

STRATFORD *TIMES*

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Son of Stratford Lloyd Robertson passes away, 92

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

“Good night and good luck.”

“And that’s the way it is.”

While American families in the U.S. would hear those venerable news anchor sign-offs from the likes of Edward R. Murrow and Walter Cronkite, respectively, Canadian families were privileged enough to hear another:

“And that’s the kind of day it’s been.”

That phrase was used by the legendary broadcaster and news anchor Lloyd Robertson during his tenure as CTV’s senior news anchor from 1984 to 2011. Combined with his time at the CBC, Robertson was a staple of Canadian news for 41 years, a trusted voice broadcasted within homes across the country.

According to reports from his former stomping ground CTV, citing confirmation from his family, Robertson passed away Aug. 4 at the age of 92.

Robertson was born in Stratford in 1934. According to his memoir, *The Kind of Life it’s Been*, he first became interested in broadcasting when he was 12 years old. Soldiers from the Perth Regiment were returning home from Europe and Robertson heard commentators from the local radio station CJCS broadcasting their march.

“I was always fascinated by the radio – the box in the corner sitting there – and I think, for me, I just

CONTINUED TO PAGE 5



(FRED GONDER PHOTO)

The Voyageurs stroll down Veterans Drive during the World in a Weekend festival last weekend. For more photos, see page 4.

At \$143M, Ritz urges public to compare GTR plans 'apples to apples'

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

After presenting a revolutionary vision for the what the Grand Trunk site could be late last year, local architect Robert Ritz promised to have formal numbers soon.

Those numbers are now in: \$143 million, a steep price that Ritz says is worth it.

“People go, ‘Well, Ritz it’s more than double the price of what the city’s proposing.’ Yes, but guess what? You’re getting more,” Ritz said. “... Let’s think ahead, folks.

What do we need in the future? And let’s plan where they’re going to go.”

The whole 172,000 square foot community space and parking (\$415 per square foot), dubbed the “Renewal Plan,” would be comparable in square footage to the Stratford Rotary Complex and Agriplex, though it would have many more components. All-in-all, it would have:

- A new YMCA (\$23.6 million),
- A new location for the Stratford Public Library (\$27.7

CONTINUED TO PAGE 2



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SKIP THE DISHES

Apples to apples, Ritz's GTR plans come in cheaper – but \$100 million more than what city staff currently propose

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

million),

- An aquatic centre (\$18.3 million),
- A childcare facility (\$6.1 million),
- A medical clinic (\$7.9 million),
- Heritage space that tells the site and city's history (\$5.2 million),
- A mall-like concourse with retail and commercial space (\$10 million),
- A performing arts space (\$14 million),
- Event space (\$3 million),
- Space for a restaurant (\$2.5 million),
- 305 indoor parking spaces and 637 outdoor parking spaces,
- And a 52-unit high-end condo building.

The costs come from “estimators who work for Canada's largest construction company,” according to a presentation from Ritz's team, which also notes the estimates are based on his proposal drawings and quotes from local contractors and suppliers.

As Ritz noted, all of those features would be housed in the old shops facility – and some would open doors for further financing. The condo sales could offset the cost of the rest of the facility, the YMCA of Three Rivers, the library and other organizations could bring in additional funding through specific grant streams open only to them and the restaurant would be privately financed.

While the cost is steep, Ritz argues it would be economical in an “apples to apples” comparison to building a new community facility with the same facilities and



An overhead of the Grand Trunk renewal (GTR) site, 18 acres of land in the heart of downtown Stratford that has garnered much debate the last few years.

floor area outside of the GTR superstructure, as the City of Stratford is currently investigating. By his estimate, that cost would be \$156-161 million (\$418-\$433 per square foot).

City staff, on the other hand, have presented to council an estimated cost of \$47.3-\$65.4 million to build a 70,000-100,000 square foot space that combines the Y with the library, with the potential for other organizations and ideas to be in-

cluded – though according to Ritz, that is not enough to futureproof Stratford's key-stone project.

“I want to just stir it up and let people realize the big picture and to think long term,” Ritz said. “... I look at this and I always say my grandchildren's children will be using this facility if it's built, and they will.

“... If my proposal became reality, how neat that would be? You take your child,

you go for a swim. ‘Hey, kids, you want to go see the train?’ Have an ice cream at the restaurant, and just hang around the locomotive ... It would be really, really cool. Stratford's history and future in one building.”

To date, council has pledged \$15 million toward a shared community facility as part of the Grand Trunk renewal (GTR) plan, directed staff to formalize partnerships with the YMCA and the library through Memoranda of Understanding (MOU), to undertake the next phase of work on the hub (including design, governance and funding models), to prepare a report on the parking at the site after the completion of a comprehensive downtown parking study being undertaken now and to begin a market sounding process to gauge private sector interest.

No location, scope or design for the hub, within or outside the GTR superstructure, has been formalized. Neither has the fate of the superstructure.

Through a \$1 million investment in capital transfer (representing a roughly one per cent increase to the yearly tax levy), the city would be able to afford its portion of the cost, with its partners, fundraising efforts and other levels of government putting up the rest of the cost.

For more information on the project, visit the city's landing page for it on Engage Stratford: <https://engagestratford.ca/grand-trunk-renewal>.

For more on Ritz's vision, visit <https://www.gtrshops.ca>.

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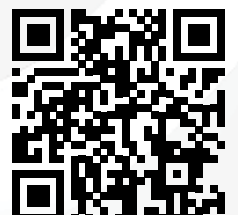
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Ritz's vision: Could it be a reality?



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS)

A before and after of the Grand Trunk superstructure, according to local architect Robert Ritz's vision of the site. The project would cost an estimated \$143 million – though Ritz is asking council and the public to think about the future when balancing costs.

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The World in a Weekend: International Puppet Festival



(FRED GONDER PHOTOS)

The Voyageurs – two exiled travellers – found themselves in downtown Stratford this past weekend as part of the World in a Weekend: International Puppet Festival. From July 30 to Aug. 3, puppeteers and performers from across the world filled Stratford with performances.



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Stratford native Lloyd Robertson dies, 92

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

kind of caught the bug,” Robertson told Rebecca Shreiber, a guest writer for the Times, in a 2024 interview. “... From the time I was about five years old, I was asking my father, you know, how do the voices get in there and who are those people and where do those wires go? And he did his best to answer those questions, so I developed a passion for it.”

He got his start in the industry at that very radio station, working at CJCS from 1952 to 1954.

After moving on to various radio jobs, including getting his foot in the door with the CBC, he got his first television job at the Winnipeg CBC station in 1956. He worked at other stations across the country over the years, before he anchored for the CBC’s flagship show *The National* from 1970-1976. He joined CTV in ’76.

Over the course of his career, Robertson reported on many world- and nation-changing moments: Expo 67, the moon landing, Terry Fox’s Marathon of Hope and 9/11 to name only a few.

On the playful side, in 2018, Robertson cheekily came out of retirement for an impromptu live report of a collision on the Don Valley Parkway, after CP24 reporters handed him the microphone. Robertson, ever the news-man, expertly walked viewers through his own crash.

“And that’s how it goes sometime, Steve,” Robertson said next to his frontless car. “Just a little accident.”

Robertson was a “proud son of Stratford and Perth County,” in the words of Perth-Wellington MP John Nater, in a memorial post on his Facebook page.

“Over the years, I would cherish the times when I would answer the phone and



(TIMES FILE PHOTO)

Lloyd Robertson back behind a CJCS microphone during a 2024-visit. Robertson died on Aug. 4 at the age of 92. While nationally revered for his 27-year tenure as CTV’s chief news anchor, he is being remembered locally as “a proud son of Stratford.”

hear that familiar and reassuring voice on the other line; sometimes wanting to chat about politics and sometimes wanting to catch up on ‘our Stratford,’” Nater wrote. “He was even kind enough to join me for a special online story time where he read a children’s book for the community.

