (phone only)

Grumblin' Granny's, 613-756-3073

Hannah's Chicken, 613-756-2074

Helen Benn - Live. Life. Better, 613-756-1156

LCBO, 613-756-2022

Lorraine's Pharmasave, 613-756-2013

Mad Outdoors, 613-756-2007

Madawaska Coffee Co Café, 19578 Opeongo Line, 613-756-5656

Madawaska Valley Food Bank, 8 Martin Street, Barry's Bay. January Food Bank sessions will be Tuesday, Jan. 12 and Tuesday, Jan. 26. Upon arrival, NO EARLIER THAN 8:30 a.m. clients will be asked to form a line with their vehicles in the parking lot opposite the food bank. PLEASE ENTER THE PARKING LOT (between Afelskie's and the Ear Depot) FROM DUNN STREET, NOT MARTIN STREET. As usual, volunteers will direct traffic. NEW CLIENTS WELCOME.

Madawaska Valley Public Library offers pickup service as of Jan. 4, Monday to Friday, 3 pm to 6 pm and Saturdays 12 pm to 3 pm. Digital materials also available for loan. Library catalogue is online at www.madawaskavalleylibrary.ca. For assistance call 613-756-2000 or email mvpl.programs@gmail.com

McDougall Insurance, 613-756-3092

NAPA Auto Parts, 613-756-2437

Natural Health Centre, 613-756-6000

Opeongo Seniors Centre, temporarily closed, 613-756-0554

Ottawa Valley Physiotherapy & Sports Medicine, 613-756-2226

Pantry Savings, 613-756-3813

Queenswood National Real Estate, 613-756-2477

RE/MAX Country Classics, 613-756-6789

Rutledge Heating, 613-639-5745

Stedmans, 613-756-2612

Subway, 613-756-9988

Talk O' The Town, 613-756-3676

The Beer Store, 613 756 2009

The Grape Vine, 613-756-2992

Tim Hortons, 613-756-0008

Training & Learning Centre of Renfrew County, 613-628-1720

Travis Richards Office, 613-281-9419

Tyerman & Daughters Inc., Employment & Community Service, 613-756-8079

Ultramar, 613-756-4010

Welk Electric, 613-757-2955

Yantha Enterprises, 613-756-2542

Yuill's Valu-mart, 613-756-2023

COMBERMERE

Bent Pizza Pie, 613-668-2368

CO Country Market, 613-756-1113

Combermere Home Hardware, 613-756-2436

Combermere Service Centre, 613-756-5109

Heartwood Restaurant, 613-756-9169

Kodiak Construction, 613-633-7630

Pilgrim Reader Book Store, 613-756-2665

Quilters Curve, 613-756-6262

The Old School Café Laundry & Greenhouses, 613-756-9729

WILNO

Wilno Tavern, temporarily closed during shutdown

Wilno Craft Gallery, orders and enquiries, 613-756-3010

Need help with pickup? Call **The Delivery Guys**, 613-602-5393

Meet Barry's Bay Cottages new owners

SAMANTHA LLOYD
MADAWASKA VALLEY

Meet Luiza and Ferdinand Kaci of Barry's Bay Cottages Resort on Carson Lake. Going from commuting on the Toronto subway every day to buying a snow-plow-ready ATV, it would be an understatement to say their life has changed a lot in the past few months. When everything shut down because of COVID-19 last March, Luiza and Fred's work came to a grinding halt. They realized it was time for a big change — but what? "We both love nature and being outside," said Fred. "We started looking at ideas that gave us freedom to be in nature all the time." Luiza continued, "All I kept thinking about was getting to the cottage, growing my garden, and waking up early to the calmness of the lake with my coffee."

Back in their native Albania, Luiza and Fred had had the pleasure of running a local food shop together. Customer service is innate to both of them, but Luiza's skills truly shine in that type of role. "I love making someone smile." In Toronto, Luiza worked various customer service jobs while going to school and then worked for twelve years as a dental assistant. Fred worked in construction for the first few years, then opened his own contracting business.

