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A plea for kindness and respect for healthcare workers

DR. ROBERT CUSHMAN
RENFREW COUNTY AND DISTRICT

Who could have imagined the current state of the pandemic? What happened to the promise of newly arrived vaccines last Christmas and widespread optimism for 2021? Simply put, Omicron took us by storm.

Cases have risen exponentially, tests are in short supply, and demand for vaccines far exceeds supply. Worse, the local booking system crashed which made setting up an appointment an additional exercise in frustration. At this time when we are all exhausted and struggling to balance life's tasks mentally and physically, the Government has rightly chosen to ramp up restrictions to protect our health care system once again.

Hospitals could soon be overwhelmed with additional cases, however, the physical capacity, beds and ICUs, may not be primary concern. The breaking point could be the lack of health care workers to treat patients.

Healthcare workers are already overworked and burnt out. Now with increased exposures from work, family, and the community, we are seeing more COVID-19 cases than ever amongst front line staff. They are increasing their precautions like the rest of us in efforts to "keep all hands-on deck."

Over the past weeks, we have seen a dramatic increase in verbal abuse of health care workers for circumstances beyond their control!

Does the receptionist at a vaccine clinic have any control over a collapsed internet registration system? Does a nurse have any responsibility for a shortage of vaccines and delayed appointments when she has spent the past year vaccinating people daily? Is Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) responsible for a lack of rapid antigen tests?

The answer is categorically no! Sad to say, but Omicron took us all by surprise



Dr. Rob Cushman, Acting Medical Officer of Health Renfrew County and District, issued this statement on Jan.5 2022 PHOTO YOUTUBE

and we were not prepared. Yet, an increasing number of the public think it is their right to complain and verbally abuse overworked and now fragile healthcare workers whose immediate families have seen little of them over the holidays.

We understand the public's frustration, and no one feels it more than front line staff. While we continue to have widespread public support, an increasing number of people are venting their frustrations at us. The number of offenders may not be large, but the impact is enormous. It is harmful and hurtful.

My message to these inconsiderate people is "stop it". These behaviours will no longer be tolerated. Furthermore, be careful not to bite the hand that helps you, because healthcare workers are giving up in exhaustion and disgust. This means that hand may not be there to help you or a loved one when you need it most.

The vast majority of the public has been highly supportive, and this has contributed to Renfrew County and District's suc-

cess during the pandemic. However, it is time to remind you that we all need to be in this battle together and that means that everyone needs to do their part. Kindness and respect are as much a part of the solution as vaccines and the strict observance of public health measures.

CURRENT STATUS OF CASES IN RENFREW COUNTY AND DISTRICT: AS OF JAN. 13 2022

Self-Isolation:.....	495
Hospitalized:	14
Hospitalized in Intensive Care Unit: ...	0
Resolved:	1664
Deceased:.....	16
Active outbreaks in RCD:	8

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Fatal fires in Ontario a worrying trend

THE CURRENT MADAWASKA VALLEY

In December Madawaska Valley Fire Chief Corwin Quade shared with us his fear that Ontario was heading for a record year for fatal fires. He noted that up to the end of October 2021 there had been 83 fatal fires that killed 100 people. He pointed out that during the last week of November alone, eight people died in fires.

Quade said, "Again I remind people that only working smoke alarms save lives. You have less than a minute to get out when the alarm sounds. A fire will double in size every 30 seconds and buildings now burn eight times faster than they did 50 years ago."

REMINDERS:

- If you hear the smoke or carbon monoxide alarm going off, get outside and call 9-1-1 from a safe distance.
- Smoke Alarms are required on every level of your home and outside each sleeping area (Note: in the case of a new house or a major home renovation, alarms must be smoke, carbon monoxide, strobe light combination units; they need to be interconnected. Along with this they are required in every bedroom.)
- Clean the drier lint out of the dryer after every use.
- Always make sure that only seasoned wood is burned in your stove, fire place, or furnace. (Note: dried wood is wood that has been cut into firewood length and allowed to dry outside



Madawaska Valley Fire Chief Corwin Quade stands on the deck of the new MV pumper

for a season. You cannot bring wood indoors and dry it on top of a stove. As funny as this sounds, it happens and it is very dangerous)

- The chimney should be cleaned at least once a year before using your wood burning appliance. Chimney brushes need to be run through the chimney.
- If you are cooking never leave items unattended. If you must leave the area, first turn off what is being cooked. Unattended cooking is one of the leading causes of structure fires.
- Don't smoke in bed.

RENTAL PROPERTIES:

Landlords and tenants are both responsible for smoke alarms in apartments or rental properties. Rental properties require combination smoke, carbon monoxide alarms, with a strobe light and must all be interconnected. The alarms must be located in every sleeping area and on every level of the building.

Quade finished his reminders with: "Should someone have any questions in regards to fire safety contact your local fire service. They are more than happy to answer any questions that you may have."

