



The road to sobriety | Pages 12-13

## Changes urged after woman killed by cyclist in Queenston

Julia Sacco  
The Lake Report

The death of Louise Leyland has shaken the small village of Queenston, whose residents have been fighting to improve traffic safety in the community for years.

• **An Appreciation:** Friends of Fort George executive director Amanda Gamble pays tribute to Louise Leyland. **Page 11**  
• **Traffic concerns:** Letter writer urges the town to act in the wake of this tragedy. **Page 7**

While out walking on Saturday afternoon, Leyland was tragically struck and killed by a cyclist on Queenston Street near Willowbank.

The retired teacher and board member of the Friends of Fort George was passionate about Niagara-on-the-Lake history and was active in the community.

Niagara Regional Police said she was hit by a 64-year-old cyclist as she crossed from the east to the west side of the narrow residential street.

The unidentified cyclist was southbound, riding toward the escarpment, police said.

Detectives from the police force's collision reconstruction unit are



Continued on Page 11 Louise Leyland.

## Council cuts \$95K from operating budget

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake council still hasn't approved the town's final operating budget for 2023, but found \$94,622 in savings during a special meeting on Tuesday.

The operating budget was proposed at \$43,920,434 for 2023, with the capital budget having been approved at \$9,695,042 last week.

About \$15 million of the proposed operating budget will come from the town's tax levy, with another \$952,110 being funded through areas where the town charges a special storm levy.

In the latest in a long series of debates, councillors were hoping Tuesday to finalize the operations budgets and were largely focused in on cost-saving, particularly surrounding town hires and contract workers.

Coun. Wendy Cheropita made a series of motions, many of them asking the

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## Gaio performance rocks Legion



Ryan Gaio and his band rock a crowd of about 150 people at the Legion on Saturday during his album release show. RICHARD HARLEY

Richard Harley  
The Lake Report

Ryan Gaio wanted local music in Niagara-on-the-Lake and that's exactly what he brought to the Legion on Saturday.

And people were there for it — about 150 of them, dancing the night away.

It was a surprise for Gaio, who would have been happy with a

crowd of 50.

"I think it went amazing. I'm just like so stoked and thrilled with how it all went," he said in an interview.

"It just blew me away beyond my wildest dreams and (I'm) already dreaming about the next

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## Special Report: Advocate pushes for affordable secondary units in NOTL

Somer Slobodian  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Last in a three-part series  
Housing advocate Scott Robinson foresees a future

in Niagara-on-the-Lake in which scores of existing homes sprout new, secondary units to provide living space for seniors, singles and anyone else in need of an affordable place to call home.

Simply put, NOTL needs to build more affordable and attainable housing options — and soon, he says.

And he thinks the most efficient way to increase housing density is for

existing homes to add more secondary suites and accessory dwelling units.

An accessory dwelling unit is a separate living space, such as a basement apartment or converted

garage, with essential amenities.

"We can build attainable housing everywhere. Because we need to build attainable housing everywhere," Robinson told The

Lake Report.

He isn't backing down and hopes to push NOTL council to encourage more such housing alternatives.

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# Neighbours talked for years about safety problems

*Continued from Front Page*

leading the investigation with the help of detectives from the forensic services unit.

Jim Armstrong, president of the Queenston Residents' Association, was devastated by news of Leyland's death.

And, like many in the community, he wants to see changes made to control traffic and prevent future tragedies.

"This one is so tragic. It's unspeakable and we never really thought it would be a bike and pedestrian issue," he said.

"Pre-COVID we were talking to the town by email, trying to find out how to drop the speed limit here and encouraging the town to have a community meeting to look at some of these issues around parking and the speed limit, and maybe making a community safety zone," Armstrong said.

For the most part, there are no sidewalks and typically traffic is moving quickly, he added, and often there's "no audible signal that they are coming, no bells, no horn."

"Nobody ever stops and bikes wipe out on the far side frequently," he said.

Tracee Smith, another Queenston resident and member of the association, told *The Lake Report* that she contacted the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake about a year ago with that very



Louise Leyland leads a guided tour in Queenston Heights on the 209th anniversary of the Battle of Queenston, on Oct. 13, 2021. FILE/EVAN SAUNDERS

concern in mind.

"We've seen so many near-death accidents happen," she said.

"We see cyclists wipe out all the time, especially as tourist season picks up."

Smith described several instances of cyclists jumping curbs, cars getting T-boned, mailboxes being hit and, on some occasions, ambulances being called.

"It's awful and we've been saying this for years. I have an email to the town from last August where I said to them, 'You guys need to do something because someone's going to die.'"

Her close friend and

neighbour, Sandra Gowans, remembers Leyland's deep love of learning and history.

"Her favourite thing was working with the Friends of Fort George, particularly at (Queenston) Heights, being the teacher that she was and she loved teaching the students," said Gowans.

Throughout her eventful life, Leyland wore many hats, one of which was being a teacher in Niagara for years. She is survived by her husband Don and sons Sean and Tyler.

Sean described the passion his mother had for her work and her ability to touch the lives of many.

"Man, she was strong, persistent and strong," he said.

"She just got things done. You hear stories, especially from her generation, about how women weren't supposed to be like that, you know?" he said.