“To his wife Nancy and their daughters, I offer my deepest sympathies and our collective thanks for sharing Lloyd with us every evening as he brought us the news. ... To you Lloyd, we say thank you.”

Nater was not the only one remembering Robertson on Tuesday. Tributes poured in from across the nation.

“I always enjoyed to chatting with Lloyd about international and Ontario politics whenever he was back in Stratford,” MPP Matthew Rae wrote. “My thoughts and prayers are with Nancy, their daughters, and the entire family. Thank you for sharing Lloyd with a nation.”

“For more than six decades, Lloyd Robertson helped Canadians make sense of the world,” Prime Minister Mark Carney

wrote. “For millions of us, he was a familiar face in our living rooms. A reassuring voice in moments of uncertainty. A calm and steady presence through the moments that shaped our nation.”

As a “proud son of Stratford,” his neighbours can see Robertson’s presence across the Festival City today. From the Lloyd Robertson Garden in front of city hall to the many organizations supported by the Stratford and Perth County Community Foundation, of which Robertson and his wife Nancy were honorary patrons.



(FRED GONDER PHOTO)

The Phoenix was unveiled at this year’s World in a Weekend festival. Representing Stratford’s past and reinvention, as well as its unique intersection between art and industry, this new puppet created by SpringWorks~PuppetWorks! will be travelling the world soon as an international ambassador for Stratford’s puppetry scene.

Weekend Quiz

By Jake Grant

1. Who played Allie Hamilton in *The Notebook* (2004)?
2. Two lines that never intersect are said to be what?
3. What year was WestJet founded?
4. What crop was known as maize?
5. Heidelberg is a city in what country?
6. Name the big three parent grocery companies in Canada?
7. What sensory organ do starfish have at the end of each arm?
8. How many musical families are there in a standard orchestra?
9. What is Africa's oldest continuous democracy?
10. What kind of fruit juice is used to mix a Tom Collins?

This week’s answers are found on pg. 19

Council denies Wordofa's reimbursement again

CONNOR LUCZKA

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Stratford city council has again denied a request from Coun. Geza Wordofa to have the City of Stratford reimburse his legal fees.

At the most recent council meeting on July 27, Wordofa asked for a reimbursement of about \$13,003.48 in fees, a similar petition he made in September 2025 when he asked for \$14,571.10 to be reimbursed. According to the staff report, these costs were incurred by "investigations that have been conducted." Although no specific information was given in the report, much of the conversation in council chambers

in 2025 and July 2026 revolved around an Integrity Commissioner complaint – though chief administrative officer (CAO) André Morin clarified that there were multiple investigations beyond an Integrity Commissioner's review.

As a matter pertaining to identifiable individuals, the information allowed to be made public was limited. Morin nevertheless gave the following statement ahead of the discussion:

"There were complaints filed. Investigations were conducted. No court proceedings have been commenced to the knowledge of the city. The city does have errors and omissions insurance, which covers council members' legal fees in cer-

tain circumstances. This policy does not apply to cover the fees in this particular case."

"I like Coun. Wordofa, I'm glad he's on our council," Coun. Mark Hunter, who originally made the motion to deny the request back in September, said. "This is a tough situation because there's information we are required to keep confidential because it could identify individuals, and we have no permission to disclose that information. My obligation was to look at the taxpayers in the community, and I didn't feel that reimbursement was justified. So that's why I proposed it, and I've seen nothing new to change my mind on that."

Hunter's sentiment was shared around the horseshoe. Many councillors expressed a similar opinion and Coun. Larry McCabe and Coun. Bonnie Henderson both shared that they have been subject to an Integrity Commissioner's investigation and neither felt it was necessary to go to a lawyer.

To date, no information about an investigation into Wordofa by the Integrity Commissioner or other body has been publicized – nor has any action or comment made by him been given as the reason for an investigation.

The Times attempted to reach Wordofa for comment, though didn't hear back before publication.

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Kinsmen Benefit Concert presents: Hotel California – The Original Eagles Tribute Band

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

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Get ready for an unforgettable evening of classic rock at the Kinsmen Benefit Concert at the Rotary Complex in Stratford in support of the Stratford Hospital Foundation. All proceeds support the Stratford General Hospital Foundation and will be matched by the Kinsmen Club of Stratford.

With just a little over two months to go the event it is already at 50 per cent sold out, so those interested are encouraged not to wait. Tickets are \$52 and can be purchased online at <https://tinyurl.com/3ku7r8ev>. Alternatively, those interested can go to the Stratford General Hospital Foundation website, and when the Kinsmen Benefit Concert banner appears click BUY TICKETS.

The date is Saturday, Oct. 17, featuring Hotel California – The Original Eagles Tribute Band. Doors open at 6 p.m., with the music beginning at 7 p.m.

Opening the show is the talented Yeager and Tony setting the stage with an exciting performance before the night's headline act takes over.

The main event Hotel California – The Original Eagles Tribute Band, is internationally recognized for recreating the legendary sound, look and feel of one of rock music's greatest bands. The audience will be treated to faithful

renditions of timeless Eagles hits.

The event is sponsored in part by Purolator, VFG Wealth, Young's Funeral Home and the Stratford Army & Navy.

Chartered in 1945, the Kinsmen Club of Stratford was one of the most recognized service clubs in the city and at one time had over 75 active members. Major fundraising and service projects over the past 65 plus years have included Arena Booth, Canada Day and Santa Claus parades, Canada Day fireworks, Stratford Blues and Ribfest, Camp Tanner, high school bursaries and Cystic Fibrosis to name a few.

Most recently the Kinsmen have made financial donations to the Camp Bimini, Wellspring for Cancer, Rotary Aquabox, Connections Centre, Stratford Library and gym equipment for a new outdoor facility by the skate park.

Kin Canada, "Only In Canada EH!" is Canada's largest all-Canadian service organization, made up of Canadian men and women who gather together in clubs to volunteer their time for the purposes of bettering their communities by performing "hands-on" service work, raising funds for important community projects and having fun.

If you would like more information on the Kinsmen Club of Stratford or would like to come out to a meeting just contact us at www.stratfordkinsmen.ca.

Police service board extends Chief Landers' contract

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

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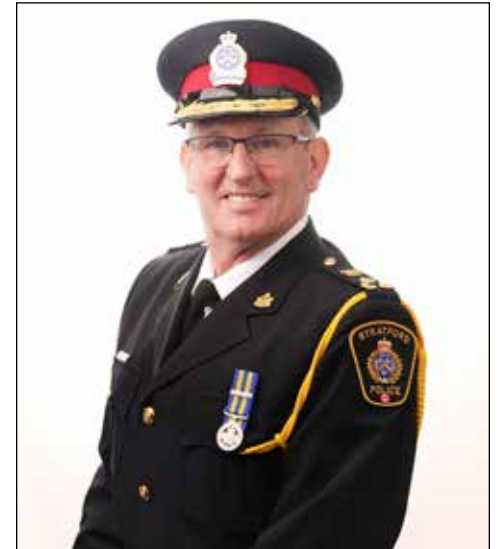
The Stratford Police Service (SPS) board is pleased to announce the extension of Chief Paul Landers' contract through Dec. 31, 2027.

Landers joined the local police branch in March 2026 under an initial one-year agreement. Recognizing the importance of leadership continuity and organizational stability, the board has approved a 10-month extension to support the service as it advances key strategic priorities and prepares for future leadership transitions.

Since his appointment, Landers has provided strong and steady leadership, according to a news release from the board, enhancing organizational effectiveness, supporting the professional development of members and helping guide the development of the service's new strategic plan. His efforts have helped establish a clear path forward while reinforcing the service's commitment to community safety, operational excellence and accountability.