Court calls BLR Integrity Commissioner billing “excessive” – also criticizes BLR lawyers for improper claim for costs

MICHAEL J. MCCLOSKEY
PALMER RAPIDS

The longstanding concerns of some ratepayers as well as some members of Council regarding the billing practices of the Brudenell Lyndoch and Raglan (BLR) Integrity Commissioner, as well as their lawyers, were confirmed in a decision released by Justice Robyn Ryan Bell of the Divisional Court on January 4, 2022. The judge criticized both the Wishart Law firm and the Integrity Commissioner (Peggy Young-Lovelace of E4m), specifically:

- As against E4m, for charges that the judge classified as “excessive;” and,
- As against Wishart Law, for seeking costs in representing BLR when the Township was not a party to the court motion.

Justice Ryan Bell of the Divisional Court said in her ruling **“Having regard to the factors set out in r. 57.01(1), I agree with Ms. Budarick that the costs claimed by the Integrity Commissioner are excessive. In particular, the motion was not complex. The total time incurred by counsel for the Integrity Commissioner – 41.5 hours for senior and junior counsel – is excessive for a straightforward motion involving no evidentiary record.”**

The judge also considered the claim by Tim Harmar of the Wishart Law firm for payment of fees relating to the same motion. Referring to the contents of Harmar’s “dockets,” she said, **“The dockets ... make plain that these are costs which were incurred by the Township. The Township is not a party to the appeal and was not a party to the motion.”** She therefore refused to allow the sum of \$3,588.03 claimed by Wisharts to be recovered.

The costs ruling followed Justice Ryan Bell’s decision dated December 6, 2021 rejecting Councillor Budarick’s request to remain on BLR Council pending the hearing of her appeal against the earlier decision of Justice James ordering that she be removed from her seat on Council.

The Integrity Commissioner had requested payment of \$14,515.98 but the judge reduced this to \$5,100. It remains to



PHOTO GORDON LAW

be seen whether or not the ratepayers of BLR Township have been presented with a bill from E4m for the higher amount and, if so, whether it will be disputed. Readers may recall from previous reports in The Current that questions have been raised about the billing practices of the two firms, as well as about ISN, the private investigators retained by E4m. Those included:

- A 2019 report into Councillor Iris Kauffeldt cost BLR \$4,460 despite the fact that Young-Lovelace acknowledged that the matter was outside of her jurisdiction claimed 36 hours of work.
- A 2020 report into Councillor John Rutledge took over a year to complete and cost BLR \$5,162.35, this despite the fact that the Integrity Commissioner’s investigator conducted no interviews on the matter.
- In June 2021, the BLR released a number of E4m/Wishart Law invoices totalling \$73,000 for their services for Code of Conduct investigations and Occupational Health and Safety Investigations
- Previously in response to criticism, Young-Lovelace stated in a letter to BLR Council on January 20 2020 that “It has not been our practice to provide specific time detail of activities carried out.”

The Current wrote to BLR in June 2021 seeking comments about possible examples of over-charging and other anomalies

in the invoices, but did not receive a substantive response.

COUNCILLOR TO ASK FOR THIRD PARTY INVESTIGATION OF IC BILLING

Councillor Trevor Lidtkie has indicated that he will be putting forward a motion at the next meeting of BLR Council asking that Council appoint an independent third party to conduct a review of past billing submitted by Wishart, E4m and ISN. Lidtkie, who attributes his current problems with Integrity Commissioner investigations to his previous questioning of their bills, told The Current “I am happy that the court got to see what I have been seeing from the get-go. This company is in the billing business not the integrity business.” Lidtkie went on to say “I think we need someone we can trust to come in and determine if other charges are excessive as well?”

The Current will continue to seek comment on these matters from BLR staff and Council.




**BARRY'S BAY
Legion**

AT THE LEGION

Legion events (Bingo, Pancake Breakfasts, Club Room) are temporarily closed until Jan.26 due to Ontario COVID restrictions.

VACCINATION CLINIC

Your Legion continues to be the venue for the Barry's Bay vaccination clinics. Walk-ins are welcome, but tickets provided for any vaccines once bookings are satisfied. Make appointments via Renfrew County & District Health Unit, not the Legion.

 Watch for upcoming events in local media and on our FB page

**ANSWER TO TRIVIA QUESTION -
FOOD AND DRINK: 7**

Local OPP tips to enjoy a safe winter



Drone photo of Eastern Ontario ice rescue in January 2021. PHOTO OPP/TWITTER

SUBMITTED
KILLALOE

Local OPP Detachments provide seasonal advice so you can safely enjoy the cold weather.

NO ICE IS WITHOUT RISK

The Bancroft Detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) would like to remind residents in the area that they need to be cautious around frozen lakes, rivers and streams. Ice may look tempting for snowmobiling, riding your all-terrain vehicle (ATV), ice fishing and other activities but you cannot determine the strength of ice by its appearance. Please remember that ice is unpredictable and can be affected by many factors including: thickness, currents, temperature, cracks, snow cover, water depth and size of water body.

