

Fire destroys historic Sheguiandah Anglican church



HISTORY AFLAME—The former St. Andrew's Anglican Church in Sheguiandah First Nation was destroyed in a conflagration that threatened to spread to the nearby bush during the afternoon of Friday, April 19. The building had lain derelict for a number of years and was uninsured. UCCM Police are investigating the incident.

photo by Michael Erskine

Arson suspected by authorities

by Michael Erskine
SHEGUIANDAH FN—A Friday afternoon fire consumed an historic decommissioned Anglican church, St. Andrew's, located on Sheguiandah First Nation.

According to locals, the building, largely constructed of cedar shingles was built sometime in the 1880s but became run down since being decommissioned. It was lovingly restored thanks to the efforts of Sheguiandah Elder Clara Waindubence baa and Lucie Robitaille, an Espanola woman who helped Ms. Waindubence realize her dream of restoring the building to its earlier glory. Both women were acknowledged with certificates from the Ontario Heritage Foundation and a feast held in their honour following the restoration work—it was hoped at the time the church would become a community museum.

Then Sheguiandah Chief Georgina Thompson noted that the restoration process took a lot of time and effort, with final touches such as cleaning

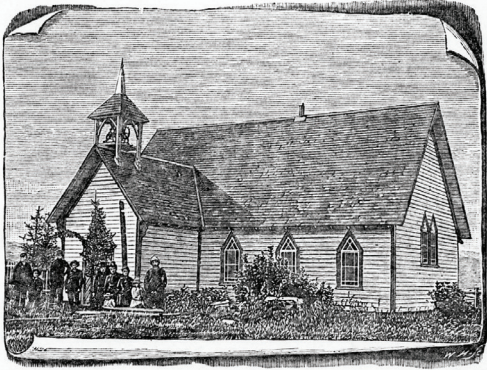
...continued on page 10

Dream of the late Clara Waindubence goes up in smoke

by Shelley Pearen

Fire destroyed an historic building in Sheguiandah First Nation on April 19, 2024. An online video of the smoke and flames on Manitoulin caught my attention. I recognized the building immediately as the former St. Andrew's Anglican Church in Sheguiandah. I watched as the flames destroyed the eastern gable end and then devoured the belfry. The spectacle of the vibrant flames and billowing smoke was for me as heartbreaking as I assume it was for Parisians watching Notre Dame burning. Though unlike Notre Dame, which has inspired an entire country to rebuild it, St. Andrew's will vanish.

Its disappearance does not simply mean



St. Andrew's Anglican Church as depicted in 1890.

the loss of another old building to fire or "progress." It is the loss of a concrete symbol of the community's history and of its Anishinaabe builders.

St. Andrew's Church was entirely built by Anishinaabe hands 138 years ago. The builders' descendants still live in Sheguiandah or Manitoulin.

As Expositor readers know, Manitoulin Island (Mnidoon Mnisig or Odawa Mnisig) has been the home of Anishinaabeg for thousands of years. At Sheguiandah this long residency is well documented. The Sheguiandah Archaeological Site illustrates the area's ancient history.

...continued on page 11

Help sought for Manitoulin Island 'little brown bat' study

by Tom Sasvari

GUELPH—Alexandria Cosby is currently in her first year of studies at the University of Guelph and will be conducting research on Manitoulin Island this summer toward her PhD, studying little brown bats and

the types of habitat they need to forage. She is hopeful that Islanders will be able to help her in this work.

"I study little brown bats and will be carrying out research on the type of habitats they need to forage," Ms. Cosby told

The Expositor. "There is very little information available about bats on Manitoulin, and bat research heavily relies on having relationships with communities and I am hoping to get access to private property for monitoring. I felt the Island would be the perfect place for my study given my roots."

"My PhD is in ecology," Ms. Cosby shared. "I'm studying animals in the community and how they interact with each other. My PhD will take about four years to complete and I am in my first year at university."

Ms. Cosby is a Haweater, born and raised on Manitoulin Island and lives in Little Current. "I graduated from Manitoulin Secondary School in 2016."

"I study little brown bats, which have seen significant population declines and are now endangered in Ontario due

to white-nose syndrome," said Ms. Cosby. "I'm looking into the reproduction influences have on their foraging."

Her proposal, "The Geographic and Temporal Variation in Myotis Lucifugus (Little Brown Bat) Foraging," explains "the distribution of species is influenced by factors affecting habitat suitability. Optimal foraging theory (OFT) explores the balance between food gathering and energy expenditure, providing insights into dietary and habitat choices. However, gaps exist in our understanding of foraging behaviour and habitat use, especially for cryptic and endangered species like the little brown bat."

Given their alarming population declines, "a detailed examination of bat foraging

...continued on page 13

Nature Conservancy secures more of Cockburn Island

WIARTON—Midwestern Ontario is home to some of the Great Lakes region's most important biodiversity hot spots, supporting an exceptional abundance of species and habitats and on Earth Day, April 22, additional hectares of thriving forest and alvars have been protected forever. The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) announced the

protection of two new nature preserves to mark Earth Day: Sturgeon Bay Forest, located on the Saugeen (Bruce) Peninsula near Wiarton, and an additional 40-hectare property added to existing conservation lands on Cockburn Island.

The additional 40 hectares protected on Cockburn Island contain alvars, an unusual

...continued on page 11

Robinson-Huron chiefs, trustees hear language trust proposal

by Tom Sasvari

SERPENT RIVER FN—A grassroots effort being coordinated by Serpent River First Nation band member Quinn Meawasige, along with a group of Robinson Huron Territory First Nations members, is proposing allocating a portion of the \$10 billion Robinson-Huron Treaty Litigation Fund (RHLTF) settlement be put into an Anishinaabemowin Language Trust.

"We are lobbying some of the chiefs and trustees of the 21 First Nations (including all those on Manitoulin Island) to put funds into an Anishinaabemowin Language Trust," Mr. Meawasige told The Expositor. "They will be meeting on April 22, chiefs and trustees for all the Robinson-Huron Treaty (RHT) First Nations (including all First Nations on Manitoulin Island) and we have put this proposal forward for their consideration. They have all seen and know about the proposal because community members have indicated their support to them in voting in favour of the proposal."

"Yes, there have been community leaders, language advocates and teachers, a wide range of

...continued on page 12