

EDITORIAL

We can listen, we can learn, and we must change

As I write this, at home from my office on the couch, I listen to the funeral of George Floyd while I work.

His brother says, George might be dead, “but he’s going to change the world.”

And I try not to cry, that a man has to die, for us to do what we should have been doing all along.

These last days and weeks have been an eyeopener, to say the least. An education, a wake-up call, a reality check, for those willing to accept the truth of what has been put in front of us.

We cannot, must not, ignore it. It’s time to listen, to hear, and to respond. We have been faced with proof of systemic racism, and not just in the U.S. It’s here, in our country, and in our town. And it’s long past time to do something about it.

We’re asked to speak out about racism. To be silent is to condone, we’re told. But first, we must be educated to understand what it is.

From Robin DiAngelo, author of *White Fragility*, a book on the recommended reading list handed out at Friday’s rally: “White people who see themselves as liberal can be the hardest, the most defensive, the most resistant, the most arrogant in their certitude that it is not them. I’m not sure we can fully stop it, but we can seek to do less harm through education and practice, and end mistake-making. The key is that you learn and grow from your

mistakes.”

We all have an opportunity, and a responsibility, to learn, and to grow. To have the difficult conversations with those who need to hear them.

We were asked by Yvonne Bredow at the rally Friday to raise our hands if we would like to live as a Black person in this society. She asked a second time. She didn’t expect to see any hands, and she was right.

We can’t literally walk a mile in her shoes, but we can try to imagine.

One of the many news stories that may help us understand systemic racism on our side of the border: We recently saw photos of a First Nations chief, his face swollen, bruised and beaten, who is alleging an RCMP officer assaulted him during an arrest that he says began over expired vehicle registration tags on his truck.

Have any of you ever been pulled over for not having an up-to-date sticker on your licence plate? Were you asked to get out of your car? If you asked why, would you expect to be beaten and arrested? Being pulled over by police for a minor infraction is mildly annoying for most of us. We hope for a warning, and are angry if we’re handed a ticket.

But for others, it’s terrifying, because they understand what can happen to them. What does happen.

That’s something we can change. Must change.

Thank you to Yvonne and the other speakers at Friday’s rally, and to the organizers who quickly planned and held a gathering that could, that should change the future of our town, and of all of us, but most of all, for those in our midst who live every day with discrimination and racism. We will move through our community now with awareness, and an obligation to ensure racial equality for all around us.

That brings us to another situation we need to face, and that’s the charge that migrant workers are being subjected to all kinds of inequity.

We know some live in crowded conditions. We’re hearing they live with far, far worse.

We have a duty to discover the truth, and to push for change if and where it is needed. Our seasonal workers are essential to our food supply, but much more than that, they are men and women we welcome to our community, and we have a duty to protect them from harm.

To those who know how to help, please tell us. This is a community of good people who will fight for the rights of others, if they know what to do.

There is so much good being done already, but if it’s not enough, what is? What’s the next step? Tell us, and we will take it.

Penny Coles
The Local

LETTERS

Racism exists in our town

We are angered and saddened by the senseless murder and violence suffered by members of the Black and Indigenous communities, not only in the United States, but throughout the world.

We acknowledge that racism exists in our country, in our province, and in our town. Yvonne Bredow’s column about her experiences, local news coverage of discrimination, and the Peaceful Anti-Racism Rally last week have brought to light the issues of racism and discrimination in Niagara-on-the-Lake. They’ve started a conversation that is overdue in our town.

We strive towards a community that is equitable, diverse, and inclusive. In light of this, the Inclusivity Committee and the Community

Wellness Committee will work to address the issues of racism and discrimination in our society and be an ally in the fight against systemic oppression.

We acknowledge that now, more than ever, is a time for allies to listen and to educate ourselves. We encourage you to speak up about experiences, concerns, questions, or suggestions, if you are comfortable doing so. You are always welcome to do so via email at inclusivitycommittee@notl.com. Any information shared will be held in confidence at the request of the individual(s) sharing it.

We urge everyone to learn more about what role you can play in addressing racism and what it means to be an ally. There is always more to know, and we all have a part to play.

Together, we can ensure that everyone feels welcome, heard, and valued in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Inclusivity Committee:
Councillor John Wiens
Virginia Head
Jamie Knight (Chair)
Bex McKnight
Richard Mell
Niki Walker (Vice-Chair)
George Webber

Community Wellness Committee:
Lord Mayor Betty Disero (Vice-Chair)
Alan Brockway
Carol Clarke
Natalie Cooper
Cindy Grant (Chair)
Paul Jurbala
Terry Mactaggart
Catherine Novick
Sean Simpson



Views from the couch

Donald Combe
Special to The Local

For six seasons and 80 episodes I was happily indulging in my favourite TV show, Schitt’s Creek. Now it is back on Netflix and I am doing it all over again! In spite of wild

and absurd plot lines, and over-drawn people, it is believable because we have all known, or at least wanted to have known, each and every one of these loveable characters who are so real, and uniquely Canadian.

Schitt’s Creek is a Canadi-

an wonder.

Donald Combe is a retired English teacher who loves to go to the movies. But with movies unavailable for now, he has agreed to share his opinions on what he is watching on TV, with “short and sweet” exclusive reviews for The Local.



The cast of Schitt’s Creek.

2020

PRIDE MONTH

The Niagara-on-the-Lake

LOCAL



The trusted voice of our community

P.O. Box 430, 1596 Four Mile Creek Road, Virgil, L0S 1T0

Editor:
Penny Coles
penny@notllocal.com
905-246-5878

Publisher:
The Niagara-on-the-Lake Local

Graphic Designer:
Rosie Gowse
composing@notllocal.com

notllocal.com  facebook.com/notllocal  instagram.com/thenotllocal  [@thenotllocal](https://twitter.com/thenotllocal)

Advertising Sales:
Karen Skeoch
karen@notllocal.com • 905-641-5335

Julia Coles
julia@notllocal.com • 905-934-1040

Helen Arsenaault
Local Business Directory,
Local Happenings, Classified Sales
classified@notllocal.com

NEED HELP? MAKE THE CALL

DISTRESS CENTRE

For depression, distress and crisis. 24 hour help line: 905-688-3711

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS ACCESS

(Toll Free) 1-866-550-5205

GAMBLER'S ANONYMOUS

905-351-1616

KIDS HELP PHONE

Service for youth 416-586-5437 1-800-668-6868 (Crisis Line) kidshelpphone.ca

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

Meetings every Wednesday evening 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. St. Mark's Parish Hall 41 Byron St., NOTL or find a meeting 905-682-2140

ASSAULTED WOMEN'S HELPLINE

Mobile calls to: #SAFE (#7233) 1-866-863-0511 (Toll Free)

CRIME STOPPERS

1-800-222-8477 (TIPS) niagaratips.com Text 274637 (CRIMES), keyword: Niagara, then your tip