Anyone choosing to venture out on frozen bodies of water are reminded to use proper safety equipment that will reduce the risk when travelling on ice:

- Wear a thermal protective buoyant suit.
- Carry picks that can be used to grip the ice to pull yourself out of the water.
- Carry a small personal safety kit that includes waterproof matches, pocket knife, compass and whistle.
- Never go out alone and always tell someone your planned destination and your expected time of return.
- Avoid unfamiliar areas/unknown ice, travelling on ice at night and slushy/thawed ice.

Always remember that NO ICE IS WITHOUT RISK.

MAKE THIS SNOWMOBILE SEASON A SAFE ONE

As snowmobile season starts in the Renfrew County area the Killaloe Detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) would like to remind snowmobile operators that they need to be cautious on trails, lakes and private property.

Anyone choosing to operate a snowmobile are reminded to carry the required documentation, use proper safety equipment and operate their snowmobile in a safe manner.

The Madawaska Valley
Current

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THE CURRENT WELCOMES LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Please address letters to 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. Only your name and municipality appears in print. Online, readers can comment using the "Reply."

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EDITOR'S NOTE: This downloadable version of *The Current* is available free from our website. Please consider printing copies for any friends and family without internet, especially those in self-isolation that you may be helping.

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



Safe Snowmobile Week is Jan.15-23 2022

Some safety tips include:

- Carry a valid driver's licence or motorized snow vehicle operator's licence, proof of insurance, proof of snowmobile ownership and have a valid snowmobile trail permit affixed to your sled when on trails.
- Come to a complete stop before entering any roadway and be cautious when crossing roads.
- Obey speed limits and always adjust your speed to the weather and trail conditions.
- Ride SOBER.
- Wear an approved snowmobile helmet.
- Wear appropriate clothing to prevent hypothermia.
- Ensure you cellphone is fully charged.
- Carry a small personal safety kit that includes waterproof matches, pocket knife, compass and whistle.
- Never go out alone and always tell someone your planned destination and your expected time of return.
- Avoid unfamiliar areas at night.
- Regularly inspect your snowmobile to ensure it is in good mechanical condition.
- Use caution on frozen bodies of water and remember that No Ice is Safe Ice.

International Snowmobile Safety Week is Jan. 15-23 2022. For more information on

snowmobiling and cold water/ice safety

please visit:

Snowmobile Safety -

ontario.ca/snowmobilesafety

Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs
ofsc.on.ca

Cold water and ice safety -

www.lifesavingsociety.com/water-safety/cold-water-and-ice.aspx

FESTIVE R.I.D.E. CAMPAIGN ENDS

The Killaloe Detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) participated in the OPP 2021/22 Festive R.I.D.E. (Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere) campaign, which began on November 18, 2021 and concluded January 3, 2022.

The Killaloe OPP Detachment conducted 103 RIDE checks throughout the detachment area, and issued 2 warn range alcohol suspensions. Killaloe OPP report that drivers were in compliance, with no impaired operation or over 80 mgs charges laid.

While the Festive R.I.D.E. campaign has concluded, Killaloe OPP will continue conducting R.I.D.E. initiatives throughout the detachment area year round.

Killaloe OPP thank community members for their continued cooperation in making our roads safe for all to travel on.

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ANSWER TO TRIVIA QUESTION - INDUSTRY: FRANCE

Catching up with Catch The Ace

DANIELLE PAUL
MADAWASKA VALLEY

There's more than one way for lucky Valley residents to win with St. Francis Valley Healthcare Foundation's (SFVH) popular Catch The Ace progressive lottery. Yes, of course you can buy a ticket for just \$5 cash in the weekly draw as these photos of recent Weekly Winners prove. These four people have won Weekly Prizes (20 percent of the tickets purchased that week) so they have benefited to the tune of nearly \$3,000. Eventually the Ace of Spades will be found and that week's winner will receive the progressive jackpot for an even bigger prize. As of Jan.12 the Total Winnings are estimated at \$12,000. But because proceeds from ticket sales are used to support the purchase of essential medical equipment for St. Francis Memorial Hospital, it's important to remember that with the purchase of every Catch The Ace ticket, everyone in the community wins too.

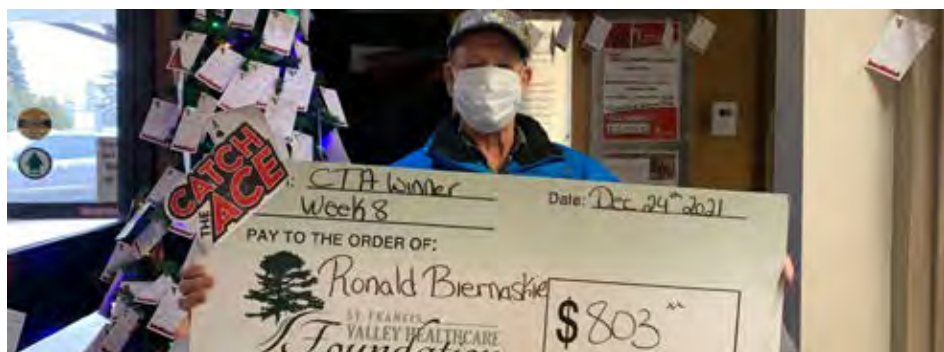
Tickets can be purchased at the following locations: Round Lake Centre Food Market, Round Lake Country Store, AJ's Convenience, Killaloe Hardware, Wilno Building Supply, Charlie D's, Barry's Bay MacEwen, Lorraine's Pharmasave, Barry's Bay Shell, CO Country Market, The Cottage Cup, Eganville Shell, Conway's Pharmacy, Village Discount and Variety, Ramona's Hairstyling and Whitney Pharmacy. You can watch the Weekly Draw on Facebook every Thursday at 4:30 pm.



