

# Niagara Escarpment **ViEWS**

WINTER 2025-26 (DECEMBER, JANUARY, FEBRUARY)



**PLEASE BRING  
ME HOME**  
Searches For The Missing

## Skiing Massie Hills

Minerals  
and Fossils

**OF THE NIAGARA  
ESCARPMENT**

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of 2025

M'Chigeeng's  
Unique Church Service

BY STEVE PAIKIN



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# Thai Turkey Soup

Prep Time: 10 mins | Total Time: 20 mins | Serves: 6

## Ingredients

- 1 carton Reduced-sodium chicken broth (900 mL)
- 1/4 cup Thai Yellow Curry Cooking Sauce (60 mL)
- 3 cups Cooked turkey, shredded (750 mL)
- 1 tbsp Reduced-sodium soy sauce (15 mL)
- 1/2 pkg Vermicelli noodles, or other thin, dried Asian noodles (60 g)
- 1 Green onion, thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup Bean sprouts (125 mL)
- 1 Carrot, grated
- 1/4 cup each fresh cilantro and fresh mint, leaves only (60 mL)
- 1 Lime, cut into 6 wedges

## Directions

1. In a saucepan, bring broth and curry sauce to a boil over medium heat and cook, 5 min. Add turkey and soy sauce, bring back to a boil then remove from heat.
2. Meanwhile, cook noodles according to package directions.
3. Evenly divide noodles, green onion, bean sprouts, carrot and hot broth mixture among 6 bowls. Garnish each with cilantro and mint and serve with a wedge of lime.

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# Niagara Escarpment Views

SINCE JANUARY 2008

A division of 1826789 Ontario Inc.

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*Niagara Escarpment Views* is published four times a year.

Subscriptions in Canada:

Annual: \$22; Two years: \$39.50 HST included. HST # 80712 0464.

Subscriptions to the U.S.:

Annual: \$35; Two years: \$65 Canadian funds.

Other International subscriptions: Annual: \$65 Canadian funds

Subscriptions to the U.S.: **TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED**

Order online at <https://NEViews.ca>



Delivered by Canada Post Publications  
Mail #41592022

The publishers of *Niagara Escarpment Views* are not responsible for any loss or damage caused by the contents of the magazine, whether in articles or advertisements. Views expressed might not be those of its publishers or editor. Your comments are welcome!

Letters to the editor may be edited for space and published in the magazine, on the website or in print materials.

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50 Ann St. Halton Hills, (Georgetown) ON L7G 2V2

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ISSN 2293-2976

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We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada.



*Big Fat Stinky Woman and Other Stories*,  
Published 2025



*The Gift of Land: Living With Nature: a memoir*,  
Published 2024



*Views & Vistas, Favourite Photographs from the Entire Niagara Escarpment in Canada*, Published 2021



Conservation Halton Award, 2014  
to Mike Davis in Media/Blogger Category

# Engaged Letters to the Editor



**O**ur letters to the editor, which we publish in a department we call Readers & Viewers, have long been a vibrant part of our Escarpment community. This section is so popular that some people tell us it's the first thing they turn to in our issues. That may be because we have always published letters and messages from our audience, even when they are critical of our work, disagree with our choices, or dislike what I've written as my editor's letter. I believe that good journalism accepts a variety of opinions and voices. Publishing negative comments adds credibility to our letters

department, and engages our readers more than just positive ones would. We've had discussions from readers that have lasted over several issues, again demonstrating the level of engagement that you have with our magazine. I'm honoured and humbled by that, and encourage all of you to keep sending me your opinions. The letters in this issue contain at least one that may certainly stir some of you to a deft response. I'm eager to read your views.

## In this Issue

Last winter the Bruce Peninsula endured a brutal snowstorm that locked people down for days. Our man in Lion's Head, Chris Hamilton, shows us what it was like and how people came together to ensure everyone's safety and comfort.

Sandra J. Howe, who loves getting out in all seasons, takes us cross-country skiing at Massie Hills, southeast of Owen Sound. Deep snow is valued here!

There's a valuable volunteer organization based in Owen

Sound that works tirelessly to locate missing people, or at least their remains if they're deceased. Please Bring Me Home is celebrated for us by Sue Horner.

Beth Gilhespy shows us some of the very foundations of the Niagara Escarpment in her exploration of the astonishing variety of rocks and minerals to be found along the mighty ledge.

We're honoured to have a piece written by Steve Paikin of TVO. His description of a remarkable church in M'Chigeeng, Manitoulin Island, marries well with photos of the exterior and interior that were taken by Mike Davis.

## What, Another Book?

A few years ago, I woke up to the alarming fact that I may be in the last third of my life. Too many of my friends had died recently, and there is no reason that I might not be next. I'm not even as fit as some of them were. With the real probability of death sometime in my future, I began to feel an urgency to

get some things done that I always thought I would do one day. That includes publishing some books of my writing. I started with a memoir, *A Gift of Land: Living With Nature*. Next is a collection of what I consider the best short stories I've written over my lifetime. I didn't want to die without having them assembled in book form. I'm relieved that I've published *Big Fat Stinky Woman and Other Stories*. Now I feel I've "caught up" with the obvious works I had in me. If I manage to write any other books, I expect it will take some time. I appreciate the opportunity I have in this magazine, to publicize my work.

*Gloria*

**Gloria Hildebrandt**  
P.S. *Wild animals need wild spaces.*

The offices of *Niagara Escarpment Views* are located on the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, specifically The Ajetance Treaty No. 19, of 1818, when Chief Ajetance sold the lands to the Indian Department of the government.

## Let us know what you think!

Write us at [editor@NEViews.ca](mailto:editor@NEViews.ca) or  
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## More Online!



Keep in touch with Escarpment news between issues at our website. We have unique content not seen in the magazine, and you can leave comments in response. See [www.NEViews.ca](http://www.NEViews.ca).



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 EXTREME AS  
 MAJOR WEATHER  
 EVENTS  
 BECOME  
 MORE  
 FREQUENT.

...EVEN I AM  
 GETTING TIRED  
 OF THIS !!



## ■ READERS & VIEWERS



I take offence to your reference to the US government, “These are manageable ways for individuals to resist the increasingly BIZARRE ADMINISTRATION that’s dominating our neighbors to the south.” That is your opinion and you are entitled to it. I am a dual citizen living in Ontario who happens to be a Republican as I agree with the party’s policies.

“He” is rebuilding the US economy. He is calling out corruption and waste in the government, lowering crime rates, deporting illegal immigrants that are straining social services and deporting criminals that are committing

I notice in the current issue that you have included some Canadian flag photos. Here is an interesting variation on the theme from the Hopeville Kite Festival. Sandy Richardson, email



crimes against US citizens. And, he is working for world peace.

It has been a wake up call for Canada. Canada needs to seek other markets for its goods. They are now breaking down trade barriers between provinces. Canada needs to clean the waste and corruption and work on our healthcare system. Great to purchase Canadian products and spend our tourism dollars in Canada. I do as I live here. This is a beautiful country. Just need a warm parker [sic] and touque to get through the winter.

Louise Dawe, email

We, the YAH young at heart singers and band, out of Erin, over the last 16 years, appear to have been missed out in this latest edition. We practice, harmonize and sing our hearts strongly every Monday morning. And we sound pretty darn great. We sing for numerous events incl memorials, for Seniors’ groups, Centennial concerts, Christmas events, you name it and we are there to give joy and have fun. We have regularly about 35 participants, sing with just the words as we don’t aim to be perfect but rather to join together with love. I would appreciate your knowing about our amazing group of singers and our 4 band members.

