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this
week



Wakeham adult and vocation education, convenience is key



Shigawake residents to pay significantly more in taxes



A busy year for Vision Gaspé Percé Now

The Gaspé Spec

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Good crowd attends “Noël au Village” despite cold weather

Gilles Gagné

VILLAGE-ALLARD (NOUVELLE): – A crowd of slightly more than 2,000 people attended the 10th annual Christmas parade, “Noël au village”. The annual Santa Claus parade is organized in the Village-Allard section of Nouvelle. The crowd seemed slightly smaller this year, the result no doubt because of a cold northwest wind that was sweeping the Nouvelle River valley. Up to 36 floats or groups of performers were part of the parade. Santa Claus was, of course, present in

one of those floats, the last one, while Mrs. Claus and their daughter were on a previous float. Since 2010, Noël au village has also raised funds for the Bay of Chaleur *Fondation Rêves d'enfants*. This year was no exception, as the crowd donated \$1,712 for that cause, bringing the total to \$10,304 over the years for the parade and to \$13,016 in 2016 for the Bay of Chaleur *Fondation Rêves d'enfants*.



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‘Together for the Sustainable Future of the Greater Gaspé’ is concerned about abandoned oil wells

Gilles Gagné

GASPÉ: – The environmental group ‘Together for the Sustainable Future of the Greater Gaspé’ is asking the Quebec government to release information regarding 171 oil exploration wells that were dug since 1860 in the Côte-de-Gaspé MRC. Up to 44 of those wells are still “active”, in the sense that gases and sometimes oil is emitted by the holes still present in the ground to this day.

The spokesperson of Together for the sustainable future, Lise Chartrand, says that since January 2016, Quebec’s department of Energy and Natural Resources refuses to share information regarding those wells, which is in contrast with the two years of collaboration that took place in 2014 and 2015 in a thorough study that was destined to evaluate the situation of each well dug in Quebec.

“Since the end of January, the Department of Energy and Natural Resources decided to



Pelope Adzakpa shows the Sandy Beach well that emits methane constantly.

refrain from making the results of the reports public. The funding related to the collaboration made by some regional organizations, like the *Conseil de l’eau du nord de la Gaspésie*, was stopped. The reports will remain secret,” explains Lise Chartrand.



Lise Chartrand urges the Quebec department of Energy and Natural Resources to release the reports on abandoned wells.

It is generally admitted through scientific evidence that 60% of the wells leak 25 years after their closure, or abandonment, if no other intervention occurs. Between 2000 and 2014, twenty-two wells were drilled in the Côte-de-Gaspé MRC, mainly close or within the Town of Gaspé limits.

Lise Chartrand remarks that the Department of Energy and Natural Resources has reduced the number of inspections made on Quebec abandoned wells in recent years, from 101 in 2013 to 75 so far in 2016. It is a cut of 25.7%.

Over the years, close to 30% of the Quebec wells were dug in the Gaspé Peninsula.

“There is a big concentration in the York River water basin. Seeing the number of inspections diminish is a cause of concern, considering the importance of the river’s water quality, and the multi-purposes of the water. We must not forget that Junex intends to drill 30 wells at Galt

eventually, near an exceptional source of water,” emphasizes Lise Chartrand.

Up to 21 of the wells located in the Côte-de-Gaspé MRC were drilled more than 100 years ago, according to previous reports issued by Quebec’s Department of Energy and Natural Resources. Fifteen of those wells were dug before 1900.

“It is important to understand that a well, even sealed and clogged, will cause methane to find an exit. There are therefore potential leaks in the vicinity of the well hole. The study released by Savaria Expert show that the soil is profusely fractured. We fear that the watershed will be contaminated by those fugitive emissions. They have to be monitored but currently, a lot of things are standing still and the number of inspections are clearly declining,” says Ms. Chartrand.

An old well is emitting methane in Sandy Beach

One of the Côte-de-Gaspé

MRC abandoned wells, located in Sandy Beach, near the Haldimand well no. 4 of Pétrolia is emitting methane.

SPEC visited the location, situated only dozens of metres away from an apartment building. The old well can easily be found in a small wooded area.

Pelope Adzakpa, a mathematics teacher at the Gaspé Cegep, lives up the hill, near the junction of Toundra and Forest Streets.

“It is more evident to see in the summer. The snow covers it a bit and we can smell it,” he says as he gets near the patch of “water”.

The well remains evident despite December’s snow. Small bubbles of gas come to the surface every couple of seconds. The smell of methane is obvious every 10 to 30 seconds. The water is sometimes tainted by the hydrocarbon’s slick.

Mr. Adzakpa finds it rather odd that such a leak is not taken care of, considering the proximity of houses. “We don’t know what will happen to that well,” he says.

Since 2000, two oil deposits have been found in Gaspé or close to the town’s limits. Junex has found oil on the Galt property, about 20 kilometres west of Gaspé, while Pétrolia has found oil at Haldimand. That well is located on a hill, about 350 metres from the closest houses, in Sandy Beach, quite close to the abandoned well shown to SPEC by Mr. Adzakpa.

Gas exploration is also taking place on the Bourque property, located about 20 kilometres to the northeast of Murdochville.

Methane is considered one of the most serious causes of greenhouse gases currently contributing to global warming.

