



VOLUME 30 ISSUE 4  
MAY 2022



# ANTHONY LEO GEARING UP FOR SUMMER

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# PUBLISHER'S NOTE

May



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Dear Business Link Readers,

May is an interesting month and there are plenty of reasons to celebrate it. It's the start of summer, flowers are blooming, birds are chirping, and you can finally begin entertaining outdoors again.

This month's issue is about "gearing up for summer", shaking off those winter doldrums, getting outside and enjoying the fresh air! Find out what Niagara events promoter "Local Louie" is looking forward to this summer. Check in with abstract artist Bodo to learn about what large-scale NFT project he's going to be launching soon! Discover how you can have creative, nature-based outdoor gatherings with Mobile Mixer. Or consider using the summer months to start a home-based business with "LifeCasting: School of Art".

We're especially excited about our cover story this month, featuring Anthony Leo of Dragon's Eye Consulting. Learn about the man at the helm of one of Niagara's most reputable digital media marketing agencies and how he has been using his Community Care initiative to give back to local charities!

We've got lots of great content to share with you, including two featured articles from young aspiring writers, as part of our partnership with GYP (Global Youth Philanthropy), and some exterior landscaping tips from investment property advisor, Daniel Chin.

Our 2022 Class of 40 Under Forty Business Achievement Awards Recipients were selected by the judge committee. The celebration event will be on July 7.

We spend all year craving a little extra time to spend with our loved ones during the summer. In May, we get the pleasure of anticipating what is to come! The days are longer and lighter, and the outdoors compel us to come out of hibernation, indulge in the sunlight a little and rediscover our community.

Best wishes and Happy Reading!

Yours in business,

Marilyn Tian, M.B.A.  
President & Co-Publisher  
Business Link Media Group

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SPOTLIGHT ON  
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# UP FOR SUMMER GEARING

with Stefan and Amanda



*Meet Stefan and Amanda  
The friendly faces behind MOBILE MIXER!*



**H**aving a strong work ethic instilled in her from a young age, Amanda started working in the hospitality business at the age of 14. After finishing high school and going on to complete two diplomas -- first in Police Foundations at London's Fanshaw College in 2008 and then Niagara College in 2012 for recreation therapy - Amanda got a job as a recreational therapist.

In 2014, Amanda's wandering feet took her to a bartending job in Japan. That's where she met Stefan, an Australian with an Italian background much like hers. They quickly discovered the commonali-

ties of their ancestral roots, including both of their grandmothers, or "Nonnas", having immigrated from the same remote area outside of Traviso, close to Venice, Italy. Both Nonnas, one from each side of their respective families, having grown up only five kilometers away from each other, had adopted the same distinct regional dialects.

Stefan was an engineer and a project manager for multi-million-dollar worksites in Australia. As luck would have it, once Amanda's visa had expired in Japan, her next holiday working visa was in Australia, so she was able to live and work near Stefan in

Melbourne, where she developed a love for the Australian coffee culture.

"There's something so great about leisurely enjoying a cappuccino over lunch." Amanda reflects, "And the coffee they have in Melbourne is next level. We loved the idea of bringing that high-end coffee culture to Canada."

Stefan and Amanda's visions aligned with the type of life they wanted to experience. "We wanted to work hard in condensed time frames, so we could devote more time to traveling and seeing the world.", Amanda says.



So, in 2017, Stefan and Amanda moved to Canada together. Initially, they were looking for a brick & mortar business, which aligned with their original intent of bringing the Melbourne coffee culture to Niagara. But instead, they decided to launch their business as one of the first mobile coffee carts in Ontario. “We wanted our trailer to be an Airstream.” Amanda states emphatically. “Stefan and I are frequent campers ourselves and we travel quite a bit. There’s something so

iconic about the sleek look of an Airstream, and it holds such historical and nostalgic value for so many people.”

Amanda and Stefan opened their mobile coffee business in 2018, doing mostly coffee events on the weekends. Amanda had worked on & off at The Hard Rock Café for nearly a decade, and both Stefan and Amanda were working steady jobs at vintage properties in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

# FACING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

In early 2020, both Stefan and Amanda were laid off from their hospitality jobs, which forced them to devote their energy to running their mobile business full-time. With the drastic changes to Ontario's government mandates, they quickly saw the opportunity of transitioning from a coffee bar to a mobile cocktail service to accommodate small weddings and birthday parties.