They found Barry's Bay Cottages Resort, with 13 private, full-service cottages surrounded by towering pines and nestled beside Carson Lake. Luiza said, "We had been looking for a long time but we knew it was the right place. It felt like home," Luiza says.

The purchase went through in November and with help from the previous owners and their family members, the Kacis' new business venture was up and running almost immediately. Fred's background in construction helped them make cosmetic improvements to the cottages. They have explored a bit, met their lakeside neighbours and have been made to feel welcome in Barry's Bay. Fred says, "People are very friendly and everyone offers to help you."

But while this pandemic year has given them a precious new lakeside beginning, it has also been cruel. When the December lockdown was announced for the second time in one year Fred and



Fred and Luiza Kaci of Barry's Bay Cottages Resort.

Luiza watched their business vanish.

Luiza had had such fun decorating their six winterized cottages for the holidays. "We were fully booked from the week before Christmas well into January and I was so looking forward to welcoming our guests." She shrugged off her disappointment with a smile, saying, "It's better to be safe and follow the rules."

"We feel very lucky," said Fred. Luiza continued, "The resort is great as it is now but we would like to make it more beautiful so that our guests think of it as a paradise.... When our guests leave our resort feeling relaxed and happy, that's when we're most satisfied."



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Check online for COVID-19 related announcements and all the need-to-know information for Valley residents at: madvalleycurrent.com

Reaping what you sow

BRENDA STRACK
MADAWASKA VALLEY

When a farmer plants a crop, he usually does so expecting an abundant harvest in due course. But in order to achieve that harvest, a number of things need to be tended to. First and foremost, the ground requires preparation, so the farmer plows the land in order to overturn soil, breaking it into smaller masses, incorporating any plant residue from the previous season and then adding fertilizer. The farmer knows that in order to grow crops successfully, he needs to start with a healthy ground in which to plant the seed.

But suppose that the farmer goes to pick up the necessary products for the season and is told that, presently, the only fertilizer on the market is one that requires daily application. Though he has never been aware of such a process, he trusts the direction of the supplier and complies with the unfamiliar procedure.

He plants his crop and begins the process of daily fertilization. It isn't long before he notices weeds beginning to appear, thick and aggressive weeds. In a short span of time, they overtake the entire plantation, leaving little space and nourishment for the crop seed to take root.

He doesn't understand what is happening but realizes that, in order to save his crop, immediate action is required. After retracing his steps, he comes to the conclusion that the only thing that he has done differently from years past related to the fertilization method. Although he had been directed by the supplier to follow a specific protocol, he chooses to follow his intuition and do some investigating prior to continuing the routine. He calls the supplier and immediately discovers that the fertilizer has been accidentally exposed to, and combined with, a weed that has the power to destroy everything around it.

Of course he makes the decision to cease applying the product and before long, the weeds begin to dry up and are eventually eradicated. The crop seed is now provided with what it requires to thrive and flourish and produce an abundant harvest.



PHOTO: KNOWORG

APPLY THIS SCENARIO TO EVERYDAY LIFE

Our minds can be likened to fertile ground. Regardless of what we plant, which is always a choice, what we feed it with daily determines what is produced.

We are in control of what we watch and listen to. When we notice that our lives are being negatively affected in any way, we, like the farmer in the fictional scenario, can make a decision to remove those things

Positive influences build up and encourage us to get through life with confidence. They promote well being, contentment and assurance that, although problems may arise, we can feel optimistic about getting through them.

Negative influences, on the other hand, deplete us of the quality of life that we deserve. They create negative thoughts, emotional distress and impact how we view the world around us. When we are faced with things that pose a threat, real or imagined, it is common to lose sight of all logic. We begin to experience unexplained symptoms in our body which can further lead to feeling overwhelmed and out of control.

Chronic fear has the ability to literally take over our minds, preventing us from making rational decisions, break-

ing down our immune systems and causing debilitating sickness and disease in our bodies.

We may be experiencing symptoms like mood swings, anxiety, the inability to feel love toward others, fatigue, withdrawal from family and friends, intrusive thoughts — just to name a few — and never understand what is triggering them.

We may begin to find it difficult to look after ourselves, make meals or get up in the morning. There can be times when we may experience dissociation. This means that we can feel disconnected from our bodies. We watch things happen around us but are unable to feel, we may not have a sense of who we are or recall memories from our past.