Tim Kuiack also bought his ticket at the Shell in Barry's Bay and won \$727 using his birthday (27). He supports Catch the Ace as he feels the proceeds are going to a good cause. Tim is his family's designated ticket buyer.



These were the remaining envelopes before the draw on Jan.13. Is one of them your lucky number?



When the envelope bearing his lucky number – 20 – was opened, Ronald Biernaskie received \$803 which he will use for last-minute Christmas gifts and will share some with his granddaughter.



Dawn Cruchet of Palmer Rapids won \$739 and plans on sharing her winnings with the children. Her lucky number was 51 – the number of years she and her husband have been married.



Susan Coulas bought her ticket at Barry's Bay Shell. She selected number 17 as it has been lucky for her previously and is also the day her father passed away. She loyally buys a ticket each week and has no plans yet for how to spend her winnings of \$700.

Barry's Bay Legion Ladies Auxiliary celebrates 60th Anniversary year

SUBMITTED
MADAWASKA VALLEY

The Royal Canadian Legion Barry's Bay Branch 406, has had the assistance of the Ladies Auxiliary since May 18, 1961. It started a few weeks earlier, on April 23rd of that year, when interested ladies met with the Zone Commander of Zone G7.

The First Executive was made up of: President – Mary Fox, First Vice President – Mary Maika, Second Vice President – Susan Kulas, Sergeant-at-Arms – Evelyn Cybulskie, Secretary – Constance Chippure, Treasurer – Isabell Etmsanskie.

Other members initiated at the organizational meeting were Julia Burchat, Francis Chapeskie, Beatrice Shalla, Annie Ostroskie, Susan Cybulskie, Ursula Yarascavitch, Ella Hoffman, and Ursula Burchat.

Charter Night for the newly formed Auxiliary was held at Pine Cliff Lodge on May 23, 1961.

In the early years, the Auxiliary did not have facilities to raise funds, but the ladies managed somehow with their limited means. Card parties, bake sales and teenage dances are just some examples of how the ladies raised money in the early years. Later, the activities included cribbage, darts, broomball and bowling added to the Ladies schedule. Most years the Auxiliary has entered teams in the Zone Darts, Bowling, Cribbage and Euchre. In 1994, a team consisting of Doris Hudder, Ursula Burchat, Sandra Coulas and Teresa Sullivan brought home the Provincial Cribbage Trophy.

In 1963, the Ladies Auxiliary started the practice of presenting an Auxiliary member who became a new mother with an Engraved Silver Baby Cup. This still continues today. Another important tradition, which started in 1997 at a Zone Convention, is placing a single red rose in a vase at the head table for each deceased member from the past year. This, too, continues today.

In 1972, construction of a new Branch



Front row (left to right) Doris Hudder, Teresa Sullivan, Ann Cybulskie, Lillian Campbell, Constance Chippure. Rear row (left to right) Sandra Coulas, Beatrice Lentz, Ursula Burchat, Viola Cybulski and Judy Lisk. For more, see page 8.

The news clipping above from those early days shows (from left) Front Row: Doris Hudder, Teresa Sullivan, Ann Cybulskie, Lillian Campbell, Constance Chippure. Back Row: Sandra Coulas, Beatrice Lentz, Ursula Burchat, Viola Cybulski, Judy Lisk. Photo submitted. PHOTO SUBMITTED

building started and the first wedding the Ladies Auxiliary catered to was on September 30, 1972. With the building of the new Legion by the Branch, the Auxiliary's abilities at fundraising changed. Using the modern kitchen facilities at the Legion, the Ladies could now cater to weddings and parties, something they have become famous for over the years. Branch 406 is now doing the catering at the Legion.

The above historical information about the Ladies Auxiliary was provided by Teresa Sullivan when she was G7 Zone Commander. As a keen lover of local history and 50th Anniversary of Barry's Bay Committee member, she contributed this to the book Village of Barry's Bay, 50th Anniversary: 1933-1983.

Each year, the Ladies Auxiliary donates to various charities including the Provincial Bursary Fund and Charitable Foundation. Local donations have included Royal Canadian Legion Branch 406, Veterans, Girl Guides, Minor Hockey, Figure Skating, St. Francis Memorial Hospital, Valley Manor, local schools for their Healthy Snack Program and Bursaries, Food Bank, and Christmas Gifts for Children.