"COVID-19 changed the way people could celebrate. They could only gather outside and in small numbers," explains Amanda. "So, within



a matter of a few weeks, our schedule dramatically changed, from no events at all to a full calendar."

Amanda continues, "The truth is, we had already launched our business with this concept of smaller, simpler parties, more engaged in nature. I grew up on the Bruce Trail next to a vineyard, so nature means a lot to me, to both of us. So COVID helped us do what we'd already envisioned, but because we lost our full-time jobs, we were able to do it at a much faster rate."



2021 was a big year of growth and expansion for Mobile Mixer. Firstly, they turned their van into a tap truck, and were parked at popular spots, including The Watering Can and Collective Arts Brewery. (Their tap van is still available and they're looking to partner with local breweries and distilleries). And secondly, their business has expanded enough that they will soon be launching a second business - a 1965 TradeWind vintage Airstream --in collaboration with a winery in Jordan, where it will have its permanent address.

## WHERE THEY'RE HEADED

Stefan and Amanda created their business model so they could work primarily during the warm months in Canada's late spring, summer, and early fall seasons, leaving them free to travel to Stefan's home country of Australia in the winters. While in Australia, the pair stay busy working the Australian Open and many other seasonal events so they're ready to jump back into business when they return to Canada. Having just returned from Australia in late March, they're gearing up for a huge season of weddings, fundraisers, markets, in-house cocktail tastings, workshops, and special celebrations.

Although they're already almost fully booked over the weekends, they are still open to booking for weekday parties and community events

"We love hosting bridal showers and birthday parties. And we can modify what we do to customize our drinks for any event. From your grandpa's favorite old-fashioned scotch to a bride's signature sugar-frosted Cosmopolitan, we can do it, and everything in between.", chuckles Amanda.

Stefan and Amanda are huge believers in community over competition. "There is so much work in this space", concludes Amanda. "Having other people doing these mobile businesses has helped to grow the trend, and that's what we're all about."

Want to get in touch with Stefan and Amanda? Find them on IG and Facebook at **@mobile.mixer**, or check out their website at: <https://www.themobilemixer.ca> BL.

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*Article written by Sheri Hawkins. Sheri is currently the Chief Editor of Business Link Media digital magazine and the operator of the community platform, Mainly Niagara.*

# MOBILE MIXER



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# SPOTLIGHT ON LOCAL ARTIST MATT BODO

*Local Niagara artist Matt Bodo – or otherwise known as just “Bodo” – began a large-scale art project as a result of inspiration that led to a series of events that would shape the direction of his life.*

*Unlike most NFT projects, Bodo himself IS the project. A solo artist launching the start of his career, and what a magnificent start it has been!*

# WHO IS BODO?

**D**uring his early years, Bodo never defined himself as an artist. As a kid, he had good style and taste, but lacked the pen to paper skills. It was only until a magical canvas appeared that he began to paint with unexplainable uniqueness and skill.

That first (blank) canvas he found was during a time when his mind had nearly abandoned him. He overcame multiple challenges rooted in his mental health to find his way back to the surface, using colours and emotions to express himself and define his artwork.

Since his transformative rebirth in 2017, Bodo has painted everyday, always pushing himself to his creative limit.

Most artists spend 15 or more years of their life painting and honing their skills, so by the time they're older,

they understand the extent of their creative ability and experience. Contrastingly, every art piece Bodo creates is literally his first attempt of developing that specific idea. Each art piece is vastly different from the one before in both difficulty and structure. Not having taken the typical artist path from a young age, Bodo hadn't spent years drawing a hundred different shadows from a classroom of apples and pet rocks. Rather, in just over a month, he has taught himself multiple forms of artistic expression, including 3D modelling, graphic design, photogrammetry, and types of AR/VR.

Bodo is heralded as a canvas painter, sculpture, set designer, music video producer, fashion icon, fashion maker, digital wizard, all while keeping the look of his singular, innovative style.

## WHAT'S BODO WORKING ON NOW?

Working with a group of six people through a development company called Livvinyl Inc -- including 3 computer developers, an AR app developer, a Blockchain business specialist and a crypto marketer - Bodo is working on a large-scale NFT project, with unreleased artwork. The launch date is yet to be determined so be sure to check out his work and follow him for updates! You will be guaranteed to see some truly unique, one-of-a-kind art from one of Niagara's newest and most innovative artists. BL.