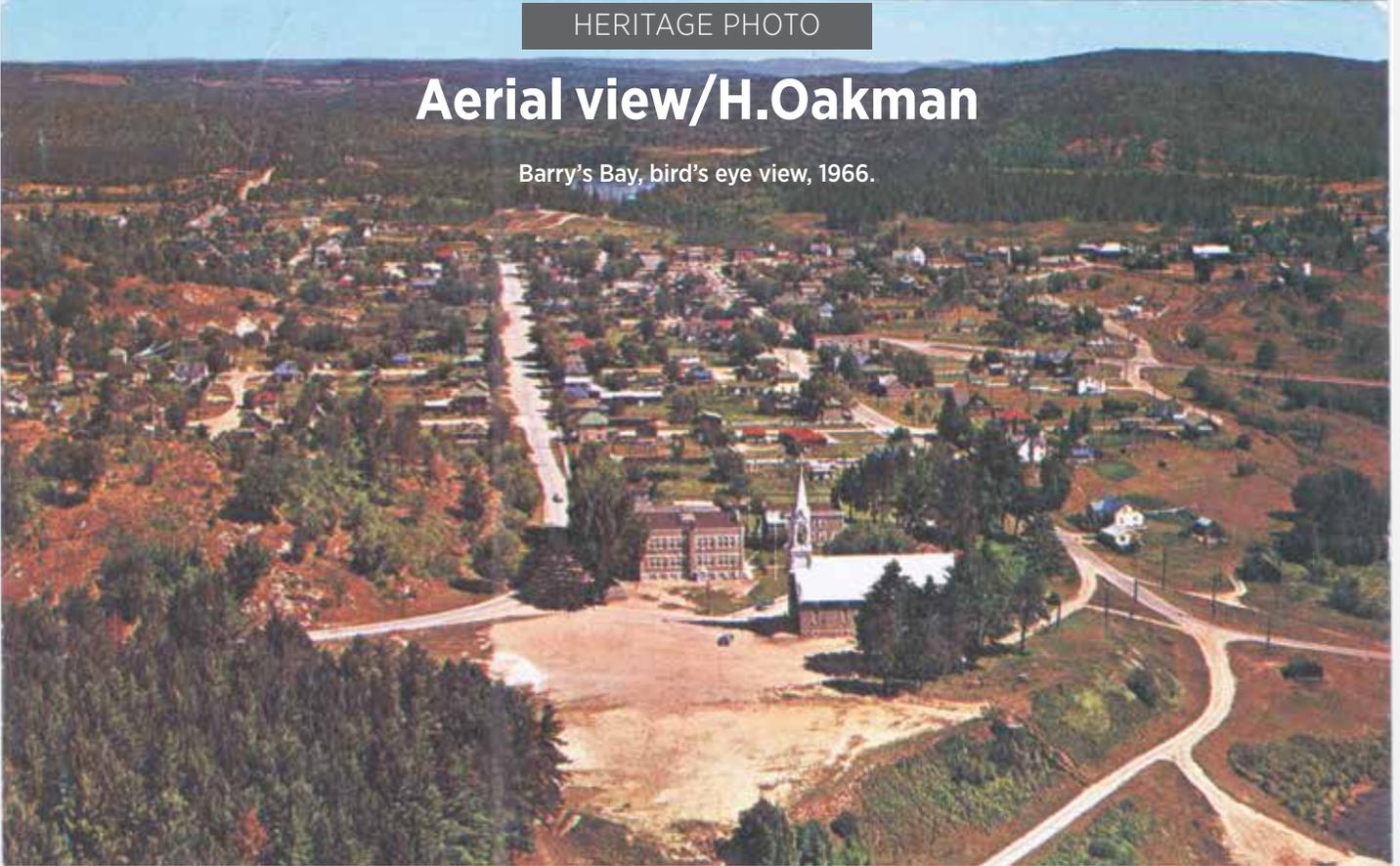
Fear also affects our ability to learn. When our brain is in hyper arousal mode, it distorts the storage of sensory input and the retrieval of information.