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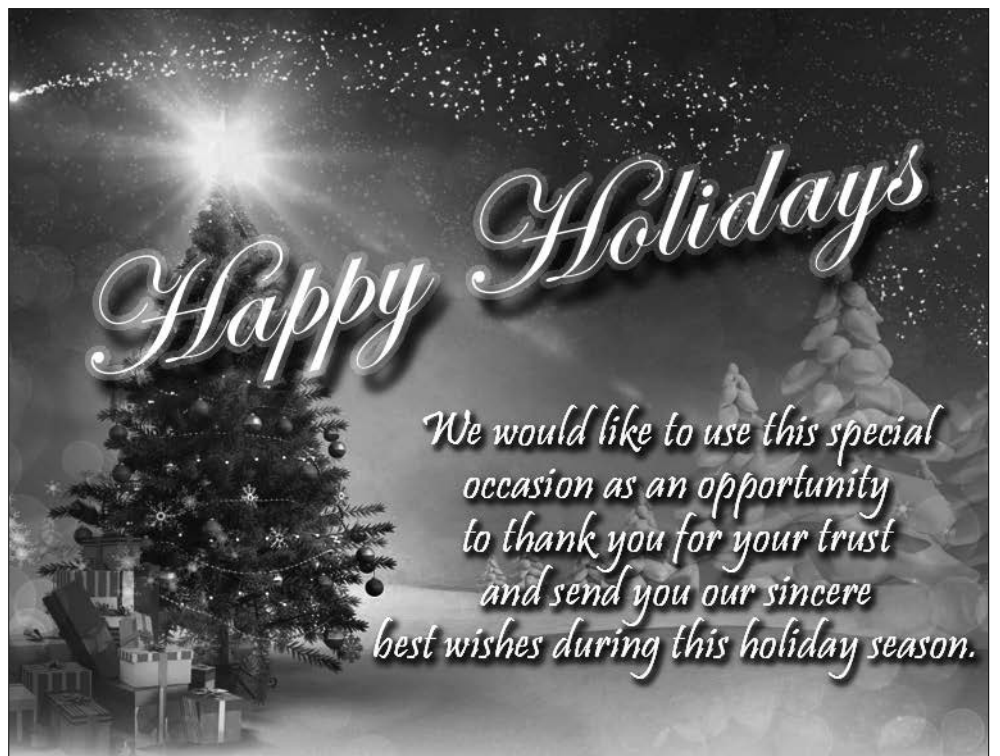
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Gaspesian Daniel Desjardins among the final 100 in the Canadian Space Agency Astronaut Race

Wendy Dawson

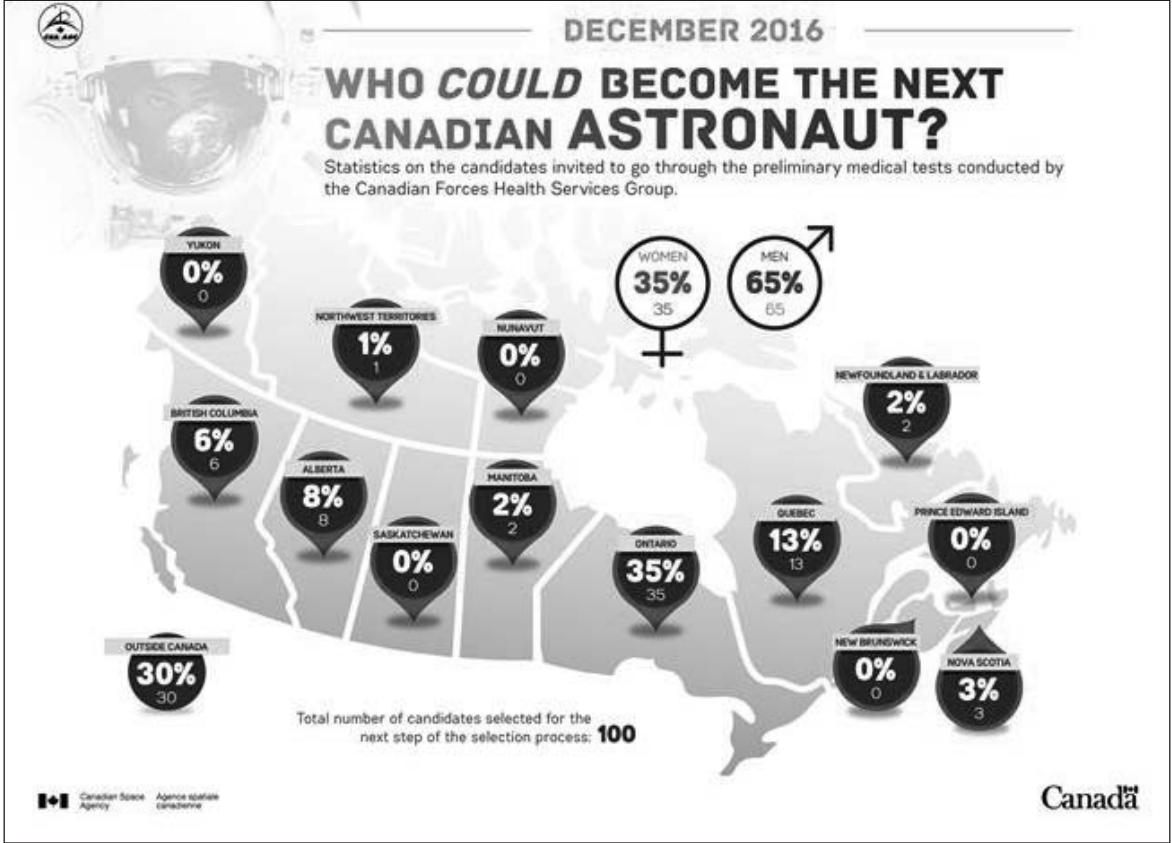
NEW RICHMOND: – “I am just as excited as I was at the start, but now things are really beginning to feel real,” that is the sentiment of Daniel Desjardins, candidate vying for one of the two positions of astronaut that the Canadian Space Agency will be filling before the end of the summer of 2017.

The short list includes 100 individuals, among them Daniel Desjardins, a native of New Carlisle who has made the preparation for this position his life’s work and whose interest in space travel dates back to his years as a young boy.

The original number of applicants for the Canadian Space Agency’s two astronaut positions was 3,772, out of 7,793 people who had started filling the online form.

After a series of tests and exams that number was cut down to 1,706 and then after further testing it was whittled down to 100 potential candidates.

“I feel extremely lucky and fortunate. I am among some



of the most phenomenal and qualified candidates – the competition is strong, so I am also starting to feel the pressure,” says Daniel.

The next series of tests for all candidates will be physical ones. Asked if he feels he has an advantage in light of the fact that he is already a pilot, Desjardins indicates that he is taking nothing for granted.

“There have been occasions in the past when potential candidates have had discoveries made during these tests, small subtleties that affect their eligibility. I will not make any assumptions.”