**For Portfolio, visit:**  
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# MEET ANTHONY LEO

DRAGON'S EYE OWNER & CEO

BY SHERI HAWKINS





ENTERTAINMENT • EDUCATION • LEARNING • FUN

# How Dragon's Eye Owner & CEO Anthony Leo is Helping Business Owners Get Clear and Creative

*"Finding fulfillment in my business and giving back to the Niagara region has helped me serve my passion for helping others, but I love my new granddaughter, and I want to make sure I'm home for the special moments. In the end, I think that's what it's all about."*

- ANTHONY LEO



INSPIRATION  
CREATIVITY

## WHAT IS DRAGON'S EYE CONSULTING?

**L**egend has it that the fork in the Dragon's Eye represents the choice we have between Fear and Opportunity, which, according to owner Anthony Leo, "is the essence of what being an entrepreneur is all about."

Additionally, folklore states that the "Dragon Eye" stone also has the effect of enhancing the "Inspiration" and "Creativity" of its owner. It will work effectively when creating something new. Therefore, it is considered useful in professions such as designers and creators who rely on inspiration.

This is what owner Anthony has created, a unique, collaborative agency focused on helping business owners succeed by providing them with the most valuable resource available. TIME!

Dragon's Eye Consulting is a sales agency that provides end to end solutions for busy solopreneurs, as well as small and medium size companies that want to scale their business but don't have enough hours in their day to focus on sourcing all the services they need for their growing business. Whether it's strategic consulting, web design, social content, mobile app development, or creative needs or service fulfillment, you can access through one single point of contact. Dragon's Eye provides a seamless 360° experience, or as one customer aptly put it, "They are the Swiss army knife for your business".

When Anthony is asked how the concept for his consulting agency came to be, he states it was "born from his own experiences".

According to Anthony, “Many times in business we find ourselves at a crossroad searching for direction, only to feel like we don’t have anyone around us that understands what we’re going through or the questions we need answered. And today, perhaps more than anytime before, we strongly believe that no business owner should ever feel like they are alone.”



## WHO IS ANTHONY LEO?

So, if the concept for Dragon’s Eye’s partnership-based business solutions was birthed from Anthony’s own experiences, we wanted to shine a spotlight on the man behind the business.

Drinking a cup of coffee and dressed in a casual yellow hoodie with his red business logo emblazoned across the front, Anthony warm smile and kind eyes make him instantly approachable. His respectful, gentle demeanor and the unassuming way he makes direct eye contact with you when you’re speaking makes you feel like he’s paying attention. Even though he’s clearly a busy man, he takes time to listen, to ask questions, to get to know who you are. The immediate impression he gives is that he’s not trying to sell you a product, he’s trying to find out what you need so he knows how to help. He is generous with his time, a character trait of someone who believes the foundation of a good business is building genuine relationships.

Born and raised in Niagara Falls, Anthony graduated high school and attended university at Brock, completing the entirety of his education in Niagara.

"I always knew I would end up in Business, but it wasn't a direct path for me", reflects Anthony. "Initially I thought I was going to be an accountant, but in my third year [of university], I participated in a co-op program, and I realized it wasn't for me."

Anthony continues, "I had

a perception of what it was going to be, and I thought I knew what I wanted until I had a chance to experience it. It wasn't at all what I expected, and I didn't like the isolation. It was a real eye-opener for me. That's when I realized I needed to be in a profession where I could interact with people."



So, Anthony switched his major from Accounting to Human Resources, eventually graduating from Brock with an Honours BBA (Bachelor of Business Administration).

Anthony's first job out of school was working as an insurance adjuster. He made

the commute back & forth to a company in Oakville while still living in Niagara, but his goal was always to try to get back to working in Niagara.

In the early 90's, he got a job as an independent insurance adjuster with a local insurance company called Crawford & Co in St Catha-

rines. Being driven and full of energy, Anthony put in long weeks in the office and then spent his weekends working the charity casinos circuit as a blackjack dealer.

"Working the casino circuit was fun", recalls Anthony, "Our weekends would rotate

from basement halls one weekend to the CNE exhibition the next."

It was so fun in fact, that, by 1996, when Casino Niagara was looking to hire their opening team, Anthony quit his job as an insurance adjuster and worked at Ca-



# DRAGON'S EYE CONSULTING



Niagara full-time, first as a floor supervisor, and then as pit manager. But with a two-year old daughter at home (his eldest daughter Alexis had been born in 1994), followed by the birth of his second daughter Lauren in 1998, Anthony soon recognized the demands of the casino no longer fit his lifestyle.

