

# abbotsfordtoday

ABBOTSFORD'S NEWS & OPINION MAGAZINE

ISSUE NUMBER 3 | OCTOBER 2019

## Federal Election

It's time for Canadians to get to the polls on October 21st. Are you ready? Will you vote for the same party as you always do, or are you ready to try something new? We offer up some thoughts of our own and some podcasts by the candidates to help you make your choice.

### ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

#### **POLICING, CRIME RATES AND YOUR SAFETY**

Just where are we with the crime rates in Canada and here in Abbotsford? Do you feel safe in your home and on the streets? We break down the stats and then see how it might affect local government policy.

#### **IMMIGRATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

Two hot topics for the election campaign, but we move away from the talking points and offer up two editorials that may change your "thinking points".

#### **BANMAN LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN**

Two issues ago, Bruce Banman appeared on our cover. We spoke to him then about what it was like to be back in politics. His enthusiasm continues as he launches his bid for the Liberal Party nomination in the Abbotsford South riding.

### AND MUCH MORE!





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# A

## Abbotsford is about to vote! Politics, policing, personalities and more!

*This issue features podcasts with some of the Federal Election candidates. Plus we offer up some in-depth editorials on Immigration and the Environment. For those of you who have had enough of politics, we also start a series of stories from the world of Canadian aviation!*

### Is it really time to vote again!

If you're like me, it feels like we are always getting ready to vote. Campaigns seem to be non-stop and we just keep bouncing back and forth between different levels of government. I think we're burned out and I predict a low voter turnout for this Federal Election. To understand my opinion, read my Editor on the Election on page 4.

Despite this prediction, some of the campaign issue warrant the attention of every Canadian. We discuss three of them in very unique ways in this issue.

Be sure to read the column on Refugees submitted by **Richard Belcham, Executive Director, Inasmuch Community Society**. It is a unique perspective on the immigration and refugee experience.

Climate change is now firmly implanted in the top election issues. The two major parties come down very differently on how they want to address it. In some cases, parties asking for your vote, don't think it is a problem we need to address at all. For insight into just how people think about climate change, read the latest submission from **James R. Coggins, Anomalies of the Environmental Movement**.

If Federal politics weren't enough for you, former Mayor and current City Councillor Bruce Banman has thrown his hat into the ring vying for the Abbotsford South Liberal Party nomination. We bring you some pictures and an overview of his campaign launch event.

Not related to politics, we have a great story that kicks off a series featuring tales from Canadian Aviators. Give that a read and then drop us a note at [editor@abbotsfordtoday.ca](mailto:editor@abbotsfordtoday.ca) and let us know if you liked it and if you want more!

If music is more your thing, the Fraser Valley Music Awards are now open for submissions. So, if you are a budding recording artist, it is time to sharpen your pencils and fill out some forms. Oh, and practice, practice, practice!

Finally, we get stuck into policing and crime rates. Before you think it is a downer, give it a read as we may surprise you. Even a column on crime can have a happy ending!

The Editor

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Inder Rai  
Publisher

Vince Dimanno  
Editor

CONTACT US

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# The Federal Election...can we skip this one?

*I know what you're thinking. "If he wants to skip the election, he must be a Liberal. I knew he was a Liberal!" Well, I hate to disappoint you, but my feelings on the election have nothing to do with any party affiliation. They are directly related to the fact that this has been one of the most boring campaigns, and whoever wins, the needle will barely move for the average Canadian. Let me explain...*

According to many polls, the top election issues, as defined by Canadians include: housing affordability, climate change, the cost of living, healthcare and taxes.

With these issues being at the forefront, you'd think there would be lots of opportunity for the parties who want to run this country to make some big promises. Instead, we are being treated to an election campaign full of tiny little nudges that will barely register with Canadians.

## **Let's look at some of these promises.**

For example, Andrew Scheer and the Conservatives have largely been running two campaign ads. The first ad type has been a direct attack on Justin Trudeau and his scandals. Fair play...but emotional, not meaningful.

The second type of ad has been one where the Conservatives add up all the savings a Canadian family will receive if they are elected. The grand total? Just over \$1000 per year.

## **What?**

\$1000 per year is nothing. By the time they get into government these initiatives will be blunted, and the net effect will be much lower. To the average Canadian family, this doesn't even offset the ICBC rate increases we've just seen, and it pales in comparison to Property Tax increases we've seen here in Abbotsford over the last 6 years.

So, how can anyone get excited about that? In fact, I don't think anyone is excited by it. Rather, it feels like each party is relying on their base to show up and vote for them.

Locally, the candidates are remaining tight lipped. We invited them all to sit down for a chat with us. Some did, but neither the Conservative nor Liberal candidates agreed to.

## **Why? Because they had nothing to say.**

Essentially, they take your vote for granted. They are hoping you will vote "against" the other party. Canadians are good at that. We often vote to keep someone out rather than to vote for what we really feel is important.

To be fair, my request to the candidates was to sit down and record a podcast. The goal was to find out about the person as well as the politics. You'll see that we didn't just send them questions and print their answers in this issue. That is a waste of paper as every candidate sounds the same. Rather, we wanted to have a good conversation.

I sent them my questions in advance. I guess they thought I would ambush them. I haven't done that in the past, but I guess they figured they should be careful.

I wasn't going to ask Jatinder Sidhu what he thought about Justin Trudeau's brown face scandal. I wasn't going to ask him how he is going to insure financial stability for Canadian families while raising the Carbon Tax. I wasn't going to ask him when Canadians can expect their \$4 billion back from the pipeline purchase. Instead, I was going to ask him about his history here in Abbotsford and how he fared as the first MP in a brand new riding.

I've interviewed Ed Fast before, but he declined this time around. Maybe he thought I would ask him how he can square his position on climate change from when he was first a candidate for MP, where he called it the most important issue facing Canadians, with his party's desire to get rid of the Carbon Tax. I wasn't going to ask him what he thought about Andrew Scheer having dual citizenship with the United States. Instead, I was going to ask him about his long service in the community, stretching back to City Councillor many years ago.

**But really, why talk to me?** Why answer the questions when your leaders are answering them all for you. Just let your base do their thing, vote as they have always done, and then your Party Leader can try and convince people one way or another.

