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2nd annual Chic-Chocs dog sled race will take place from March 18 to 20

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW RICHMOND – The Chic-Chocs dog sled race will start at the Station touristique Pin rouge in New Richmond on March 18 and end on March 20 at Motel Chandler.

As of March 9, 15 racers were registered in the short distance 40-mile event. For that event, mushers will travel from the Station touristique Pin rouge to the Relais de la cache in Cascapedia-St-Jules, a distance of 43-miles.

For the 200-mile circuit, 12 racers are registered. For that longer race, the mushers will have to pass through three checkpoints.

Their first checkpoint will be at the Relais de la Cache, where they will rest for about 4 hours.

They will then undertake the longest section of the race, 60 miles of mountains and the ascent of Mount Lyall to an altitude of 900 metres.

They will then arrive at their second checkpoint, Mont Miller in Murdochville where mushers will have a mandatory 6-hour stop.

The last 100 miles of the race is divided in two sections. First mushers will stop at a third checkpoint in the forest near the St. Jean River at the

Bailey Bridge. There mushers must use up what's left of their 14-hour total mandatory break time. At this location prospector tents will be set up for participants. Competitors will then head towards the coastline, finishing their final 50-mile section in Chandler.

"The success of last year provided the drive to return. At one point, a year ago, we only had four registrations but we added a category and we were seven at the starting line. We had a good crowd at Pin rouge. People really liked it," explains Philippe Dugas, the event's coordinator and a Maria-based musher.

Even if 27 teams were registered as of March 9, organizers will be happy if at least 20 or 25 mushers attend the March 18 race.

"The Can-Am Crown was held recently in Fort Kent, Maine. We are reaching the end of the season after that big North American race. So we might see some movement in the current registration," he says.

Registration fees for the 40-mile race are \$150 and \$300 for the 200-mile event. Money prizes total \$25,000. \$20,000 is earmarked for the 200-mile race this includes \$3,500 for the winner. The remaining



Photo: Fabrice Simon

Florence Shaw participated in last year's race. She is seen here at the Murdochville departure, shortly after making the checkpoint stop. She is a 17-year-old resident of Fermont.

\$5,000 will be awarded to mushers in the 40-mile event.

"It looks like a lot but the expenses are considerable to attend any dog sled race. Spending \$1,000 in fuel to get here adds up fast. Baie-des-Chaleurs Car Rally organizer Danny Hudon volunteers for us and he says that our prizes are bigger (in comparison to the rally). Dog sled races almost disappeared in Quebec and they are coming back. It is smaller in the East than in the West, where there is a race every weekend, like in Yukon. Count-

ing ours, there are three new races with 100-mile events, the PG (Pierre Germain) race in Abitibi and one in Parent, two hours north of La Tuque, called la Boréale," stresses Philippe Dugas.

It takes at least 50 volunteers to organize the Chic-Chocs race. The fact that there are two categories also plays a role in the number of volunteers that are required.

"It takes a lot of people for the start, like officials and experienced dog sledding veterinarians. People will get their money's worth and all that for free," says Philippe Dugas.

Three of the registered mushers are women who won all the races at Fort Kent's Can-Am Crown; Quebecer Diane Marquis, who won the 30-mile race; Florence Shaw, from Fermont was the winner of the 100-mile event; and Cat Langlais, of New Brunswick, who won the 250-mile run. She was the first woman to do so at the Can-Am Crown.

"We expect a few Americans at our event and mushers from all over Quebec including Fermont, Quebec City, Abitibi and Gatineau. We organized the whole thing with \$40,000.

We have a board of five people. It is a non-profit organization. We would be glad to have more people on board. Money-wise, we received \$10,000 from Desjardins and additional sums from private sector partners. The Town of New Richmond, Pin rouge, La Cache and Murdochville also helped a lot," mentions Mr. Dugas.

The three main Quebec races are supervised by the MACQ federation which stands for Mushers et athlètes canins du Québec. The federation oversees the events, takes care of the well-being of the dogs, deals with the insurance file, and provides licensed officials. As of now, there is no cup at stake.

Philippe Dugas, who has owned sled dogs for years and who offers rides from his Maria home, had the idea of a race in the Gaspé Peninsula two years ago. It took him and his team a year to organize the 2022 event.

"We will be glad to greet spectators on the morning of March 18 at Pin rouge. People who like sled dogs will want to come on March 17 in the afternoon, for the vet check. This is the best time to see the dogs," he concludes.

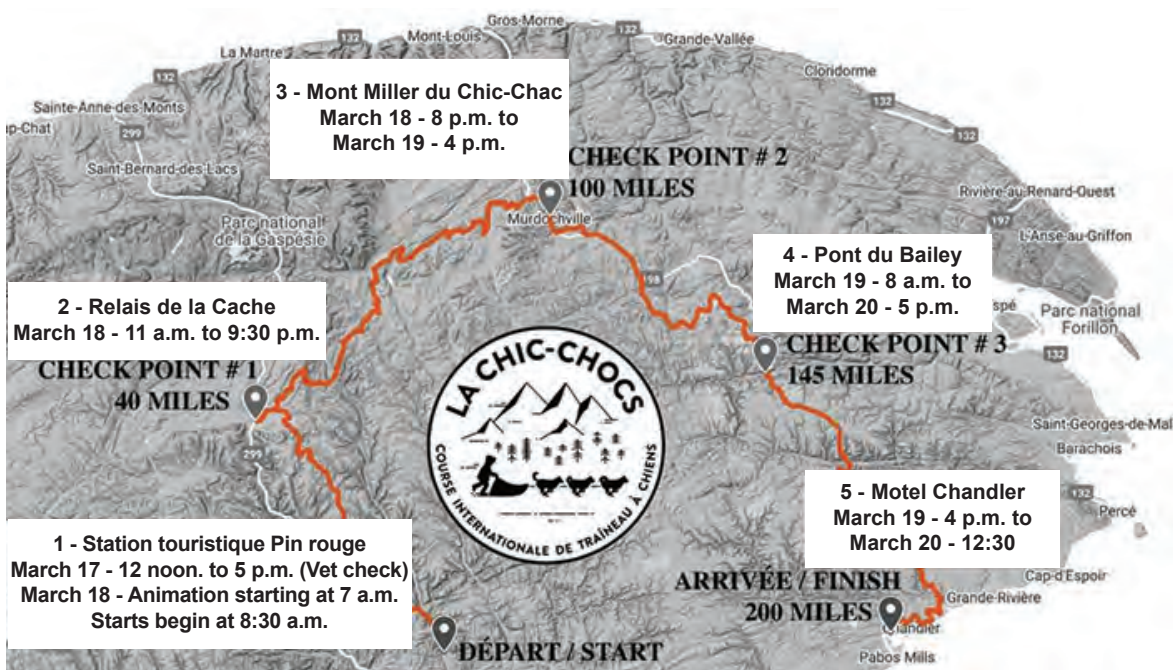


Photo: La Chic-Chocs Facebook

The itinerary for the Chic-Chocs dog sled race.

Moratorium on fisheries: Bloc Québécois says Ottawa doesn't understand the situation

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

MAGDALEN ISLANDS - The leader of the Bloc Québécois is under the impression that Ottawa did not understand the situation imposed on fishermen last year when the federal government suspended some fisheries without taking into account the individuals and communities affected by these measures.

Yves-François Blanchet visited the Magdalen Islands to discuss the fisheries sector in particular. This visit coincided with Minister of Fisheries, Joyce Murray's regional tour. Minister Murray visited the Gaspé Peninsula on March 2 and the Magdalen Islands on March 3.

"There is a kind of discontent that can be explained quite well by the fact that Minister Diane Lebouthillier managed to bring Minister Murray to the Magdalen Islands. It is a very good thing, on one condition that it is not just a public relations exercise, this is what is being said more and more," explains the

Bloc leader.

Mr. Blanchet maintains that the minister did not meet the stakeholders involved in the seal industry when attending the Loup Marin festival in the Magdalen Islands.

Eight groundfish fishermen are affected by a fishing suspension of two species: winter flounder and yellowtail flounder. These suspensions to protect the resource are done without alternatives.

"The minister met with them (the fishermen) and there was no hypothesis of a solution. It will have to lead to something a little more concrete," says Mr. Blanchet.

The situation experienced on the Magdalen Islands resembles that of the closure of the mackerel and herring fishery last year, which raised the ire of many fishermen in the Gaspé Peninsula.

"These people say, like in the mackerel crisis last year, 'we want to fish. We are not asking for a grant.' Ultimately, if there is no solution, at least subsistence fishing is needed. And keeping a business alive



Yves-François Blanchet criticizes Ottawa for not supporting fishermen affected by a moratorium.

Photo: Bloc Québécois Facebook

is not employment insurance. It's much more complex than that. They say: 'I want to work, I want to go fishing. I want to go to sea,'" says the Bloc leader.