Joanne Gardner, email



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## READERS & VIEWERS

I picked up your latest issue at a cafe near me in Dundas and loved it! I am interested in sharing this issue more widely. 1) with my grade 7 and 8 students, there are so many great examples of things we discuss in class. It would be amazing to use them and read them in the classroom. 2) I do a variety of teacher workshops about environmental education and would love to share this resource with that audience as well.

Sarah Lowes, email

What a lovely Sunday Fall afternoon we had attending the “Hildebrandt + Davis Nature Park”, with our friends Claire & Bob Warren. It was so nice to meet you both in person, after enjoying your publication of “Niagara Escarpment Views” since your very first edition. Gloria read from her book “The Gift of the Land”, and we were each given a copy. The tour through their property and the information regarding the trees and plants all in their natural state was so interesting. After our hike Gloria & Mike set up a lovely display of snacks outside their home for the group. So we enjoyed their publication conversations and talking with other attendees. We applaud you, your magazine is wonderful, and thank you both for a very enjoyable afternoon ...

Diana & Steve Barker, email



It was great to see the letter of kind words and encouragement included on the letters page. It really makes a difference to see that someone would take the time to comment and it is appreciated.

Russell Tonks, Georgetown



I attended the Shamrocks Talks at the Legion in Erin and was handed your magazine. I am a contributor to a local newsletter with around 300 subscribers and was wondering if I could share your article on Brenda McEnery's passion with Erin Ontario News.

Pierre Brianceau, Hillsburgh

I picked up the summer issue while visiting Manitoulin Island for the first time and really enjoyed both the island and your magazine!

Jennifer Jung, Strathroy



My girlfriend Mallory and I loved the Bat story in the Niagara Escarpment Views publication. Mallory just started work as a post doc Fellow in the Psychology lab at McMaster, and received a lengthy tour last week, which included McMaster's very own colony of Bats, they call it the Bat Lab and use the Batman logo for promotions, they study the acoustic location and auditory stimuli of the bats and compare to human audition.

Alexander Korola, Mississauga

## Photos by Steve McNamara



▲ Red-headed Woodpecker, Rockwood



► Bald Eagle, Glen Allan



► Great Horned Owl, Rockwood Conservation Area.

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## EVENTS

Photos by Mike Davis except where noted

► At Crawford Lake Conservation Area on Aug. 11, Hon. Zee Hamid, MPP for Milton, announced that \$25,000 is being given to Conservation Halton for its Nature Stewards program. This program gives seniors in long-term care and retirement homes in Halton, connections to nature by creating native gardens, enjoying nature workshops and guided walks. Displaying the large cheque are from left, Garner Beckett, executive director of Conservation Halton Foundation; Chandra Sharma, president and CEO of Conservation Halton; MPP Hamid; and Diana Huson, head of corporate affairs for Conservation Halton.



▲ In August in Norval, and again in September in Glen Williams, Georgetown Little Theatre presented *Olde Tyme Nites*, a celebration of community, music and laughter, featuring the character of Lucy Maud Montgomery, once a resident of Norval.



▲ Hopeville Kite Festival was held August 23 & 24.  
PHOTO BY SANDY RICHARDSON.

## EVENTS

Photos by Mike Davis except where noted



▲ Sharon Frayne is the featured author at Thistle Bookshop & Café in Port Dalhousie from September through December. PHOTO PROVIDED.



▲ Colton Clark of the Georgetown Pipe Band leading guests to the annual Limehouse BBQ & Corn Roast after a ceremony of appreciation for volunteers, held in the Limehouse Millennium Garden on Sept 13, marking 25 years since the garden was created.



► Canadian Cowgirls Rodeo Drill Team from Chatham-Kent participating in the opening day parade at the International Plowing Match, held this year in Grassie on Sept 16.

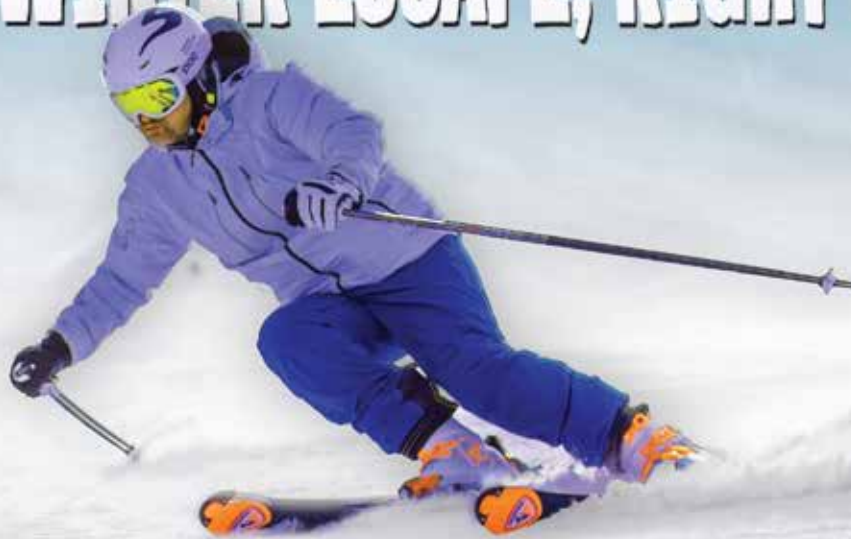


▲ Conservation Halton hosted the 18<sup>th</sup> annual Halton Children's Water Festival at Kelso Conservation Area from Sept. 23 to 26. More than 4,000 elementary school children participated in activities exploring climate change and the role of water in communities and local ecosystems. PHOTO PROVIDED.

► Glen Williams held its Bicentennial Fair on Sept. 27. One of the celebratory events was a historical walking tour led by John Mark Rowe, here shown in Saint Alban the Martyr Anglican Church.



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## EVENTS

► A bronze sculpture created by Wendy Mitchell was unveiled in the heart of Belfountain as part of the Bicentennial festivities on Oct. 4.



▼ On Oct. 18 Knox Presbyterian Church in Georgetown held a 165<sup>th</sup> anniversary dinner. Here, members of the organizing committee are being recognized.



► Escarpment Corridor Alliance hosted Nature Corridor Summit at Osler Bluff Ski Club, Town of The Blue Mountains, on Oct. 24. Jodi Hilty was keynote speaker, discussing North America's longest corridor, Yellowstone to Yukon.

# Hidden Beneath Our Feet: Minerals and

By Beth Gilhespy | Photos by Mike Davis



The Niagara Escarpment is formed from a wide variety of minerals and fossils.

# Fossils of the Niagara Escarpment



**W**ith its towering cliffs, ancient oceans, and a hidden world beneath your feet, the Niagara Escarpment is more than just a dramatic backdrop to southern Ontario's landscape. Its thick, white walls of Amabel Dolostone loom over forests, cities, and shorelines, while lower layers of dolostone, sandstone, and shale form natural terraces and valleys that provide texture to the landscape.

These rock layers aren't just scenic, they're storied. They've built Toronto's historic buildings, fuelled lime kilns, and formed the very bricks that built and still build communities.

But what lies within the rocks tells an even deeper story. A micro-sized world of minerals and fossils makes up the Niagara Escarpment. From sparkling crystals of calcite and sphalerite, to ancient sea creatures fossilized in stone, the Escarpment is a geological world in miniature waiting to be uncovered.



Dolomite ( $\text{CaMg}(\text{CO}_3)_2$  - calcium magnesium carbonate) Dolomite crystals form when calcite in limestone is altered by magnesium-rich seawater.