## **Some of you true believers out there are surely mad at me right?**

Then perhaps some evidence will help. Visit Ed Fast's web site ([edfast.ca](http://edfast.ca)) and you'll see that he held not a single campaign event. His "news" section is empty. He launched his campaign and then noted the All Candidates Meeting. If you visit his Facebook page however, there are lots of opportunities for Coffee with Ed.

Incumbent Jatinder Sidhu was no better. No events, no campaign appearances outside of those that would be embarrassing to miss like an all-candidates meeting. **I guess the days of "earning your vote" are long gone.**

So, I have a suggestion for you. Go and vote, but this time, vote FOR someone. Forget about the rhetoric and which party is promising this or that. Walk out of the voting booth feeling good about voting FOR something instead of against the other guy. I don't care who you vote for. As I've said, no matter who gets elected, the needle won't move much in your daily life. Instead, let's make voting a happy day by voting for someone, or something you believe in.

# Federal Election Candidates

## Abbotsford



**Aeriol Alderking** (CHP)  
[www.chp.ca](http://www.chp.ca)



**Locke Duncan** (PPC)  
[ppcabbotsford.ca](http://ppcabbotsford.ca)



**Ed Fast** (Conservative)  
[edfast.ca](http://edfast.ca)



**Stephen Fowler** (Green)  
[greenparty.ca](http://greenparty.ca)



**Seamus Heffernan** (Lib)  
[seamusheffernan.com](http://seamusheffernan.com)



**Madeleine Sauvé** (NDP)  
[madeleinesauve.ndp.ca](http://madeleinesauve.ndp.ca)

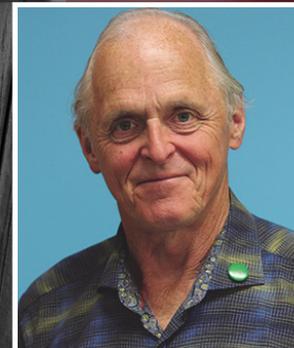


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**Nick Csaszar** (PPC)  
[peoplespartyofcanada.ca](http://peoplespartyofcanada.ca)



**John Kidder** (Green)  
[www.johnkidder.ca](http://www.johnkidder.ca)



**Michael Nenn** (NDP)  
[michaelnenn.ndp.ca](http://michaelnenn.ndp.ca)



**Jati Sidhu** (Liberal)  
[jatisidhu.liberal.ca](http://jatisidhu.liberal.ca)



**Brad Vis** (Conservative)  
[www.cpc-mmfc.com](http://www.cpc-mmfc.com)



**Elaine Wismer** (M-L)  
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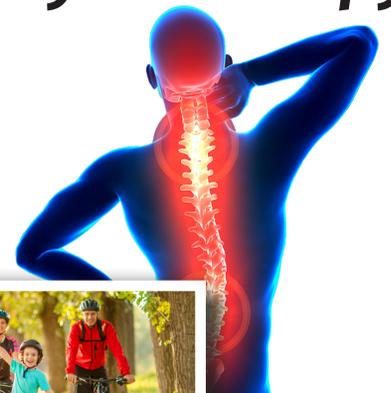
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# R Refugees Are Like Our Grandparents

*There is so much controversy over immigration in our country. Some say we should slow down immigration so that the price of items in demand, like housing, goes down, while others believe that to support a growing economy our population must also continue to grow. Here is a point of view that you may not have thought about!*



by **Richard Belcham, Executive Director, Inasmuch Community Society**

Maybe it's easy to look at the folks crossing the border irregularly and claiming asylum and think it has nothing to do with us. Or maybe it's easier to think that these refugee claimants are nothing like us. Or maybe we should simply view it as a modern day phenomenon.

**In the Fraser Valley though, and Abbotsford in particular, we'd be wrong.**

You don't have to go too far back in Abbotsford's history to find stories of people fleeing persecution. Maybe they're not women's rights activists from the Middle East, or political campaigners from the Horn of Africa, but they were fleeing the horrors of war and persecution for their religious beliefs and identities nonetheless.

And the very real costs of the choices they made are not so very different to refugees we see today.

Take the Mennonites who settled in the Fraser Valley as an example. They left their lives and homes in Ukraine and the Netherlands and Prussia and sought safety and freedom in the relatively new land of Canada.

They too came in search of a better, safer life.

These people – who settled the land in and around Abbotsford, who toiled

and worked to build their new lives, who established the City that we love today – wanted the same things as people who are fleeing their homelands today.

They wanted the freedom to worship in the way they believed to be right, to bring up their children in safety – free from discrimination and persecution – and they wanted to invest in their new community to make it their home.

**How quickly we forget those choices our grandparents made though.**

We are settled and comfortable and happy. We celebrate the cultures and cooking they brought to Canada in books and at festivals. We often fondly remember our ancestors without recalling the sacrifices they made and their choice to find freedom in Canada.

But the truth is our grandparents and great-grandparents made the same tough choices that refugee claimants make today: the choice to pack what belongings they could carry and venture to a strange country, the choice to leave known dangers for unknown ones and the choice to seek protection in a country that has welcomed the newcomer for generations.

So what are we to think when we see people crossing the border with their families and their belongings and asking for refugee protection? How should we respond to the rhetoric and shouting of the election campaign?

Oscar-winning actor George Clooney said it so clearly when he was talking about his own family's story of fleeing the Irish famine:

**“The simple truth is that all of us here ... are the result of someone's act of kindness. We all stand on the shoulders of good people who didn't look away when we were in need.”**

Let's not forget our shared history and the risks our forebears took. Let's instead open our hearts and homes to find compassion for the newcomer.

**After all, it wasn't so very long ago that our own families needed the same.**



*Richard Belcham is Executive Director of Inasmuch Community Society in Abbotsford.*

<http://www.inasmuch.ca> - Inasmuch provides transitional housing, settlement services, customized employment counseling, English Language training and basic living support for up to six months following an asylum seeker's arrival in BC.