These fishermen asked for crab allocations "it would not take anything away from anyone else, but it could be given, since their equipment could be used," adds Mr. Blanchet, but nothing has been mentioned so far.

This was the first visit of a Minister of Fisheries to the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands since 2016.

"Just coming is not a solution. Say 'I'm listening to you. Yes.' Come up with something. She arrived in the Gaspé Peninsula with \$2.5 million which, a priori and this is common practice, you will get the money from a fund to make announcements. It does not solve the funda-

mental problems of the region," says the Bloc leader who recalls that just the renovation of the Cap-aux-Meules Port requires \$40 million.

In addition, Mr. Blanchet took advantage of his visit to the Magdalen Islands to announce 12 recommendations made by the Fisheries Table on the right whale situation.

For example: the right whale is only passing by the islands. For crab fishermen, the opening should be brought forward to April 1.

"We can open the crab fishery more quickly given the abundance of the resource and the quotas are fixed. Starting 10 days later in New Brunswick doesn't change anything, but 10 days in the islands is 10 days before the whales arrive," says Mr. Blanchet.

The closure of an area for two weeks, while the whale is only passing through, is another problem that should be taken into account. The Bloc is instead proposing a 24-hour closure, while the whale makes its way.

Politicians want actions now when it comes to air transportation

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - The Mayor of Gaspé and the Parti Québécois believe that the two-year deadline proposed by the deputy premier, who is also the minister of transport, is too long to wait for results.

"I think the problem is urgent and there are possible solutions that must be put in place, very quickly," says Mayor Daniel Côté, who is also president of the Québec Union of Municipalities.

The Member of the National Assembly for René-Lévesque, Yves Montigny, who had campaigned with the Union of Quebec Municipalities (UMQ) for improvements in air transport is aware of the current shortcomings in air transport and the disadvantages to the regional economy and population's ability to travel.

In an interview with a Côte-Nord media outlet, Deputy Minister Geneviève Guilbeault noted being delighted with the relaunch of the committee on air transport, adding that the government does not want to skip any steps and must consider all the regions of Quebec.

"I think the first step will be

to bring together the task force proposed by the government and to do this quickly. Take advantage of the collective intelligence around the table to come up with solutions in a shorter term than two years. But there may be longer-term solutions over two, three or five years," says Daniel Côté.

"I do not know the possible solutions as we speak. All we see are problems on top of problems. We see schedules changing all the time. If we want to stabilize the market and ensure that everyone has access to this service, there is a push to give now," adds Mr. Côté, who notes that in March, it is practically impossible to take a plane from Gaspé.

"It becomes more and more difficult to the point where I have a trip that I will have to make by bus to Montreal with the 13 hours and 45 minutes it takes. The service is no longer there... It looks like it's getting worse and worse," says the mayor who fears the regions are garnering a poor image because of the ongoing transportation situation.

He points out that it's nice to have a \$500 ticket program, but if there is no service, the regions are no better off.

"We have to hold a sit-down with the airlines to see what can be done. What are their problems: are they short of money? Are they missing equipment? Are there no pilots? The situation has never been worse than this. It takes short-term solutions and we will not wait two years. Things will have to move faster than that," says Mr. Côté.

The mayor of Gaspé intends to speak with "his good friend", Mr. Yves Montigny who was the former mayor of Baie-Comeau and now Member of the National Assembly for René-Lévesque. The two worked together at the Union of Quebec Municipalities on this file. "The development of our regions depends on it," concludes Daniel Côté.

The Parti Québécois also reacts

The Parti Québécois believes that the regions cannot afford to wait another two years before the situation is rectified.

"It's inconceivable that we're giving ourselves two years to act when we've already wasted the last two years with lots of proposals that had been submitted to the Air Transport

Intervention Group and that have been set aside to propose \$500 tickets, a formula that does not work," says a frustrated Joël Arseneau, who is the MNA for the Magdalen Islands.

According to him, the situation is catastrophic, he's asking the standing committee to convene the standing committee on air transport quickly. He mentions the proposals put forward during the Air Transport Forum.

"We need to increase the supply. There are municipalities, MRCs, and airports that have said they are ready to set up a service to meet the expectations of the population. I think this is a path to be explored closely," says Mr. Arseneau, who points out that the reliability and frequency of service causes problems.

He also cites proposals from cooperatives and says he is ready to listen to carriers if they have any solutions to offer.

"Transportation must improve if we want to develop it, and if we want people to return to air travel by convincing them that the service is efficient, reliable and affordable," says the elected official who

has difficulty buying the arguments of lack of equipment or pilots.

"It would have to be demonstrated to me if we can be attractive and have a business plan that sticks. I don't believe equipment has disappeared with COVID and neither are human resources. If it is necessary to stimulate competitiveness between companies to ensure that we offer advantageous conditions... We cannot sit back and wait for the situation to resolve," says Mr. Arseneau.

This is why the committee must be convened to take a complete look at the situation.

"There is a challenge for all air transport around the world, but the situation in Quebec is unique: the extent of the territory, the services, the airports that have always been served and popular and today, which are not adequate. We must know the current situation, the issues, obstacles and see the opportunities if we want to resolve the situation, but it will not happen by itself. The government must show leadership," concludes Joël Arseneau, who is a regular user of air transport between the islands and Quebec.

Difficult years for dairy farmers

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

CARLETON-SUR-MER - Dairy producers in the Gaspé Peninsula are going through "lean times" as business liquidity is being impacted by the increase in the cost of production inputs.

"The main thing that came out (at the meeting) is the difficulty for businesses, when we have a revenue crisis and an increase in expenses. These are two things that we are experiencing when the timing is not necessarily good," said the regional representative of the Dairy Producers of Quebec, Normand Barriault, on the sidelines of their annual general meeting on March 6, in New Richmond.

2023 is not looking any better. Input costs have not decreased.

"In 2023, some will have to renew loans that are coming to an end. We were with loans at 3% or 3.5% and now, we will see perhaps 6% or 7% in interest. It will affect our cash flow even more," reports Mr. Barriault, who claims to have had his worst year, in his life, in this regard.

He cites as an example that for the 2021 year (July 2021 to June 2022), the cost of fuel reached \$57,000. For the first part of the current year (July 2022 to December 2022), the bill has already reached \$50,000.

"Yes, we have had increases in the price of milk, but not enough to compensate for the upheavals in the inputs which

are hitting us hard," says the farmer.

The current situation will lead producers to turn to the governments to raise their awareness, not only in agriculture but for all primary sectors of the economy.

"That's the other step we'll have to take, meeting with our elected officials to make them aware of the primary sector: fishing, agriculture and forestry are affected by the explosion in costs just as much (as dairy farming) and we can't completely hand over (the additional costs) to the consumers," explains the Carleton-sur-Mer dairy farmer.

Without mentioning direct subsidies for production, which could go against international agreements, he does mention possible assistance wage subsidies to support the industry.

People are changing their consumption habits but dairy products remain important in their diet.

"That in itself is good news. They drink less milk and eat more end products like cheese or yogurt. These are interesting products for us, but they generate less revenue than fluid milk," says Mr. Barriault.

Ottawa has granted a 17% opening of the markets with the various international agreements concluded with Europe, the new Canada-United States-Mexico and the Transpacific agreement.

"Imagine if we hadn't had these concessions, it would have been great. But despite everything, there are growing markets right now," he says,

hoping that Bill C-282 which would block new concessions in agriculture will be passed by the House of Commons.

The Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands lost a dairy producer in the last year. The region now has 12. The region has nonetheless acquired a new producer who will soon start in Nouvelle. "The economic situation remains complex: construction costs have exploded, rising interest rates, these factors could have a negative effect on the profitability of the project. I hope he will start up anyway, but it is up to the producer to see if he can do it in 2023," says Mr. Barriault.

Discussions are taking place to add a new producer to the Magdalen Islands, but he must obtain permission from the Régie des Marchés Agricoles et Alimentaires du Québec since production needs are specific in the Magdalen Islands.

Despite the loss of a producer, the other farmers were able to buy back production rights and more, which will cause the loss of the Gaspé Peninsula priority for quota acquisitions in 2023 on the Quebec scene. The region was in a position to count on that priority for a certain number of years because in the past, the total quota of the Gaspesian dairy producers had diminished significantly.

"The remaining producers are active in buying or growing their business. It's not all black and white. If we have the launch of a producer, that would be good news," he says.

Police report

Isaac Moffat-Swasson, 33, from Listuguj charged with numerous counts of violent crimes, will come back to the tribunal in Quebec City on March 24 for an update on his case and the possible determination of a trial date. In 2022, he opted for trials in front of a judge instead of Superior Court trials in front of a judge and jury, which was his initial decision. The two trials are linked to events that took place in the Gaspé Peninsula and will likely last two weeks each.