### **Escarpment Rocks**

Rocks are made up of assemblages of minerals, which form in different ways depending on their rock type. Most of the time the minerals are too small to see individually, but occasionally large, showy crystals can be found in cavities in the rock, normally in quarries, road cuts or rock falls, where the minerals have only been exposed to the elements for a relatively short period of time.

The rocks of the Niagara Escarpment are sedimentary, and so the minerals form primarily through such processes as the accumulation and compaction of

mineral-rich sediments, the evaporation of water containing dissolved elements, and the precipitation of minerals from solution. These processes often occur in bodies of water like seas, lakes, or riverbeds, where minerals crystallize as solid layers over time. The resulting minerals typically have a specific chemical composition and structure, formed through low-temperature, surface-level geological activity.

The types of minerals found in the Niagara Escarpment depend on the specific rock layer. In the dolostone, you'll primarily see crystals of calcite and dolomite, but you might

also come across less common minerals like celestite, sphalerite, and fluorite—colourful minerals that often form in cavities within the rock. Celestite, sometimes referred to as celestine, is a particularly beautiful mineral that is normally sky blue in colour, and is found at many of the dolostone quarries along the Niagara Escarpment. A somewhat rare orange variant of celestite is found in the area of Georgetown and Forks of the Credit, the orange color being due to iron impurities or inclusions that tint the mineral. Hilltop Quarry northwest of Glen Williams has produced

many fine samples of orange celestite, and I have also found it in the former York Quarry waste piles below Devil's Pulpit at Forks of the Credit.

Often the minerals in Niagara Escarpment rock formed from elements present in the pore water, which is the microscopic amount of water that exists within the sedimentary rock. These elements assemble into minerals; if there is a cavity within which they can expand unimpeded, the minerals can become quite large. In the shale layers, gypsum nodules formed when shallow pools of mineral-rich water evaporated in the



▲► **CALCITE WITH DOLOMITE CRYSTALS**  
Calcite ( $\text{CaCO}_3$  - calcium carbonate) Calcite (the larger yellowish crystals) forms in dolostone mainly through original precipitation from seawater, from the calcium-carbonate in shells and corals, and from precipitation of the minerals from calcium-rich pore waters within the rock.



The rock of the Niagara Escarpment formed between 450 and 420 million years ago from tropical seas that once covered the region. These warm, shallow waters teemed with coral and other marine life. When these organisms died, their calcium-rich shells and skeletons accumulated on the sea floor, eventually compacting into limestone. Over time, magnesium in the seawater gradually replaced some of the calcium in the limestone, transforming it into dolostone. Although limestone and dolostone look similar, dolostone contains magnesium, which makes it more resistant to weathering. In addition to forming from biological remains, this limestone and dolostone rock can also form when calcium and magnesium carbonate precipitate directly from seawater, a process similar to the scale that builds up in a kettle. These two methods of formation, biological and chemical, help explain why some rock layers contain abundant fossils, while others have few or none.



◀ Sphalerite ( $ZnS$  - zinc sulphide) Sphalerite, the brown crystal within the cavity, forms when zinc and sulphide ions in the seawater during rock formation or from the decay of organic matter, combine. The sphalerite precipitates within pore spaces in the dolostone or along its bedding planes.

▼ Gypsum ( $CaSO_4 \cdot 2H_2O$  - hydrated calcium sulphate) Gypsum formed when calcium- and sulfate-rich water evaporated in pools in the muddy deltas, leading to the precipitation of gypsum as nodules.

muddy environment that later became shale, leaving behind concentrated deposits.

Most quarrying of the Niagara Escarpment rock is for creation of cement and building stone material. But the presence of sphalerite (zinc-based) and galena (lead-based) minerals in the dolostone resulted in several small lead-zinc mines to spring up on the Saugeen (Bruce) Peninsula. Dow Chemical once owned several thousands of acres at Hope Bay, where they intended to extract the magnesium in the dolostone. Thankfully they abandoned their plans when Niagara Escarpment development control came into force, and today the area is the Hope Bay Forest Nature Preserve.



### Layers of Fossils

The fossils in Escarpment rock hint at the tropical seas and ancient coral reefs that inhabited the area over 420 million years ago. All of the dolostone layers have fossils,

but they differ depending on the layer, and in fact that's often how the different layers are distinguished. Extending from Hamilton north to Manitoulin Island is the Manitoulin Dolostone.

Its fossils are primarily small shells, but occasionally one can find beautiful crinoid stem pieces and even more rarely, trilobites and cephalopods. Despite their plant-like appearance, with long stems

and waving, petal-like fronds, crinoids were animals that used feathery arms to capture plankton in the tropical seas.

The Amabel Dolostone caprock also has crinoid fossils, though they are

Pentamerid Brachiopods were marine animals with two shells and five internal chambers. Their petrified remains are found in the Fossil Hill Dolostone layer.



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Sandhill Cranes, taken by Rob Wray



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hard to find unless you are in just the right location.

The most fossil-rich layer on the Niagara Escarpment is the Fossil Hill Dolostone. Named for Fossil Hill on Manitoulin Island, it contains a rich assortment of corals (favosites, halysites, Syringopora and others), stromatoporoid sponges, and other fossils.

It's not just the dolostone layers that have fossils. The Rochester Shale, which is found in the southern reaches of the Escarpment on the Niagara Peninsula, contains several different fossil types, including the beautiful trilobite *Trimerus*

*delphinocephalus*.

Next time you look at the towering Niagara Escarpment rock, remember that there is a world of hidden stories beneath your feet – a microscopic realm of minerals and the preserved remains of life from hundreds of millions of years ago. **NEV**

*Beth Gilhespy is CEO of Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy and holds B.Sc. and M.Sc. degrees in geography and geology. She recently published her third book on Niagara Escarpment geology.*



▲► Celestite (SrSO<sub>4</sub> - strontium sulphate) Celestite forms when strontium- and sulfate-rich fluids precipitate celestite in cavities or fractures within the dolostone rock. Celestite is most often a sky-blue or celestial colour, which inspired its name.



Stromatoporoids are fossils of sponges, and are found in the Fossil Hill and other dolostone layers.



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An aerial photograph of a winter landscape, showing a snow-covered road and trees. The image is in a muted, blue-grey color palette.

**YOU CAN'T  
GET HERE  
FROM THERE**

WRITTEN BY CHRIS HAMILTON

**THE 2025  
BRUCE  
SNOWSTORM**

A photograph showing a person in dark winter clothing walking away from the camera through a deep snowdrift. The visibility is very low, creating a whiteout effect. In the background, several other people are visible, some standing and some partially obscured by the snow. The overall scene is desaturated and hazy, emphasizing the severity of the weather conditions.

Multiple accidents on closed road,  
Bruce County. PHOTO BY DON MCCULLOUGH.

**T**he storm of 2025 on Saugeen Bruce Peninsula came with 90-km-per-hour winds and 60 cm of snow per day causing huge drifts, roads blocked, whiteout conditions with zero visibility. It hit fast and hard. Squalls and whiteouts had made roads impassable. Everyone in town was stuck in town, and anyone who had gone out of town in the morning was stuck wherever they were because roads were closing.



Bruce County accident on highway. PHOTO BY DON MCCULLOUGH.

**O**n January 27, 2025, the town of Lion's Head was busy. Residents from all over the Peninsula were preparing for an incoming storm. Grocery, hardware, pharmacy, liquor stores and shops in town were full of people stocking up on essentials either for themselves or friends and neighbours who couldn't get here. With the forecast predicting massive winds and

oodles of snow, we all knew it was going to be a bad one.