# PEOPLE'S PARTY

## ABOUT LOCKE

I am dependable and willing to rise to a challenge. I am known for my willingness to say it as it is, conveying truth and facts. I am personable to most, respectful to all and their ideas and needs. Humility doesn't escape me, as I continue to face my shortcomings and own my actions. I am accountable and responsible personally and outwardly.

Born in Victoria BC in 1964 to a military family, I am now a proud father of three young men, two of which are grown and fostering their own independence and way in this life. Having lived and grown a large family in Alberta, Manitoba, Quebec and now beautiful B.C. My own upbringing in the military family taught me the merit of being disciplined and to look for reasons of why something happened, not the excuses.

Past high school, I made my way into the electrical trade, upgrading my skills along the way through BCIT's Automation-Industrial Controls program. My career then led me to many large projects throughout B.C., Alberta and Saskatchewan, where I thrived in leadership roles, being responsible for labor and material with monthly values in the millions of dollars. Deadlines with expectations helped hone my interpersonal skills, accountability and responsibility. I have a strong ability for quick and astute decision-making with proven success, and readily employ these skills in my desire to help others succeed in their own endeavours.

I have a conservative mindset and a motto of live-and-let-live, allowing everyone their choices that are not an impediment to someone else's. I present myself as your candidate for the **People's Party of Canada in Abbotsford**.



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- Withdraw Canada from the Global Compact on migration and the Paris Accord
- Cut foreign aid except for humanitarian crises
- Reinvest in our Veterans and Armed forces



### Sustainable Immigration

- Stop illegitimate "refugees" at the border
- Reduce annual immigration to 250,000 or less
- Prioritize skilled immigrants
- Increase funding to RCMP

### Tax Plan

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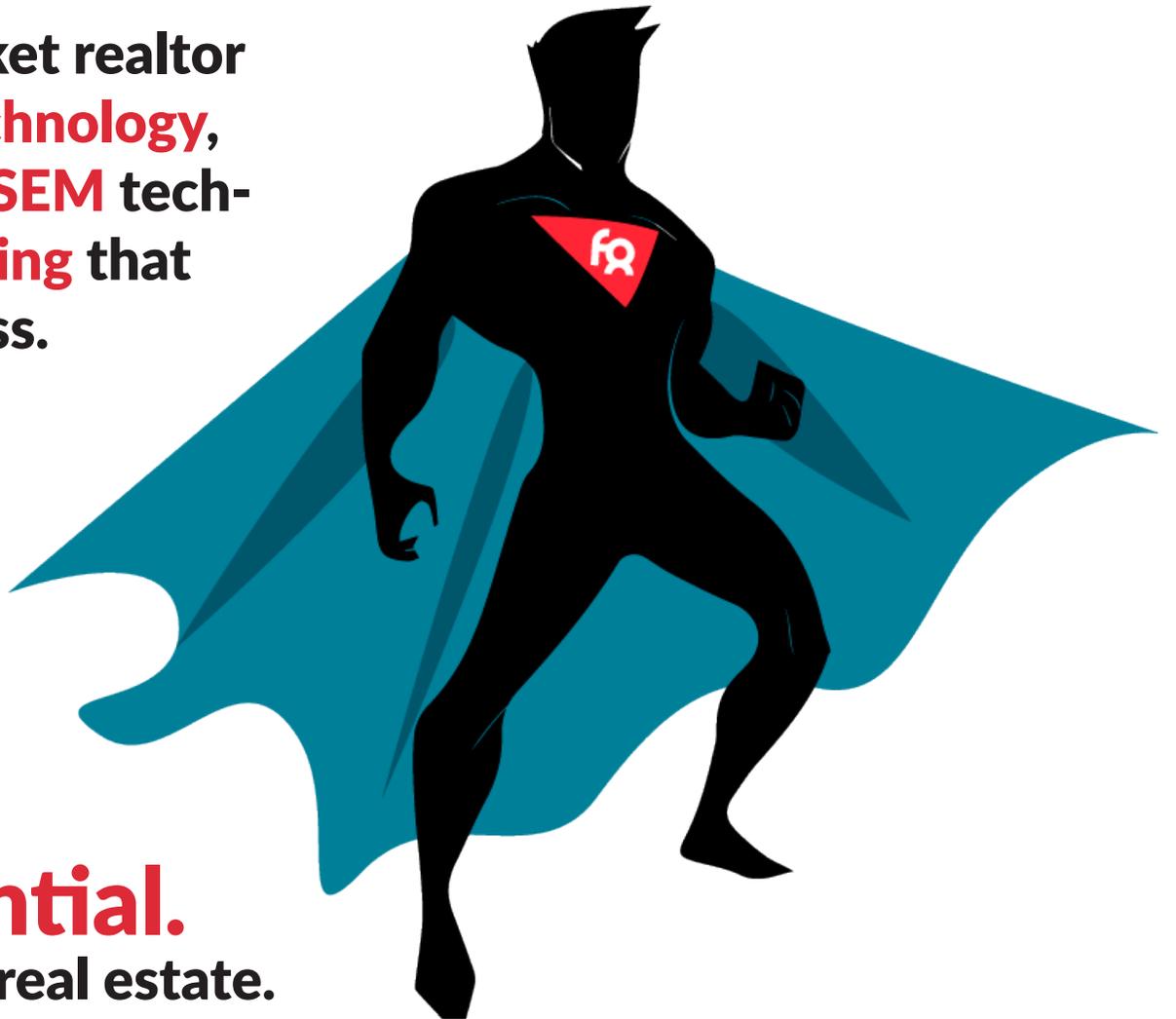


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# True Stories of Canadian Aviation

*Canadians have a rich history in aviation and the stories of their adventures are amazing. The story of bush pilot Elizabeth Wieben is an entertaining look at some of her time flying in the far north of Ontario.*

*Submitted by Al Neuman*



Elizabeth Wieben was 17 when she earned her pilot's license. The beginning of Liz's flying career, like so many, was flying bush planes in the far north of Ontario. At 19, at the controls of a Beaver aircraft, she had the job of flying mining engineers into remote lakes north of Thunder Bay for their surveys.

On one particular morning she was asked to fly in a 15-man survey crew to Carib Lake. Before landing, Liz circled very carefully over the water and noted the many large rocks jutting out of the lake. She landed safely and the engineers set off into the bush for their day's work. Liz would come back in the evening to return them to camp.