On April 30, 2019, while waiting for his first trial pertaining to charges of assault, aggravated assault and uttering death threats towards two Listuguj men relating to a February 21, 2019 robbery, Isaac Moffat-Swasson allegedly caused damages of more than \$5,000 in a section of the New Carlisle detention centre. He also resisted the guards and consequently faces a charge of obstruction. This section of the detention centre still has not been repaired and has not housed inmates in close to four years.

The damage caused to that detention section could amount to tens of thousands of dollars. The accused will also eventually have to face a charge of attempted murder of an inmate, following events that took place in Montreal. Isaac Moffat-Swasson is consequently also charged with assault with a weapon on prison guards and intimidation in that Montreal case as well.

Criminal prosecutor Maxime Rocheville-Paradis requested a change of venue in the case of the two Gaspé Peninsula based events for which Isaac Moffat-Swasson faces charges. The trials could take place in Montreal.

"The two files are still in Quebec City for the moment," points out Mr. Rocheville-Paradis. The accused is defended by Mathieu Poissant, a lawyer based in Montreal. In the summer of 2021, he was defended by Réginal Victorin, but he fired him a few months later.

Steve Soucy, 50, from Saint-Elzéar will return to court on March 17, likely to enter a plea of guilty on reduced charges. He was scheduled to make that plea on March 3. "It was postponed to March 17. The request (to postpone) was made by the defence," points out criminal prosecutor Cédric Leblanc-Falardeau. Quebec Court Judge Celestina Almeida accepted the request.

Steve Soucy has been incarcerated since the September 2 events during which he allegedly uttered death threats and caused injury to police officers. He also faces charges of possession of a weapon without a permit, possession of a weapon for a dangerous purpose and possession of a firearm while he was prohibited to do so. He underwent psychiatric evaluations at the Louis-Philippe-Pinel Institute in Montreal following his September 6 first court appearance.

Steve Soucy already had a criminal record dating back to 2018, when he was arrested in September 2022. In 2018 he was sentenced to serve 30 months in prison for various offences related to break and enterings.

Snowmobilers damage Percé boardwalk

Nelson Sergerie, LJI

PERCÉ - Snowmobilers have crossed barriers blocking the "L" section of the Percé wharf and have damaged the boardwalks.

A citizen contacted SPEC after noticing minor damage caused by the skis and tracks of snowmobiles that had travelled on this section of the wharf.

"I find it unfortunate that the town authorizes snowmobilers to go and break the wharf. We are doing everything to attract snowmobile tourism, but at what cost," he wrote in his note.

Snowmobilers appear to have crossed the two barriers to get to the end of the wharf. Access is only permitted on the first part of the infrastructure where the landing stages for the lobster boats are located.

After a call from SPEC, municipal authorities went to the site and noted the situation. According to them, the damage is superficial. The Town of Percé has since installed a padlock on the gates to block access since some snowmobilers have passed despite the barriers.

The town relied on the good faith and respect of users, but that was not enough. With the installation of the new padlock, passing the barrier will no longer be an option for snowmobilers.



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Gilles Gagné

Commentary

The CAQ government still highly popular, despite very questionable performance

An online Léger survey conducted between February 24 and 26 inclusively, for Le Devoir newspaper, suggests that the Coalition avenir Québec party would have won an election with pretty much the same results obtained close to five months earlier, when the true election was held. Premier François Legault's party would have received a 40% rate of support, 1% or so less than the 40.9% of October 3.

Only two parties made gains during the almost five month span, according to the survey. Endowed with only three National Assembly seats since October, the Parti Québécois raised its proportion of popular support from 15 to 18%. Québec Solidaire has also increased its popular support, from 15 to 17%, a modest gain as well.

The Liberal Party is at a standstill with 14% of the popular support. The worst news goes to the Conservative Party of Quebec, as its support falls from 13% to 9%.

For the Coalition avenir Québec (CAQ) government, the survey results must spell a bit of relief, considering that the last months have been trying, to say the least. The health sector, where 45% of our taxes are channelled, is marred by problems. There is still a shortage of nurses, doctors and caregivers and most hospital emergencies are congested. The promise made by the CAQ during the 2018-2022 term that each Quebecker would be able to have a family doctor has become a distant mirage and surgery rooms have not recovered from the effects of the pandemic.

The Ministry of Education, the second most important budgetary item of the Quebec government, is run by Bernard Drainville, a former Parti Québécois minister who became a private radio show host prior to resuming his political career with the CAQ. He has kept some trash-talk habits from his radio days, he doesn't seem to know the education sector very well and he has very questionable stands on environmental issues. This is far from reassuring to see in a man, who is supposed to be the main leader for the teachers who will train Quebec students.

The CAQ government only admitted in April 2022, that Quebec is experiencing a housing short-

age, which has become a huge problem. Over recent weeks or months, the same government fiddled with statistics in an attempt to hide the fact that the shortage of daycare spaces reaches 71,000, while the cabinet was rather talking about a shortcoming of 33,000 places. This is flatly misleading people over an important issue.

The same government mismanaged the digital switch required to modernize the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec's computer to 2023 standards instead of leaving it entrenched in 1980.

During the electoral campaign, François Legault bragged about his capacity to shake the federal government in order to obtain the money needed to improve Quebec's health service and resolve the immigration file linked to Roxham road. In both cases, the government crashed in an embarrassing way.

His "Captain Quebec" approach, a nationalist position that seems poorly documented, and embedded in a federalist stand, has yielded poor results in his confrontations or negotiations with Ottawa. It has been mentioned repeatedly but it is necessary to remind it again, Mr. Legault is not a man of thoroughness. He can rarely talk eloquently and at length about important issues.

In that regard, he is far from René Lévesque, Jacques Parizeau and Robert Bourassa. The latter was considered vulnerable during his first two terms as premier, between 1970 and 1976, and he was then ridiculed on a few occasions by then Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau. However, his 1985 to 1994 terms were slightly better and he demonstrated a capacity, when he wanted, to clearly explain complicated issues. François Legault's poor pedagogical potential certainly affects at times his capacity to convince the people he is dealing with, that his requests are valid.

The CAQ government also boasts a poor environmental record, ridiculous transportation policies that seem borrowed from the worst part of the 20th century, and an outdated energy strategy, putting too much emphasis on the eventual construction of power dams.

So why are Quebecers still favouring this government with a 40% rate of support? A reigning political party presenting such a poor record over the utmost important stakes would have been kicked out of power 40 or 50 years ago, in a context similar to last fall's October 3 election.

The main reason probably stems from a fragmented opposition, people's dwindling interest in politics, the fatigue tied to three years of pandemic

and the image of François Legault, who, for people looking for increasingly easier ways to deal with political options, consider his paternalist manners rather reassuring.

To explain their survey results, the Parti Québécois and Québec Solidaire probably took advantage of the CAQ poor showing during the health sector negotiations held with the federal government between December and February. François Legault had basically settled for the amount decided by Ottawa, with very little wiggle room. That amount was five times less than what Quebec had wished for.

Such poor negotiation results might also have boosted a bit the support for Quebec independence, which increased from 32% in 2018, the last survey commissioned by Le Devoir on that option, to 38% at the end of February survey.

There are two ways to analyze the Liberal Party results following the survey. It could mean relief because the party has not sunk deeper than it was on October 3, when it recorded its worst electoral results historically. The liberal support should normally have been affected by the departure of leader Dominique Anglade and the controversy that marked the last days of Member of the National Assembly Marie-Claude Nichols in the party's caucus.

The Liberal Party is far from beaming with energy though. Its interim leader Marc Tanguay was only known by 36% of the survey respondents and 13% of them perceive him favourably. Among Liberal supporters that answered the survey, only 48% knew who he was. He has been sitting at the National Assembly for 10 years.

The survey also suggests that 46% of non-francophones support the Liberal Party. The rate of support from francophones has melted to 4%, from 9% before the October election. In a province characterized by a proportion of francophones hovering around 77%, affirming that the Liberal Party is currently far from the status of being a potential contender represents an understatement.

The declining results of the Conservative Party are explainable. Leader Éric Duhaime's failure to get elected in his riding diminish his media exposure. Moreover, during the campaign, he was helped by the presence of the pandemic and the people who were consequently casting a doubt on the relevance of maintaining a set of sanitary measures. Those factors don't feed many headlines anymore and the validity of Mr. Duhaime's position on those issues has fallen accordingly, along with the mobilization of a fair part of his supporting base.

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Stormy council meeting in Chandler

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

CHANDLER - On March 6, about forty citizens attended the Chandler town council meeting to obtain answers in the Adrenaline rescue file following the suspension of free services decreed by the town council in February.

The suspension of the person in charge of aquatic activities at the town and manager of the Adrenaline rescue organization, Dominique Giroux, mobilized the citizens who questioned the council while police officers of the Sûreté du Québec made themselves visible at the entrance of the Town Hall.