Long term exposure to anxiety triggered by fear can cause our brain to release stress hormones on a regular basis and prevent our bodies from returning to normal functioning. This causes our immune systems to weaken and make us vulnerable to viral infections and other physical and mental health problems. *Continued on page 9—*

HERITAGE PHOTO

Aerial view/H.Oakman

Barry's Bay, bird's eye view, 1966.



BOB CORRIGAN | BARRY'S BAY

The photo above is from a postcard that was mailed from Barry's Bay on June 11, 1966 by a woman who was camping just outside of Barry's Bay (probably in the Carson Lake / Trout Lake area) and sent to another woman in Centralia, Ontario. Although this particular postcard was sent in 1966, the photograph was probably taken in an earlier year.

In the picture, Dunn Street is the most noticeable street with Bay Street parallel to it on the right. Both St. Hedwig's Church and St. Joseph's Elemen-

tary School (no longer there) are very visible and one can see Drohan Lake near the top of the picture. Notice that there is no Sand Hill residential area at this point in time. Also missing is the Legion which had not yet been built.

The aerial photograph was taken by H.R. (Harry) Oakman of Peterborough. Not only had Oakman founded the Peterborough Municipal Airport but he owned the Peterborough Post Card Company, of which this postcard is one sample.

Oakman was commissioned by the

Brewers' Retail Store in the 1960s to fly over every town that had a beer store and take a picture. The one of Barry's Bay can be seen at the Train Station where it is on display on the wall.

Heritage Photo: If you are interested in having a picture and story featured in The Madawaska Valley Current, please submit the information to Bob Corrigan at madvalleycurrent@gmail.com (subject Heritage Photos) or mail your photo to Bob c/o The Current at PO Box 1097, Barry's Bay K0J 1B0 (originals will be returned).

LIMIT YOUR EXPOSURE

Looking back to the farmer, we notice that the products purchased from the supplier were infested with weeds. Through daily application, they were provided with the nourishment required to help them grow to the extent that they were able to overpower everything around the fertilizer.

To a certain degree, this is what happens to us when we listen to the news. A large percentage of the information covered by the media focuses

on the negative. When we expose ourselves to this type of content regularly, it has an impact on us — a negative impact — especially when a personal connection exists, such as during the current pandemic.

We tell ourselves that we need to stay informed, yet in doing so, our stress levels begin to elevate the moment we touch that remote. We know what's coming, yet we allow ourselves to hear it again and again.

Fear is a normal emotion in the sense

that it warns us of potential threats to our physical and emotional safety and prepares our bodies to take flight; however, as previously mentioned, it can be harmful when our bodies begin to live in this state for long periods of time.

If you find that you are experiencing symptoms that may be stemming from fear, begin setting boundaries. Limit your exposure to who and what might be contributing to it.

Discontinue fertilization and eradicate the weeds!

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Valley medical chief reviews local pandemic experience

JASON MALINOWSKI
 MADAWASKA VALLEY

We asked Dr. Jason Malinowski, Chief of Staff at St. Francis Memorial Hospital (SFMH), as well as Clinical Lead Physician for the Madawaska Valley Family Health Team (MVFHT), to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on health care in the Valley and share any good news that may have come out of this pandemic. He has provided the following review of the challenges and improvements to local health care through 2020.

STRAINS ON HEALTHCARE WORKERS

We faced a lot of challenges, knowing what was happening in China, Italy and New York with healthcare workers getting sick and dying while caring for their patients. Wearing my leadership hat, we had to make a lot of important decisions regarding patient flow, visitor policies, and personal protective equipment (PPE) – decisions made with insufficient, rapidly changing, and often conflicting information. The stress of not knowing how long this was going to last, and whether we would have enough PPE to safely care for patients was terrible. All the decisions at the tables I was at, were made with patient and staff safety as a prime consideration. As family physicians, we felt the stress (and still do) of not being able to care for our patients as we did before. We knew that some patients were going to forego care and possibly have bad outcomes related to waiting out the pandemic.