Stories from the massive storm of 2014 were everywhere. Cam Ruttle told of having his car stuck headfirst in a snowbank until a burly man with a dump truck and chain, pulled him out and onto the road again. Cam followed the truck's tail lights to Lion's Head, where he stayed the night. Others spoke of days without hydro or water. One family left their

stranded car seeking shelter at a nearby farm only to find two other families had already been welcomed inside.

Conversations would then invariably turn to making sure everyone had food and water, hydro, firewood or someone to call in case of emergency.

### **Then the Storm Hit**

Up here on the Peninsula we can see 30 to 60 cm of snow and laugh it off. Sure, that's a lot of snow to get rid of, but

we have a great snow clearing system using municipal and locally contracted resources in town and on municipal roads, and provincial plows on the highways. Anyone with a plow is out there helping someone.

The nasty bit about a Peninsula winter, though, is the wind.

Those working in town who live in Pike Bay or Stokes Bay, Miller Lake or anywhere in between were stuck. Jo stayed with her sister in town. Rick



► Chris Hamilton digging because there's a barbecue in here somewhere. PHOTO BY NANCY HAMILTON.



Highway closed, Bruce County.  
PHOTO BY DON MCCULLOUGH.





▲ Waves of snow, when the snow blows in from both directions. PHOTO BY CHRIS HAMILTON.



▲ Icicles and overhangs at the Golden Dawn senior citizens' home. PHOTO BY CHRIS HAMILTON.



▲ Snow wall, Lion's Head. PHOTO BY CHRIS HAMILTON.

barely made it to Ferndale. Bijou and her Jeep 4x4 got stuck twice on the nasty turn on the way to Barrow Bay. Lee made it as far as the liquor store. A handful of us live in town so were able to get home. We all just hunkered down.

It was a different story out on Highway 6.

Bear Tracks Inn and Restaurant remained open that night to take in anyone who needed shelter. Kelly, who would end up stuck at work for two days, was inside making sure everyone was dry and fed. The Inn was full, but no one was turned away.

Nick was outside in the storm pulling people off the road. The snow was blinding and the howl of the wind was deafening. He watched for the blinking hazards of slow-moving cars and directed them into the parking lot. Soon the cars stopped coming.

Drifts on the highway were six feet tall. Stranded Hydro workers stayed at the gas station. One car was stuck in the middle of Highway 6 in Mar blocking the road. Over the course of the night 50 cars were stranded. There were even plows and emergency vehicles in the ditch.

The storm continued for two days. Many roads remained closed in the region so supply trucks could not get through. The egg truck made it through, but once here, was stuck. The driver couldn't get there from here. Stranded motorists lined Highway 6, slowing the process of clearing the roads. The OPP were ticketing anyone caught driving on a closed road.

I climbed over the six-foot pile of snow plowed into

the end of the driveway and walked to work in the tracks of the school bus. There are enough of us who live and work in town so we can open some stores for food and essentials. Rachel's stayed open for hot meals. Scott's for essentials. Scott's even brought me up a new snowblower that afternoon when mine broke mid-plow. Hellyer's was open for groceries and gossip.

By noon on the 29th, Highway 6 was open. The sun was shining, and the snow-covered world took on a sparkling beauty. Stranded people made a dash for home. By 2:30 Highway 6 south was closed again. A hydro pole had gone down over the highway just north of Warton. It would be more than a day before it re-opened, but Bruce Road 9 was open as an alternate route.

### Digging Out

Once the snow abated, the efforts to dig out began.

As the sun came out, neighbour helped neighbour to clear ice and snow. In many cases, there was no place to put it. The kids went back to school for the first time in weeks, and life slowly returned to normal.

As the people of the Peninsula made it out, they gathered in their spots: the gas station, the restaurants and the shops. People new to the area would say "What the hell was that!?" Those of us who have lived here a while would just say "Winter." And so, the new stories began.

The biggest delay in opening roads during and after a storm is saving people and clearing abandoned cars. Many had to be pushed into



Impassable front door. Maybe we'll go out the back door today. PHOTO BY CHRIS HAMILTON.



Chris Hamilton's path through the 12-foot drifts so the propane guy can get through. PHOTO BY CHRIS HAMILTON.

the ditches to clear the roads. Warnings had been issued for days. More than snow or ice or wind, people travelling when they shouldn't, caused the most trouble. People

were stuck in cars all night, frightened and frozen or sleeping on floors away from their homes and loved ones.

So, if it's winter and it's going to be a big multi-day

blizzard, get some food, warm boots and mitts, stop at the library, then head home. Start the fire, make some popcorn, open a book and let the storm rage outside.



▲ Meanwhile, Sauble Beach also had a bit of snow. PHOTO BY LISA CHADWICK.

Don't go for a drive. Because you can't get here from there. **NEV**

*Chris Hamilton's last feature for this magazine was "Fire at Lion's Head Foodland," Summer 2024.*



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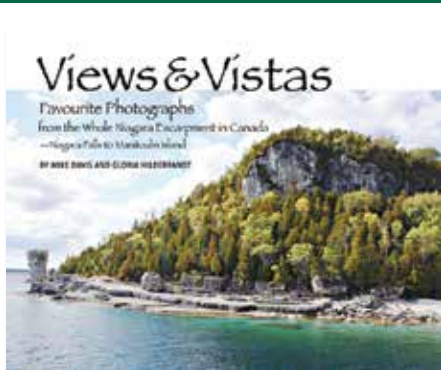
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Old Baldy, Beaver Valley.

PHOTO BY MIKE DAVIS.




# COLD CASE HUNTERS

## Keep a **Spotlight** on **Missing People**

WRITTEN BY SUE HORNER | PHOTOS BY MIKE DAVIS EXCEPT WHERE NOTED

► Founders of Please Bring Me Home. Matthew Nopper, Nick Oldrieve and Melissa Harwood look out onto the bay at Owen Sound, one of the many areas they search for missing persons.  
PHOTO BY PLEASE BRING ME HOME.

A photograph of three people standing on a rocky shore next to a body of water. On the left is a man with a beard wearing a white patterned button-down shirt and dark pants. In the middle is a man wearing a white patterned short-sleeved shirt, a dark baseball cap worn backward, and dark pants. On the right is a woman with long hair wearing a purple zip-up hoodie and dark pants. They are all looking towards the left. The background shows a calm lake, a line of trees, and a blue sky with light clouds. A semi-transparent white circle is overlaid on the image, containing the text.

**P**lease Bring Me Home (PBMH), based in Owen Sound, is a non-profit group formed by citizens to help solve local missing persons cases. Located on the shore of Georgian Bay below the limestone cliffs of the Niagara Escarpment, the area includes many hiding places among crevices, rough terrain and waterways.

**L**isa Maas had been missing for two years when Matthew Nopper heard about her disappearance. A former reporter, Matthew was fascinated by missing persons cases, and this was close to home. Lisa hadn't been seen since leaving a party near Owen Sound in July 1988. Recently moved to the area, Matthew joined a search for her.

It was one of many civilian and police searches for

the 22-year-old, including OPP officers rappelling into a chasm at the top of the Niagara Escarpment. All searches came up empty. Although the searches petered out over the years, the case stayed with Matthew. After his own father disappeared in 2012, the body found by police after a search, Matthew felt compelled to help others.

In 2013, Nick Oldrieve moved to Owen Sound. At the time, he was part of a crisis team helping locate

missing youth in foster care. He heard about Lisa's case and began looking into it in his spare time.

Melissa Harwood had a passion for crime research and reached out after hearing about Nick's efforts. So did Matthew. The three realized they shared a passion: to bring home those who were missing.