A young lifeguard, Chloé Beaulieu, came forward to present the lifeguards' viewpoint and blamed the town council for Ms. Giroux's suspension.

"By acting in your way, not only are you showing us your desire to put us aside, you are also depriving all citizens of the MRC of an exceptional person. Dominique Giroux is greatly respected by all of us, our families and all our sponsors who brought the necessary money for the equipment and who make our projects come true," stated Ms. Beaulieu.

"We, rescuers from Sauvetage adrénaline, demand the immediate return of Dominique Giroux, who encourages self-transcendence and makes us better people and future active, responsible and sought-after citizens," concluded Ms. Bouchard to the applause of the audience.

Dr. Stéphanie Ferland, from Grande-Rivière, whose children attended the Chandler swimming pool, expressed her disappointment at the turn of events which deprived the population of aquatic activities, especially during spring break.

"My youngest is sitting on the couch, feeling a little depressed about why he can't continue swimming," says the doctor, mentioning that from a professional point of view, it is important to promote physical activity.

"Sauvetage adrénaline is a wonderful organization that has been around for several decades and has had amazing success, which has been recognized beyond our MRC. It is an organization that shines elsewhere and is a source of inspiration," added the family doctor.



Photo: N. Sergerie

About forty people attended the March 6 town council meeting

"I find it unfortunate to see such a flourishing organization, which offers so many services, and promotes the physical health of our children and everyone. It is worth putting this at the forefront and recognizing it," continued the doctor.

Monique Doucet from Grande-Rivière has been involved since 2019 and volunteers twice a week for free swims for seniors.

"We would like to know your intentions for the complex? Are you aware that an organization like this is the only one capable of fetching the regulatory equipment for rescue? We need to update that," she said.

"You must be proud of that. Free admission to an organization like this arouses the interest in renewing the spon-

sorship from year to year to keep the accreditation and standardized equipment. It is very difficult for a municipality to keep recreational equipment up to standard. You have this privilege," she said to the elected officials.

The mayor, Gilles Daraïche, faced the comments by recalling in particular that the freebies were granted beyond the 2016 agreement which provided for only four freebies.

Taxpayers had to sustain an operating deficit of \$332,000 in 2021 and \$310,000 in 2022 in connection with the sports complex.

The mayor mentioned to the citizens that he never questioned the work carried out by Adrenaline Rescue, but he recalled that questions were raised by certain citizens who

led the council to look into the file.

"We are accountable to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. Our administration must be sound and transparent. It was at the request of a citizen that we took this step, which was necessary," explained the mayor, Gilles Daraïche, following the municipal council meeting.

The main interested parties met and information was obtained. The administrative investigation has not yet been completed.

"We will have to analyze all of this. Money is involved. The Ministry of Revenue will question us. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs is aware. We expect to have questions following the end of the administrative investigation," added the mayor who hopes that the Permanent Anti-Corruption Unit (UPAC) will not be interested in the file.

"I hope not. We are not immune to a complaint from a citizen who does not agree with this file," said the mayor.

On March 2, Adrenaline Rescue requested a meeting with the council.

"If it's worth it, we'll accept having a meeting," underlined the mayor who adds that this file has cost the town dearly through the freebies granted, money that did not go to the municipality.

"In my personal opinion, it could have been handled better. We have to better frame it because it was going on all sides," he said.

The mayor wants a way

out of the crisis as quickly as possible so that people who are deprived of activities can resume them.

"If it was just us, it would start again tomorrow. For spring break, we called rescuers who refused to work," says the mayor.

The genesis of this conflict dates back to February 6, when the town put an end by resolution to the principle of free admission established for several years for sponsors.

Swimming, spinning, fitness and dance lessons were allowed, but the framework for freebies expanded over the years, according to the elected officials.

The head of aquatic activities, Dominique Giroux, was suspended by the town during the administrative investigation while another employee, Nancy Belvin, is on sick leave.

The mayor has already recalled that the organization is independent of the town, even if these two municipal employees are involved in its management. The town wants to avoid a conflict of interest in this situation.

Recently, the president of Sauvetage adrénaline, Marylène Nicolas, mentioned that in 2002, out of \$45,000 in sponsorships, \$12,000 was given as freebies. For the 2020, 2021 and 2022 period, out of \$90,000 in sponsorships, "very few freebies were offered in those years."

The equipment at the sports centre belongs to Adrenaline Rescue.

Support for rail repairs along section three

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

CHANDLER – The MRCs of Rocher-Percé and Côte-de-Gaspé as well as the towns of Chandler and Gaspé reiterate their support for the vast repair project of the railway line between Matapédia and Gaspé.

This support reconfirms once again the desire to obtain a renovated track as quickly as possible on the eastern end of the peninsula, especially following statements during the winter holidays when a elected representative from Chandler, questioned the rehabilitation of rail on the Banc de Pabos and Liberal Minis-

ter Diane Lebouthillier offered a "good luck" wondering about the possibility of restoring this railway section.

"We must not cut any transportation in the Gaspé Peninsula. We are a remote region – we don't like the term – but that's it all the same. We lost the train. We almost lost the bus at one point. I think that all public transport in the Gaspé should be encouraged. We can believe or not believe in the project, but we must support it," says the mayor of Chandler, Gilles Daraïche.

"At the Town of Gaspé we have unanimously reaffirmed that the railway is possibly the most ecological, respon-

sible and sustainable means of transportation for our part of the country," says the mayor, Daniel Côté, using the example of the wind turbine blades which caused problems for users of the road network because the train could not transport them between Gaspé and New Richmond because some bridges are closed.

"We want rehabilitation to Gaspé. The government's game plan holds up. They have put in millions of dollars so far and will continue to put in millions of dollars. The policy direction is clear. We have to reaffirm somewhere that we want the investments to continue to

Gaspé," explains the mayor.

The Côte-de-Gaspé MRC adopted a similar resolution on March 8. Rocher-Percé had done so in February. "It was to remind the level of government that this was an important issue for the region. We also have environmental concerns. The railway will support us in the fight against greenhouse gases. We wanted to reiterate our desire once again for the railway to get to Gaspé as quickly as possible in harmony with the Quebec government," explained Rocher-Percé prefect, Samuel Parisé, on February 16.

CBC's Still Standing show about New Richmond gets rave reviews from citizens

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW RICHMOND – The March 8 screening of the Still Standing show about New Richmond, filmed in 2022 and aired by CBC, was thoroughly appreciated by the citizens of the town, whether they attended the screening at the local concert hall or watched it from home.

Described as a “reality comedy show” by CBC, Still Standing visits communities and interviews citizens that have faced challenges but, have shown a capacity to rebound. This is certainly the case for New Richmond, which suffered a significant loss in August 2005 when the Smurfit Stone’s linerboard mill closed. At that time up to 300 people were employed at the mill.

Still Standing presents a well-documented file of the challenges tackled by the population and the ways they found to progress and vitalize their communities. Host, comedian Jonny Harris lightens the heavier topics with brilliant humour.

The March 8 show was presented simultaneously at the New Richmond concert hall, attended by over 200 people, and on the CBC network. It was the tenth and last episode of Still Standing’s



Photo: Evan Seccombe

Jonny Harris learns about salmon with fishing guide Josh Bradstreet.

eighth season.

The episode covered the closure of the mill and the creation of the Chaleur Park residential area as experienced by municipal councillor Natalie Clark. Rail GD Director General Joey Cyr spoke about the relaunching of local businesses. Other interviews included, Gesgapegiag salmon fishing with guide Joshua Bradstreet, and Mi’gmaq basket-making with Stephen Jerome and his wife Heather Condo. The Baie-

des-Chaleurs Car Rally was presented by the Leblanc brothers, René, Adam and André.

Before the beginning of the screening at the concert hall, mayor Éric Dubé praised the work of Natalie Clark, who was constantly in touch with the crew of Still Standing.

It was apparent that the screening was an emotional experience for the mayor. “I can only express pride, the pride of seeing on a huge

screen what we have accomplished after experiencing the challenges of the past. I was also proud to see the place reserved for the three communities (English, Mi’gmaq and French),” said Mr. Dubé, who added that the size of the screen added to the experience, compared to what he would have watched on his television set.

He was impressed by the effort put forth by the show’s research team to get an overall perspective of the area. “They even contacted our whisky tasting club,” he adds.

Natalie Clark was also very proud. She became involved in the research part of the show after the Town of New Richmond Director General Stéphane Cyr received an email from the Still Standing crew and forwarded it to her.

The presentation was the culmination of a year-and-half back and forth communication between her and the Still Standing crew. She also led the part of the show that dealt with the sudden and unfair way the mill was closed, the creation of Chaleur Park and how local life was affected from her childhood to the 2005 mill closure.