When asked if he has been doing anything special to prepare for the upcoming tests, Daniel explains that his new role as a physics teacher has

changed his beat somewhat, however he says, “I still fly in order to keep my flying skills sharp. That is something that I will continue to do regularly.”

Captain Daniel Desjardins, who recently received a Canadian Forces Decoration – his first military medal – for having completed 12 years of military service, has been

teaching at the Royal Military College of Canada in Kingston since the fall.

“Teaching is so rewarding,” says Desjardins, “I am really loving it. Having been a student sitting in those very seats in those same classrooms, I am able to relate and really adjust my classroom strategies. There is nothing better than having a student ask if you will be there to teach next year.”

While he awaits the next phase of testing, Daniel says that he expects to remain “on his toes”. “We can’t forget,” explains Daniel, “that every other candidate is just as determined and as ambitious as I am.”

The Canadian Space Agency will be making the selection and announcing the new Canadian astronauts in the summer of 2017 and those two individuals will be required to relocate to Houston, Texas by August 2017.

Fingers crossed for the local boy from a small town with a big, big dream.

You can follow Daniel Desjardins’ blog for updates at <http://www.ad-astra.ca/>

Shigawake residents to pay significantly more in taxes, increase reaches 22%

Gilles Gagné

SHIGAWAKE: – The residents of Shigawake will pay significantly more in 2017, than they did in 2016 for their municipal services. This is due to a number of reasons, including increases in the contracts signed with service providers and the delay in the reimbursement of the excise tax from the Quebec government.

The municipal tax rate will go from 80 cents to 95 cents, an increase of 18.75%. The recycling service will also increase, from \$37 to \$50, a 35% jump. As for the garbage fee, it will climb to \$150, from \$118, a 27% hike.

The total budget decreased from \$429,000 to \$378,275

but that figure is somewhat misleading because the municipality had to delay the reception of an amount of \$100,000 linked to the Quebec government’s reimbursement of the federal excise tax on gas.

“We used to get the reimbursement of the gas tax before the work was done. Now, we will have to wait a year. The work will be carried out and we will be paid back the following year,” points out Maria Marroquin, director general of the Municipality of Shigawake.

She adds that the tax rate in Shigawake had hardly changed in 20 years.

For a house that has a municipal value of \$50,000, the municipal bill will climb to

\$675 in 2017, compared to \$553 this year. It is a 22% hike, or \$122.

“Snow removal is the worst case. It is costing a lot. It is almost one third of our budget because we have a lot of roads. The garbage and recycling bills are also increasing. We contract out on everything. So we have to adapt to those increases,” adds Ms. Marroquin.

The extent of Shigawake’s green zone hampers the municipality’s potential to in-

crease its taxation revenues without increasing the rate. The municipal value of all of Shigawake’s properties is \$36 million. It will likely change over the next year or so as a new municipal evaluation is taking place for the first time in several years.

“Our capacity to increase our tax revenues is very limited because there is no construction in Shigawake. The green zone is hurting us a lot. We have people interested in building here but we can’t

issue permits. We are only asking for a zoning change along Highway 132. We don’t want changes on agriculture land in the ranges but allowing them along the main road would help us greatly. It would also bring in new residents. We have communicated with the MRC (of Bonaventure) and with the government and we will continue to do so. We have no choice. Shigawake will die if the current situation prevails,” states Maria Marroquin.

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MRCs convince Quebec to go back to the drawing board regarding the Matapedia to Gaspé railway

Gilles Gagné

NEW RICHMOND: – The president of the Gaspésie Railway Society, Éric Dubé, says that the mayors and the prefects have convinced the Quebec government to go back to the drawing board and rethink the use of the budgetary envelope earmarked for the Matapedia to Gaspé railway.

The mayors and the prefects of the Gaspé Peninsula met for more than six hours on December 12 to solve various problems. During that period, they held a half-hour conference call with Sébastien Proulx, minister responsible for the Gaspé Peninsula.

During that conversation, the mayors and prefects told the minister that the railway line must be upgraded and put back in function over its entire length, mostly due to the new reality of hauling windmill blades made in Gaspé by LM Wind Power.

“The government is going back to the drawing board, based on the viewpoint expressed by the MRCs. Over the spring, when the government was planning an intervention for the railway, the hauling of windmill blades was not in the picture. Now, windmill blade transport is planned, for many years to come,” says Éric Dubé, who is also the mayor of New Richmond.

When Minister Proulx was asked if the Quebec government had committed to any kind of time frame, during the conversation, his response was “Nothing is settled, time-wise. We have also asked for



Photo: G. Gagné

The reality of the Gaspésie Railway Society changed over the summer when the LM Wind Power plant in Gaspé signed a big contract to supply windmill blades to the central and southern parts of the United States. Those blades have to be hauled by train. That trend is not likely to change since the LM plant is expanding to fill the needs of other potential American customers.

a meeting with Quebec’s Transport Minister Laurent Lessard, We gathered that it wouldn’t be before Christmas,” adds Mr. Dubé. He will attend that eventual meeting with the president of the Table of prefects, Guy Gallant, of the Avignon MRC.

For part of the spring, rumor had it that the Quebec government was preparing to announce close to \$39 million for the railway between Matapedia and Caplan, or New Carlisle. The uncertain status of then Transport Minister Jacques Daoust might have delayed any announcement. He resigned in August and was replaced by Laurent Lessard, who was also involved in some turmoil, as the Ethics Commissioner investigated his case.

Recently, the amount slated for the Gaspé Peninsula

line was again to be concentrated solely on the Matapedia to New Carlisle stretch, but it was reported to be \$50 million instead of \$39 million. The money was to be used to replace the two bridges spanning over the Grand Cascadia river, a potential investment hovering between \$20 million and \$30 million. Some other bridges need an increase in their bearing capacity, a condition apparently required by Via Rail to resume the passenger train op-

eration between Matapedia and New Carlisle.

The possibility offered by a contract to haul 600 windmill blades over the next year, and the possibility to get significantly higher revenues if the blades are eventually loaded in Gaspé instead of New Richmond, as well as two major business opportunities, notably linked to the upcoming start-up of the Port Daniel cement plant, shifted the regional priorities in rail transport.