### **From Idea to Action**

Lisa's case inspired Matthew, Nick and Melissa to launch Please Bring Me Home. The

not-for-profit organization maintains an anonymous tip line and social media accounts with the intent of looking at local cold case files. Nick is executive director; Matthew is in charge of media and Melissa leads research and trends in missing persons cases. The name represents the plea of a missing person.

"Our goal is to find the missing and bring them home to their family and friends," Matthew says.

At the time, there were at



▲ Even in summer, there may still be snow in deep fissures of the Escarpment.



▲ Waterways like Pottawatomi Falls near Owen Sound may provide hiding places to be investigated.



▲ Owen Sound from the edge of the Niagara Escarpment.

▼ Thick forests and Escarpment formations can make searching difficult.





▲ Escarpment bluffs in winter are beautiful but can be difficult places to search.

least seven missing person cases in the area. Nick remembers they wondered, “What if we could help find a missing person and prevent them from turning into a decades-old cold case?”

The team did just that in 2018.

Nolan Panchyshyn had gone missing in mid-December 2017. After almost two months with no answers, the family asked PBMH for help. An anonymous tip, promptly passed along, helped the local police locate Nolan’s body and arrest two men for his murder.

Five months later, PBMH found the body of Terry Schope. He had been known to walk along Owen Sound Bay and the team guessed he had simply fallen into the water. Kayaking in the bay and

searching with binoculars, they spotted clothing almost exactly where currents suggested a body might wash up.

Many searches take place in Escarpment country, which means careful planning. Even in July, you might find snow and ice in deep fissures. Almost every search shows evidence of bear activity, and the area includes thick forest and difficult trails.

“In some places, you’re so deep in woods, you wonder if any human has ever walked where you are,” Nick says.

#### **Partnering With Police**

PBMH members are careful not to step on law enforcement toes or contaminate a case.

“When we started, the OPP weren’t shy about letting us know we were a pain,” Nick says. “But I think we’re now



appreciated more than seen as a hindrance.” The team recognizes that police often lack the resources to devote to cold cases, and new

investigations take priority. Also, the team believes that in cold cases, some people just don’t want to talk to police.

“We’re often a last-ditch



▲ Almost every search shows evidence of bear activity. This Black Bear was spotted on the Bruce Peninsula. FROM *VIEWS & VISTAS* BY MIKE DAVIS AND GLORIA HILDEBRANDT.



▲ The Niagara Escarpment is located near The City of Owen Sound and its harbour.



▲ Logo from the Please Bring Me Home Facebook page.

▲ Some days, Please Bring Me Home searchers find junk like old tires, metal and plastic in Escarpment crevasses instead of missing people. PHOTO COURTESY OF MATTHEW NOPPER.

effort to bring cold cases to a conclusion,” Nick says.

The team also takes police feedback to heart. Told they shouldn’t be interviewing the public because they were untrained, they lined up instruction. Told they didn’t have the training to conduct searches, they now work with a retired OPP officer specializing in ground search

and rescue. They also partner with specialists in canine search and an anthropologist who looks at bone fragments.

PBMH relies on the generosity of businesses and individuals to cover expenses such as equipment, mileage and food for experts and volunteers. All team members have day jobs and donate their own time and resources,

and local companies often sponsor excavators.

### W5 Spreads the Word

In 2019, CTV’s W5 aired a documentary about Please Bring Me Home and its work to find missing people. Almost immediately, the plan to stay local changed.

“We received an influx of requests from family

members in every province,” says Nick. They couldn’t say no. Now they keep missing persons from across Canada in the public eye – but only if asked by a family member.

At a minimum, the missing person information goes on the website and social media. The team follows an intake process and begins a formal investigation, speaking with



▲ White cliffs of the Niagara Escarpment near Owen Sound.

family, friends and others.

“We’re all after the same thing, to help close this loop of not knowing, that can eat you alive,” says Matthew.

There are thousands of cold cases out there, and PBMH is actively following about 107. Sometimes the cases have been cold for years or decades; other times the person disappeared just weeks before.

When they do close cases – and they’ve contributed to wrapping up close to 70 as of May 2025 – it’s always due to one or more of three factors: an anonymous tip, an investigation, a search.

“It never ceases to amaze me how a simple post about a missing person can bring in significant information,” Nick says. “I can’t help but wonder what cases might have been solved if these platforms

were around decades ago.”

Lisa’s parents never discovered the truth about their daughter’s whereabouts before they passed away, her mother in 2019 and father in 2024. But they never lost hope that someone would find her, and PBMH hasn’t either. They still conduct a yearly search.

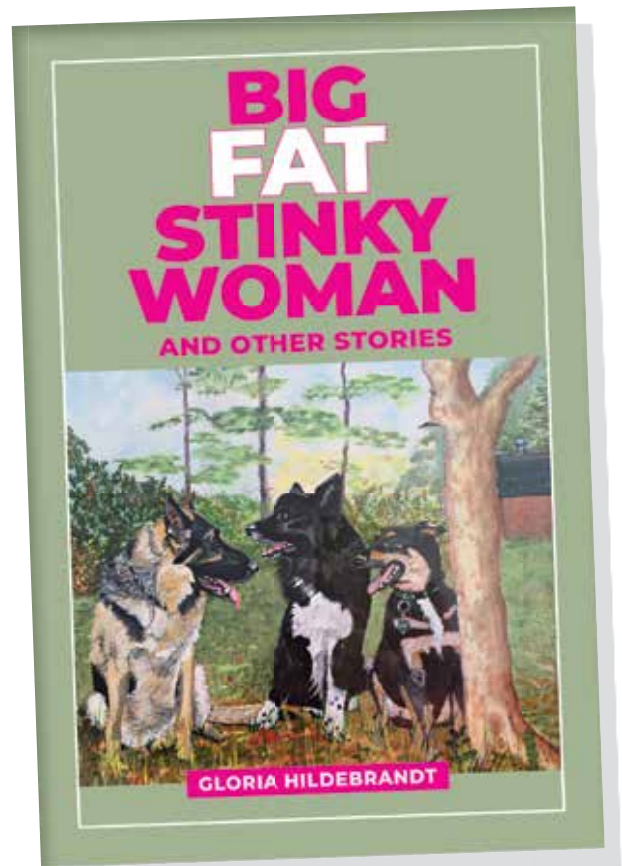
If you have a tip about a missing person, contact your local police, OPP, RCMP or Crime Stoppers. You can also leave an anonymous tip with Please Bring Me Home at [pleasebringmehome.com](http://pleasebringmehome.com), or its tip hotline at 226-702-2728. If you need help finding someone, fill out the intake form online. **NEV**

*Sue Horner wrote “All’s Well That Ends Well: Completing the Bruce Trail During COVID” for this magazine, Spring 2021.*

# NEW!

A collection of 21 fictional short stories by Gloria Hildebrandt, co-publisher and editor of *Niagara Escarpment Views* magazine, author of *The Gift of Land: Living With Nature* and co-author of *Views & Vistas: Favourite Photographs from the Whole Niagara Escarpment in Canada*.

Characters range from children to seniors, while themes move through sexual attraction, love, and many kinds of loss. The writing is clear, concise and deceptively simple.



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# Massie Skiing Hills

WRITTEN &  
PHOTOGRAPHED  
BY SANDRA J. HOWE

**T**he Massie Hills Management Area, owned by Grey Sauble Conservation Authority (GSCA), is located on the Niagara Escarpment southeast of Owen Sound. It is a huge, diverse, and fascinating property at about 119 acres with over 10 km of trails to explore. The Bruce Trail has crossed this land since the trail's beginnings in the 1960s but the route shifted in 2007. This change marks an important bit of Bruce Trail history. Originally the Bruce Trail traversed the full length of Massie Forest, continuing west toward Inglis Falls and Owen Sound. After four years of hard work by dedicated volunteers, the Bruce Trail was extended from Massie Forest for an additional 69 km to Bayview Escarpment Provincial Nature Reserve. The main trail now turns north, and the former main is the Spey River Forest Side Trail.