The board's decision was further supported by significant progress in succession planning, including the recent appointment of Deputy Chief Jason Clarke on July 20. Landers and Clarke will continue working collaboratively to advance the board's vision, implement the strategic plan and ensure a seamless and effective leadership transition in the future.

The board believes that sustained leadership continuity is essential to maintaining organizational momentum and



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Chief Paul Landers will be Stratford's chief of police for an additional 10 months. His contract was extended by the Stratford Police Service's board to Dec. 31, 2027.

supporting the long-term strength and stability of the SPS.

Mayor Martin Ritsma, who is also the board's chair and led the recruitment of Chief Landers in March 2026, stated: "Chief Landers has provided strong, thoughtful leadership during a period of significant progress for our service. The board is very pleased with the advancements made in succession planning, including the appointment of Deputy Chief Clarke, as well as the work undertaken to help develop the service's strategic plan. Together, Chief Landers, Deputy Chief Clarke and our members are well-positioned to achieve the board's objectives and continue delivering exceptional policing services to our communities."

Don't You Flash Those Big 'Ol Chestnut Eyes at Me

(on the occasion of Ron Hikel's 90th year unto heaven)

Don't you flash those big 'ol chestnut eyes at me, Ronny Boy, we've got you figured, we've got your number, pal:

alms for the poor, democracy for the masses, that unwavering flag of social justice that wraps and warms your heart like a treasured shawl.

A nation, you've always told us, reveals itself not by the heft of its monuments, but how gently it lifts those who stumble.

Teacher, mentor, advisor, coach, you have dispelled wisdom not to conquer, but to illuminate, not to prevail, but to support, not to dominate, but to guide.

It is the smallest voice, you remind, that deserves the largest hearing. The only child in your grade three class who could actually spell "egalitarianism," you chose to embody it, espousing even then that true justice is most clearly measured by the dignity afforded the least protected.

To you, Ron Hikel of the cognac eyes, universal benefits are not a policy but the promise we make to one another, guaranteed income not crude charity, but the firm ground, the assurance and eternal embrace that is the foundation of every human life.

And as consultant and prophet, tutor and reform agent, you have counselled that dreams remain vapour without determination, that if the life we pursue is an elusive garden, then we must kneel among its stubborn roots with knuckles and spade, becoming the doer, the personification and breathing soul of the change, itself.

Yet still, even in the chaos, you find the islands that so kindly remind what life is: Tricia's hand like a flower in yours while with your other you tap the table top to Peterson's all that jazz or counterpoint to your beloved Bach, reserving always those tender hugs for the kids amid your cries for social equity, fairness and that lovely levelling you know we need to bring the most to the many.

At ninety, Ron, ideas are forever lanterns in your hands, and like that wall of books before your fireplace, you are a library lit from within.

We salute you, Ron, here on the occasion of your 90th year unto heaven.

May your road ahead remain forever curious and potholed with possibilities, and all our futures be blessed by your refusal to never stop believing.

David Stones, Stratford Poet Laureate

STRATFORD *TIMES* SPORTS

Stratford Nationals weekly recap: 18U qualifies for provincials, 15U ends regular season on a positive note

MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY

Times Correspondent

The 2026 Inter County Baseball Association (ICBA) regular season came to an end for both the 15U and 18U Stratford Nationals last week, and the 18U squad qualified for the Ontario Baseball Association (OBA) provincials in Clarington with a perfect 4-0 record in the qualifier tournament in Brantford.

Fresh off the disappointing end to the regular season, the Stratford 18U participated in the six-team OBA 'A' provincial qualifier last weekend at Cockshutt Park.

Playing their games under a double-elimination format at the George Baker Diamond, the Nationals opened their tournament play against the Guelph Royals on the late afternoon of July 31.

Stratford put on an offensive clinic from the first inning onward and dominated the Tier-2 Royals squad with a 13-3 win. Cadan Diehl was instrumental in the tournament opener win, going the distance with five strikeouts, allowing three earned runs on one walk and four hits on the mound. Offensively, Diehl went 2-for-4 with a team-leading three RBIs.

In the evening game, the Nationals endured a tough test against the Cambridge Cubs. Cambridge took a 4-1 lead through the first three innings before the Nationals rallied for eight unanswered runs in the remaining innings to beat the Cubs 9-4.

The turning point of the game came in the bottom of the fifth when the Nationals faced a bases-loaded situation with one out. Stratford's Reed Bowles came in

relief, and with two pitches, the Nationals turned into a 1-2-3 double play.

Finley Newton led the Nationals with two RBIs and three hits on three at-bats.

On the morning of Aug. 1, the Nationals faced the Kitchener Hassan Panthers in the semifinal round game between the unbeaten teams.

For the second straight game, the Nationals trailed early with a 1-0 lead into the bottom half of the fourth, when Diehl and Logan MacMillan's RBI singles put the Nationals in the lead. Stratford poured on the offence in the next inning with five runs to put the game away in the 7-1 win, putting the Nationals in the final round.

In the evening game, the Nationals renewed their acquaintances with the Panthers with the OBA provincials on the line.

After Kitchener went to a 2-0 lead in the top of the first inning, James Robinson's RBI single and Cooper Yantzi's two-run RBI double put the Nationals ahead in their half of the first. Stratford added six more runs in the next three innings to go ahead 9-3 through four complete innings.

Kitchener drew a late rally to close the deficit to three in the sixth, but the Nationals preserved the lead and retired the side in the final inning to win the game and clinch their spot in the OBA 'A' Provincials in Clarington, scheduled for Aug. 13 to 16 in Clarington.

In what was their finest form of results in 2026, a very happy Stratford head coach Mud Grasby commended the team's quality and commitment to qualifying for the OBA tournament.

"Well, they played this weekend like

I knew they could. They showed up on time. They stretched and played catch. They played baseball the way I knew they could. They weren't just coming to the ballpark and fooling around," Grasby said.

"They gave me everything they had this weekend, and we played four solid ball games, from pitching to hitting in key situations. They just did everything appropriately."

The Nationals are returning to Brantford next weekend for the ICBA playoff tournament, scheduled from Aug. 6 to 9. Grasby mentioned that the team will face a tougher challenge this time but aims to remain competitive and hopes to replicate their performance from the OBA qualifier tournament and preserve the pitching staff.

"We're playing AAA and Double A teams, but if we can win a couple games next weekend, yeah, rest is huge. Like pitching staff, I don't have a lot of pitchers because we only have 11 doll players, so pitching is going to be key that I rest on for the OBA's," Grasby said.

The Stratford 15U Nationals finished their ICBA regular-season play with wins over the Ancaster Angels on July 28 and Waterloo Tigers Team 2 on July 29, both at Stratford National Stadium.

On July 28, Cole Morris led the Nationals with four hits and co-led the team with two RBIs alongside Will Molenhuis and Landen McCann in the 12-7 win over Ancaster. On July 29, the Nationals overcame an 8-2 deficit to hold off Waterloo with a 14-run fifth inning in a high-scoring 18-16 win.

The top of the Stratford batting order of Molenhuis, Jake Price and Morris combined for seven RBIs on eight hits and scored nine of the 18 Nationals runs.

After the July 29 game, Stratford coach

Rick Boon praised the pitchers for rallying the team and pointed out a crucial defensive play by Molenhuis in the fourth inning as a turning point. The team's hitting also improved, thanks to significant contributions from lower batters, which positively impacted the performance of the top players.

"Yeah, it was a very tough start. We didn't come ready to play. We made too many mental errors and physical errors to start the game, and we got behind. All right, so I give credit to our pitchers for getting us in, and when we finally started getting one or two hits, then it became contagious. Then the good hitting came back out, and we started playing better defence after that," Boon said.