The Table of prefects has expressed a will to prioritize the return of the freight train to Gaspé, just like the two Members of National Assembly representing the Gaspé Peninsula, Gaétan Lelièvre and Sylvain Roy.

The enhancement of the budget to at least \$75 million would favor the return of the freight train and the passenger train to Gaspé, argue the two MNAs. The Matapedia to Gaspé line is owned by the Quebec government since May 2015.

In the meantime, the Gaspésie Railway Society, a company under the control of the municipalities located between Matapedia and Gaspé, is taking steps to increase its freight traffic. The company has recently launched a call for tenders in order to find a contractor that will build and install a cement silo in New Richmond.

“The silo will be used for the transshipment of part of McInnis Cement’s output from Port Daniel. It is temporary because we want to load that cement in Port Daniel but over the short term, we have no choice. We must load it in New Richmond because we can’t offer the service east of Caplan, due to the dormant state of the line,” explains Éric Dubé.

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Christmas Spirit at New Richmond High School

Jenna Boudreau

NEW RICHMOND: - The New Richmond High School Christmas Concert was a huge success, if the fully packed gymnasium was any indication!

The elementary students entertained the crowd composed of their parents, grandparents, guardians and surrounding community members with Christmas songs, dances and poems. Every class performed a little something, organized and directed by their teachers. From wanting a hippopotamus for Christmas, to lip syncing to Mariah Carey’s classic “All I want for Christmas,” the spectators were pleasantly entertained.



Many donations were graciously given for door prizes to be won. We wish to thank all of those organizations/people that donated: Cascapedia Society, Mary Robertson, Gisèle Coull, Joanne Legouffe (Café du Village), Depanneur Central, Trudy Brown (Epicure Consultant), CASA, Walter Jerome (Organo Consultant) and the CLC of New Richmond High School. The Grade 11 class sold tickets on a Christmas basket for the last two weeks as a fundraiser for their year end trip, and the winner was announced at the concert. Congratulations Tina Caplin!

Community Learning Center technician Jenna Boudreau and Tammy Chatterton, CLC coordinator wish to thank the incredible staff and students of NRHS for bringing everything together so smoothly. The CLC also thanks everyone who attended for their donations to the cause. The funds raised will be put back into the school to go towards activities or programs for all students.



Photos: Darlene Dimock

Tree lighting ceremony is a popular event

Elaine Sexton

CASCAPEDIA-ST-JULES: - This was the sixth year for the tree lighting ceremony and Christmas activities. We were pleased to have Rev. Raymond Kragland join us for the blessing. He thanked God for the blessing of the children in our community and everywhere.

After Santa came, we sang "Oh Christmas Tree" in both languages and then the classic "Jingle Bells."

We went outside to watch Rev. Raymond do the honours of plugging in the tree and then we sang "We Wish you a Merry Christmas."

The tree lighting ceremony would not be possible without the many helpers including those behind the scenes.

Thank you to Bob and Gisele McWhirter for giving us one of their trees again this year. They have kindly done this since the beginning.

Merry Christmas and a new year full of happiness and especially health, from the community of Cascapedia St-Jules.

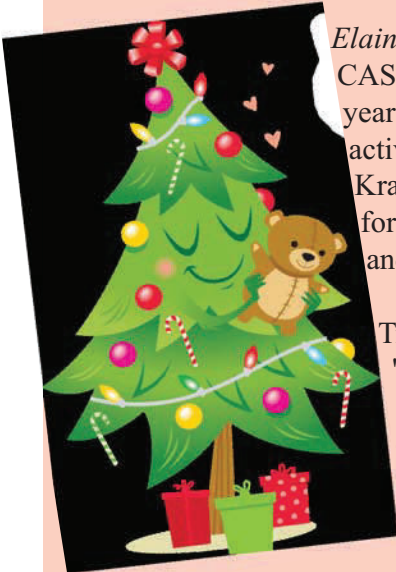


Photo: Darlene Sexton

Rev. Raymond getting ready to plug in the tree.

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Photo: Saucette de Percé

Icy dip raised thousands for children

Thierry Haroun

PERCÉ: - The Saucette fundraiser for Enfant Soleil raised thousands of dollars for sick children. The 6th edition was held on Saturday, December 10 near the wharf. It consisted of diving in Percé's icy water to raise money that will be used to buy medical equipment to treat sick children in the region's hospitals. When Spec met the spokesperson, Lisa-Marie Gagnon, she confirmed that \$26,000 had been collected. "These are preliminary results. The ambiance was great. People participated with their hearts. We had more than 130 swimmers that jumped in the icy water of Percé who came from as far away as the Town of Gaspé and even Sherbrooke! It was really cold."

Recruiting doctors

Thierry Haroun

GASPÉ PENINSULA: - Good news in the health sector: the Québec government has authorized the Gaspé Peninsula to recruit family physicians and specialized physicians. For the year 2017, the Québec Health Ministry has authorized Chandler Hospital to recruit four family physicians, Maria Hospital four, one in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts and two in Gaspé. Up until now, 24 candidates have submitted their names, confirms the spokesperson of the Gaspésie Health and Social Services Center, Dr Claude Mercier. Moreover, the region has been authorized to recruit three specialists: An Internal Medicine Physician in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts, a Public Health and Preventive physician for Gaspé Hospital and one anesthesiologist for Maria Hospital, confirms Claude Mercier.



Photo: Ariane Aubert-Bonn

Nathalie Drapeau, executive director of Grand River's recycling plant.

Recycling glass? Yes...finally

Thierry Haroun

Grand River: - For years decision makers from the recycling field have been trying to find a solution to glass recycling. It is now possible with an all new technology. The Gaspé region was chosen to try a pilot project on the matter.

Éco Entreprise Québec, a non-profit organization, recently announced that five recycling centers have been chosen to participate at its Glass Innovation Plan. All in all, 18 centers submitted their candidacy and five were chosen: EBI Environnement and Tricentis (Lanaudière Region), Récupération Frontenac (Chaudières-Appalaches), Centre de tri de Québec and the Gaspésie Recycling Plant (located in Grand River). The total investment for all five centers is \$5.5 million. In early

2017 a detailed announcement will be made in each center by the Québec government and its partners which are Eco Entreprises Québec and Recyc-Québec.