“I am very happy with the result. It was the project of a lifetime. The goal was to put New Richmond on the map and in all the work that I did, I always tried to impress the Still Standing crew with the answers because they could have said no. That’s why I al-

ways tried to put them in contact with the best people, the people who could give them accurate information. They came here because they were interested in New Richmond,” explains Natalie Clark.

She publicly thanked all the people who fed the Still Standing team with accurate and valuable details about the area.

Reactions

Gesgapegiag’s Heather Condo, who is shown in Still Standing with her husband Stephen Jerome, was quite satisfied after the screening.

“What an incredible experience for both of us. It’s great to see all backgrounds of the region come together to learn about each other’s talents. A big thank you to Natalie Clark for her efforts to bring the production to New Richmond. It was a wonderful experience. I also learned a lot I did not know about New Richmond,” she said on March 9.

Trudy Brown adds that “it felt wonderful to see my little hometown on the big screen, and what I appreciated, even more, was having English content played at the Salle des Spectacles. It’s been decades since we have had English content played there. I remember loving getting to watch movies there. I’m sure that now that the country has been introduced to New Richmond, tourism will increase. And a special kudos to the lady who made this possible; Natalie Clark. I’ve never seen someone work so hard and truly listen to the citizens of the town.”

Teacher Darlene Dimock also praises the episode for its historical relevance, when thinking of the young generation. “I really enjoyed the whole show and appreciated the inclusion of all three cultures. I showed the episode to my grade 3 and 4 students today and they were surprised at how much they learned about our area. They were proud to see the various landmarks on a tv show. They didn’t realize that there used to be a mill in New Richmond. It was entertaining and educational.”

Still Standing is easy to find online, on CBC Gem (season 8: episode 10).

CSN launches awareness campaign

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

CHANDLER - As collective agreement negotiations get underway for civil servants, three unions affiliated with the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN) in the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands are asking Quebec to maintain “truly public” public services.

“For several years now, we have suffered attacks on public services. There has been a tendency for the government over the past few years to privatize certain services. We believe that the best way to have quality services is for those services to be public, from A to Z,” says the vice president of the Federation of Health and Social Services in

the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands, Kent Denis.

The CSN will produce information capsules and leaflets to raise public awareness over the coming weeks.

“The government, as we can see, wants to privatize several sectors. He has invested so little in utilities that people are starting to think why not pay out of pocket if I need services? We have the impression that the government wants to sabotage public services so that people think that the private sector is better,” says Mr. Denis.

On March 5, union members from the Federation of Health and Social Services, the Federation of Public Service Employees and the Federation of Quebec Teachers in the Rocher-Percé MRC partici-

pated in the region’s first awareness campaign, in Chandler, marking the start of public sector negotiations. “There is always the question of salaries. But we also see privatization happening in the Gaspé Peninsula. We see agencies coming in. Millions and millions of dollars go up in smoke for services that could be provided to the public at a lower cost,” says Mr. Denis.

Approximately forty CSN union members took part in the regional campaign.

Similar activities will be held in the coming weeks in the region.

“People are going to be active over the next few months. I can assure you of that,” says Mr. Denis.

Quebec supports museums with over \$4.4M in operating assistance

GILLES GAGNÉ

PASPEBIAC – Two Gaspé Peninsula museums now have access to regular government funding from the Quebec government. The Department of Culture and Communications recently announced \$4.4 million in support from its three-year operating assistance program for museums.

The operation assistance program for museums, which already supports five establishments in the Gaspé Peninsula and two in the Magdalen Islands, will now also provide funding to Bonaventure's Bioparc de la Gaspésie and the Exploramer Museum in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts.

The Bioparc will receive \$813,640, and the Exploramer Museum will get \$866,700 between this year and 2025 inclusively.

The Banc-de-Paspébiac Historic Site will receive \$463,620 compared to \$420,000 between 2019 and 2022. The Musée acadien will receive \$785,360 compared to \$739,000 for the previous three-year period.

The Musée de la Gaspésie in Gaspé will receive \$843,600, the Corporation du Bourg de Pabos \$322,150 and the Manoir Lebouthillier in Griffon Cove, \$336,130.

This agreement between the Government of Quebec and the recognized museums of the Gaspé Peninsula was initially renewed annually but now covers three years.

The renewal was announced in a press release by the Members of the National



The Banc-de-Paspébiac Historic Site will receive \$463,620 compared to \$420,000 between 2019-2020 and 2021-2022

Assembly for the riding of Bonaventure and Gaspé, Catherine Blouin and Stéphane Sainte-Croix, respectively. The announcement was made on behalf of the Minister of Culture and Communications, Minister responsible for Youth, and Minister responsible for the Abitibi-Témiscamingue and the Outaouais regions, Mathieu Lacombe.

The exact amount allocated over three years is \$4,430,200. The financial assistance granted to these museums provides support for organizations in the accomplishment of their mission and the realization of their action plan, specifically by showcasing their collections and themes, diversification of their educational and cultural activities, and the development of their offerings to vis-

itors. This financial assistance contributes to the region's vitality and allows visitors to discover heritage elements, regional history, arts and culture.

"Museums contribute significantly to the dynamism of all regions of Quebec by making art and culture accessible to the entire population. These places of creation, reflection, discovery and education also constitute valuable allies in making our culture known and promoted, particularly among youth. Our government is pleased to offer its support to museums so that they can accomplish their mission, as well as, develop and shine. I invite Quebecers to continue to visit many of our museums to fill up on enriching experiences," points out Minister of Culture

and Communications Mathieu Lacombe.

Bonaventure riding Member of the National Assembly, Catherine Blouin adds "the museum offer in the Gaspésie is more than impressive! It embodies our collective heritage. Not only do these recent government investments make it possible to support the museums of our territory, but also, it is a great way to highlight the richness of their contributions to the dynamism of our communities."

Her colleague MNA Stéphane Sainte-Croix stresses that "the museums present on the region's territory testify to the rich history

of several of our communities and are also attractive elements for our visitors. Supporting their operations enables them to carry out their mission and contribute to regional pride. I thank the minister for this fine announcement."

At about 2%, the yearly budgetary adjustment between 2022-2023 and 2024-2025 is significantly lower than the inflation rate of 2022, which amounted to 6.8%.

During the 2022-2023 government budget, an additional amount of \$6 million over three years was announced for the operating assistance program. The amount applies to all of Quebec.

The operating assistance program has two components. The first recognizes the contribution of the regional and provincial museums to the cultural development of their territory and their central role in the conservation and dissemination of heritage.

The second part reaffirms the Culture and Communications Department's responsibility concerning the museums that manage heritage assets protected by the Act respecting the cultural heritage and confirms the need to highlight and give access to these elements of our history.

Funding allocation

Site	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Total
Centre d'interprétation du phoque	\$156,780	\$159,920	\$163,120	\$479,820
Musée de la Mer	\$213,140	\$217,400	\$221,750	\$652,290
Musée acadien du Québec	\$256,620	\$261,750	\$266,990	\$785,360
Musée de la Gaspésie	\$275,320	\$280,830	\$286,450	\$842,600
Corporation du Bourg de Pabos	\$105,260	\$107,370	\$109,520	\$322,150
Manoir LeBoutillier	\$109,830	\$112,030	\$114,270	\$336,130
Site Banc-de-Paspébiac inc.	\$151,490	\$154,520	\$157,610	\$463,620
Bioparc de la Gaspésie inc.	\$265,860	\$271,180	\$276,600	\$813,640
Exploramer	\$283,200	\$288,860	\$294,640	\$866,700



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“ May your pockets be heavy
and your heart be light.
May good luck pursue you
each morning and night. ”
— Irish Blessing



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Happy first day of spring!

Diane SKINNER

If the weather agrees or not, the official first day of spring is March 20, 2023. The vernal equinox marks the beginning of the new season and a time of renewal. The days become longer and the nights become shorter and in time the weather will be warmer.

As the planet revolves around the Sun, the Earth is always tilted in relation to the Sun. The North Pole always points in the same direction and because of this, different areas of the Earth receive varying amounts of sunlight at different times of the year. This is what causes seasons.

An equinox (there are two each year) occurs when the sun is positioned exactly over the Equator. On these two dates annually, the hours of daylight and night are just about equal. This year the autumn equinox will take



One of the earliest spring wildflowers is the dandelion which provides food for birds, bees and butterflies. The entire plant including the leaves, stems, flowers and roots are edible and nutritious - for humans too.

Photo: Thelma Day

place on September 23. After that date, the days become shorter and the nights become longer.

The vernal equinox, a time of renewal and growth in nature, is officially celebrated by various cultures such as the Baha'i and Zoroastrian religions who view this time as their New Year.

The vernal equinox lasts this year until June 21 when we will welcome the summer solstice.

Spring has finally arrived

The grass is green across the hill,
But yellow blooms the daffodil.
It's sunshine on a little stalk,
A friendly flower, I bet they talk...