"It was that one defensively. It was a turning point of the game. Willie (Molenhuis) gives it all every time, and he put out and made a good catch. ... We got some key hits from guys that are lower in our batting order, and that made the guys in the top board take a better look at things, and they took better swings after that."

The 15U Nationals start their OBA 'A' provincial qualifier at Stratford National Stadium with the Brantford Red Sox Tier-2 in the opening game on August 6. The double-elimination tournament takes place from Aug. 6 to 9 in Stratford.

When speaking to the Times about the OBA qualifier tournament, Boon insists that the players commit to the game and not battle from behind.

"We have to be on time to start the game on time, so that we don't get behind by six and seven runs again. We're a good team, but we have to work from ahead. So the focus is making sure that we play clean in the field, but we've got to show up on time and put the bats to work right away," Boon said.



(MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY PHOTO)

Will Molenhuis of the Stratford 15U Nationals prepares for his next pitch against the Waterloo Tigers at Stratford National Stadium on July 29.



(MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY PHOTO)

Stratford 18U Nationals first baseman Dawson Davidson picks off the Cambridge Cubs runner in the OBA 'A' qualifier tournament in Brantford on July 31.

Stratford Nationals Weekly Recap - 18U qualifies for the provincials, 15U ends regular season on a positive note



(MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY PHOTO)
Stratford 18U Nationals pitcher Caden Diehl winds up from the mound for the pitch against the Guelph Royals in the OBA 'A' qualifier tournament in Brantford on July 31.



(MICHAEL WILLOUGHBY PHOTO)
Owen Brooks of the Stratford 18U Nationals slides into second base after stealing from first against the Guelph Royals in the OBA 'A' qualifier tournament in Brantford on July 31.

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Popular Indigenous arts and cultural learning series returns

STRATFORD TIMES STAFF

stratfordtimes@gmail.com

Following an enthusiastic response and strong community interest, Kaswentha Two Row Now is pleased to announce three additional Indigenous arts and cultural learning workshops led by Christin Dennis, a knowledge carrier from Aamjiwnaang First Nation (Chippewas of Sarnia First Nation), also known by his traditional name Gzhiiquot (Fast Moving Cloud).

Hosted at the Gathering Place at the Falstaff Family Centre and made possible through funding support from United Way Perth-Huron, the additional sessions will provide more community members with the opportunity to experience the same engaging hands-on workshops that were so well received earlier this summer.

The three new workshops will take place from 6-9 p.m. on:

Wednesday, Aug. 19 – Dream Catcher Making Workshop

Wednesday, Aug. 26 – Bone Choker Workshop

Wednesday, Sept. 2 – Painting Workshop

Dennis is a member of Kaswentha Two Row Now, a Stratford-area collective of Indigenous educators, local businesses, health agencies, social service organizations and community members committed

to advancing learning, understanding and reconciliation.

An accomplished visual artist, Dennis describes his work as a reflection on contemporary Indigenous culture and the enduring importance of traditional teachings.

"My art reflects our current era in Aboriginal culture, focusing on the sweat lodge and carrying on the traditions of old into the contemporary world. I tell the story of our heritage and the importance of preserving traditional values. I use mixed media with photography as a visual demonstration of the blending of traditional images with 21st-century technology. By understanding and embracing our ancestral past, we can use those teachings to preserve a way of life, document its core values and build a vision for our future."

Each workshop is designed to foster learning, creativity and cultural understanding while giving participants the opportunity to learn directly from a First Nations knowledge carrier and artist in a welcoming, hands-on environment.

Advance registration is required, and participation is limited to 20 people per workshop.

For registration information and event details, visit <https://tinyurl.com/towrownow>.



(CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Kaswentha Two Row Now Knowledge Carrier Christin Dennis joins participants in displaying their completed works during the July 15 Indigenous painting workshop at the Gathering Place at the Falstaff Family Centre.

STRATFORD **TIMES**

SCAN TO READ THE ONLINE PAPER

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Alzheimer's Society Huron Perth welcomes new ED

GARY WEST

Times Correspondent

The Alzheimer Society Huron Perth (ASHP) has a new executive director.

Tracey Jones has taken over from the retiring Cathy Ritsema, who has been the executive director of the local branch of the society since the Perth and Huron chapters were unified in 2022. The retiring director was also involved in this leadership role with the Huron County Alzheimer Society for 23 years.

Ritsema was formerly a chapter co-ordinator and organized the society's day programs.

Prior to that, in 1987-1998, she worked in Wingham and Area Health Care, with the Alzheimer's adult day programs and was also involved in financial analytics.

She then took on the role of managing programs and services and became the executive director for the Huron County Alzheimer's Society.

Tracey Jones took over as the new executive director for Huron Perth on Aug. 1.

She was raised in Wiarton and received her anthropology degree from Western University and has worked for 25 years in area not-for-profit organizations.

She also received her Master's in interdisciplinary studies from Athabaska University in Alberta, oversaw the Brain Tumour Foundation across Canada, and has worked

for the Goderich Parkinson's Society, where she helped organize many support groups.

For seven years, Jones had been the executive director of the Wellspring Cancer Support Centre in London, serving southwestern Ontario, including Wellspring Stratford.

Her employment in the past has also included being the public educational co-ordinator for the Elgin-St. Thomas Alzheimer's Society.

The society's board welcomes Jones to her new position.

In her message in this year's annual report, Donnalene Tuer-Hodes, chair of the board, stated that "As ASHP marks its fifth year since unification, the board remains committed to strengthening its position as a trusted source of dementia knowledge and support. The organization continues to collaborate with the Alzheimer Society of Ontario and the Huron Perth & Area Ontario Health Team to enhance integrated care across the region.

"... The important work of the Alzheimer Society Huron Perth would not be possible without the generosity of our donors. While approximately 75 per cent of our programs are funded by the Ontario Government, it is your donations that enables us to expand and enhance our services. Every contribution – no matter the size – has a direct and meaningful impact on the lives of individuals living with dementia and their care partners."

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Editorial

Nothing, not even a wrist fracture, stopped me from seeing *The Hobbit*

EMILY STEWART

Times Correspondent

The first of three Hobbit films is called *The Unexpected Journey*. Similarly, the past few weeks have been an unexpected journey.

As soon as I found out the Stratford Festival would bring a production of *The Hobbit* to the stage, directed by Pablo Felices-Luna, I knew my sibling Hillary and I had to see it. Hillary is a huge fan of the world and stories J.R.R. Tolkien created and I also enjoy the story of Bilbo Baggins. As someone who has also many times wish I stayed home with my snacks and my cozy fuzzy blankets, Bilbo is an incredibly relatable literary character.

We had plans to explore Stratford on our visit including browsing Fanfare Books, hanging out with the cats at Alley Cat Café, and dining out somewhere to get fish and chips. If there was time, we'd also check out the Stratford-Perth Museum's "The Hobbit: Sharing An Adventure" exhibit. I've had the pleasure of seeing it, but I want Hillary to see it as well.

Then, I broke my wrist from a fall a week before we were to see the show. I'm still unsure of how what was supposed to be a simple walk to a hair salon became a medical emergency, though I know it's likely from either my chronically weak ankle collapsing under me or from tripping on debris. In either case, I experienced unreal pain in my left wrist in addition to loud ringing in my ears and blurry vision once I was in my parents' car and on the way to the emergency room.

Two days later at the St. Joseph's Hand and Upper Limb Clinic in London, Ont. I found out my fracture required surgery the following week. In classic Emily Stewart fashion, I started going through an anxious mental spiral. The thought of going through surgery genuinely terrified me for a few reasons, but I was

also concerned about missing *The Hobbit*.