For her take-off, Liz moved slowly out from the dock when suddenly the right side of the plane heaved up and became stuck on a rock that was just under the surface of the water. Liz shut down and got out on the float to take a look. Having been previously stranded in the bush, Liz discovered quickly that getting wet meant spending miserable hours in wet clothing. She decided the smart thing to do is take her clothes off. She threw her clothes into the rear of the plane and with just her heavy socks and work boots, Liz positioned her shoulders between the two spreader bars above the floats and started to heave using the bars as a pivot point.

She heaved and heaved and heaved. Slowly, ever so slowly, she managed to inch the float off the rock. For a five-foot-two woman to move a Beaver aircraft off a rock is nothing short of a miracle. Before Liz could enjoy the moment of her accomplishment, the plane began to sink. Liz jumped into the cockpit and fired everything up.

On full throttle, the plane refused to move with Liz knowing the float is filling up with water and she was in big trouble. Then, slowly, slowly the Beaver began to move but was just wallowing in the water. As the plane was moving at 35 miles an hour, Liz realized she was just about at the end of the lake with trees ahead. With much skill, Liz put both feet on the left rudder and skidded the Beaver around a 90-degree turn, picked up more speed and got her airborne.

Liz was now at 7,000 feet in the air with a big hole in a float and no clothes on. She decided to get on the radio to see if she could get

someone on the air. Luckily a pilot she knew flying a hundred miles north of her responded "Hi Liz, How is your day going? Need some help?"

After explaining that she had holed a float, he suggested that she bring the plane to his base camp where he had beaching gear and a mechanic to repair the float for her. She checked her fuel gauge, checked the compass and set a heading for his base camp.

But now she had another big problem to solve. She just could not image the level of embarrassment she would encounter landing her plane nude at his "men only" base camp.

She had to figure a way to get her clothes from the rear of the plane. Liz decided to trim the controls to put the nose down and get into a slight dive, then she ran back and grabbed some of her clothes.

While she was doing this, the nose came up and the airspeed was decreasing. Liz grabbed the controls, trimmed to a level altitude and put on some of her clothes. A second effort she retrieved the rest of her clothes and finally Liz was dressed again. She put on her lifejacket and undid her boots so she could slip out of them in case the plane sank in the landing. She landed on one float, kept the other float out of the water and ran it right up on the beach. Later in the day the float was fixed and she flew back to Carib Lake to pick up the miners. They had no idea what kind of day Liz had and she wasn't about to tell them.

*Photo is of Elizabeth Wieben, now retired in front of her own personal airplane in 2002.*

*Courtesy Al Neuman*



# Policing, Crime Rates, Your Safety and Quality of Life... It's Better Than You Think!



*If you watch the news, or follow any media, it seems that the world is full of crime, danger and hate. The truth is that it is just the opposite. This column presents the facts and then translates what the real statistics on crime mean for the future of the Abbotsford.*

There is one undeniable fact about crime in Canada...over the last 35 years, the number of reported incidents have trended down. Even with a slight uptick in the last 2 years, we are still at crime rates that equal those of the 1970's.

## But what does that mean?

We get blasted on a daily basis with stories of violent crime, home invasions and robberies. The truth is that the news media thrive on those stories. Recall the old media trope "If it bleeds, it leads".

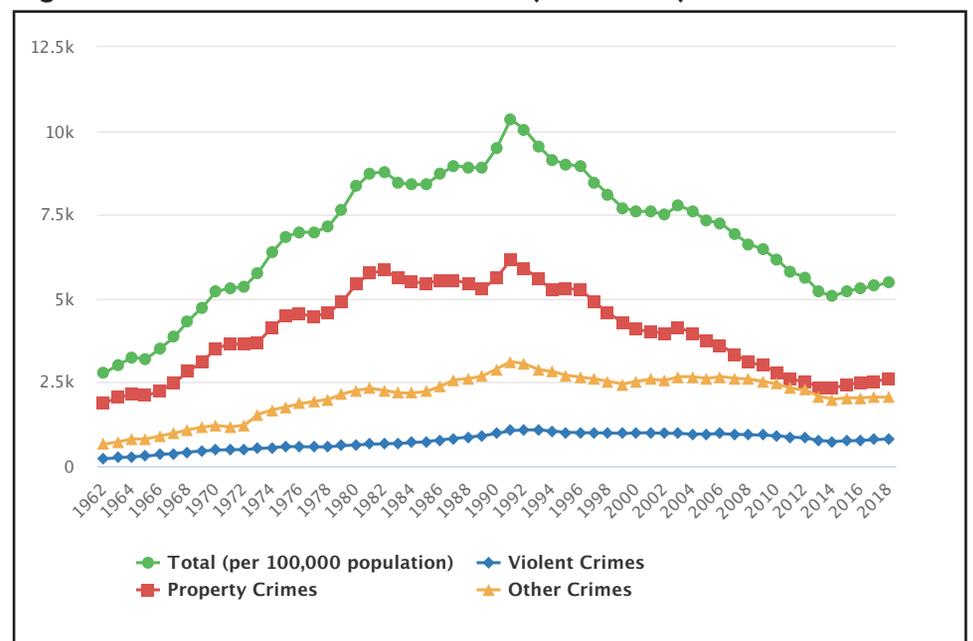
With access to stories and data more readily available because of the internet, each violent incident is picked up and reported on in ways that were historically not available. For example, just last week, a horrible murder of a teen outside their school was reported on nearly every single media platform available to a human being. 30 years ago, it would have been reported by the local newspaper, radio and TV news, but it may not have made it onto the national news media.

So, our perception of violence all around us correspondingly goes up. Even though this incident was in Hamilton, Ontario, the media make us feel like it could be us next, or that it was right next door.

Now, don't get me wrong. Violence occurs all over. We have certainly had our fair share here in Abbotsford. On many an occasion, we have been labeled as the "Murder Capital of Canada", but even the statistics that support that moniker are circumspect. We've never actually had the most murders in Canada, just the most per 100,000 of population.