Of little kids, too long inside
They burst outdoors to play and hide.
Tracking mud and bringing bugs.
Look, there's footprints on the rug!

Tiny whirlwinds, these little tykes,
They skin their knees while riding bikes.
They rip and roar, they're running wild!
What fun it is to be a child.

It grows warmer every day.
Shoo the children out to play!
Pick the flowers, play in mud.
Too much rain, here comes a flood!

The snowy, winter days are gone.
I mourn them, but I hear a song
Of birds in trees; wind chimes ring.
I guess it might as well be spring!

First Annual Shigawake Winter Carnival

Diane SKINNER

SHIGAWAKE: On the cold but sunny weekend of February 18 to 20, the First Annual Shigawake Winter Carnival took place. The carnival was organized by Heather Imhoff, who is the head of the Shigawake Family Committee and members of the Shigawake Agricultural Society. These two organizations came together to provide activities for people of all ages.

On Friday evening the carnival got underway with a Snow Ball dance.

On Saturday, Madame Lulu Berlue entertained the children with face painting, balloon animals and glitter tattoos. Bright Beginnings also offered activities for children. The afternoon was filled with games including an egg toss, a sleigh pull and snowshoe races. Those in attendance then had a chance to sample maple taffy.

On Saturday, the chainsaw and snowblowing competitions were both huge hits. The day ended with a bonfire, with smores and music, which was enjoyed by many.

On Sunday, to complete the weekend's activities, there was



Photo: Heather Imhoff

The egg toss competition at the Shigawake carnival.

a lumberjack breakfast and a skidoo rally.

Heather Imhoff tells Spec that at least 50 children and 150 adults attended the carnival, which is a great turnout for the first year of the event.

The carnival was made pos-

sible thanks to many community sponsors and a dedicated group of volunteers who worked hard to make the Carnival a reality. Heather states, "We plan on coming back next year with an even better carnival!"

Reflections

by

Diane Skinner Flowers



The Gentle Art of Swedish Death Cleaning:

Have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful.

Some years ago, a dear friend asked for help to clean and pack up her recently departed mother's home. "Sure," I thought, "that should not take long." Wrong. On the hottest day of July, we began the monumental task of packing up her mother's home. She was not exactly a hoarder, but there was so much, the task turned out to be overwhelming. We developed a system we termed the Big Three: stuff to keep, stuff to donate, and stuff to throw out. We were swamped. Add to the mix the friendly, but interfering neighbour who wanted to go through the items bagged and ready to go for garbage at the curb. Dear Edna kept bits of wool, used butter tart tins, dead batteries and thousands of photos. By the end of Day 1, we were exhausted and had completed just one room.

The book, *The Gentle Art of Swedish Death Cleaning: Free Yourself and Your Family from a Lifetime of Clutter*, was published in 2017, but its message is still of great value. This book outlines a method of cleaning out the clutter now, not when you are forced to, due to health, age or even death when somebody else will have to do it. The idea is that decluttering your life is a positive thing. It's a way of taking stock of what is important and getting rid of that which is not. The author approaches this as a positive and joy-filled process. But on that sweltering July afternoon, my friend and I were not all that joyful.

This process gives older people an opportunity to use the Big Three method now, and not later when they may not be able to. Would you like to decide who gets the photos, spoon collection and needlework? Now is the time, because if you are gone, you do not have any say in where your possessions go. Also, this prevents the family from arguing about who gets the blue lamps or your sea glass collection. It gives you some peace of mind.

Keep in mind that the things we value may not be those our children want at all. I had a large china cup and saucer collection. When I offered them to my daughters their facial expressions told it all. They were not interested. Many younger people do not want your heavy old clunky dining room set. We may not be doing them a favour by holding on to those things.

So, if somebody calls and asks what you are up to, spread the message and say, "I am in the process of death cleaning." It means that you are simply removing unnecessary things in order to make your home neat, and tidy and when you leave this planet you have not left a giant burden for your loved ones. Either we do it or they will have to. Our children might not want to talk about death cleaning with us. But after all, these things that fill our homes are just stuff. It is people that matter.

As the author of the book *The Gentle Art of Swedish Death Cleaning* writes, death cleaning is "a permanent form of organization that makes

everyday life run smoothly." A terrific and attainable goal.

What better legacy to leave behind than to ease the bereavement process for the ones we love? In the meanwhile, we can live our golden years without clutter.



Irish - Gaspesians celebrate St. Patrick's Day

DIANE SKINNER

DOUGLASTOWN AND CASCAPEDIA-ST. JULES: Gaspesians of Irish heritage are proud to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. In the 1840s waves of Irish immigrants began to arrive in the Gaspé Peninsula when the potato famine devastated one of Ireland's main food sources – potatoes. In addition, in 1847 the Irish ship “The Carricks” was carrying Irish immigrants to Montreal when it was destroyed during a huge storm at Cap des Rosiers. Over 120 passengers perished and some of the surviving passengers settled in the area.

Linda Drody of Douglastown shares her reflections about St. Patrick's Day: Years ago, before I was born, St. Patrick's Day was a holiday in Douglastown and the stores and post office were closed. During most of my years in Douglastown we al-



This photo taken over 40 years ago at a Douglastown St. Patrick's Day play organized by Gary (spelling?) Briand. The actors, left to right are Wilfred Marion, Bernard Rooney, Scott Rooney, Dennis Hackett and Billy Mulrooney.

Photo: Linda Drody

ways had three concerts for St. Patrick's. The first two concerts were always jam-packed while the Sunday matinee was half full. The school kids were the first performers singing songs, dancing and reciting poems.

The adults sang, danced, and acted in plays. Anyone with any talent in acting,

dancing, singing or playing an instrument was a welcome participant. In the 1990s I organized a few concerts, sang and wrote skits and was the master of ceremony for many of them.

Today is very different. Many of our Irish have passed away so this year we will celebrate at the old St. Patrick's

school in Douglastown which is now a community centre.

We will sing, have a square dance and tell a few jokes, as the Irish like to do. We will celebrate with joy as we sing together but there is sadness too, for we are finding it more difficult to hold onto our Irish traditions. There are fewer of us now.

But first thing Saint Patrick's morning I will take out my Irish teapot and set the table for my Irish tea with scones and then I will send out a message to wish all the Irish and wannabe Irish a “Top-a-de-mornin' to ya!” And while I'm at it... “Top-a-de-morning to you too!”

Elaine Sexton of Cascapedia-St. Jules tells SPEC: St. Patrick's in our community was celebrated for decades with an annual concert, a special Mass, and a pot luck supper. Unfortunately, since Covid, the supper can no longer be held, and there are not many people to participate in the concert anymore.

My family still enjoys playing our Irish heritage music, and remembering our history with a tear and a smile.

The best things in life are the people we love, the places we've seen and the memories we've made along the way.

Irish proverb

Why wear green on St. Patrick's Day and other interesting myths and facts about March 17!

DIANE SKINNER

St. Patrick's Day started as a religious holiday, but over the years has become a celebration of Irish culture. Who was St. Patrick and why do we wear green on the day?

St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, was actually born in Scotland. Born in the fourth

century, he arrived in Ireland to work when he was 16 years old. It was in his new country where he became interested in Christianity and over the years converted many people to that religion. St. Patrick's Day is celebrated on the day of his recorded death.

Though St. Patrick was a real person, some of the customs surrounding the day are

not based on fact. We have all heard about the luck of the four-leaf clover but according to legends, Patrick used a three-leaf clover or shamrock. Four-leaf clovers do exist and we associate them with good luck.

Snakes!

Patrick is sometimes given credit for ridding Ireland of snakes, but this is simply a myth. Many animals that can be found in Europe do not live on the island of Ireland. According to animal researchers, no evidence confirms that snakes ever lived on the island. Scientists tell us that is because snakes could not reach the island due to it being surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean to the west, the Celtic Sea to the south and the Irish Sea separating it from England to the east.

Wearing Green

The wearing of green on St. Patrick's Day has evolved over centuries. Blue was the first colour associated with the day! It was not until the 1700s when the shamrock became a national symbol that green became more commonly displayed on St. Patrick's. In

addition, the landscape of Ireland is very “green,” so it is a tribute to the lush, green beauty of the island.

Even in ancient stories about leprechauns, their first colour was recounted as being red. Over the centuries, green came to be the colour associated with leprechauns. In fact, if you wear green on St. Patrick's Day it will protect you from being pinched by a wee leprechaun. Keep a sharp eye out for a leprechaun that might lead you to a pot of gold!

Others wear green because of the belief that it will bring them good luck or simply be-

cause it honours the Irish and their ancestry. In Chicago Illinois, the Chicago River is dyed green every year in honour of the holiday. Some bars and taverns dye their draft beer green on St. Patrick's Day.