Left, Carl Sadler of Owen Sound often spends three days a week grooming the trails, then comes out to ski on Saturday. He shares his enthusiasm for Massie Hills with Dennis Stier of Southampton.

“I love to ski at the Massie Trails!” says Bettilyn Berglund of Owen Sound. “I have carved out a relatively flat route over the years so I am quite comfortable going there alone. This winter is amazing for snow, and the groomers have been so generous with their timely trips on behalf of all of us. I came to this area, Grey Bruce, for work, about 40 years ago, and joined the Bruce Trail Conservancy, for all the wonders that it has to offer. This includes the main Bruce Trail and blue side trail through Massie Hills. I met Curly Harnden, who looked after that section of trail. We were ultimately married and partners in that endeavour so it always has a special place in my heart. I am heading there today! Great snow, even some sun, perfect temps. Carpe diem!”

The Spey River Forest Side Trail is the backbone of the trail loops that allow hikers, bikers, horse riders, and dog-walkers to explore Massie Hills Conservation Area in the green seasons. In winter, access is limited to cross country skiers. The Owen Sound Cross Country Ski Club maintains and grooms classic double-track for a spectacular Nordic skiing experience. The trails range from fairly level beginner sections to more challenging, intermediate hills and turns. The diversity of habitats and terrains is fascinating: upland maple-beech forests, pine and tamarack plantations, cedar lowlands, and extensive wetland areas.

Kelly Rogers, ski club president, explains what she enjoys about skiing Massie Hills. “I love the peace and quiet. It’s a place to go to escape the bad news and revel in the beauty of the



▲ Sandra J. Howe skiing through snow-laden conifer plantation.

Massie Hills. It’s more of a wilderness experience than other ski trails in the area. It harks back to a simpler time when cross country was all about quiet skis in the woods. Not that I am averse to skate skiing at other ski trails!”

As to her experience as president, Kelly says “All positive. I work with a great board. They are always keen to pitch in when things need

doing. We have recently added an annual moonlight ski which has been well received by our community. Otherwise, our mission is to simply continue to offer classic skiing in a wilderness landscape. Our volunteer trail crew captains, Gary and Carl, have been maintaining this trail, summer and winter, for years; there wouldn’t be skiing without them. They are out there in all

types of weather keeping our trails in great shape. GSCA staff are very supportive, and are excellent partners.”

#### **After Big Snow**

The trails really are in wonderful condition. The volunteer grooming team is out machine-packing and track-setting several times weekly. It can take up to three hours each time. After



▲ Gary Shute on trail groomer. He has been a groomer since 2010, and loves being on the trails. Gary talks to all the skiers, and is a great ambassador for the club.



◀ Bettilyn Berglund of Owen Sound has skied at Massie Hills for many years. Her broad grin shows how much she loves to be out on the trails that hold many memories for her.



Fresh snow provides a cozy forest blanket over everything. After a big snow, volunteer groomers may need to ski with hand tools to cut back hanging limbs, or clear fallen debris.



Well-groomed double track offers excellent ski conditions through young deciduous forest.

a big snow, they may also need to ski with hand tools to cut back hanging limbs, or clear fallen debris.

Carl Sadler says “I love every minute I spend on the trails! Whether I am skiing for recreation or working on trail maintenance, I am happy

in Massie Forest. It reminds me of winters in the north, Algonquin area. It is so quiet, peaceful, and remote feeling. But it is close to home.”

There is also a powerful sense of community on the trails. Skiers and volunteers stop to greet each other, and

to chat. The double track allows people to ski side by side, engaging in conversation. Friendly faces and a warm welcome are important parts of the skiing experience here.

No one embodies this quality of being an ambassador for Massie Hills

better than Gary Shute. He has been grooming trails here since 2010, and it is clearly a labour of love for him. Gary stops the snow machine to talk to everyone. He likes to know where they are from, hear their ski stories, and recommend great trail routes for them.



▲ Left, Bob Knapp of Owen Sound and Dennis Stier of Southampton chat about the early history and development of the Massie Hills trails.

“We’ve had people come from Lake Huron and Peterborough, from Lake Erie and the Sault, and all points in between. Massie Hills is such a spectacular area that once people ski here, they keep returning. The snow, the beauty, the

community, call them back again and again,” shares Gary.

#### Reciprocal Ski Clubs

The Owen Sound Cross Country Ski Club community reaches beyond Massie Hills to connect with other Grey Bruce ski clubs. Members



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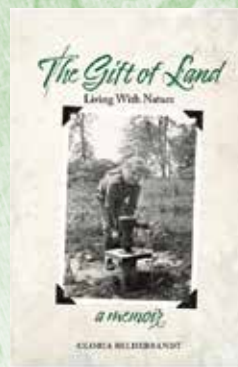
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▲ Ani Eby is a dedicated skier who enjoys chatting with people on the trails. She loves to night ski at Massie with a headlamp because the forest is so peaceful. She also appreciates the double-track grooming for skiing with family and friends, allowing conversation on the trails.



▲ Gary Shute clears snow from a property map to share a favourite route with visitors.

enjoy reciprocal free ski weeks through January and February. Sauble Beach Cross Country, Bruce, Glenelg Nordic, and Beaver Valley Ski Clubs all participate in the exchange program. This provides amazing opportunities for club members to explore

other areas. For non-members, day-use fees can be paid at the trailheads, or by e-transfer on club websites. Membership fees support club activities, and provide the necessary insurance coverage for trail operations.

Are you ready to get out

for your own ski adventure at Massie Hills? There are two trailheads with parking available. The main access is off Concession 6 South, Municipality of Meaford, south from Grey Rd.18. This entry takes you straight into the rolling hills, and colour-

coded loop trails. Maps are posted at each junction. The secondary access is on Sideroad 6 with roadside parking. From here, it is a long, gentle ski toward the North Spey River bridge. This entry point is a better choice for beginner skiers. Find



▲ Doug and Loreen Cumming of Owen Sound, and Dennis Stier of Southampton enjoying fresh snow and superb ski conditions.

directions and maps at: <https://www.greysauble.on.ca/portfolio/massie-hills-management-area/>.

For more info about Owen Sound Cross Country Ski Club, ski conditions, club membership and news, visit: <https://massiehills.com/>. **NEV**


*Sandra Howe's last piece for this magazine was "Wild, Wild Women! Riding the Georgian Trail," in Autumn 2024. Her note for this feature: "In memory of my beloved husband, Dennis Stier."*