The Ladies Auxiliary has also partici-

pated in many community events over the years including Remembrance Day Services at the Branch, Valley Manor, St. Francis Memorial Hospital and Local Schools, Bingo at Perley Rideau Veteran's Health Centre, sale of Luminaries for an All Night Vigil, Canada 150 Community Parade, preparing tray favours for St. Francis Memorial Hospital, hosting card tournaments, helping prepare and serve St. John Bosco School's Christmas Dinner and catering for Weddings, Funerals and Birthday Parties.

The present Ladies Auxiliary Executive includes Maureen Kiedroski, President; Sandra Coulas, Second Vice-President, Secretary and Sports Officer; Viola Cybulski, Membership; Aileen Yantha, First Vice-President; Theresa Chapeskie, Sick and Shut-ins; Helen Gutoskie, Honours and Awards; and Glenda Vaillencourt, Treasurer and Sergeant-at-Arms.

The membership of the Ladies Auxiliary today stands at 15 with four Life Members. Many members have come and gone, but each one has left a piece of themselves in this great organization called the Ladies Auxiliary to the Royal Canadian Branch 406.

SWC appoints leading sexual abuse lawyer to spearhead Lieflander investigation

JAMES DI FIORE
BARRY'S BAY

Following publicity surrounding sexual abuse allegations against former music teacher Uwe Lieflander who was employed at Our Lady Seat of Wisdom College, (2007-2017), SWC announced in early August that it would arrange for an independent investigation. On December 2, The Current received a media release advising that SWC has retained Toronto lawyer Elizabeth Grace "to uncover the facts surrounding the allegations as they relate to SWC and its community of alumni, students, staff, and faculty members." Among her achievements Grace was recognized by Canadian Lawyer Magazine as one of Canada's Top 25 Most Influential Lawyers in 2014 for her commitment to advocating on behalf of victims of sexual abuse.

SWC's announcement requests anyone with information regarding any form of sexual misconduct perpetrated by Lieflander during the period of 2007-2017 to come forward no later than Feb.4 2022. Grace may be contacted by email to swcinvestigation@lerner.ca or by telephone at 1-833-913-7718. Alternatively information may be shared with SWC's Vice-President Academic, Dr. Natasha Duquette, Vice-President at swcinvestigation@seatofwisdom.ca who will forward

information after review to Ms. Grace for her consideration and/or follow up as she deems appropriate.

Ottawa Police Services issued a warrant for Lieflander in 2019, who is believed to be still living in his native Germany. The story of one of his alleged victims was published in July of 2021, and attracted international attention. See: <https://www.simchafisher.com/2021/07/01/canadian-college-church-and-community-ignored-predatory-choirmasters-red-flags/>

The Current reached out to Grace and Duquette for information about the scope of the investigation, including how they plan to contact all potential victims of abuse that occurred up to fifteen years ago. Grace responded to say that as the investigator she would not directly engage with media about the investigation. Duquette replied saying that she emailed a letter to all alumni from the years 2007-2017 when the announcement was posted on Dec.2. She said further letters were also emailed on Dec.6 to all alumni in SWC's database, as well as present-day staff and faculty; past faculty and staff will be emailed Dec.7. Saying her aim was to be as thorough as possible, Duquette confirmed she has compiled and provided to Grace a list of potential witnesses (faculty and staff, past and present, and former students) and is adding to that list as people come forward. Follow-up telephone



Lawyer Elizabeth Grace hired by Seat of Wisdom to lead independent inquiry. PHOTO
LAWANDSTYLE.CA

calls are being planned as well. Duquette also said she was forwarding any new information at her own discretion, that the investigation is her top priority and that SWC hopes to report by March 1, 2022.

The announcement and letters from SWC include an offer of up to \$150 per session for up to seven sessions of counselling for each witness or survivor who comes forward. The choice of a certified therapist will be theirs.

Madawaska Valley Gardeners to hold virtual AGM Jan.20



The Madawaska Valley Gardening Club has scheduled this year's Annual General Meeting for Thursday, Jan.20 at 7:30 p.m. The Club executive said that pandemic measures make an in-person AGM impossible this year. Members will receive details and the Zoom link by email.

Meanwhile, please renew your membership if you haven't done so. You have two options:

1) E-transfer: send \$10 to mvgardening-club30@gmail.com Please include mem-

ber's name(s) in the message section and remember to separately email your security answer to the same address; or

2) Snail mail a cheque: write a \$10 cheque payable to Madawaska Valley Horticultural Society (Note: the Club's legal name remains as Horticultural Society) and mail to Madawaska Valley Horticultural Society, PO Box 1151, Barry's Bay, ON K0J 1B0. Please indicate the member's name(s).

LETTER: Reader encourages sexual abuse victims to speak up in SWC investigation

The writer has kindly agreed to share the following letter, originally directed to the Ottawa Citizen, with The Current's readers.