"We're really proud of having been chosen. It's so important to recycle glass and we just couldn't before (technology reasons)," says the executive director of Grand River's recycling plant, Nathalie Drapeau. "Actually, we had two problems to settle. First, once we received the glass at our Center, we had to send it out of our region and that had a cost, approximately \$4,000 per trip. The problem is that the glass received generated small particles of metal, plastic and mainly glass of course. These rejects represented 300 to 400 tons per year which we had to bury at a cost of \$80,000 per year."

The project consists of implementing by next February an all new recycling line. It was developed by the firm Krysteline Technologies and is distributed across North America by a Québec firm called Machinex. The technology consists of imploding the material received followed by three steps: it goes through magnets, a vacuum system and a finally the screening section. "Once its been through these steps there are many possibilities for reusing the glass such as in construction work. There are many other opportunities that I will not speak of now because we're still looking at all the options. One advantage of this, is that it will create a full-time job at our Center. It will lower our costs and therefore generate new revenue with the glass that has been processed," added Ms. Drapeau.

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Bertram Dow could enter a plea of guilty on January 9

Gilles Gagné

NEW CARLISLE: – Bertram Dow, 60 from Port Daniel charged with the premeditated murder of retired teacher, Russell Duguay on March 13, 2004, might enter a plea of guilty on January 9, the date scheduled for the start of his third trial.

Nothing is official regarding the eventual plea of guilty of Bert Dow but a number of clues are pointing in that direction. On December 10 and December 15, during the trial of Réal Savoie, charged with the 1996 murder of Sonia Raymond, two references were made to the effect that the “Bert Dow file” was “dealt with”.

The December 10 reference was brief and it was made by his defence attorney, Marcel Guérin, who is also the defence attorney of Réal Savoie. He was thinking out loud while trying to establish his January schedule.

The December 15 reference to the possible conclusion of the Bert Dow case was more direct. Superior Court Judge Louis Dionne, when asking Marcel Guérin and crown prosecutor Gerald Maltais about their availability for a January preparatory meeting, clearly said that the Bert Dow file was “dealt with”.

Later outside the court room, Marcel Guérin simply said that Bert Dow “told me about his intention of entering a plea of guilty.” The defence attorney added that it would be a plea to reduced charges. When asked how certain he was of the intention of Mr. Dow, Marcel Guérin made a gesture, meaning that a person can always change his mind.

In his exchange with Judge Dionne, Marcel Guérin also mentioned that he had planned a two-week vacation outside the country, starting on January 10. Such a trip is hardly compatible with a multi-week



Photo: G. Gagné

Bert Dow was charged with murder on March 15, 2004.

Superior Court trial that is scheduled to begin on January 9 with jury selection.

Bert Dow was found guilty twice by separate juries in that affair. The first trial was held in May and June 2006 at the New Carlisle courthouse. Following the trial, then defence attorney Mylène Lareau filed for an appeal based on the instructions given to the jury by Superior Court Judge Richard Grenier regarding the intoxication of the accused.

The appeal was granted but on another ground, as Quebec Court of Appeal Judge Alan R. Hilton established that the linguistic rights of the accused had not been respected at certain periods during the trial. Judge Hilton even blamed Mylène Lareau to a certain extent in that decision, pointing out that she had contributed to the non-respect of Bert Dow’s linguistic rights by participating in an exchange in French about points of law that had to be clarified by the judge and the two parties. The accused himself had given his consent to those exchanges being held in French in the middle of an English language trial.

The second appeal was granted on grounds regarding the instructions given to jurors by Judge François Huot, who had presided over the second trial. At the conclusion of that second trial, Bert Dow had committed to not appealing the verdict after presenting his apologies to the family of Russell Duguay.

Bert Dow is essentially seeking a third trial to obtain a guilty verdict on a reduced charge, considering that he has already served a penitentiary term totalling 11 years and that he is out on bail. He has experienced problems respecting the conditions of his release and was assigned to a halfway house to facilitate his reintegration in society.

Russell Duguay, a retired teacher, 72, was shot in the stomach in his home on a Saturday night. He was watching a hockey game with his son Byron. He went to answer the door and was shot in the stomach by the accused. He died at the Chandler hospital a few hours later. Bert Dow and Russell Duguay lived a few houses apart in Port Daniel West.

Police report

Superior Court Judge Louis Dionne ruled that the evidence obtained by the undercover investigation that led to the charges against Réal Savoie, 51, from Nouvelle accused of the second degree murder of Sonia Raymond, 32, from Causapschal murdered on the beach in Maria on July 27 1996.

On December 15, 2016 after almost six weeks of voir-dire, Judge Dionne ruled that the evidence obtained during the Mr. Big investigation demonstrated that the rights of the accused were respected.

Judge Dionne ruled that the evidence presented between November 7 and December 9, 2017 didn’t cause any prejudice to Réal Savoie. The judge also stated that the evidence was reliable, that the behaviour of the police officers did not compromise the interest of the judicial system and that there was no abuse of procedure by the investigators.

Judge Dionne is of the opinion that the accused was “never forced to do something he didn’t want to do” during the undercover investigation. The probative value of the evidence should be submitted to the judgement of the jurors.”

Defence attorney Marcel Guérin still thinks that there was procedural abuse at the expense of his client. He was disappointed by the ruling of the judge. “I will try to prove my point during the trial,” he said a few minutes after the ruling.

The continuance of the trial of Réal Savoie is set to March 6 and will resume with jury selection. The details of the investigation during the voir-dire remain subjected to a publication ban until presented at the trial, in the presence of the jury.

Judge Dionne invited crown prosecutors Gerald Maltais and Florence Frappier-Routhier, as well as defense attorney Marcel Guérin and Reginald Victorin to return to court on February 23 in order to clarify some evidence issues in the absence of the jury.

The judge also authorized the transfer of Réal Savoie from the New Carlisle jail to the Sorel jail as of the beginning of January. Attorney Marcel Guérin lives in Sorel and will then have the possibility of meeting the accused to prepare his defense.