Others celebrate the day by eating traditional Irish foods such as beer soup, Shepherd's pie, corned beef and cabbage, Irish stew, soda bread and colcannon (a mix of mashed potatoes, kale or cabbage and butter).

Irish coffee delivers a big punch. A blend of Irish whiskey, hot coffee and sugar and topped with cream.



Photo: Debbie Sams

Once a religious holiday, St. Patrick's Day has evolved over centuries to be a celebration of Irish culture.

The Emerald Isle

Green hills and rolling landscapes,
A land of ancient charm.
Where music fills the air,
And the spirit is warm.
On St. Patrick's Day,
We celebrate this isle.
With dancing, laughter, and joy,
And a happy Irish smile.
From Dublin to Galway,
And every village in between,
We honor our heritage,
And the love that we've seen.
So let us raise a toast,
To the Emerald Isle so grand.
May the luck of the Irish,
Forever be at hand.



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Announcements



Obituary



HOWATSON: Harold Wilson

September 4, 1925 – February 24, 2023

On Friday, February 24, 2023, surrounded by infinite love, and in the warm embrace of his family, Harold Wilson Howatson passed into the Divine mystery, and the life ever after.

Harold was pre-deceased by his wife Joan Fairservice, who was always his dearest Joan. Passing before him were his parents Weston and Alice Howatson, and siblings Percival, Mary, Lester, Dorothy, James, Ethel, Everett, and Annie.

Harold was deeply embedded in the lives of his children, who provided him with his greatest joy. His love had no bounds and to his last day he strove to make things easier for them. Barbara (Jean-Jacques), Ross (Leslie), and Linda (Alfonso) are all better people for his love and guidance. He leaves an immensely loved granddaughter Julieanne (Chris), who will greatly miss her Guppy. She was a source of great joy to him especially after Mom passed away, and filled his heart with love.

Harold leaves many nieces and nephews with memories of his warm smile and good nature, but especially, Janet (Ray), Joanne (Kim), and Eileen (James). He enjoyed family gatherings, often at the home of his brother Everett and sister-in-law Ferne.

Harold lived a full and happy life, 97 years, all of them in Black Cape and New Richmond. His childhood gave him wonderful memories of skiing on home-made skis, going to the beach at Howatson Point on Sundays, riding the bicycle that came from his brother Jimmy, blueberry picking in Cullens Brook, dances at the house to raise money for the war effort, learning to drive the truck early Sunday mornings when everyone was asleep, and getting caught at it, Carlo the dog, and Shirley the horse who enjoyed at least one visit inside the house. There was always lots of laughter, such as the only time his father tried to drive a car, and of course, wonderful cooking from his mother.

With his dearest Joan, they created a happy and loving home. Whether it was summer holidays in the Maritimes, time spent at the camp on Starrack's brook, walks in the woods or at the beach, or playing cards, there was always time for activities with his children. Travels across the Rockies to visit relatives, to Disney World and Clearwater Beach in Florida, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland, and of course trips to Ottawa, Toronto and Kemptonville gave him much happiness.

Closer to home, drives up the river, or down the coast made for many happy hours. Watching the deer dance in the front yard, the foxes curled up with their sly smiles, the chickadees (Piggy in particular), and the pileated woodpecker at his window, and the

cats Snoopy and Tiger, all gave Dad much amusement. Calls and visits of family and friends in the last years, as well as new friends he made at Richmond Manor, all broadened the circle of love around him.

Harold was a devoted Christian and an integral part of St. Andrew's United Church. The stone fence at St. Andrew's was one of his last church projects and being part of that work was important to him, as each pillar was in memory of someone he knew.

The gift of the stained-glass windows in the doors of the vestibule to the hall, in memory of Joan was his way to acknowledging her place in his heart, and in the church. His faith sustained him in difficult times.

Harold's real passion bloomed when he retired from the mill, and he established his wood working shop. He spent many joyful hours in his workshop creating lasting memories for a wide circle of friends and family, finding their way into homes across the country.

Harold's favourite season was spring, as it was a promise of new life, and the garden in Black Cape was his summer passion, in particular his dahlias and nasturtiums.

Harold was a thinker, a problem and puzzle solver at his core. He was deeply curious about the world around him, and concerned for the welfare of other people. An avid reader, news follower, Jeopardy and Wheel of Fortune watcher, his mind was always open to learning new things. As a lifelong Maple Leafs and Blue Jays fan, he was an eternal optimist.

Harold had a tremendous sense of humour, the best when laughing at his own joke. He always had a ready smile for everyone, too beautiful to forget. All his life, Harold exemplified kindness, fairness, broadmindedness, and gratitude. He was humble, too humble to accept the wonderful and special person he was. He was selfless, brave, and loving. His entire life he strove to make things better for his children and those around him, and for that we are eternally grateful.

The Celebration of Life for Harold was held on Monday, March 6, 2023 at St. Andrew's United Church in New Richmond.

For those who wish, donations to either Fondation Sante Baie des Chaleurs, at Fondationsantebaie.com, the Richmond Manor Memorial Fund at 196 Perron Blvd Ouest, New Richmond, Quebec, G0C 2B0, or the charity of your choice.

There will be an interment of Harold's ashes at Black Cape Cemetery, at a later date.



In Memory

COUTURE: Martial

In loving memory of a dear husband, father and grandfather who passed away March 14, 2018.

Death leaves heartache

No one can heal.

Memories are treasures

No one can steal.

Some may forget you

Now that you are gone,

But we will remember

No matter how long.

You will always stay

Loved and remembered

In every way.

No tears, no verse,

Can ever say how much

We miss you every day.

Loved always, your wife, children, grandchildren and family.



RENOUF: Harold (Buddy)

In loving memory of my dear husband and father, who passed away six years ago on March 16, 2017.

It's been six years

Since the Lord called you home,

But, now we know you're free

In Heaven's land to roam.

Life is not the same,

And we still miss you each day,

But like God's love,

You showed us the way.

So when we see a rainbow

We try not to be sad,

Instead we think of all

The memories that we had.

We miss and love you every day xoxox wife Leila, children Donald (Brenda), Richard (Kathy) and Karen (Ricky) and their families.

Announcement Prices

Obituary and Wedding → **\$40**
(picture + \$5)

Up to 300 words. If it is more, we will give you a quote.

All other Announcements → **\$30**
(picture + \$5)

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Deadline

Wednesday at 4 p.m. to appear in the following week's issue.



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New memberships and renewals are being accepted. \$15 per person or \$25 per couple. All new membership and renewals can be sent to Gaspé Cancer Foundation, P.O. Box 6078, Gaspé, Quebec G4X 2M6. Payment can also be made by e-transfer to gaspe45@hotmail.com. Please include your name, address, phone number and email address. For more information, please contact Tony Patterson at 418-368-3276; Beatrice Coffin at 418-368-1566 or Patricia Ste. Croix at 418-649-3779.

GASPÉ:

Royal Canadian Legion
Please be advised that Legion memberships are

available for \$50. Returning and new members welcome.

PORT DANIEL: Three Star Golden Age Club

Tuesdays: Pétanque from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. every Tuesday evening to have fun and learn a new game. Cost is \$3.

April 28: Gift bingo beginning at 7 p.m. \$10 a strip and \$20 a series.

May 13: Mother's Day tea from noon to 2 p.m. \$10 per person.

SHIGAWAKE: Community Centre

April 10: Gift bingo - Details to follow.

HOPE: Hope Baptist Church

Sundays: Sunday School starting at 10 a.m. Worship service beginning at 11 a.m.

**NEW CARLISLE:
Bible Chapel Meetings**
Sundays: 9:30 a.m. Breaking of Bread for believers. 2 p.m. Gospel meeting and Sunday School.

Thursdays: 7 p.m. Prayer Meeting and Bible Study. Everyone welcome! For more information: 418-752-3372 or 418-752-6011.

NEW CARLISLE: Royal Canadian Legion Branch #64

Please be advised that Legion memberships are available for \$45. Returning and new members welcome.

Wednesdays: Line dancing every Wednesday in March at 7:30 p.m. \$7 per person.

Thursdays: Open from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Fridays: Darts beginning at 6:30 p.m.

Saturdays: Open at 2 p.m. Everyone welcome!

April 4: General meeting at 7 p.m. at 1 Mount Sorrel, New Carlisle.

**CASCAPEDIA:
Mutual Aid Committee**
March 19: A St. Patrick's Brunch (plate), will be held from 8 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Tickets will be sold at the door of the Cascapedia-St-Jules Community Centre. \$16 for ages 13+, \$8 for ages 7-12, and free for ages 6 and under. We cannot accept prepared dishes; if you wish to help by giving a monetary gift towards the purchase of groceries, or to volunteer your time to help with the brunch, please contact: Martine Boudreau at 418-759-5845 or Francine Pelletier at 418-392-0918.