On January 25, 2019, the Citizen published an article about a choir director who fled to Germany after a sexual assault charge was laid against him. The name of the alleged predator is Uwe Lieflander. While he taught at various schools in the Ottawa area, he held the post of choir director for more than ten years at a private Catholic institution in Barry's Bay, Ontario, Our Lady Seat of Wisdom (SWC). Until a few months ago, the College continued to confirm that it was not aware of any misconduct on Mr. Lieflander's part, and that it had received no complaints.

On December 2, 2021, just short of three years after the Ottawa Police raised concerns about the possibility that there were other sexual abuse victims, SWC did something that very few if any Catholic institutions have ever done in Canada: it launched an independent investigation of Mr. Lieflander's behaviour over the ten years he worked there. We know from previous reporting that Mr. Lieflander publicly admitted to grooming young people, ostensibly so they could sing better. The victim who placed the charge told a harrowing story about how Mr. Lieflander would target the most vulnerable children at the school. In her case, he distanced her from her own family, convinced her that she was special, and that only he could "care" for her as she should be cared for – all the well-documented traits of a sexual predator. Eventually he raped her, though not at SWC itself.

This investigation is important to me personally, as I come from a very traditional Catholic upbringing where anything to do with sex was never discussed openly and freely. There was multi-generational sexual abuse in my family, beginning with my father at the hands of the Christian Brothers who taught him. My father was close to 80 when he disclosed the abuse. He had never even shared it



with his wife, my mother. It explained so much about his behaviour to all of us who loved him so deeply.

Catholic institutions have a lousy track record when it comes to opening their doors for an independent look at sexual abuse allegations. Most institutions like SWC, and like my father's school almost a century ago, continue to attract young people who have been raised in very sheltered home environments, often taught to respect authority figures and not to question behaviour that may make them uncomfortable or worse. They may be ill equipped to recognise sexual predation and may, like so many victims, remain quiet, blaming themselves for what happened to them.

Some may criticise SWC for taking as long as it did to take action on the allegations made about a teacher with a decade-long track record. But sexual abuse doesn't have a "best before" date, and this investigation is a unique opportunity for the college to walk the talk about its motto: "the truth will set you free."

In my family, just like it is for so many sexual abuse victims, one of the biggest regrets is in not having spoken out sooner so that further victimization could have been prevented.

Many of SWC's alumni who were taught by Uwe Lieflander would range in age from their early twenties to early thirties. Some of them may live in the area served by the Ottawa Citizen. You may not even be certain that you, or someone in your life is a victim. What SWC has so bravely done is offer any and all potential victims the opportunity to reach out in complete confidence to a lawyer, Ms. Elizabeth Grace,

with the firm of Lerner LLP in Toronto. She can be reached directly at 1-833-913-7718 or at swcinvestigation@lerner.ca. The deadline is February 4, 2022.

If the idea of speaking to a lawyer like Ms. Grace, who specializes in sexual abuse cases, is too daunting for you or someone you love, contact your local sexual abuse support organization – these groups have trained, sympathetic staff who can help you understand whether or not what happened to you constitutes sexual abuse. In the post "Me-too" world, it is still difficult to come forward, and to be believed. But there is strength in numbers. SWC is offering trauma support to witnesses and survivors. If the environment at SWC was conducive to Mr. Lieflander enjoying decade-long exposure to young, perhaps naïve vulnerable traditional Catholic youth, others like him may have also found the environment at SWC, like it has been for so many decades in Catholic Institutions that "care for" children and youth, to be inadvertently, unknowingly predator-friendly.

Please take advantage of this amazing and unique opportunity. Our Lady Seat of Wisdom has taken an extraordinary step in its journey towards greater accountability. It needs those who may have had similar experiences to the one brave woman who has come forward to date, to find their voices, too. If you struggle to do that for yourself, please consider other young people who may escape the traumatic legacy of sexual predation, because you chose to speak up.

*Cathy Lyons
Golden Lake, Ontario*

Welcome to synodality: invitation to faithful

JOHN MADIGAN
BARRY'S BAY

The diocese of Pembroke, like dioceses all over the world, has just launched a process called "synod." If successful, this initiative of Pope Francis could be one of the most important reforms in the history of the Catholic Church, equal to the renewal brought about by the Vatican II Council in the 1960s. In October, in his opening address to bishops from all over the world gathered in Rome, Pope Francis invited all the faithful, men and women, religious and clergy to embark on a "vast consultation movement" that will reach its climax in 2023. He said, "Enabling everyone to participate is an essential ecclesial duty."

So, this is not a one-time ecclesial event like a Eucharistic Congress that will last for a few days and then we will go back to things as usual, but it is to be an ongoing consultative process — an authentic spiritual discernment to better recognize the paths for the Church of today and tomorrow. And it is not a parliament or an opinion poll where the majority decides about the paths forward. Throughout the opening ceremony Pope Francis referred several times to the importance of an openness for the Spirit to guide us. He recalled the words of one of the Council theologians, Father Yves Congar, who once said, "There is no need to create another Church, but to create a different Church."

And there may be many former church-going Catholics who will be anxious to participate in discussions of what a different church will be like. In his book *Beyond Belief*, Australian social researcher and author, Hugh MacKay offers that "about two-thirds of us say we believe in God or some 'higher power', but fewer than one in ten Australians attend church weekly."