Let's look at the raw numbers and do some comparisons. To begin with, in Figure 1 we can see the overall downward trend in crime rate. This trend is even more effective due to population. What I mean by that, is when our population was much smaller, people didn't live as closely packed

**Figure 1: Overall Crime Rate in Canada (1962-2018)**



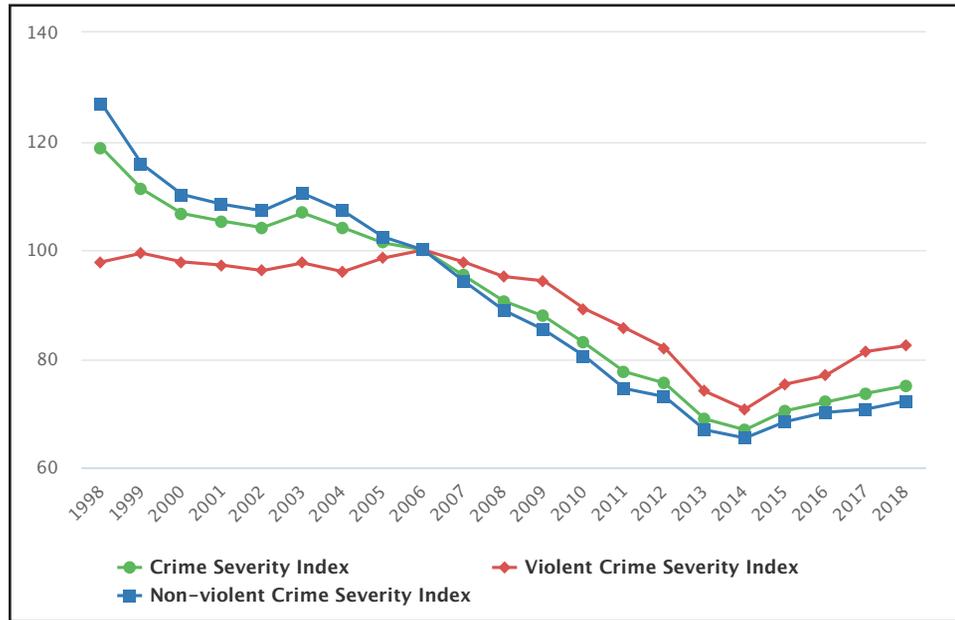
as they do today. Crime concentrates around urban areas and so, as those areas get bigger and populations densify, crime rates go up. So, as our crime rate goes down, it also goes down against the population trend. In other words, people are generally more and more well behaved. This holds especially true for major crimes like murder.

**Table 1: Number of Murders in Select Cities**

City (CMA)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Abbotsford-Mission	4	3	6	9	6
Halifax	5	8	12	8	7
Saskatoon	8	10	10	5	8

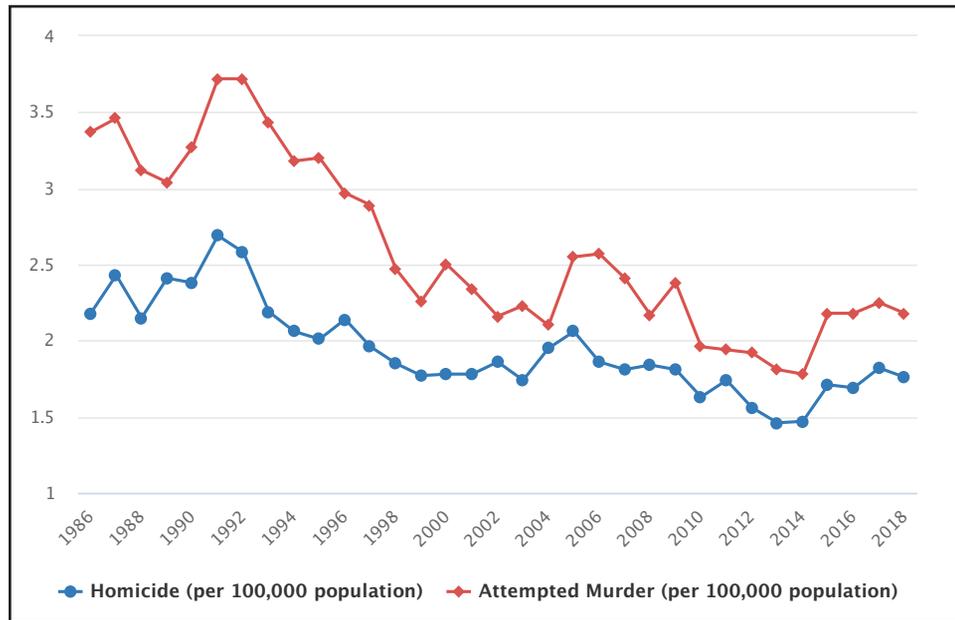
As you can see on Table 1 from the previous page, Abbotsford does not have a many more murders than anywhere else. Additionally, with a few notable exceptions, a large portion of our murders are gang related.

**Figure 2: Crime Severity Index in Canada (1998-2018)**



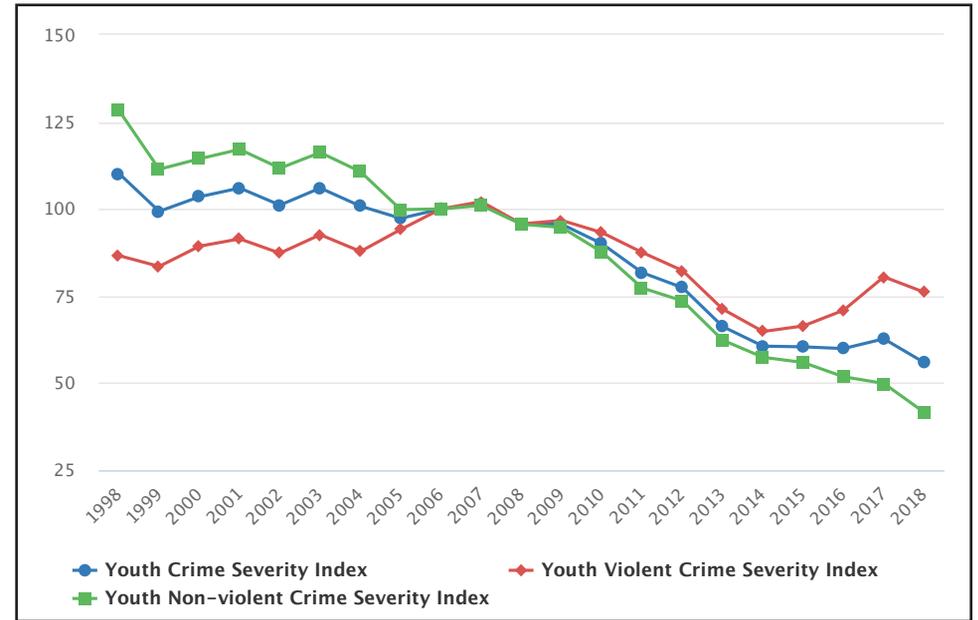
We can follow this decreasing trend in all crime in Figure 2 where we see an a downward trend in the Crime Severity Index. This index is a good indicator of how much safer our communities are. As you can see, this is across Canada, and when we drill down into Abbotsford, our city is leading the downward trend by dropping below both National and Provincial averages in most areas of crime.