LONG-LASTING IMPLICATIONS

This past year has certainly driven a lot of innovation in health care. As family physicians, we realized that there is a certain proportion of patient encounters that do not require a physical visit to the clinic to be effective – that telephone or video visits would suffice in some cases. The government did recognize that and allowed us to be remunerated for phone visits, which they had not allowed previously. I hope they continue with that. Having said that, in some cases there is no substi-

tute for seeing patients in person; for example, when I need to physically examine them or perform a procedure. So there's a new wrinkle in the triaging of appointments. It is not only "How soon does this person need to be seen?" but also "Can I do this assessment remotely?" That extra triage step represented a learning curve for doctors and office staff alike. Interestingly, I find that in some cases access to specialist or tertiary care has actually improved, in that specialists are assessing patients more quickly. Many of the first assessments are done remotely—and the specialists are arranging tests or procedures in a much more deliberate and efficient way for follow-up visits.

VIRTUAL CARE

The increase in virtual appointments has usually been found to be quite satisfactory for patients, as we know that transportation and family issues can be a significant barrier to care here in the Valley. Not having to arrange a ride, or child care, or respite care for an ill spouse for someone's appointment has been a very welcome change for a lot of people. But some patients have struggled with not being able to "see" their doctor in as much of a timely way as they have been used to. We feel that frustration too, and I would ask that everyone be "patient" as we work out all these issues with flow and access, given the new reality.

MENTAL WELLNESS

We certainly can't forget the implications that the pandemic has had on everyone's mental health. We're social animals, and being told to Socially Distance has made depression, loneliness, and other mental health issues worse, and more prevalent. We are working with patients on that front as well, and that will take a long time to address. We all just want to get together with family and friends, dance, and play sports, and have dinners. 2020 has been a social hell.

SILVER LININGS

During this pandemic one of the big

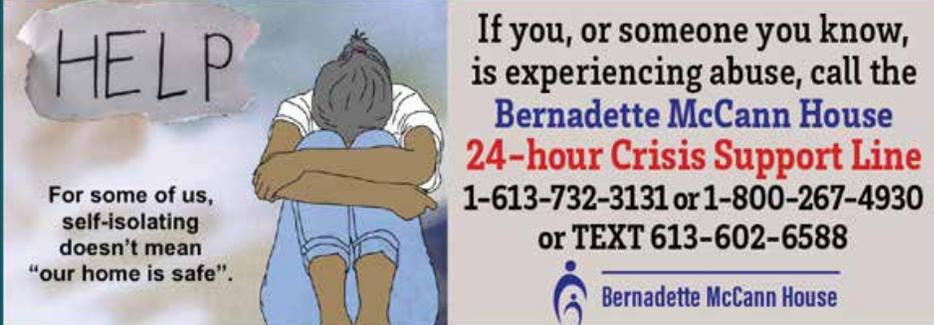
benefits is that we have been able to really strengthen our partnerships, and question our long-standing views and processes in health care. Now, we are meeting regularly with the Community Paramedic team. They have done an amazing job of being our mobile eyes, ears, and needles when patients have needed care that we were not able to deliver in person. In conjunction with them, the Renfrew County Virtual Triage and Assessment Centre (RCVTAC) program has been an excellent addition to the care options for patients who do not have access to a / their family doctor. As an example, when I look at the ER department data, visits solely for medication renewals have dropped off dramatically since the spring. New capacity at RCVTAC, increased access to the MVFHT, and the relaxation of pharmacists' restrictions in extending prescriptions has played a big part in that.

BUILDING THE PLANE AS YOU FLY

Internally at SFMH, staff have been incredibly resilient and innovative in the face of rapid change and uncertainty. It really is like the expression "building the plane as you fly." That phrase captures the "feelings of risk and uncertainty that accompany designing innovations and testing them in real time with actual participants, all while being responsible for keeping existing operations running." There's no how-to manual – and the rules are constantly changing! For instance, having to recreate a whole separate respiratory zone for screen-positive patients was an exercise in building a whole new ER from scratch. Every department contributed to its creation, weighing in with their suggestions and cautions.