A 20-year-old woman from Chandler was arrested on November 12 with regards to injuries sustained by a 17-year-old male youth from Chandler. She was driving the youth’s car while the 17-year-old was car-surfing on the roof of the car. The adolescent fell, sustained serious injuries to his face and she drove him to the Chandler hospital. The Sûreté du Québec investigated the matter and issued tickets to the driver totalling \$2,564 and 21 demerit points. She will eventually be summoned to appear in court and charged with dangerous driving causing bodily harm.

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Commentary

Gilles Gagné

2016 provided reasons to be proud and hopeful, despite a few setbacks

The year that is about to end provided all kinds of emotions, impressions, hopes and, even though we hate them, setbacks. Overall, it was a good year for Gaspesians, despite the hardship stemming from a couple of issues we have no control of, like health, education and transport budgetary cuts.

Collectively, great things were achieved, like the team work that culminated by the December 1st official inauguration of the Mesgi'g Ugju's'n wind farm, a \$330 million investment that represents the biggest advancement step for the Gaspé Peninsula Native communities since the Marshall ruling on commercial fisheries, 17 years ago.

As Mesgi'g Ugju's'n board president Troy Jerome emphasized in December, sometimes with a lump in his throat and drops we could call tears rolling down his cheeks, that venture allowed dozens of Natives to get their Quebec construction cards and the possibility to work closer to home for a change, and establish contacts with contractors that will be fruitful for years to come.

About 110 construction workers from Gespeg, Gesgapegiag and Listuguj found jobs on the site located north of Escuminac. They worked with unknown Non-Natives and both groups developed common trust and a better understanding of each other's realities. It can only be beneficial for the future. At least four more Natives will develop competence in the maintenance of wind mills, thus providing more reasons to instill additional pride in their communities.

December also provided the region with an unexpected source of pride, when Heather Condo's short documentary, "My Father's Tools", was retained by the Sundance Film Festival for screenings next month in Utah. It is the first movie supervised by Wapikoni Mobile, the organization supporting Native film production, to ever deserve a shot at Sundance. That's a feat, considering the ample talent of the creators backed by Wapikoni Mobile. Between January 19 and 29, many Gaspesians will keep an eye on what is going on in Utah. "My Father's Tools" made a lasting impression in August at the Percédes, in Percé.

Gaspesians have all kinds of reasons to be hopeful with regards to commercial fisheries too. Not all the numbers are out yet but we know that 2016 was another banner year, especially for lobster and shrimp fishermen. The catches were harder to get for shrimp fishermen but they were receiving record prices for them. While the crab fishermen were not in for record revenues in 2016, they were relatively close to all-time heights and 2017 should spell even better revenues.

Tourism was also characterized by a level of attendance that was rarely seen, and it benefited all of the Gaspé Peninsula areas. Percé came back to its old form and the development of the Geopark, paired with Chandler's Nova Lumina, could provide the Percé Rock MRC with punch that had been lacking for many years. The whole Gaspé Peninsula takes advantage of tourism when the Chandler-Percé-Gaspé stretch gets good results because people have to pass through the west part of the region to reach its extremity.

The transportation file has not yielded impressive results, funding-wise, from the federal and provincial governments but 2016 proved, for those who had not gathered it yet, that the Gaspé Peninsula population was and remains right in asking for major improvements across the board, whether we talk about rail, marine road and aer-

ial transport.

The worries for the coming year pertain mainly to forestry, health and social services, as well as education.

Forestry represents a source of concern because of the lumber dispute triggered by the United States. The Americans, who complain about the level of subsidies received by Canadian lumber producers, regularly lose that battle when trade tribunals are rendering their decision, but it doesn't ebb our neighbours repetitive attempts to impose long term tariffs. The cost is heavy for Canadian forestry firms, including the ones of the Gaspé Peninsula.

Gaspesians, like the residents of the other rural regions of Quebec, are suffering from the vast centralization of health services called by minister Gaétan Barrette. The Optilab project could soon have detrimental effects on the condition of some patients. However, and despite his stubbornness, doctor Barrette has been forced to change his mind on some occasions, and it might happen again.

Our education sector is also suffering from the Quebec government's centralization. There again, some financial catching up, a word better suited than re-investment to describe what is going on, was announced at the end of the year, therefore leaving people to think that there is room for hope there as well.

THANK YOU!

We take this opportunity to say thank you to all our loyal supporters, subscribers, advertisers, volunteers and contributors. We wish each and everyone of you a peaceful holiday season. We thank you for your support and look forward to a new year of publishing news on the Coast.

This is the last issue of
The Gaspé Spec for 2016.
The office will be closed on
Thursday, December 22, 2016
and will reopen on
Thursday, January 5, 2017

Because of the printing schedule, please take note that
our first issue of The Gaspé Spec in the new year will be
January 11, 2017



The Gaspé Spec

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SEASON'S GREETINGS

Wakeham Adult and Vocation Education, convenience is key

Wendy Dawson

WAKEHAM: – In order to make education and training available to as many people as possible, the personnel of the Wakeham Adult and Vocational Education Centre has made relevance, accessibility and flexibility key factors in their selection of up and coming programs.

There are currently 43 students enrolled at the Centre in both academic and vocational programs. However, “we are looking to increase the interest in the community,” explains Rachel Adams, a teacher of a variety of administrative programs offered through the centre.

“We have chosen to focus on programs that are supported by the CLE(Centre local d’emploi) but also on programs that have a good placement rate. We want to focus on where the jobs are,”



Photos: G. Gagné

The trucking class started in November. The last such program had a placement rate of 100%.

she continues.

For instance, students who took the trucking course, which began in November and is currently running for the

third time at the education facility, enjoyed a 100% placement rate at the conclusion of the last program.

A selection of programs will be available in 2017. Among them will be the homecare assistance course. The 975 hour program allows students to learn how to provide basic care to clients of all ages in a variety of settings, including those that are in the home and require home care.

It is a program not only of interest to those seeking work in the health care industry, but also to those that are responsible for caring for loved ones. Interested parties can enquire about participating exclusively in certain modules of the course that might help them better serve the person they are caring for such as ensuring a safe environment or intervening in crisis or emergency.