**Figure 3: Attempted Murder and Homicides in Canada (1986-2018)**



It seems that education is the key lower crime rates. As we educate our children to the consequences of their actions, and show them that a life of crime will simply impede them from the life they really want, crime ceases to be an option. This is apparent in Figure 4 on Youth Crime at the top of the page.

**Figure 4: Youth Crime Severity Index in Canada (1998-2018)**



It is important to note that the raw numbers matter here. In Figure 4, approximately 40 non-violent crimes are occurring per 100,000 youths. In Abbotsford that translates to only about 55 incidents per year. Think of that in perspective. In this entire city, over the course of a full year, Abbotsford youth committed only 55 non-violent crimes. Only 20 years ago, that number was more than double. **So, why am I telling you all this?**

Simply put, it is because statistics and facts like these must start to inform out public policy.

Every year it seems, the City of Abbotsford receives a new request for more police officers, a new police building and more and more budget. In a recent USA Today article (usatoday.com Feb 12, 2019) experts say there is little evidence that more cops mean less crime.

In fact, most increases in police numbers occur only after a rise in crime. Since crime is falling, experts agree that it is the scheduling and deployment of officers that is critical, not the addition of new ones.

New York is a shining example of a city making a conscious decision to reduce the number of officers on its police force, and yet crime continued to go down. James McCabe, a retired New York Police Department official who travels the country as a police staffing consultant, said “It’s not what you have, it’s what you are doing with them.”

The NYPD’s staffing is based on “workload allocation models” which are time-consuming and require statistical skills most police departments lack. However, with the City of Abbotsford facing more requests for officers, and more than \$60 million for a new police building to house them all in, perhaps putting resources into the science of staffing will serve our city over the long run much better than a new police building.

I think it can be boiled down to **“work smarter, not harder”**. I’m sure our friends at the APD will agree with that sentiment and we can rest easy knowing that we are safer than we have ever been, and we might save a tax dollar or two as well!



# National Anti-Bullying Charity Needs Urgent Assistance



*BullyingCanada is seeking volunteers from across the country to help ensure our services are available for all youth, whenever needed. BullyingCanada receives, on average, more than a thousand requests a day, and to provide our services on a 24/7 basis, and needs volunteers for several positions.*

To keep up with demand, **BullyingCanada** is seeking some individuals to assist with administrative and development tasks. In addition to various administrative or data entry roles, **BullyingCanada** is especially in need of people with some amount of experience with grant applications or fundraising.

“*With the start of the new school year, we are seeing an increased number of youths reaching out for assistance. To ensure we’re able to serve them best going forward, BullyingCanada needs several volunteers to help with a variety of tasks. We know that many people find working directly with youth rewarding—and we always have opportunities for that—but we have some less glamorous work that is just as vital to our mission. For many people, they prefer it to working with youth directly as it tends to be less triggering—the stories we hear from bullied youth can be exceptionally upsetting.*”

*Rob Benn-Fenette, O.N.B.  
Co-Founder & Co-Executive Director*

**BullyingCanada** provides support to all its volunteers to ensure they’re set up for success. Volunteers for the registered charity work remotely but under the close supervision of the organization.

Volunteering with **BullyingCanada** is an exciting opportunity for those looking to give back or develop experience in nonprofit administration or development. If you’re interested in helping, but prefer to work directly with youths, we are always in need of Virtual and SMS Buddies, or you may support us financially with a tax-deductible donation.

Interested adults may apply by going to **BullyingCanada.ca/Volunteer**. All applicants should have a computer with reliable high-speed internet access and a passion for engaging with our mission. Additionally, candidates will be required to undergo a federal, criminal background check, and they must be willing to commit to volunteering regularly.

**BullyingCanada** Inc is Canada’s premier—and first youth-created—anti-bullying charity. Founded by Rob Benn-Frenette, O.N.B. and Katie Thompson (Neu) in 2006, **BullyingCanada** has served hundreds of thousands of youth across the country by, amongst other initiatives, providing individual support, extensive resources, case management, scholarships, and presentations to schools and organizations.

# Bruce Banman Launches Campaign for Abbotsford South Riding

*Banman's bid for the Liberal nomination in the Abbotsford South riding kicked off last week at Gian's Sweetshop & Restaurant.*



About 130 people dropped by to show their support for Bruce Banman as he kicked off his campaign for the Liberal nomination in the Abbotsford South riding.

Even though we are in the middle of a Federal Election, Banman is starting his bid for the spot early.

The former Mayor and current City Councillor has outlined some of the issues he feels are important and/or have been overlooked by other politicians. Banman is focused on housing affordability, the homeless issue in Abbotsford, and farm land cost.

He is kicking off his campaign with a straight forward appeal:

**"I want to be your voice in Victoria.** Everyone knows that I love this region. I also have the experience to understand many of the problems we are faced with are provincial responsibilities. I am here, now, proudly putting my name forward as the contestant for the BC Liberal Nomination for the Riding of Abbotsford South.

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What does that mean? I want to be your voice in Victoria. I'm the person for the job. I have the experience and the passion but I can't do this alone. I need the people of Abbotsford to join me, support me and take part in making their community the best it can be."