Yes, it's such a small pitfall if I were to miss it but it was something I was really looking forward to. Plus, I didn't know when I'd be able to get tickets for another day for the price I did during the summer sale and on

a day that worked for Hillary before she headed back to her studies.

Oh also, I'd like to add I live in London but often travel to Stratford to cover events in-person for the Times, so my energy levels for commuting were something my family was concerned about.

Still, I was insistent that Hillary and I attend the play even though the show was the day after my surgery. I knew I would regret skipping out, and I've mostly been watching Netflix at home in my recovery, so sitting down to watch a play for two hours was hardly different to me.

Swollen, a day out of the hospital, and exhausted, I was able to attend the play thanks to my parents driving us down. I felt a bit dizzy and lightheaded midway through the first part through the painkillers and exhaustion, plus my wrist was in pain, but elevating my wrist higher and drinking water during intermission helped me feel better.

The Hobbit was a great production and I loved watching the use of colourful lighting, shadow theatre and choreography to tell the story, as well as the design of Smaug the dragon. Patrons and staff were also kind, patient and genuinely concerned about my injury. There was another guest beside my seat who helped me with my purse and gift shop purchases as I sat down and the server opened the water bottle for me when I asked.

Much as I enjoy staying inside my own cozy personal Hobbit hole, I am starting to develop cabin fever as I recover and type this. Hopefully, it won't be too much longer before the Stewart siblings embark on more side quests to complete the ideal Stratford adventure.



(HILLARY STEWART PHOTO)

Somehow, likely due to me being stubborn about it, I mustered the strength to see *The Hobbit* at the Stratford Festival on July 30, just one day after I had surgery to repair a wrist fracture.

Quote of the Week

"For more than six decades, Lloyd Robertson helped Canadians make sense of the world. For millions of us, he was a familiar face in our living rooms. A reassuring voice in moments of uncertainty. A calm and steady presence through the moments that shaped our nation."

– Prime Minister Mark Carney on the passing of legendary Stratford native Lloyd Robertson.

STRATFORD TIMES

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Opinions

A season for passing along what matters



IRENE ROTH

Times Columnist

As we grow older, we begin to realize that life's greatest treasures are rarely the things we own. Instead, they are the stories we tell, the wisdom we share, the traditions we keep alive and the kindness we extend to others. These are the gifts that outlast us. August, with its slower pace and lingering warmth, is the perfect time to pass along a little of ourselves to the people we love.

Many families gather during the summer months. Children and grandchildren visit, neighbours stop by for conversations on the porch and community

events bring people together. While these moments may seem ordinary, they provide wonderful opportunities to share memories that might otherwise be forgotten. A story about your first job, how you met your spouse, your childhood adventures or the lessons you learned from your parents may become treasures that younger generations carry with them for the rest of their lives.

You don't have to write a memoir to preserve your legacy. Simply telling stories over a cup of tea, looking through old photographs together or explaining the history behind a treasured family keepsake can create lasting connections. Often, it is the smallest details that children and grandchildren remember years later. Your experiences offer a window into a world they never knew, helping them better understand both their family history and themselves.

August is also an ideal time to share practical wisdom. Throughout your life, you have learned countless lessons about perseverance, friendship, resilience and overcoming dis-

appointment. Those lessons weren't found in textbooks but were earned through experience. Younger people are often searching for guidance, even if they don't always ask for it directly. A gentle conversation about what helped you through difficult times may offer encouragement just when someone needs it most.

Of course, legacy is not only about looking backward. It is also about continuing to create meaningful moments today. Many seniors volunteer, mentor, knit blankets for newborns, bake for neighbours, tend community gardens or support local charities. These acts of generosity may seem small, but they quietly strengthen the communities in which we live. Every act of kindness becomes part of the legacy we leave behind.

August also reminds us that we are never too old to make new memories. Sometimes we fall into the habit of thinking our most meaningful experiences are behind us, yet life continues to surprise us when we remain open to it. A visit to a local festival, an afternoon exploring

a nearby park, learning a new hobby or simply spending time with a good friend can become highlights of the season. New memories are not reserved for the young; they belong to anyone who continues to embrace life with curiosity.

The slower pace of August also provides time for reflection. We can look back over the year and recognize not only the challenges we have faced but also the ways we have continued to grow. Every season of life brings its own opportunities to learn, adapt and discover new strengths. Aging does not mean our journey has ended. It simply means we have accumulated more wisdom to guide us as we continue moving forward.

One of the greatest gifts seniors offer the world is perspective. You know from experience that difficult seasons eventually pass, that healing often comes more slowly than we would like, and that many worries lose their importance with time. In a world that often feels rushed and uncertain, your calm perspective can become a source of reassur-

ance for others. Sometimes your presence speaks as powerfully as your words.

As summer gradually gives way to autumn, August gently reminds us that every season has its purpose. Rather than mourning the passing of another summer, we can celebrate all that it has given us – the conversations shared, the beauty witnessed, the friendships strengthened and the opportunities to encourage those around us. These moments become part of the tapestry of a well-lived life.

So before the days grow shorter and the leaves begin to change, consider sharing one more story, making one more phone call, inviting someone over for coffee or creating one more memory with someone you love. The legacy we leave is rarely built through grand accomplishments. More often, it is woven together through ordinary moments filled with generosity, wisdom, laughter and love. August quietly reminds us that there is still time to pass along what matters most, and that may be one of the season's greatest gifts of all.

As I See It From America: It is just that simple



PATRICK D. BURK

Times Columnist

I have learned a lot this past weekend. It seems that we are never too old to learn. I was working on an issue over the past few days that was not really all that wonderful to handle. It seems that we all need to look at where we are at this moment in history and reflect on what we can do to better the world. Sometimes we need to take a big break and just breathe but our goal should be to make this world a better place. Don't you think?

Often in our lives we are put into the situation of supporting an issue or not supporting an issue. It is often asked of us to be "for or against," and not often is it accepted to be in the mid-

dle or more moderate. That is the case that I was just involved with and will be involved for the next few days. At the Main St. 56 Theater, we are in a difficult discussion about the use of AI and ChatGPT. I'm not even sure I know what they really are.

From the creative side there is always the struggle that AI and ChatGPT take away from those that design and make certain images, advertisements, postings and even, in the extreme, people and actors. This takes away from what real people can create and removes a lot of creativity from those that have the talent towards a computer chip somewhere in the AI circle of technology. I often wonder where they are and who is working with AI computers to make it all happen. Like where is this cloud thing? Is it partnered next to ChatGPT?

As an artist, performer and creator, I understand this concern. I have worked for over 60 years on shows and the performing arts. I have designed two full-scale theatres and have put a lot of effort into everything from performing on stage to creating a poster for a show. I have set up some things on Facebook and on the web, I have designed adver-

tising and I have written music and performed it all using my own "little grey cells," but I must admit I also have used my computer. I have not yet employed an AI generated actor OR used a computer to design sound or lights for a show. I didn't even know that was a thing. We even must look at the alleged environmental issues that many claim are a part of this technology.

I was asking a friend who needed a poster made of a period train station and a 1920s-era train. When you are in the volunteer and non-profit area of theatre arts, this would cost a great deal of money to recreate. Without even thinking, and with the mind that this volunteer had to get this done relatively quickly, he typed into some program "1920s train and train station" and came up with a beautiful photo online. I asked him if it was ChatGPT or AI and he didn't know. He was just excited that he could design the rest of the poster, get it printed and distributed. Was he wrong? Depends on who you talk to.