He argues that while our attachment to a traditional idea of God may be waning, our desire for a life of meaning remains as strong as ever. In a 2018 survey by Vice Media, seven in ten members of Generation Z (those born between 1997 and 2012) said they "look for spirituality in their lives but say organized religion is not relevant to them." And, the Catholic Church in Germany is said to have lost a record number of members in 2019. Recently, Bishop Georg Batzing, of the German Bishops' Conference, said, "Of course the declines are due to demographics, but they show that ... we no longer motivate a large number of people for Church life." And in 2011, PEW Research found that "one quarter of American adults under 30 are unaffiliated describing their religion as atheist, agnostic or nothing in particular." Derek Scally, author of *The Best Catholics in the World*, says it's an interesting time to be talking about renewal in the Church when the largest group that was in the Catholic Church have walked away and want no part in it. A woman from Mayo waiting for the papal Mass in 2018 tells Derek, "Practicing Catholics in Ireland are in a minority now."

Perhaps those Catholics who do not

attend church regularly may not even be contacted or invited to partake. Ursula Halligan, a member of We Are Church, Ireland, an organization that is working for change and renewal in the Catholic Church seeking shared decision making, equality for women, and a welcome for all says that when her members sought to participate, they were told there was no room for them. She says there needs to be a greater sense of urgency, that women make up half the human race; they are not a minority group. And when the International Rainbow Group of Catholics applied, they were also disallowed a space for participation. Halligan says that calling such people "objectively disordered" and their love "intrinsically evil" isn't the way to go about a dialogue 'bandaging wounds and healing broken hearts with the balm of God.' They are Catholics waiting to hear that wording in the official Catechism changed.

Bishop Brendan Leahy of Limerick points out that this will be a worldwide affair and hot-button issues in Western society may not have the same urgency in poorer countries that may be more focused on issues such as famine, war, and climate disasters. He says we are just in the beginning phase, and we need to ask: How do we get on with one another as a Church? How do we communicate with one another in the Church? And what is the best way to communicate with one another? It's a process that will last over time, not a big event that happens and then it's over, so it needs to have sure foundations and a 'steady-as-we-go' attitude.

It is not only the laity who wish to bring issues to the synod for consideration. At the recent AGM of the Association of

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Catholic Priests in Ireland, Fr. Tim Hazelwood said that if the Church is going to go down the route of synodality there - must be openness and respect. Some priests have concerns that need to be tabled. They are all getting older, and the demands are increasing with fewer priests and the clustering of parishes. They are concerned that it will be difficult to reach the alienated but it is important that this initiative succeed. Augustinian Kieran O'Mahoney said, "The Church needs fixing" and this project is "a recovery of the vision of the Second Vatican Council and if it fails, the Church is in serious trouble. It has to work!"

There are a few synodal processes that have already started. Peter McLoughlin, a lay leader in the Mayo Killala diocese, reports that a very successful synodal process has taken place there. Germany started a process at the national level in 2019 and in the last few months there have been many German Church leaders lining up for audiences with the pope and Roman Curia officials. In Australia, planning for a Plenary Council began in

2018 by holding small, local gatherings. The preparations have been shaped by a strong role of lay people. Massimo Faggioli, a Church historian and professor of Theology and Religious Studies at Villanova University indicates, "There is great anticipation about what happens to the recommendations from Germany and Australia once they get to Rome. A failure of these would be catastrophic."

Pope Francis wants to move the Church towards a closer conformity to Christ's own way of modelling an authentic God-centered life, a model of simplicity, and concern for the poor, the refugee, for the environment, and the immorality of empire, of war and nuclear weapons. John Crowley in Tablet Magazine (Dec. 2019) notes, "He has brought a pastoral approach to some of the most sensitive issues with which the Church is wrestling: the ordination of married men, LGBTQ relationships, ... and who is and who is not eligible to receive Holy Communion. His critics want Catechism clarity about what is right and what is wrong. They accuse the Pope of watering down the teachings of the Church, and even of heresy. But it may be that they are suffering a

sense of loss and mourning the death of a church forged in a different time. Francis warns against a punctilious concern for the Church's liturgy, doctrine and prestige" which is another modern-day heresy. Francis explains Christians "should be letting themselves be led by the Spirit in the way of love ... and seeking out the lost among the immense crowds that thirst for Christ."

For those interested in becoming involved in the local diocesan process, the diocesan website outlines the synod's objective and various procedures for meeting those objectives. Participants have access to the questions and the timeline is provided. See <https://pembrokediocese.com/synod/>

Bishop Desrochers is hopeful that the initiative will help us to better discern the paths for our Church today and tomorrow.

Bluebird Collective pops up from creative collision

DANIELLE PAUL
MADAWASKA VALLEY

A new retail outlet arrived on Opeongo Line in Barry's Bay last month - just in time to help with Christmas shopping. In what Sigrid Geddes and Amber Flokstra Radema refer to as a "creative collision" the two women decided to combine their mutual need for a high street location with a seasonal pop-up retail outlet called Bluebird Collective. The shop offered a selection of curated products from more than 15 Valley artists and makers at 19582 Opeongo Line, Barry's Bay (the site of the former Bay Café, Grove on Main, and more recently naturopathic practice of Dr. Terry Vanderheyden).