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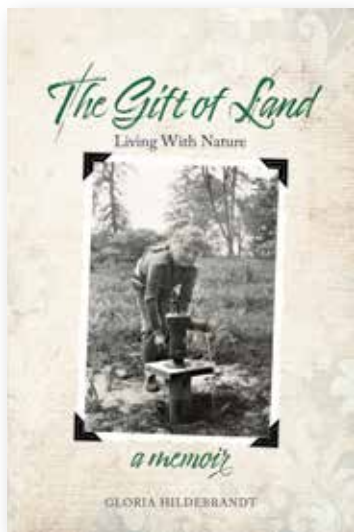
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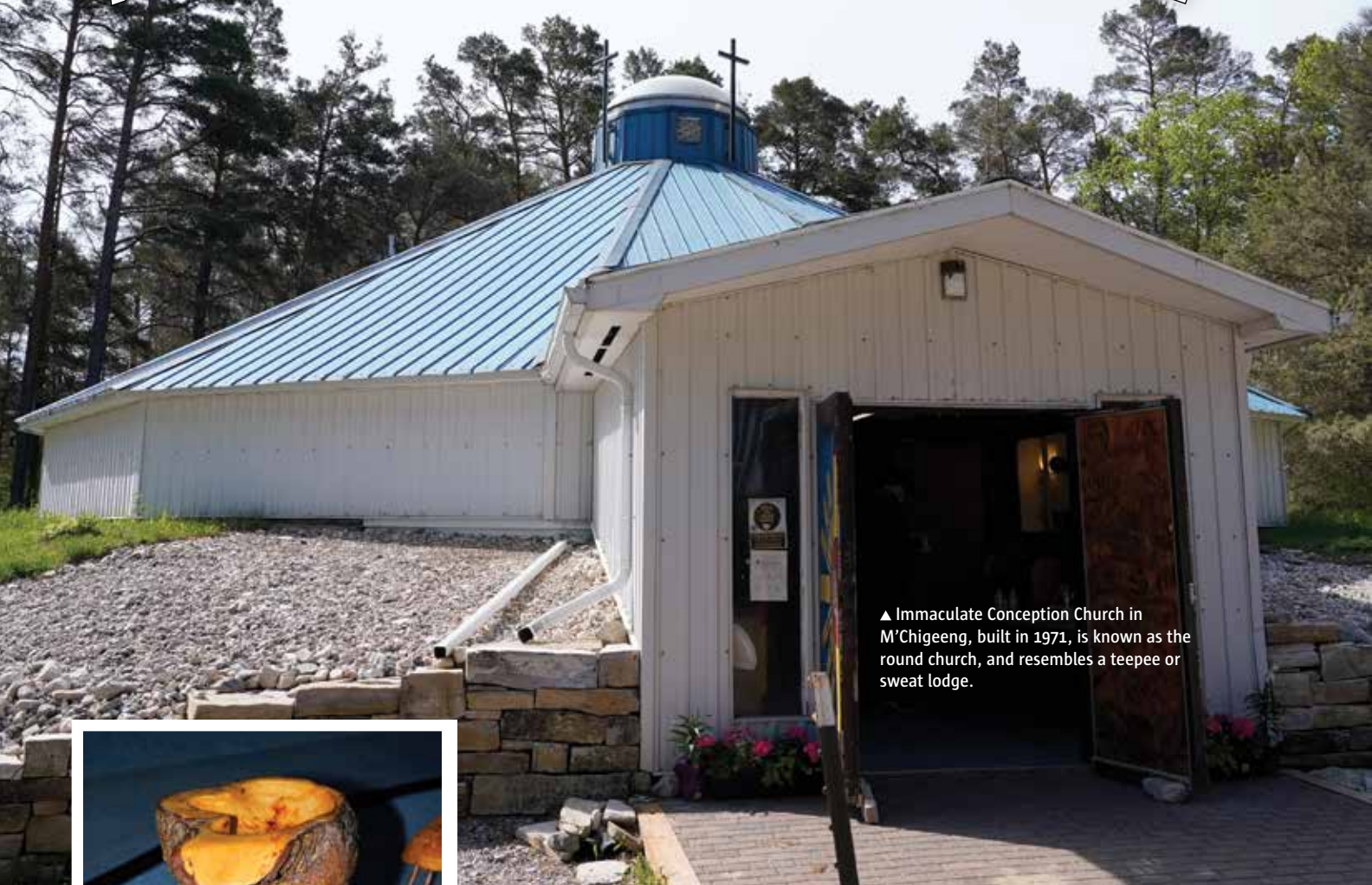
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# M'Chigeeng's Immaculate Conception Church

A SERVICE UNLIKE ANY I'VE SEEN

WRITTEN BY STEVE PAIKIN  
PHOTOS BY MIKE DAVIS



▲ Immaculate Conception Church in M'Chigeeng, built in 1971, is known as the round church, and resembles a teepee or sweat lodge.



◀ Indigenous traditions are respected in this church.

Text on sign reads:  
"A GREAT LADY CAME DOWN ON A CLOUD AND LANDED ON A GIANT TURTLE AND COMMANDED THE TURTLE TO GO ASHORE AND THATS WHAT MADE SAINT JOSEPH ISLAND. NATIVE LEGEND."

I have seen the Catholic mass performed at the Vatican as well as in churches across Europe and Canada. But I have never seen another mass performed the way they do it at the Church of the Immaculate Conception in M'Chigeeng First Nation, on Manitoulin Island.

M'Chigeeng, a community of 2,600 people, including nearly 1,000 on-reserve, on the North Channel of Lake Huron, was once known as West Bay. But in 1974, the territory was renamed with an Ojibway word meaning "village enclosed by stepped cliffs." The picturesque Cup and Saucer Trail is nearby.

The Indigenous presence on the world's largest freshwater island dates back thousands of years, and relations between First Nations and the European settlers have not always been harmonious since the Jesuits arrived 150 years ago. But what's happening at

the local church is enough to make you believe in the possibilities of reconciliation.

### Co-mingling

Every Sunday, Father Louis-Martin Cloutier, who arrived here in 2021, leads a Catholic service that incorporates many elements of Indigenous culture. The result is a beautiful co-mingling of Catholic rites and Indigenous traditions.

For example, when the original church, with its more conventional design, burned down in 1971, it was rebuilt to resemble a teepee — circular in construction. Yes, there are paintings on the walls that chronicle the 14 stations of the cross, which depict the various moments of Jesus Christ's last day on earth. But the paintings were done in the 1980s by the esteemed local Indigenous artist Leland Bell and look dramatically different from the depictions seen in more conventional churches. Yes, there is a large depiction of Christ's crucifixion, but there are also Indigenous dreamcatchers sprinkled high overhead around the church.

Where other Catholic services would feature the spreading of incense, this service begins with an Indigenous associate, Debbie Ense, performing a smudging ceremony for every person in the congregation. Debbie has been a Diocesan Order of Service for 12 years at this church; it's a unique designation within the Sault Ste. Marie diocese, which aims to bring Catholic and Indigenous traditions together. It's proving to be a wonderful way for congregants, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, to feel all are embraced.

### Mass in English and Ojibway

During the mass, the Lord's



▲ The central peak of the church shows the Thunderbird of M'Chigeeng First Nation.



▲ Seating surrounds the sanctuary. Dreamcatchers are displayed high overhead.

Prayer is recited in both English and Ojibway. Hymns are sung in English and Ojibway. And when Father Cloutier invites parishioners to reach out to their neighbours and proclaim, "Peace be with you," it feels like something special when Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike shake hands.

"We're all very proud of our church," says Father Cloutier. "Everybody is so

open and accepting. And we think by showing respect for Indigenous culture and doing things together, we can promote friendship and reconciliation."

When I asked Debbie whether this coming together of traditions has overcome past difficulties, she's quick to say: "I don't think we've overcome it." But she adds, "The Anishinabek way of praying and the Catholic way

of praying share spirituality and respect and love."

And it's on display every Sunday in M'Chigeeng. Wouldn't it be something to see this approach spread all over Ontario? **NEV**

*Steven Paikin is a journalist, author, and documentary producer. He was anchor of TVO's The Agenda with Steve Paikin and is now co-host of the weekly political podcast #onpoli.*



◀ Stations of the cross like this one, are represented by paintings of Leland Bell.



▲ Close up view of the altar.



◀ The entrance seen from the sanctuary.

