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NOTL gets haunted | Pages 6-7

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Parents blindsided by school boundary change

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

A boundary change approved by Niagara's school board last night will shift about 125 St. Davids Public School students to Crossroads Public School next year — a move some Niagara-on-the-Lake parents argue was rushed and poorly communicated.

The District School Board of Niagara's board of trustees approved the change at its Oct. 28 meeting, despite a petition and pleas from parents who said they learned of the proposal less than two weeks earlier.

Trustees granted initial approval at a program and planning committee meeting on Oct. 20, but final approval was required for the change to take effect.

The change moves Niagara on the Green and nearby rural properties, known as Zone A, from the St. Davids Public School catchment to

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NOTL catches Blue Jays fever

Fans across town cheer on Toronto as team competes in World Series



NOTL's Paul Jacot and his daughter Melissa got to take in Game 1 of the World Series last Friday. Tickets were scarce — and expensive — but Jacot managed to get seats from a friend who works for a World Series sponsor. It was a memorable night as the Jays won 11-4. SUPPLIED

Andrew Hawlitzky | The Lake Report

Toronto Blue Jays fans filled Niagara-on-the-Lake pubs Friday night as Toronto opened the World Series with an 11-4 win over the Los Angeles Dodgers, Canada's first appearance in the championship since 1993.

Across town, residents and visitors gathered at the Sandtrap, the Irish Harp and the Olde Angel Inn. What started as a sports event felt more like a national moment. With the Jays being the only Canadian team in a year marked by political tension and trade disputes, fans in Niagara-on-the-Lake described last Saturday what the win meant for them.

At the Sandtrap Pub & Grill, Luke Skubel, a lifelong fan from Virgil, said he has waited his whole life for this.

"I've been a Jays fan since I was born. I'm really happy to see this happening," said Skubel. "As a Toronto fan, it's nice to see these young guys that they've developed come up."

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NOTL Residents Association elects board of directors, talks town issues

Dan Smeenk
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

The newly formed Niagara-on-the-Lake Residents Association is continuing its efforts to grow its influence in the community.

It hosted its first annual general meeting of the year on Wednesday night, which drew 103 people, and led discussions on a bevy of hot-button local topics, including renewed development efforts at the historic Rand Estate, the future of the old Wellington Street hospital, the town's latest official plan draft and more.

Alongside these conversations, the members chose a board of seven directors, who were made directors by acclamation (running unopposed).

The seven directors are Ron Simkus, Stuart McCormack, Steve Hardakar, Norm Arsenault, Bette Ann James, Andrea Leja and Peter A. Neame.

Simkus, McCormack, Hardakar and Arsenault were already leading the association as its founders before being made directors, while James, Leja and Neame are newcomers. Colin Patey, the fifth founding member, did not run.

"(The) AGM went very well," said Arsenault via email. "Good attendance, people engaged and lots

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Above: Silks employees and friends at a Blue Jays game in 2024. With the Jays in the World Series, the TVs at Silks Country Kitchen are tuned in whenever there's a game. SUPPLIED

Left: Across Niagara-on-the-Lake, people are getting into the spirit, cheering on the Jays in their own ways — like Scott Davidson, who dyed his hair blue to show support for the team. SUPPLIED/LAUREN DAVIDSON

From Silks to the stands: NOTLers reflects on years of Blue Jays fandom as team returns to World Series

Paige Seburn
Local Journalism Initiative
The Lake Report

When the Blue Jays are on, the TVs at Silks Country Kitchen in Niagara-on-the-Lake are, too.

For sibling owners Jennifer Phelan and Joel Dempsey, who've spent nearly 20 years sharing Blue Jays season tickets, baseball isn't just a pastime — it's a way of life that's followed them from behind the bar to behind home plate.

The two have shared season tickets for about 20 years, part of a group of eight fans who've held the ticket block since the Blue Jays' inaugural season in 1977.

Their two seats — section 124, row 5 — sit just behind home plate and have given them years of memories following the team through highs and lows.

Phelan said some of the best moments were being there for Game 7 of the American League Championship Series — averaging six million viewers on Sportsnet and peaking at 8.3 million — seeing award-winning pitcher Roy Halladay pitch and watching their young son refuse to leave, even as the Jays trailed by double digits by the fourth inning.



Jenn's godson Landon shows his Blue Jays pride during a day at the ballpark back in 2015. SUPPLIED

"There might only have been 10,000 fans to start the game," Phelan said. It was a Monday night, likely around 2010 — a period when the team was struggling.

"I looked at my son, I'm like, 'Anytime you want to go, we can go.'"

"He was like, 'No, it's OK,'" she said.

It may not have been a game for the record books, "but I will never forget it," said Phelan.

Each season, the pair donates a set of their tickets to the Red Roof Pasta Dinner and often gives another to charity. They also bring Silks staff or friends to games — last year, organizing a 20-person staff appreciation trip to the ballpark.

Now, with the Jays back in the World Series for the first time since 1993, that same excitement fills their restaurant.

"The energy — like, we've seen so many people coming in wearing their Blue Jays stuff," Phelan said. "One in five people have something on."

Her group's ticket rotation means she won't be in the stands for the World Series. But Phelan said no matter what happens, she's just grateful to see them play.

"Every extra game we get is a blessing," she said.

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Blue Jays fans fill NOTL bars for World Series kickoff



Blue Jays fans fill the bar at the Sandtrap Pub & Grill in Niagara-on-the-Lake during Friday's World Series opener against the Dodgers. ANDREW HAWLITZKY

Continued from Front Page

Skubel said he's drawn to players like David Shattery, a quiet contributor off the bench, because they reflect the kind of steady work that Canadians take pride in.

"It feels good to have something to celebrate again," said Skubel.

Sitting next to him was Jays fan Anthony Nicoletti, visiting from New York, who said the atmosphere in Niagara-on-the-Lake showed how much the series means to fans on both sides of the border.

He joked that seeing Toronto beat a powerhouse like the Dodgers gave Canadians "something fun to hold over America."

"Coming from the stateside perspective, I think it means a lot to this area right now," said Nicoletti.

"If I were Canadian, I'd love to rub a little salt in America, just a little banter back and forth, not serious."

The good-natured rivalry comes at a time of strained Canada–U.S. relations, as President Donald Trump imposed a new 10 per cent tariff on Canada on Saturday due to an Ontario-sponsored ad, which aired during the World Series.

Across NOTL, the night carried the tone of cautious confidence rather than spectacle.

At the Irish Harp Pub, local resident Thomas Comrie said the evening wasn't only about rivalry or patriotism, but about seeing people come together again.

"It's been a rough few years for the Jays," said Comrie. "I think people just wanted a reason to sit beside each other again and feel good about something that isn't politics or news."

He said watching Addison Barger hit a pinch-hit grand slam, the first in World Series history, was "a moment you don't forget."

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