The program which is finishing with its most recent group is currently offered two

evenings a week in order to accommodate the many participants that are already working in the health sector during the day. A new group of students is expected to start by mid-January of the New Year.

The professional fisheries program is still in recruitment and can offer interested candidates a great scope of knowledge that ranges from the operation of a fishing vessel and equipment, preventive maintenance, safety, conservation and choice of fishing grounds among other skills. While those interested in working in the commercial fishing industry are encouraged to enroll, modules of the course are also open to those already working in the industry, people who may require upgrading or refreshing.

Finally, the accounting and administration program is a perfect choice for those that are interested in pursuing pro-

fessional training without necessarily having to commit to the classroom time. An option for interested students includes an internet platform which allows participants to work at their own pace and easily integrate learning into their personal schedules. In the local market, students who complete this program are also likely to find work quite easily.

Rachel Adams points out that “we have a great selection of professional programs, but Wakeham really offers something for everyone. We have students that range in age from 15 to 50 at the school and we offer a personalized one on one approach for those that are interested in working on their academic upgrading, their literacy or towards the completion of their high school diploma. A person is never too old to learn.”

Ms. Adams is hoping that potential students interested in pursuing any of the options available at the school are not shy to reach out. “We hope to organize an open house in 2017 but in the meantime, anyone that is curious or interested is welcome to come in to visit or even sit in on classroom time.”

If learning, upgrading or professional development are part of your plan for the New Year, Ms. Adams can be reached at the school or via the Facebook page and is available to discuss additional information about student funding, programs and schedules to help you reach your education goals.

The Wakeham Adult and Vocational Education Centre is located at 584 Montée Wakeham in Gaspé.



Teacher Rachel Adams.

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Photo: C. Dow

Late poet celebrated at Duthie Point

Cynthia Dow

NEW RICHMOND: - About 25 fans of the world-renowned Canadian poet Leonard Cohen gathered to mourn his loss and celebrate his life and works on November 24 at Duthie’s Point. The evening, organized by Danielle Cyr of New Richmond, included a profile of the poet’s varied and adventurous life by Sandi Beebe of New Carlisle and readings by Danielle and Cynthia Dow. They also did a mashup of a French translation of one poem with an English poem with a similar theme. Since the poet was also a singer-songwriter the evening would not be complete without music! Normand Desjardins of Bonaventure performed three Cohen songs: “Suzanne”, “Hallelujah”, and “Dance Me to the End of Love”, while Michael Robertson and his buddy Dion added a blues bent with Everybody Knows and a few additional non-Cohen tunes to round out the evening. Those present all noted they would love to participate in similar cultural evenings in the future. Leonard Cohen died November 7th and was laid to rest in Mount Royal cemetery in Montreal.

Health Networks meet in Halifax

Kim Harrison

NEW CARLISLE: - Members of Quebec’s Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN), including CASA, the Council for Magdalen Islanders, Vision-Gaspé-Percé-Now, Heritage Lower St. Lawrence, the North Shore Community Association and Neighbours Association of Rouyn-Noranda, met with representatives of Atlantic Canada’s francophone health networks for two days on December 6 and 7. Representatives of these 14 health networks, whose mission is to provide access to health and social services for official language minority communities (English in Quebec and French in the rest of Canada) met to share tools, resources and best practices, and to identify areas of collaboration.

Participants were pleased with the meetings and established numerous avenues for future projects. Cathy Brown, CASA Director, noted that it was interesting to learn about the different approach that francophone organizations take to ensuring access to services in their language. “Whereas CASA works to influence delivery within the health and social service institutions, we also provide direct services to the community, such as our senior’s wellness centres, services to children, video-conferencing and health information. Francophone organizations that we met with mainly work with institutions to ensure access to services in their language and do not provide direct services. However, because of the restrictions of Quebec’s language laws, we will continue to work within the community to ensure that services are received in English, either directly from CASA or the institutions.”

The event was organized by CASA and funded by the CHSSN via Health Canada. The CHSSN is a provincial organization that works in partnerships with organizations such as CASA. Their mission is to improve access to health and social services for English speakers by strengthening networks at the local, regional and provincial level in order to address health determinants, influence public policy and develop services. CHSSN has more than 60 member organizations and is involved in over 40 projects and partnerships in the areas of primary health care, community development and population health.



Photo: facebook

New Carlisle arena’s new cooling system to be ready by Christmas

Gilles Gagné

NEW CARLISLE: – The new cooling system in New Carlisle’s arena is currently installed and will be ready before Christmas. The \$248,755 system will allow the arena to open earlier in the season and offer the users of the arena stable conditions, instead of being controlled by outside weather conditions.

The Municipality of New Carlisle was targeting the opening of the arena for December 1 when the installation operation started in October but the late delivery of some parts coming from the United States delayed the work by a few weeks.

“The system itself was installed in October but addi-

tional work was required on the cement slab, as well as in the electricity system and the compressors. Some parts of the ventilation system ordered in the United States by the cooling unit manufacturer, Éco-Glace, were late in arriving. There are always adjustments when a system is installed. The system is now working but it will take a few days before it maintains control. Our cement slab is not insulated and the ground is not frozen. So it will take a bit of time before sustaining the ice,” explained the Town of New Carlisle director general Denise Dallain, on December 16.

She was then expecting the ice to be ready by December 23, maybe a day or two be-

fore. “We would have been up and running by December had all the equipment been delivered on time. We had no control over it. It is our first year too. It requires adaptation. We have to bring the system along slowly. Next year, we will be ahead,” adds Ms. Dallain.

At \$248,755 before taxes, the cost of the system was slightly less expensive than the budgeted acquisition cost of \$275,000.

Overall, with the installation cost, the work on the cement slab, the electricity adjustment and the work carried out on the compressors, the total cost should hover around \$300,000, says Denise Dallain.

Christmas Greetings from Bishop Gaétan Proulx, O.S.M.

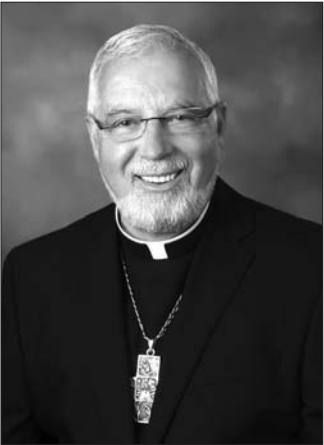


To live in peace, to propose peace, to be an instrument of justice and peace, is the message that our Catholic Church in Gaspésie and Magdalen Islands wants to reaffirm for Christmas and the New Year.