That is why it is such a conundrum. He was creative about the tools he used and did his best as a volunteer. He worked on his task,

created a beautiful and interesting image and inspired people to be interested in his murder mystery show. I wonder what is wrong with all of that. To some, he did not use all the real creative outlets that he might have been able to obtain, but to others, he was completing an assignment the best as he could as a volunteer. Isn't this all so interesting? You should read my emails about the current situation we find ourselves in over here at the Main St. 56 Theater world. I do often wonder if the same issues are as prevalent in Stratford.

Since ChatGPT and AI have become so prevalent in our politics, commercial life and online programs, we often think that this may only be as big of an issue in the United States. I saw on my phone a short movie that had entirely AI-generated actors. I would never be involved with something like that as there are plenty of real actors who can be part of many television programs, movies, commercials and YouTube offerings. It is also just a better product when real people with real emotions and experiences put their efforts into the program.

So, this begs my asking. Where

is all of this on the Canadian frontier? Has it reared its head and has it become a large issue? Do you embrace the new technology or rebuke it? Is it such a big thing in your country that is filled with creative and amazingly talented people? When I embark, in less than two weeks to be a part of Stratford for an extended stay, I am going to put this on my research list. It simply is something that I really need to understand and get a grasp of, and it is something that is really changing the world as we are witnessing. The data centres needed to support all this AI and ChatGPT are reported to be a big environmental issue. Can someone please tell me about that as well?

Before I condemn or embrace or be in the middle of the proverbial road, I need answers. That is the real deal. Before you condemn, understand and before you embrace, know what you are rejecting or accepting. Good luck with this one. It is just that simple.

Please let me know how you feel about this article. Contact me at burk.patrick1956@gmail.com.

Opinions

WEB-CRAWLING IN THE WAVES



SHEILA CLARKE

Times Columnist

Who owns that puddle? Who owns Lake Superior? Who owns the Irish Sea? Who owns the ground water, the wetlands, the headwaters? The water wrangle has begun.

There are three forces at work. The first is obvious. We've been doing rain dances in our garden. We've been advised that insect numbers are really dropping, affecting crops, birds, bats and all insect eaters so we plant native plants, ones that have been here for centuries. Native plants don't need watering and support native insects. They are accustomed to our climate. I will often water them the first year as needed to give them a good start. This year that's been almost every other day. Welcome to climate change.

The thick concentration of carbon dioxide that pours into the atmosphere from burning fossil fuels is keeping the sun's heat from escaping into space as it normally does. The planet is getting hotter and hotter, the storms more unpredictable and the growth that is normally green and healthy at this time of year is drying out in the heat. Hence the forest fires all over the world. Fossil fuel emissions are not restricted to any one country – nor are forest fires. Creeks, even rivers, are drying up and many plants, animals and people are parched for water.

The second force might be called ignoring science. We assume we live in a lovely place where water is endless and climate change is not happening – only it's not and it is. Our planet's supply of water has followed the water cycle for millions of years. Water evaporates, cools and falls as rain or snow, replenishing ground water. Scientists have told us that global warming has interfered with that cycle. Warmer temperatures are causing increased evaporation leading to droughts, especially in the southern hemisphere. More water droplets and vapor are being stored in the atmosphere. Glob-

al weather patterns change and storms intensify, without warning.

The third force is right under our noses – it's called greed. We've seen development pressure surrounding our communities. We need housing – that is true – but we need affordable housing that also acknowledges environmental needs around us. Wetlands are critical for flood management, water purification and support thousands of wildlife forms. Wetlands and small streams are the initial building blocks of headwaters that supply our water systems. We also need to recognize the importance of future water supply. The Waterloo water system has been under severe strain to support current and future development. A response was to allow an additional 30 gallons per second to flow into that system from Wilmot Township aquifers.

Current legislation has also permitted privatization of management and processing of our public water systems. Privatization always involves profit levels for the companies involved. Public resources are managed at cost for the good of the community. They do not involve profit. This basic fact should remind us all to

protect our water systems, both in their origin and in their management. Legislation has also altered the definition of wetlands and made it possible for developers to remove critical connecting wetlands. Ontario still permits water-taking for bottled water (Up to 50,000 litres per day), to put into plastic bottles that come from fossil fuels.

We've begun the AI wrangles that are seated to some degree in greed. AI has its benefits, but the race to be in the forefront has proceeded without due diligence into benefits and dangers. AI is also an energy and water hog. Large data centres require massive amounts of water for cooling (up to 5 million litres per day) and a Toronto mega data centre has been approved for up to 39.75 litres per second (approximately 1.2 billion litres annually). Where is that going to come from? And at what cost to the species that depend on that water (including humans)? Remember when one of the strongest arguments against the Xinyi glass plant was water usage?

Who owns the puddle, the lakes and the oceans – the groundwater, the wetlands and the headlands? Who owns the rain? Stratford is engaged in a process to

envision the River Avon. Does it belong to us or to nature – or to recreation or to tourism – or to the economy? Have you noticed how many people sit and look at the river? What is the communication between the watchers and the water? How do you envision the river?

UPDATES:

Carbon parts per million (ppm) in the atmosphere as of Aug. 3, 2026: 428.52 ppm.

Major forest fires have occurred this July in Canada, the U.S., Chile, Patagonia, Spain, Italy, Australia, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, South Africa, China – among others.

You are invited to consider the Avon River. Attend the Flowing Futures River Clinic which will include a river walk and an interactive workshop with environmental specialists from MTE Consultants and BMI Group. It is free, but advance registration is required (See Destination Stratford). Aug. 11, 5-7 p.m., at Copperlight (142 Ontario St.)

Sheila Clarke is a Stratford advocate for the environment, of our community and of our planet. She is a member of CFUW Stratford, Stratford Climate Momentum, and the Perth County Sustainability Hub.

LTTEs: Not an activist, partisan nor zealot

The author of a recent letter "savoured" the 3.2 per cent increase in the city's 2026 budget and credited this "low" rate to the mayor's use of the strong mayor powers. The letter went on to castigate opponents of this power as "political activists and partisans" and "zealots." He concluded by saying councillors supporting the city's challenge to the strong mayor model were motivated by a desire to avoid interference by a "fiscally sober" mayor.

I am not a political activist nor a partisan nor a zealot; I am a now retired constitutional lawyer who object to the strong mayor model as a matter of principle. The model allows the mayor and a minority of councillors to overrule the majority of council. In so doing, the

mayor effectively casts as many votes as necessary to prevail. This model clearly is inconsistent with two fundamental principles of our Canadian democracy: the majority rules and one person, one vote. Councillors, and others concerned with maintaining our democracy, should be opposing the model. The fact it was introduced by the current premier is irrelevant.

As a final point, as a property owner in Stratford, I simply don't understand how anyone could "savour" a 3.2 per cent budget increase. Over the last three years, the cumulative increase is 17.5 per cent. This is unsustainable, especially given the economic uncertainty Stratford, and all of Canada, is facing. City

council must bring these increases to a halt.

The municipal election is Oct. 26. I encourage eligible voters to get out and vote. And before doing so, to look carefully at each candidate's vision for the city, position on tax increases and on the strong mayor model.

*Patrick O'Rourke,
Stratford.*

For home and country

The Federal Canada Post is trying to provide a service which we have probably had for more than 150 years. They are making changes to help cut costs as every business is trying to do.

The community mailboxes in urban ar-

reas have done a good job with probably only a few complaints when it started. Rural areas are a different matter though. It would be a serious safety issue if group boxes were to set-up at intersections or mid-concession of country roads. Parking at these areas for drop-off or pick-up could also be dangerous especially during winter months with snow banks and narrowing of roadways.

I support rural mailbox delivery with an idea of perhaps it doesn't need to be five days a week but maybe three days a week. This could be an alternative cost saving compromise if they are looking for changing rural mail delivery.