UNITED CHURCH

NEW RICHMOND
Sunday, March 19
10 a.m. Service

UNITED CHURCH

HOPE TOWN
Sunday, March 19
10 a.m. Service

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

Sunday, March 19
NEW CARLISLE
10 a.m. Holy Eucharist
SHIGAWAKE
10 a.m. Morning Prayer with Vestry



ARIES – Mar 21/Apr 20
So many things are moving your way, Aries. As the week progresses, your energy level could rise and you will get much more done. Leave time for meaningful encounters.

TAURUS – Apr 21/May 21
Taurus, connect with nature this week. Go hiking at a national park or visit a zoo and take in the exotic animals. Fresh outdoor air is just what you need.

GEMINI – May 22/June 21
Gemini, this week marks a new cycle for you. This means you should focus your energy on your ideas and try to narrow down

prospects as much as possible.

CANCER – Jun 22/Jul 22
You may need a little inspiration to get moving this week, Cancer. While it's alright to take it easy on Monday or Tuesday, by Wednesday you need to shake away what's holding you back.

LEO – Jul 23/Aug 23
Your brain is filled with many thoughts, Leo. With so much buzzing around in your head, it may be challenging to focus. Consult with a friend to help you out.

VIRGO – Aug 24/Sept 22
Virgo, enjoy the calm while you can because later in the week the pace may become frenzied. Emotions may run

high as everyone is rushing around.

LIBRA – Sept 23/Oct 23
People are drawn to you more so than usual, Libra. All this newfound attention may feel a little overwhelming. Find some quiet time to ground yourself and refocus.
SCORPIO – Oct 24/Nov 22
Scorpio, you have many ideas for the future, but you need to get moving. Is something or someone holding you back? Have an honest conversation about what you need.

SAGITTARIUS – Nov 23/Dec 21
Exercise caution when you speak about other people at work, Sagittarius. Not everyone will share your

views and you need to work peacefully with others.

CAPRICORN – Dec 22/Jan 20

You may want to remain in an easygoing state, Capricorn, but others are not letting you just hang around. You need to get some things accomplished this week.

AQUARIUS – Jan 21/Feb 18

You may be feeling like you are moving a little slow, Aquarius. But if you write down all you have gotten done, then you're likely to discover you've been quite busy.

PISCES – Feb 19/Mar 20
Be on the lookout for a cat-

alyst that can put you on the path for big changes, Pisces. You can use some fresh inspiration.

FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS

- MARCH 12**
Mitt Romney, Politician (76)
MARCH 13
Coco Gauff, Athlete (19)
MARCH 14
Simone Biles, Gymnast (26)
MARCH 15
Kellan Lutz, Actor (38)
MARCH 16
Alexandra Daddario, Actress (37)
MARCH 17
Rob Lowe, Actor (59)
MARCH 18
Lily Collins, Actress (34)

ANNOUNCE ALL YOUR UPCOMING EVENTS!

Does your organization have a Coast Round-Up plan? If so, don't forget to send SPEC information about your upcoming activities.

Be sure to include:

- location
- date
- time
- cost



HELP KEEP YOUR COMMUNITY INFORMED

DEADLINE IS WEDNESDAYS AT 4 P.M. TO APPEAR IN FOLLOWING WEEK'S PAPER

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All about Saint Patrick's Day

Up your St. Paddy's Day savvy with these fun facts about the year's most popular party day!

A few Irish jokes

Get ready to groan! - Diane Skinner

Why shouldn't you borrow money from a leprechaun?
Because they're always a little short.
What do you call environmentally conscious leprechauns?
Wee-cyclers.
What do you call it when a leprechaun does a prank?
A saint Pat-trick.
What do you call a leprechaun's vacation home?
A lepre-condo.
Why shouldn't you iron a four-leaf clover?
You might press your luck!
What's the perfect St. Paddy's Day breakfast?
Green eggs and ham.
What's Dwayne Johnson's Irish nickname?
The Sham-Rock.

Going green

- Diane Skinner

Green is a colour that is associated with jealousy, nature, and good luck! In English, we have many expressions that have the word green in them. See how many you can identify.

1. To give approval to go ahead.
2. To be good with plants and gardens.
3. A place (or situation) that is different and seems better than where you are.
4. Feeling unwell or sick to your stomach.
5. Feeling very envious or jealous.
6. For sure, without a doubt.
7. A very young, inexperienced person
8. To have permission to go ahead and do something.
9. An American \$1 bill.
10. To be extremely jealous.

ANSWERS:

(1) Give the green light. (2) Have a green thumb. (3) The grass is always greener on the other side. (4) Green around the gills. (5) Green with envy. (6) Sure as God made little green apples. (7) Greenhorn. (8) Give the green light. (9) A greenback. (10) Green-eyed monster.



Leprechauns

In Celtic folklore, leprechauns were ill-tempered "shoemaker" fairies who used trickery to protect their hidden pots of gold. The modern-day perception of jolly leprechauns associated with St. Patrick's Day may come from the Walt Disney film *Darby O'Gill & the Little People*, released in 1959.



Shamrocks

According to legend, St. Patrick used the three-leaf clover to teach the concept of the Christian Holy Trinity to the Irish people. The Irish traditionally considered shamrocks sacred plants, symbolizing the fortuitous rebirth of spring.



ST. PATRICK'S DAY TODAY...

13 Million

The number of **Guinness pints consumed** worldwide on St. Patrick's Day

70 Million

The number of **people** across the globe claiming Irish heritage or ancestry

\$5.3 Billion

The total amount of **money spent** on St. Patrick's Day

70%

The increase in **cabbage shipments** during the week of St. Patrick's Day



New organization offers women's wellness events

GILLES GAGNÉ

ESCUMINAC - A series of four women's wellness events are coming up in April, in Escuminac, New Richmond, New Carlisle and Douglastown. The events are being produced by a new organization in our region, Turas, the brainchild of Ann Kelly, Mary Robertson and Cynthia Dow.

The word "Turas" means "journey" or "pilgrimage" in Gaelic and signifies for the three partners the fact that wellness constitutes a journey throughout people's lives, with its ups and downs, challenges and successes.

"We have been meeting regularly since 2019 to consider the social problems we see around us, and how we can best serve our community in addressing these problems. For several generations, our society has promoted the false idea that outer circumstances such as wealth, possessions, career and status are the only way to "the good life," and that you can achieve this success through individual willpower. We wish to show a different way, a different kind of success, a different journey through life," explains Mary

Robertson.

According to the three women, the COVID pandemic has created even greater suffering in terms of isolation, loneliness, illness and mourning. People in the Gaspé Peninsula need a boost to help recover their balance.

The four events are being designed to "encourage self-understanding and compassion, to explore values that sustain and support rather than weaken and divide. It will also be the beginning of a journey towards connection, not only with one's inner self but also a connection with the community and the natural world."

As Cynthia Dow points out, "despite our rather different experiences of life, we three have found that quality of life is an inside job with a vast web of connections. We believe that people have more agency over happiness and balance in their lives than our society would have them believe."

New Carlisle's Ann Kelly has been ordained as an Interfaith/Inter-spiritual minister with One Spirit Seminary in New York City. She is currently offering Thursday evening Centering Prayer



From left to right, the leaders of Turas, Cynthia Dow, Ann Kelly and Mary Robertson.

Photo: Turas

gatherings at St. Andrew's Anglican Church in New Carlisle, as well as monthly Wild Church offerings in various outdoor locations.

"From a very young age, I have spent much time in nature as a means of healing and connecting with the sacred. A daily exercise/movement routine, including walking, skiing, cycling, paddling and yoga, helps to keep me grounded and healthy," says Ann Kelly.

Mary Robertson, who hails from Cascapedia-St-Jules grew up as an observer of life and learned to question some of life's challenges at an early age. She graduated from a five-year international program of empowerment life coaching and mentoring with

the Simply Woman Accredited Trainer (SWAT) institute for women and went on to create a program called The Gift of Retelling Your Story© that she has used to help others understand, accept and love themselves so that they can escape their limiting beliefs.

"In my work, I like to help people move past their fears and challenges so that they can discover their true potential and experience some of their goals, wishes and dreams," she stresses.

For her part, Cynthia Dow has benefited a great deal from a variety of mindfulness practices over the past 30 years and is keen to share what she has learned with others.

"We know that there are proven tools and techniques

that we can share with people to help them better cope with emotional and mental turmoil. We know because we have experienced the benefits ourselves. And these tools and techniques are not complicated. It's a matter of trying them on for size," she says.

She is currently enrolled in the Mindfulness Meditation Teacher Certification Program offered by the Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley.

Additional information can be obtained on Turas: Join us on the Journey Facebook page or by emailing Turas.gaspesie@gmail.com. The events have received support from CASA, Groupe Desjardins, Vision Gaspé-Percé Now and the Gaspé Literacy Council.

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