BRIDGING GAPS BETWEEN SILOS

We have been able to strengthen our ties to other partners as well, convening an initially weekly meeting with leaders from the hospital, hospice, MVFHT, home support, pharmacy, long-term care, paramedic and emergency services, and retirement home sectors. We have been able to streamline processes, break down some barriers to care, and share best practices and success stories. This part has been invaluable to me, as I have a hand in all those sectors in some way.



HELP

For some of us, self-isolating doesn't mean "our home is safe".

If you, or someone you know, is experiencing abuse, call the **Bernadette McCann House 24-hour Crisis Support Line**
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The Library will be closed until the end of January.

Pickup service Monday to Friday 3 pm to 6 pm and Saturdays 12 noon to 3 pm.

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A lot to be thankful for in the Valley

DANIELLE AND ROGER PAUL
MADAWASKA VALLEY

In its last New Year message, *The Current* reviewed some of the highs and lows of the previous year. Because of the pandemic, unfortunately 2020 brought more of the latter than the former, so this time we will avoid depressing our readers with such a review.

Instead, we would like to highlight the exceptional service that local residents have been fortunate to receive which undoubtedly has helped keep us here in the Madawaska Valley relatively unscathed by COVID-19.

Special mention should go, of course, to our local healthcare services that continue to demonstrate their dedication and ingenuity, with flourishing community paramedicine and the very successful Renfrew County Virtual Triage & Assessment Centre (RC VTAC). Hopefully you all wrote to the Premier and Minister of Health to tell them we want to keep RC VTAC even after the pandemic is over. The Madawaska Valley Family Health Team connected with more unattached patients. Physicians and other healthcare professionals offered remote appointments and changed in-office processes.

Despite far from perfect internet connections here in rural Renfrew County, education professionals, students and their parents coped with changes including online lessons during COVID-19 closures.

Of course, Valley people don't just adapt – they step up, too! Thanks to the volunteer cohort that helped keep life as normal as possible during these abnormal times for their neighbours who were vulnerable, elderly, unemployed, short of food, without transport, or whatever their needs.

And thanks to our frontline workers who continue to put themselves at risk to ensure that our everyday necessities are available through shutdowns and varying levels of restrictions.

Also in the Valley tradition of helping our neighbours, the Madawaska Valley Food Bank stayed in good shape despite increased demand, and many individuals, non-profit organizations and service

clubs helped make Canada Day, Halloween and the Christmas season as joyous as possible for local kids of all ages.

The Current experienced quite a few changes this past year. Being a primarily online news source, we began with “business as usual” but we had to adapt by March as more municipalities began meeting online or by teleconference. We temporarily suspended distribution of “communally-read” waiting room copies of *The Current* during shutdowns, and thank our distribution partners for helping us to promote our website address. Our email newsletter, published less frequently than we would have liked due to the pandemic, now reaches 1,100 subscribers.

As always we are extremely grateful to our talented contributors who provide content for *The Current*: the writers, photographers, illustrators,

designers, webmasters, social media managers and all who help with print distribution.

Special thanks to our advertisers without whose support we could not continue to provide *The Current* as a free news source in the community. They understand that we operate as a non-profit. We are grateful to advertisers who joined us during the year although we must confess to being disappointed at the low number of BIA members who support us with their advertising. Hopefully this will change as they learn of the increased online readership of *The Current* which now averages in excess of 44,000 page views monthly.

Finally, a heartfelt thank you to our readers as *The Current* celebrates its third birthday this month.

A happy and healthy 2021 to you all!

Creative individuals invited to join Pop Up Art Project

ANYA GANSTERER
RENFREW COUNTY

As part of the broader Pop Up Art project, which runs until 2023, Ottawa Valley Creative Arts (OV-CAOS) is now accepting submissions for the Good Ancestor Exhibition. This exhibit will explore our personal connections to the past — what we would ask our ancestors, if we could, and what we would tell our descendants. Artists have until

February 8, 2021 to submit an application. And remember, you don't have to consider yourself an artist to make artwork for a Pop Up Art exhibition. You may feel more like a maker or crafter or creative person; this exhibition is for you too.

For more information, visit the Ottawa Valley Creative Arts website at ov-caos.org or email to arrange a time for a telephone conversation: anya@ov-caos.org