*Anya Donaldson,
Hickson.*

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St. Michael Catholic Secondary School, 240 Oakdale Avenue, Stratford
Rear parking lot off Matilda. Room # 1104 - 1st Tuesday of each month from September to June. 7-9 p.m.

We are night sky enthusiasts. Everyone is welcome to attend. See our website at <https://stratfordastronomy.com/> or call 519-275-4472 for more information

FOOD TRUCKS

Monday, August 10; 4:30-7:30 p.m.
Grace United Church Tavistock
Born2Eat, Fo'Cheezy, Beavertails
Donations to Grace United Church

STRATFORD LEGION YARD & BAKE SALE

Saturday, August 15; 8 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Legion 804 Ontario St.

Stop in at the and check out all our yard sale items, enjoy a back bacon on a bun and our many bake sale goodies

FOOD TRUCKS

Monday, August 17; 4:30-7:30 p.m.
Grace United Church Tavistock
Siggi's, Pablas Street of India, SWAT
Donations to Tavistock Agricultural Society

JOIN US FOR SUMMER AT KNOX

Knox Presbyterian Church

142 Ontario St., Stratford

August events include Book Club on Tuesdays, drop in watercolour painting on Wednesdays, Stained Glass Tours

on Thursday - all starting at 10:30AM. Free community dinner on August 19 at 5 p.m! Visit <https://pccweb.ca/knoxstratford/> or call 519-271-0373 for more details! Everyone welcome!

BLACKSMITH DEMONSTRATION

On Saturday, August 29, starting at 10 a.m., come to the Brocksden Country School Museum for an incredible demonstration of how a blacksmith used his forge!

FOOD TRUCKS

Monday, August 24; 4:30-7:30 p.m.
Grace United Church Tavistock
Berlin 95, Ish n Chips, El Milagro
Donations to Camp Bimini

FOOD TRUCKS

Monday, August 31; 4:30-7:30 p.m.
Grace United Church Tavistock
Born2Eat, Los Rolling Tacos, Fo'Cheezy
Donations to Tavistock Agricultural Society

FRIDAY NIGHT EUCHRES

Friday, September 11; 6 p.m.

Legion 804 Ontario St.

Sign up your team of 2 for \$20 by calling the Legion at 519-271-4540, Dave at 519-703-6544 or Anne at 519-301-0914. Doors open at 6 p.m., games start at 6:30 p.m.

EDMONTON ELKS VS TORONTO ARGONAUTS

Saturday, September 19

The Stratford Legion is hosting a bus trip to see the Edmonton Elks vs Toronto Argonauts football game. It is a 3 p.m. game and the Badder bus leaves from the Cooper Lot at 12 noon. The cost is \$105 p.p. Contact Dean at 273-4463 to reserve and pay for your spot. Tickets are

selling fast!

OSTOMY SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

Tuesday, September 1; 7:00 p.m.

93 Morgan St., Stratford

Speaker – Paul D'Souza from Coloplast
Learn about ostomy products and services from Coloplast
Social time and snacks. Everyone welcome.
519-273-4327

STRATFORD MISSION DEPOT WITH FOUNDER JEAN AITCHESON

Wednesday, September 2; 2 p.m.

Christ Church, 595815 Oxford 59 Huntingford

This Reaching Ontario Sharing Education (ROSE) program is co-hosted by the Braemar W.I. and the ACW of Christ Church. It is a wheelchair accessible building and all are welcome. Refreshments will be served. questions lauragreen77@gmail.com

THE SECOND HAND BOOK NOOK SALE

Tavistock Fall Fair, in the arena

Friday, Sept. 11; 5:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 12; 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Sunday, Sept. 13; 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Lots of books, magazines and puzzles for sale

For more information, call 519-590-1617

FRIDAY NIGHT EUCHRES

Friday, November 13; 6 p.m.

Legion 804 Ontario St.

November 13 – The next Stratford Legion Friday Night Euchre is Friday Nov. 13th. Sign up your team of 2 for \$20 by calling the Legion at 519-271-4540, Dave at 519-703-6544 or Anne at 519-301-0914. Doors open at 6 p.m., games start at 6:30 p.m.

STRATFORD TIMES

Deadline: Tuesday prior at 3 p.m.

Contact: stratfordtimes@gmail.com

PROMOTE YOUR EVENTS WITH US! HERE'S HOW:

- The Community Calendar is for non-profit organizations to promote their free admission events at no charge. Event listings can include your event name, date, time and location as well as a phone number, email address or website.
- If your event is not free admission or you would like to include more details than stated above, you have the following options:
 - Coming Events Word Ad in Classified section (50 word max.) - \$10 + hst
 - Coming Events Boxed Word Ad in Classified section (50 word max.) - \$15 + hst
 - Display Ad - Sizes begin at a classified business card size for \$35 + hst

Stratford Arts & Culture Collective
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PRESENTS:



TICKETS



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SEPTEMBER 21, 2026

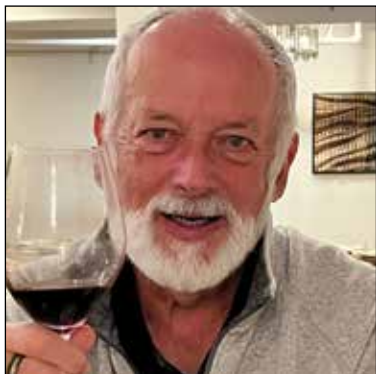
7:30 P.M.

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OH, THE PLACES WE'LL GO: Discovering Greek civilization in Italy



PAUL KNOWLES

Times Columnist

Let's be honest. It is not unexpected when, during your travels in Italy, you stumble upon yet another Roman ruin. After all, this is the country whose capital is Rome, and most of whose most famous sites are remnants of the Roman Empire. The Colosseum is just one of thousands of buildings left us by the Romans.

What you might not expect is to find a lot of physical evidence of Greek civilization here in Italy. Especially in the south of Italy, in Calabria and Sicily, Greek civilization was the dominant culture in the centuries before the ascendancy of Rome.

And today, visitors will find a number of destinations in Calabria offering ample evidence of the centuries when this part of Italy was known as Magna Graecia. And even today, there are remote villages high in the hills of Calabria where a variety of Greek – called Calabrian Greek or Griko – is the common language in daily use.

So, it is not surprising there has been a concerted effort here to protect the remaining evidence of that period, which started in the eighth century B.C. and lasted for about five centuries.

Our time in Calabria saw us vis-



Ruins of a Greek temple and other buildings in Locri, dating from the eighth century B.C.

(PAUL KNOWLES PHOTOS)

iting several of the sites connected to Magna Graecia. Chief among them is the National Museum and Archeological Park of Locri. Locri is a town on the eastern or Ionian coast of Calabria. The name Locri dates back to the Greek era; the town was founded by Greek newcomers about 680 B.C., and a century later, had a population of 40,000. The good news is the modern town of Locri is located slightly north of the Greek era settlement, which means a wealth of archaeological ruins are still there to be found.

And today, a modern museum – and an archaeological site – can tell visitors almost all they would want to know about those ancient times. The archaeological ruins are exactly that – ruined. Like many sites that were abandoned for centuries, most of the walls of the temples and other buildings are missing.

Well, they are not precisely

missing because everyone knows where they are. In the 19th century, a lot of the stone blocks were plundered and used in building projects elsewhere in the area. There are plenty of Locri buildings that have a touch of Greek history in their foundations and walls.

But what remains is fascinating – clear remains of a Greek temple and associated buildings, including the impressive carved base of one enormous column.

The site has some helpful interpretive plaques, but the thoroughly modern museum, opened in 2022, offers a treasure trove of information. One of the most intriguing features of the still-being-discovered site is the temple of Persephone. It is apparent that a very significant cult devoted to Persephone, Queen of the Underworld, flourished here, and a complex ritual involving brides-to-be was carried out here.