To find out more about Bruce Banman his bid for the Abbotsford South nomination, visit his web site noted below, or drop Bruce an email at [brucebanman1@gmail.com](mailto:brucebanman1@gmail.com)



**VIEW BRUCE BANMAN'S WEB SITE**

<https://brucebanman.com>

# Submissions now being accepted for Fraser Valley Music Awards

Submissions are now being accepted for the fourth annual Fraser Valley Music Awards (FVMA).

The awards, an initiative of CIVL Radio, will be presented in 15 categories on November 21st at Corky's in Chilliwack, starting at 8:00 p.m. The location of this year's festivities coincides with May's CRTC decision approving a Chilliwack transmitter for CIVL, the University of the Fraser Valley station.

**Entries will be accepted until October 24th.**

New to this year's awards are a Fan Vote and a special presentation for Lifetime Achievement.

For the third year in a row, hosting and coordinating duties for the gala fall to Fort Langley native and Chilliwack resident Harry Doupe, award show veteran comedian, producer, and writer.

To submit an entry or to get more information about the awards go to [www.civl.ca/fvma](http://www.civl.ca/fvma). For media inquiries or to learn about sponsorship opportunities, please contact [fvma@civl.ca](mailto:fvma@civl.ca).



# Anomalies of the Environmental Movement

*According to most polls, climate change and the environment made it into the top 5 election issues facing Canadians. James Coggins dissects just where this upward trend in awareness may be coming from.*

by James R. Coggins

One of the anomalies of the environmental movement is the sources of its strength. Support for the Green Party varied widely in the 2015 federal election, but where it produced its best results was somewhat puzzling.

The greatest area of strength by far was on Vancouver Island, where Elizabeth May won the only Green seat. The other area of strength in British Columbia was Vancouver and its closest suburbs. The party polled poorly in most of the interior of British Columbia.

The Green Party also did poorly in the Prairies. In Ontario, its best showing was in smaller cities such as Guelph, Barrie, and Thunder Bay.

In New Brunswick, its best showing was in the city of Fredericton. The Green Party also did well in Prince Edward Island.

But the Green Party results are not the only indicator of environmental commitment. The Liberal Party under Justin Trudeau also championed the environmental cause. That party's greatest strength across the country was in big cities such as Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. The Conservative Party, which was considered the weakest party on the environment, found its greatest strength in rural areas, the agricultural areas and the wilderness areas.

The strength of the Green Party on Vancouver Island would seem to disprove this generalization, but it doesn't really. The Green Party found its greatest strength in the city of Victoria and along the eastern coast of the Island, including the smaller islands between Vancouver Island and the Mainland. These areas have large populations of retirees (particularly professional people who practised their careers in cities farther east); communities of artists and writers; and people who work in the tourist industry. Opposition to the Trans-Mountain pipeline also boosted environmental concern in that area.



## The Urban Factor

The irony, then, is that the environmental movement finds its greatest strength in cities. Perhaps those who live surrounded by steel and glass high rises develop a longing for green forests and open seas.

It is odd that environmentalists are thus more often people with the least experience with the environment. Their food and other goods come to them through stores. They do not have the experience of farmers, fishermen, and loggers, who know that the necessities of life often have to be wrested from the environment by hard work at great cost and even with some destruction. People in rural areas have a more realistic and practical experience of nature, while city dwellers can afford the luxury of maintaining an idealistic view.

Similarly, for city dwellers, electricity comes from an outlet in the wall. This helps explain the popularity of electric vehicles and of wind and solar power in cities. Electricity, whether derived from water, wind, or the sun, is generated in rural areas and mostly consumed in the cities. Electric vehicles and rapid transit work well in cities, but don't make sense in rural areas. There is no transit in rural areas, they don't make electric combines to harvest

• • • **Article Continued from page 17**

wheat, and electric vehicles are impractical in areas such as the Prairies, where there are long distances between charging stations and where farmers have to drive 30 miles on rough roads just to pick up the mail. Besides, with no mountains and waterfalls, hydroelectric power is impossible on the Prairies, and electricity there is often generated by burning fossil fuels.

### **The Wealth Factor**

The urban nature of the support for the environmental movement may also indicate that there is a socio-economic component to that support. For instance, the Green Party's best showing in the Vancouver area was in the wealthy suburbs of North Vancouver and West Vancouver. The upper middle class, including university elites, the media, and other members of the intelligentsia, can afford to pay more in carbon taxes and buy more expensive, electric vehicles. They are also not concerned about the job losses (the loss of working class jobs, that is) that might result from environmental protection. This is not true of the working class, including the working poor. Similarly, environmental activism is a luxury afforded only to those with leisure time. The working classes are often too busy working to take part in demonstrations and too poor to travel to protests and environmental conferences. If you ask what Elizabeth May's job was before she became an environmental activist, the answer is that she never really had one. Similar to Justin Trudeau, she has dabbled in a number of occupations but never seems to have had to work for a living.

It is significant that the early environmental movement in Europe was seen as "a reaction to the urban conditions of the industrial towns." It was often supported by the landed gentry, who were living off the wealth accumulated by their ancestors and who saw the industrial revolution as a threat to their own power and wealth. They did not want the lower classes intruding into their forests and estates to gain food, building materials, and other supplies.

### **The Romantic Movement**

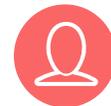
Many supporters of the environmental movement are extremely passionate about the issue, sometimes to the point of obsession. This is partly obscured by the fact that the environmental movement is also strong in universities and intellectual circles. But the philosophical roots of the environmental movement lie in the Romantic Movement of the 19th century, which arose in reaction against the Enlightenment, which valued reason and science. Its emphasis was on "emotion and individualism as well as glorification of all the past and nature." It presented a view of nature that was "unified and organic" (a view that derived from philosophy rather than scientific study of nature) and suggested that understanding nature required "an attitude of admiration, love and worship...a personal response." Theologically, it found ultimate meaning in Deism (the idea that religious knowledge comes from observation of the natural world rather than revelation) and the human spirit rather than in organized religion. In one sense, in spite of the many scientific studies which endorse it, the deep commitment to the environmental movement is based more on emotion than on reason and science. This helps explain why one of the people considered to be a leading expert in the environmental movement is a 16-year-old girl from Sweden.