The Bluebird Collective also offers a public performance space where Geddes and Flokstra Radema held a special pre-Christmas event.

Flokstra Radema's clothing business, Marigolds Vintage, in Killaloe and Geddes' well-known natural skincare line, Sigrids Naturals, both enjoy significant loyal customer bases, so using their retail skills on behalf of local artisans is a win/win for producers and shoppers alike. Geddes in particular is delighted with the new space, as it means that she can at last move the production of her unique creams, salves and cosmetics out of her Wilno home where she has combined working and living for the past seventeen years.

Bluebird Collective offered shopping for local artisan products five days a week right up to Christmas Eve. After a winter break, shoppers can watch for a re-opening in the spring. For more details, see Bluebird Collective on Facebook.



Bluebird Collective partners Amber Flokstra Radema and Sigrid Geddes strike a pose outside the front window.

New art exhibition explores the tapestry of our waterways

ANYA GANSTERER
EGANVILLE

Water is one of the strongest forces in nature, and here in the Ottawa Valley we are no strangers to its awesome power. It has carved a path through the Canadian Shield for millennia, shaping the landscape we know and love. These waterways are the inspiration for a new work of art that envisions the familiar lakes, rivers, and streams of the Ottawa Valley in a whole new way.

Working in collaboration with 51 creative people from across the Ottawa Valley, artist Genevieve Townsend created *People and Place*, a mixed media tapestry exploring the intersection between people and the natural landscape. Now on display at Fifth Chute Coffee in Eganville, *People and Place* is a map of our local waterways unlike any you've seen before.

"It is a true community collaboration," says Anya Gansterer, co-artistic director at Ottawa Valley Community Arts (OV-CAOS). "The concept for this piece grew out of a desire to support people in working on a project together yet apart during the early days of the pandemic. People and Place pays homage to the places where we feel connected to one another and the land from which we draw inspiration and livelihood."

People and Place is the latest installment in the Pop Up Art series, presented by OV-CAOS. The exhibit will remain in Eganville until March 20, 2022, before moving on to the Arnprior Public Library for the spring and then Garrison Petawawa later this year. The goal of Pop Up Art is to offer Ottawa Valley residents the opportunity to interact with art in public spaces, and to have meaningful encounters with art in their day-to-day lives.

Because this art is in shared, public spaces, Pop Up Art events carefully ad-



PHOTO: OTTAWA VALLEY COMMUNITY ARTS

here to all current public health protocols. Visitors are reminded to wear a mask when visiting the exhibition, and always maintain distance from other visitors.

If you would like to get involved with Pop Up Art, please visit ov-caos.org for more information, or contact Anya Gansterer at anya@ov-caos.org.

Take home trivia a winner for MV Library

DANIELLE PAUL
MADAWASKA VALLEY

Madawaska Valley Public Library's first take-home trivia quiz last winter was popular enough for library staff to suggest a quiz for the holiday season. But when the number of teams registered was double those who participated in last February's Cabin Fever Quiz, the Library realized their approach was a winner for these pandemic days.

Library CEO Karen Filipkowski circulated the answers to the 80 quiz questions to all participating teams in early January when she announced the winning teams:

- In First Place, Upstairs/Downstairs (team contact Sheilagh Dunn)
- Second Place went to the Pademelons (led by Jas Michaelski)
- The Bier Garden team finished in Third Place (Natalie Barrington team lead)

Congratulations to the winners! Teams



paid \$25 to participate, and Filipkowski extended the Library's thanks for their support of this fun, informal fundraiser.

Part of the fun is that team members can play remotely or gather in-person as Covid restrictions allow. Upstairs/Downstairs played in Barry's Bay, the Pademelons were located in Stittsville and Toronto, while the Bier Garden did their quiz in Wilno. Other teams were scattered across the globe. Frances Mawson in Lunenburg organized a team that included family in Australia, England and Halifax. Penny Shulist's team had members from Barry's Bay, Germany and Australia. The Current's own team, Alternating Current, met in-person but played in London, Eng-

land. The teams who gathered virtually reported they had lots of fun connecting with family for a round of Trivia, and some asked to be emailed when registration opens for the next round of trivia.

Filipkowski said that because of the growing interest in take home trivia and continued Covid protocols restricting in-person programmes, the Library plans to hold another quiz soon. In the meantime, to whet your appetite here are a few questions from different categories in the holiday quiz. Answers are hidden somewhere in this issue of *The Current*. Good luck!

- Industry category: Denim, the sturdy cotton textile, was invented in what country?
- Food and Drink category: How many teaspoons of sugar are in a can of Coke ... 3, 7, Or 12?
- Music: "Cat's in the Cradle" is a 1974 folk-rock song written by which American singer-songwriter?