In the museum, visitors can see hundreds of artifacts from the Greek era, including many bits of evidence of the Persephone cult.

What you can't see here are two sculptures that are two of the most important finds in Locri. They are life-size statues of mythological heroes Castor and Pollux. They were the twin sons of the Greek goddess Leda, but oddly, Pollux was considered divine while Castor was mortal. That's because Zeus was the father of Pollux, but a human, King Tyndareus, fathered Castor.

At any rate, both were venerated at Locri, but modern-day powers that be decided to move these important sculptures to another – and frankly, pretty darn impressive – museum, the National Museum in Reggio Calabria. That city is an hour and a half away on Calabria's west or Tyrrhenian Sea coast.

And there is no doubt that Reggio's museum is also a must see

for anyone exploring Calabria's Greek connections.

But let me suggest that after you have sated your intellectual hunger with all this historical knowledge, you give a thought to your physical appetites. Especially (this won't surprise regular readers) for wine because a wine-making tradition that dates back to Magna Graecia is alive and delicious in modern-day Calabria. We were introduced to this unique wine by winemaker and vineyard owner Flavio Latella.

His small winery – 3.2 hectares of vines, all harvested by hand – produces 20,000 to 25,000 bottles annually. And in pride of place is his award-winning Greco di Bianco wine, a dessert beverage made from grapes grown on vines that may date back millennia. Wine makers have been reproducing the same variety of plants using slips to create new vines for time immemorial.

The wine is made using the "passito" method in which the grapes are dried before they are made into wine. During our Senior Discovery Tours visit to the winery, we enjoyed a tasting – which included sampling some unique, homemade pastries as well as the excellent wine.

One warning: Greco di Bianco has a minimum alcohol content of 17 per cent, which is significantly higher than most wines we buy here in Canada. However, you can't actually buy this unique wine in Canada, so you'll just have to go to Calabria and drop in on Flavio.

Paul Knowles is an author and travel writer, and past-president of the Travel Media Association of Canada. To contact Paul about travel, his books, or speaking engagements, email pknowles@golden.net.



Exhibits in the Locri Museum tell of ancient rituals, including wedding rites connected to the goddess Persephone.



This statue of the Greek hero Castor (with one of his brother Pollux) were found in Locri but moved to Reggio Calabria.

Crossword

CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Bleated
- 6. Snakelike fish
- 9. Database management system
- 13. Social evolution anthropologist Service
- 14. American rocker Grohl
- 15. Greek personification of compassion
- 16. Negatives
- 17. Rescued
- 18. Self-immolation by fire ritual
- 19. Assigns tasks
- 21. Popular type of cigar
- 22. Discounts
- 23. The whole quantity
- 24. New York Giants legend
- 25. Indicates before
- 28. Lentils
- 29. Extremely angry
- 31. Body part
- 33. "North Star State"
- 36. David ___, US playwright
- 38. Lower and raise one's head
- 39. Private rendezvous
- 41. In a way, improved
- 44. A place to play
- 45. Astronomical period of 18 years
- 46. Automobile
- 48. Something you can take
- 49. A radio band
- 51. Jaws of a voracious animal
- 52. Short-billed rails
- 54. Chinese province
- 56. Shameless
- 60. Horizontal passage from the surface into a mine
- 61. Indian respectful titles
- 62. Fail to entertain
- 63. Dried-up
- 64. Central Utah city
- 65. Southern U.S.
- 66. German river
- 67. Necessary for breathing
- 68. Put into play

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Curved segment
- 2. Wings
- 3. Yellowish volatile liquid
- 4. Makes less severe
- 5. Debit note
- 6. Overhang
- 7. The nights before
- 8. Type of light
- 9. Lacking enthusiasm
- 10. Tattle
- 11. Some is "heavy"
- 12. One who is canonized
- 14. Indicates date and place of writing
- 17. "Peace" in Arabic
- 20. "Olaf" actor Josh
- 21. Fragmented rock
- 23. They ___
- 25. Advanced degree
- 26. Backside
- 27. Influential architect and design couple
- 29. An act of undue intimacy
- 30. Words from which later words are derived
- 32. 10 meters
- 34. Neither
- 35. Fungal sacs
- 37. The law of God revealed to Moses
- 40. A woolen cap of Scottish origin
- 42. A promise
- 43. Challenges
- 47. British Air Aces
- 49. Large bank
- 50. Served as an omen
- 52. Cavalry sword
- 53. Vaccine developer
- 55. Belgian WW2 resistance leader Jules
- 56. Italian Seaport
- 57. Hip joint
- 58. ___ Clapton, musician
- 59. Insect repellent
- 61. Constrictor snake
- 65 "The First State" (abbr.)

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Pet of the week



CHILLI CHEESE

Meet Chilli Cheese! This handsome boy has a heart of gold almost as bright as his orange fur. He may seem shy at first, but after a few pats, he totally melts like cheese on nachos. He will happily be a lap cat, as he loves to spend time cuddling, soaking up affection, and nuzzling into your side.

He's very communicative and will adorably meow to tell you about this day while he keeps you company. He does have some special dietary needs, so his ideal family will help maintain his special diet and has a good relationship with a veterinarian.

If you're looking for a sweet orange cat to fill your home with snuggles, purrs, and unconditional love, Chilli Cheese is the boy for you. He's currently in foster care, but you can meet him online at kwsphumane.ca/adopt/dogs or arrange a visit our Stratford Centre.



Sudoku

6		3				5	8	2
			9				7	
8	7	5	2					3
4	6					2		8
1							4	
7	2	8			3			1
	4		7	5		8		
		1	8	2				

Solutions on page 19

CLASSIFIEDS

Email to inquire stratfordtimes@gmail.com

OBITUARY



NOLDA BYVELDS

Passed away peacefully at the Cedarcroft Place Retirement Residence in Stratford on Thursday, July 30, 2026, Nolda Byvelds (nee VanMoorsel), formerly of Williamsburg, age 96. Beloved wife of the late Bill Byvelds and the late Gerry Byvelds. Loving mother of Margie Byvelds (Pete Wilson) of Tavistock, Reta Byvelds of Stratford and Ed Byvelds (Catherine) of Stratford. Loving mother-in-law of Christie Byvelds of Kemptville. Dear sister-in-law of Mary VanMoorsel of Mariatown, Eleanor VanMoorsel of Fort Saskatchewan and Tony Byvelds (Corrie) of Williamsburg. Oma will be fondly remembered by her grandchildren Sarah (Shane), Bill (Montana), Amanda (Scott), Mark, Owen, Emma, Grant and her great-grandchildren Olivia, Stella, Caleb, Wade, Marek, Matilda, Lyla and Blake. She was predeceased by her parents Martinus and Johanna VanMoorsel (nee VanZutphen), her son Pat Byvelds and her brothers Harry VanMoorsel (Diny), Ted VanMoorsel (Catherine), Peter VanMoorsel and Bill VanMoorsel. Tante Nolda is also survived by many nieces and nephews.

Friends may call at the Marsden McLaughlin Funeral Home in Williamsburg on Tuesday, August 18th from 7-9 p.m. Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church in Morrisburg, on Wednesday, August 19th at 11 a.m. A reception will follow at the Royal Canadian Legion in Morrisburg. Interment of cremated remains will be at St. Mary's Cemetery in Morrisburg. Donations to Winchester Hospital or the Stratford General Hospital Foundation would be gratefully acknowledged by the family. Online condolences may be made at marsdenmclaughlin.com.

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1. Rachel McAdams
2. Parallel
3. 1994
4. Corn
5. Germany
6. Loblaw's, Empire Company Limited(Sobeys), & Metro Inc.
7. An eye
8. Four
9. Botswana
10. Lemon



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