The Romantic Movement was promoted by some of the radicals who provided the ideology for the French Revolution and by English poets such as

William Wordsworth. They put forth the idea that there is a balance in nature and it will function best if humans leave it alone - even though this belies that fact that many species have gone extinct in the past without human intervention.

As a corollary, early leaders of the Romantic Movement, such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, also promulgated "the myth of the noble savage," the idea that indigenous peoples live in idyllic harmony with nature and are more noble and altruistic than urbanized people. It is significant that Rousseau lived his whole life in Europe, mostly in cities, and his understanding of the state of nature was theoretical rather than practical; his knowledge of indigenous people was secondhand. Again, in the modern world, support for indigenous land claims and aid to First Nations people seems higher in urban areas than in rural areas, where people rub shoulders with actual aboriginal people and whose land (and the jobs that go with it) could be taken to settle land claims. In contrast to the Romantic Movement and the myth of the noble savage is Hobbes's view that life in a state of nature is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."

One of the great strengths of the environmental movement is its idealism, its desire to restore a more perfect world. One of the great weaknesses of the environmental movement is its idealism, its belief that the industrial revolution can be reversed and we can go back to living in a harmonious state of nature without cost, without pain and suffering, and without severe economic dislocation.



*James R. Coggins (www.coggins.ca) is a writer, editor and historian from Abbotsford, BC*



#### **VIEW LINKS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS ARTICLE**

2015 Federal Election:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Results\\_of\\_the\\_2015\\_Canadian\\_federal\\_election\\_by\\_riding](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Results_of_the_2015_Canadian_federal_election_by_riding)

A reaction to the urban conditions of the industrial towns:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental\\_movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_movement)

Romantic Movement:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental\\_movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_movement)

Romantic Movement - Emphasis:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanticism>

Deism:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deism>

The Myth of the Noble Savage:

[https://www.jstor.org/stable/3983879?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/3983879?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)

Rousseau:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Jacques\\_Rousseau](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Jacques_Rousseau)

# What's Online!

Stories, articles, columns and your letters appear online every single day. Visit often and enjoy all the content, including the items noted below!



## Podcasts

Don't miss out on the podcasts featuring some of the Federal Election Candidates. Plus, if you missed our interview last issue with Bill Vander Zalm, it is still available online by visiting [abbotsfordtoday.ca/podcasts](http://abbotsfordtoday.ca/podcasts)



## Entertainment

Along with the Fall Entertainment Guide we published last month, check out our Community Arts Section for the latest in announcements featuring concerts, shows and much more!



## News

Get the in-depth facts on the stories in the news that effect your life. We cut through the headlines get to the real issues, in print, online, by podcast and live stream.



## Personalities

Along with our podcasts and articles, watch for the start of a number of new stories. We begin in this issue with a wonderful tale of a Canadian aviator. Watch the web site for more in that series...and much more!

# Next Issue

Our next issue is already in production and we've got lots of great articles ready for you. We dig deep into the issues that you need to know more about, including:



## Mystery Podcast Guest!

We're hoping to bring you an exclusive interview with one of the Province's top newsmakers over the last year. Watch for an announcement confirming our guest by joining us on Twitter, Facebook or Instagram!



## Lawsuits, investigations and court activity

The City of Abbotsford finds itself in court a lot. We're going to summarize some of the lawsuits, both past and present, and see if we can't get a handle on why City Hall seems to choose to litigate instead of negotiate.



## Christmas Time

Yes, I know...it comes earlier every year, but our next issue is scheduled for the end of November. We'll kick off the season by providing you with all the holiday activities, shopping and festivities from around Abbotsford.

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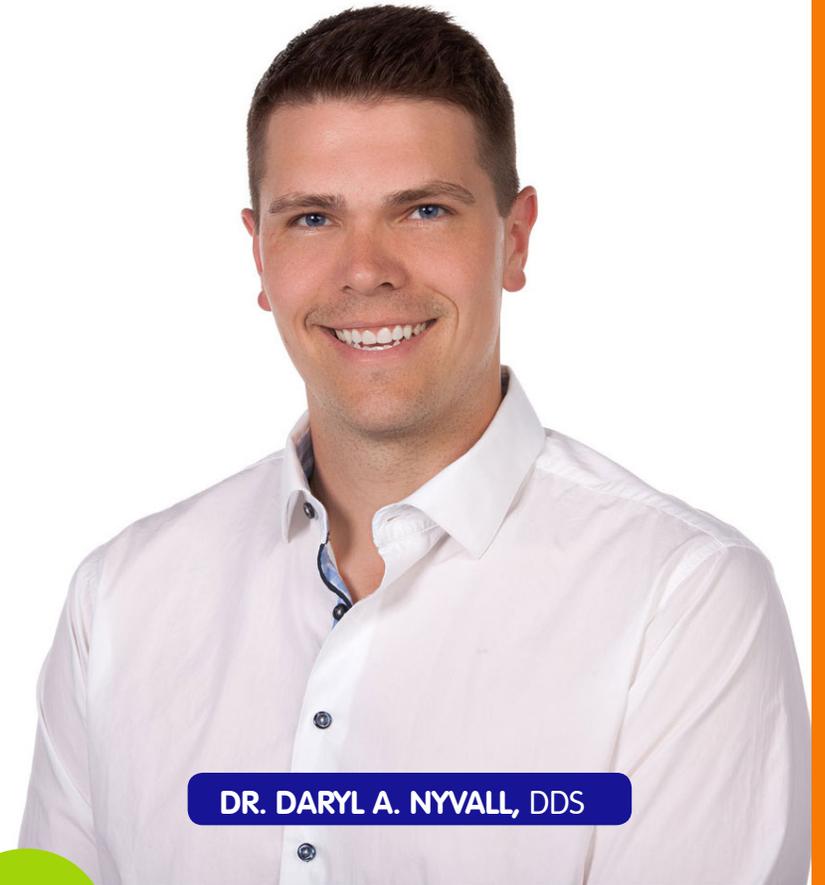


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