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# Cloning Yogurt

By Nicholl Spence

I love spending the warmer months foraging berries, blossoms and wild apples and then hours preserving them. I do all this so I can enjoy the products of my garden in winter when the weather is too harsh for anything to grow outside and the costs in the grocery stores inflate.

Making, or more so, cloning plain Greek yogurt is simple and very cost effective. Once you clone your favourite Greek yogurt once, you will never need to purchase it again!

Although the process is not new, it was a new concept for me and after a few failed attempts I finally seemed to get it right. I really like that I control what I put in my yogurt and prefer to purchase healthier, gut-friendly A2 beta-casein protein milk which can be purchased from local dairy farmers. You can also find A2 in bottles in higher-end grocery stores, such as your local Foodland. Once the yogurt has set, I enjoy it every morning with homemade granola, maple syrup, berry preserves or wild apple butter.

## Two simple ingredients

All you need to begin is 2% milk (or higher milk fat) and plain Greek yogurt. The process is based on temperature. Heat two cups of 2% milk to about 180F (scalding) in order to kill off the bacteria from the milk, and then let it cool to 110F. This step is important because the milk bacteria and the bacteria in the yogurt don't work together and could cause your yogurt to fail to set.

Once your yogurt has cooled to 110F you will see that a skin has formed on

top. I prefer to use a spoon to skim it off and discard it. In a one-litre mason jar, mix your cooled milk with a generous tablespoon of Greek yogurt, stir completely, place a cotton towel over the top and let stand in a warm spot. My oven has a proof setting but placing your mixture near a heat vent works as well. The trick is, don't touch it! The mixture cannot be disturbed while it is setting or it may flop. After six to eight hours however, the yogurt has set and you will have a loose yogurt which

contains about a quarter of water, or whey. If you prefer thicker yogurt, as I do, you will then need to strain the newly cultured yogurt through cheesecloth over a colander in the refrigerator overnight. It always amazes me how much whey strains through the cheesecloth into the bottom of the bowl.

## Repeat the process

Once you have completed the initial step you can continue to repeat this process using a tablespoon from the cloned

yogurt to continually re-make a new batch. Luxurious, probiotic enriched Greek yogurt is a simple process that you can clone time and time again!

## Follow Along

You can find how-to tutorials on my YouTube channel @FarmhouseStudioOnFifth.

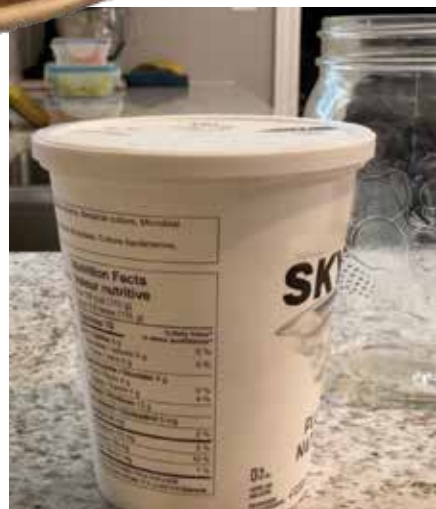
*Nicholl Spence is a freelance graphic designer who works from her rural farmhouse home office in Erin. Among her work is the design and layout for this magazine.*

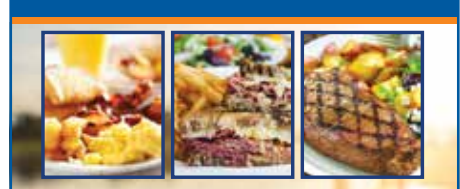


► Luxurious plain Greek yogurt with berries and homemade granola.



▲ 2% milk being heated on the stovetop to 180F(scalding) and then cooled to 110F.





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▲ After six to eight hours the loose yogurt is strained through cheesecloth overnight in the refrigerator, straining the water, or whey, from the new yogurt.



▲ Whey after a night in the fridge.

◀ A generous tablespoon of plain Greek yogurt will be added to a one-litre mason jar. The cooled milk will be added to this jar and mixed together with the yogurt and then set aside in a warm, undisturbed area for six to eight hours.

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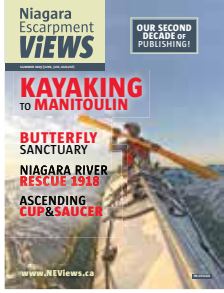
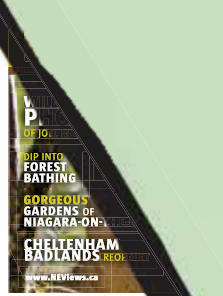
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# Help Protect our Rare and Endangered Wildlife

By Beth Gilhespy

**A**s 2025 draws to a close, the future of Ontario's natural heritage hangs in the balance. Across the globe, species are disappearing at a rate more than 1,000 times faster than nature intended - an alarming sign of an escalating environmental crisis. Here in Ontario, the loss of habitat remains the greatest danger to our rare and endangered wildlife.

At a time when environmental protections are scaling back and public lands sold or developed, land trusts remain a steady, permanent safeguard for the places and species we love. Independent and charitable, land trusts like Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy (EBC) ensure that wetlands, forests, shorelines, and alvars are protected forever.

This year, EBC's Wild Future Campaign has a goal to secure nearly 1,000 acres of sensitive and vulnerable landscapes along the Niagara Escarpment and surrounding regions. These natural spaces filter our water, store carbon, and provide homes for threatened species. Protecting them isn't just conservation, it's a gift to every generation that follows.

The opportunity is urgent and extraordinary: from Owen Sound to the Saugeen Bruce Peninsula to Manitoulin Island, we are protecting wetlands, woodlands, rocky heights, gentle fens and alvars. Many of these properties are adjacent to other preserved land, creating larger, more robust and resilient landscapes. Others are distinct, precious parcels of land with sensitive and vulnerable features that need our protection.

Here's a glimpse of what we will protect:

**Benallen:** 365 acres of forest and wetland near Owen Sound, adjacent to a 233-acre wetland and forest lands we preserved in 2024

**Otter Lake:** 100 acres of meadow, forest and wetland - habitat for Bobolinks, Eastern Meadowlarks, and even a resident Black Bear family

**Tamarack Corner:** A stunning 20-acre fen and alvar complex on the Saugeen Bruce Peninsula, home to tamaracks and showy Lady's Slipper Orchids.

**Sucker Lake Ridge:** A magnificent Escarpment ridge on Manitoulin Island (Mnidoo Mnising) with prized dolostone caprock that would be vulnerable to quarrying, and sensitive fern species.

The value of the land and additional costs total \$3.8 million but with donations and grants received, our fundraising target for year-end is now \$1.5 million. We have made great strides this fall 2025 but we need your help! By making your year-end gift now, you can help preserve 1,000 acres of wetlands, woodlands, and shorelines - critical refuges for Ontario's most vulnerable wildlife.

Your generosity this holiday season can secure clean air, safe water, and thriving habitats for decades to come. Let's make a gift of nature and close the year by protecting the land we cherish, forever.

Donate today at [bit.ly/wildfuture2025](http://bit.ly/wildfuture2025), email [beth@escarpment.ca](mailto:beth@escarpment.ca), or call 437-331-1341 to make your year-end gift for a Wild Future.

*Beth Gilhespy is Chief Executive Officer of Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy.*



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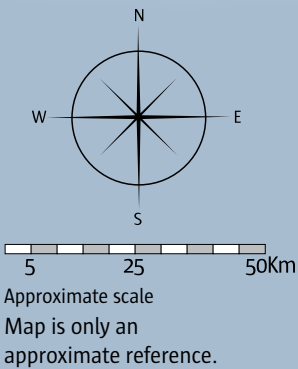
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