"Mom just turned around and said 'That's not the life I want. I want a life that's better than that, that's fuller than that. I don't want to just be a housewife and have kids, I want to have a career.'"

A private family service will be held and a community celebration of her life is planned for mid-

May. Details will be posted on the website of the George Darte Funeral Chapel in St. Catharines.

Recalling some of the standout moments in Leyland's past, her lifelong friend, Coun. Sandra O'Connor, spoke of her generosity and passion.

"She was more like a sister to me than a friend. She'd been in my life since I was three years old. She was my matron of honour. Our lives were always intertwined even though I didn't always live close," O'Connor said.

"She was a teacher for many, many years, she was also on the board of directors for the Friends of Fort George and she was a Reiki master and often helped out at Wellspring."

One moment in their lives O'Connor says particularly stands out was during the 1955 World Scout Jamboree in NOTL, the first ever to be held in Canada.

Leyland, who was volunteering, caught the attention of June Carter Cash, whose boys were at the Jamboree. She asked young Leyland to be her children's summer caregiver.

"She went to Nashville that summer, watched the kids and met Johnny Cash."

Most of all, Leyland is remembered as an active member of the community and a friend to all she met.

Gowans was thankful for sharing time with Leyland,

especially on their walks together and said many in the community likely feel the same.

"We talked and walked for about an hour or more sometimes. I can think of all the conversations and you know it was a bit of anything and everything. It was like therapy. Whenever I'd get frustrated I'd call her up and ask 'Can you go for a walk?'"

"She always seemed to know what to say if you were feeling down or just to cheer you up and I'll miss her sense of humour and smile," said Gowans.

In the wake of her death, Queenston residents are as dedicated as ever to getting the Town of NOTL to make their community safer for pedestrians and cyclists alike.

Smith said this preventable crash unfortunately doesn't come as a surprise.

"I'll be shocked to see if the town actually does something, to be honest. God knows residents have been complaining about this for years."

Armstrong said the residents association has already begun more work in hopes of forcing change.

"The bottom line is we want to reopen our conversation with the town about a number of safety issues in Queenston and see what solutions there might be."

## An Appreciation: Memories of Louise Leyland's contributions to the community

*After the tragic death Saturday of Louise Leyland, who was killed when she was hit by a cyclist in Queenston, The Lake Report asked Amanda Gamble, the executive director of the Friends of Fort George, to share her memories of this remarkable woman from the Niagara-on-the-Lake community.*

Amanda Gamble  
Special to The Lake Report

If you ever visited Brock's Monument on a warm autumn day, you most likely met Louise Leyland, one of the amazing heritage interpreters employed by the Friends of Fort George.

Louise started working with the Friends of Fort George more than 25 years ago, when she retired as a school teacher.

She became a mentor to countless students who worked at Brock's

Monument over the years, sharing her passion for the site and for Canada's early history with everyone she met – along with her muffins and baked goods.

She influenced so many young people with her charm, wit and sincere caring.

Louise was extremely involved with the planning of the Bicentennial of the War of 1812, and worked with committees on planning the re-enactments of the Battle of Queenston Heights and the funeral of Maj.-Gen. Sir Isaac Brock.

She also sat as a representative for the Friends of Fort George on the Landscape of Nations educational committee and this is where she truly excelled.

Louise was extremely passionate about Indigenous history and ensuring that anyone who visited the site understood the connection between Brock and the Indigenous community.

In 2016, Louise became more involved with the Friends of Fort George as a board member.

She dedicated countless volunteer hours to ensuring events ran smoothly, such as the Canada Day celebrations, the Fife and Drum Muster, and special tours at Brock's Monument.

Her love for history and her love for teaching shone through whenever she was talking about the War of 1812 and Sir Isaac Brock's role in making Canada a nation of its own. She could speak at any level, from small children to adolescents and adults.

Louise will always be remembered for the indelible mark she left on Brock's Monument. It truly was her second home.

She would often reminisce about Queenston Heights being her favourite place on Earth – it was the site of her engagement to her beloved husband Don

and the village of Queenston was her home, where she raised her two sons.

Louise was more than just an employee or just a board member of the Friends of Fort George.

She was a lively, happy, caring woman who was more than willing to share her time and expertise with anyone who was interested.

I will truly miss her as a confidante and friend. There was no one like Louise.

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I also have spoken with Erika Alexander, the former executive director of the Friends of Fort George, and she asked me to pass along the following:

Louise was truly a giving person. She was always there when I asked her to help and "no" was not a part of her vocabulary.

I first knew her as Peter's primary school teacher and our paths crossed again

after she retired. She took on a part-time position at Brock's Monument with Jim Hill and from then on became a permanent-temporary volunteer/staff assistant.

We supported each other through personal and work lives and our friendship grew through the years. She was an integral part of helping at special events from setup to cleanup.

Louise was always invaluable in her support and training of the Friends' summer students at the monument and the fort's gift shop – sharing her experiences, knowledge and enthusiasm about the sites and their history.

She touched and influenced so many young people with her charm, wit and sincere caring. I will miss her so much on so many levels.

Amanda Gamble is executive director of the Friends of Fort George.



Louise Leyland, in period costume, in 2013 at Brock's Monument. SUPPLIED