A few days ago, the Jubilee of Mercy ended. It was a time for Christians to rediscover how God loves humanity with tenderness. We are called to be witnesses of the mercy of God and to be instruments of peace.

On the occasion of this feast of Christmas, I invite you to take all the personal initiatives necessary that could help to bring peace in our various living environments: at school, at work, in our families, our social and Christian communities. In doing so, we will be signs of the Kingdom of God among us.

† Gaétan Proulx, O.S.M.
Évêque de Gaspé



(Crédit, photographie Dachowski)

*Merry Christmas and
Happy New Year!*



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A busy year for Vision Gaspé Percé Now

Wendy Dawson

DOUGLASTOWN: - The bright and tight quarters of the Vision Gaspé Percé Now office are located in the heart of the community centre in Douglastown. The room is organized and functional, but hardly spacious.

“You can see by looking around,” says Cheryl Leggo, “that everyone works in the same space and at times it can be a trying environment, but it also shows that we can get along pretty well. We make it work.”

She has made it work, as executive director of the organization for the last four years, this month Cheryl Leggo will complete her final weeks in that role and will also mark the end of her ten-year career with Vision.

Cheryl Leggo, who is the only full-time employee at Vision Gaspé-Percé Now (VGPN), oversees eight part time employees who work between 14 and 20 hours a week on a variety of projects.

The expression “a little goes a long way” truly applies to the actions of VGPN. With a modest annual budget

any core funding. This means that its very existence, from year to year is put to the test as Vision must seek out and apply for funding to help support not only the projects that it drives in the English Community of the region, but also the funding to support its basic infrastructure, like salaries, rent and other operating expenses.

This presents an important annual challenge to both the executive director and to the organization’s nine member board of directors, headed by president Tony Conoley. Mr. Conoley praises Ms. Leggo’s contribution as executive director stating that “during her tenure (...) our organization has grown in recognition, the number of programs and projects continue to increase along with the number of partners and funders.”

For her part, Ms. Leggo admits to the occasional challenge presented with the lack of core funding but points out that “we have a good team here. Working with our financial person and really focusing on what needs to be done, we always manage to keep it together.”



Photos: W. Dawson

Cheryl Leggo, Executive Director of Vision Gaspé Percé Now and Board President Tony Conoley.

care (a collaboration with CASA and CAMI), guides for home caregivers and a summary document of medical terms in English and in French for professional health care workers. Reference tools for seniors are aptly produced using large print and tabs for easy access.

The great reference documents however barely scrape the surface of their community impact and VGPN’s accomplishments. There has been the frozen meals program, wellness centres, caregiver support and cognitive workshops for seniors. While a great focus of the work from VGPN is geared towards health and seniors projects, they also work with youth and in the schools focusing on the “I AM ME” self-esteem project.

Vision Gaspé Percé Now has clearly tapped into the needs of their region, “While most of our programs are geared towards the Anglophone population, there are many Francophones that come to see us to access the same resources and services, or for referrals. All of our staff is bilingual, so it is easy for us to address those enquiries. Things like the wellness centres, people will call and say that there is nothing like that offered in the Francophone community. Do you mind if we participate?”, explains Ms. Leggo.

Mr. Conoley points out, “Our mandate is to serve the needs of the Anglophone population, however we welcome the participation of our Francophone community as well, especially our seniors, as they can be vulnerable and need

certain services.”

When asked to reflect upon her time at Vision and to identify the projects or services that she is proudest of, Ms. Leggo explains, “it would have to be caregiver support. When I came back to the community it was to take care of my mom and I had to fight tooth and nail to get any kind of support on my journey. I always felt that if there was something that I could do for the population here, it would be to provide caregiver support.”

VGPN and Cheryl Leggo’s goals have been met, with a solid caregiver support system that includes the guide (produced in both English and French), Caregiver cafés – a place where caregivers can gather and share as well as workshops, are all made available through VGPN to the many caregivers that are in the region.

It is fair to say that Cheryl Leggo is leaving her tenure as executive director on a high note, and on a smooth one. Ms. Leggo explains, “I started to really consider leaving after my ‘big birthday’ in July, so we have had several months to plan and organize the transition.”

Mr. Conoley explains that this departure is on the best of terms and has been well planned.

Vision Gaspé Percé Now

has selected their new executive director who will begin serving her term in the new year. Ms. Jessica Synnott will be Cheryl Leggo’s replacement. “Cheryl’s replacement, Jessica Synnott has been with VPGN for the past six years and we are very confident that she will continue to insure the strength and vitality of the organization. She has the support of a very dedicated staff, a strong, dedicated and experienced board of directors,” states Mr. Conoley.

“I’ll continue to work with Jessica and support in this transition. It’s a chance for us (VGPN) to spread our wings even more,” explains Ms. Leggo.

For her part Cheryl Leggo will be taking some time to rest and reflect upon what the next chapter is for her. “I would like to do some volunteering. Caregiving is still an important priority for me,” she explains. “We would love to see her on the board,” says Mr. Conoley, “but I think we will wait a bit,” he teases.

Vision Gaspé Percé Now has a very active facebook page and website. Those interested in staying informed about the activities in the region will find that they are both updated regularly and full of information for users from both inside and outside the region.



Cheryl Leggo will be leaving her role as Executive Director and passing on the torch to Jessica Synnott who will assume her duties in the new year.

of approximately \$400,000, the organization this year has worked on 14 different projects with the support of several different partners whose financial contributions to the agency range anywhere from \$80,000 to \$750.

March 31, 2017 will mark the end of Vision Gaspé Percé Now’s 12th year, which in its own right is remarkable as the organization has never had

This small community organization has a lot to be proud of. Spread across the table during the interview with SPEC are a variety of reference documents, each a culmination of community and partner driven projects that include reference guides for seniors, information documents for Anglophone Gaspésians that must travel out of the region for health