Anthony had known his wife Claudia since they were kids, when she would come down from Boston for summer vacations to visit her mom's family. When Claudia's family decided to relocate to Canada permanently, their

summer friendship eventually blossomed into romance, and in 1991, they got married.

Now thirty-one years later, he and Claudia are grandparents to their first grandchild named Ruth.

"I grew up in a houseful of men", says Anthony, "I had two brothers and I was the eldest of three. Now I've transitioned to a houseful of women. There's likely a lesson there I need to be taught that I'm still working on." Anthony chuckles.

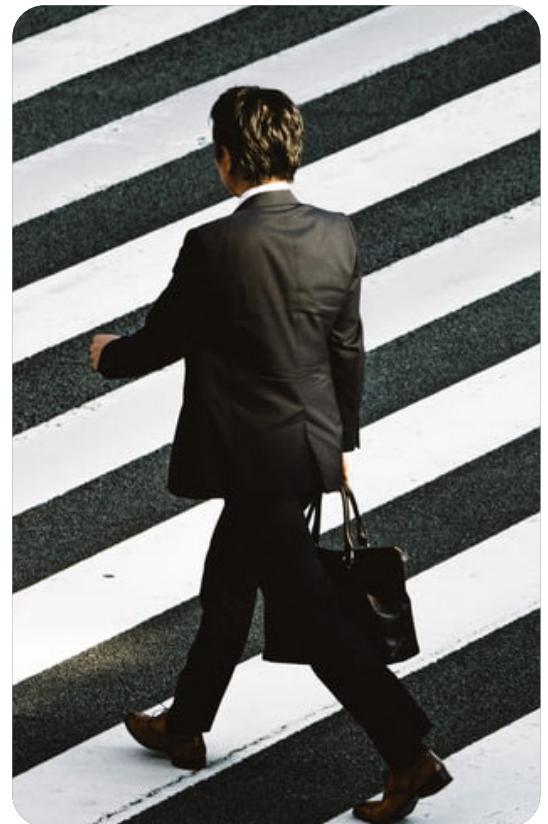
In 2001, after several years of trying to balance the needs of his young family with the demands of the casino life, Anthony realized he needed a change of pace. So, on June 11th 2001, he got a job as a financial advisor with Investor's Group, one of Canada's oldest financial companies.

Although Anthony had great mentors, leaders, and support at Investor's Group, the first year and a half was challenging, managing the aftershock of the events of 9/11 that had happened only three months after he started. The massively publicized Enron corporate fraud case preceding the WorldCom and Tyco scandals, followed by the Mad Cow outbreak, SARS,

the West Nile Virus and ultimately the meltdown of the corporate belief system, made it a tough road for any businessperson in commission-based sales.

In 2007, Anthony was promoted to Division Director in the Grimsby office just in time for Lehman Brothers to collapse in September of 2008, the catalyst which led to the worst financial meltdown since the Great Depression.

States Anthony, "Around 2009, I started scratch-padding an idea of a business, which was the embryo of Dragon's eye. I had a deep, driven passion to be able to help, find, and create solutions for struggling business owners."





# BUSINESS NOW

"I wanted my business to be focused on helping business owners on a personal level as well and meeting them where they're at," Anthony continues. "As a financial consultant, we would often have speakers come in talking about how they could help us grow our business, which I really wanted to do, but in many cases the cost of the program was more than I could afford." Anthony pauses, then adds emphatically, "Business help and advice costs enormous amounts of money, and no one should ever feel like they're on their own to figure it out, especially when they're just opening a business."

In May 2011, he was feeling like he was missing out on family events and spending quality time with his wife and two daughters, so he decided it was time to move on.

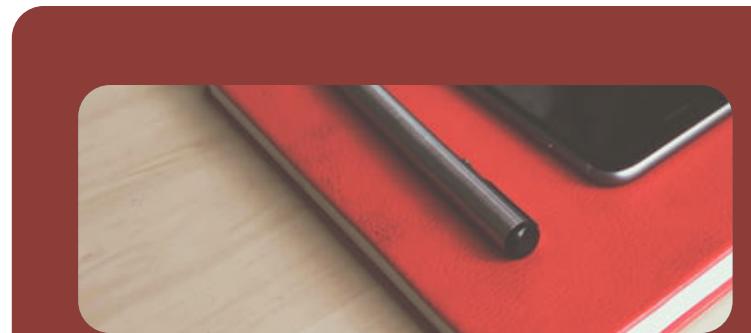
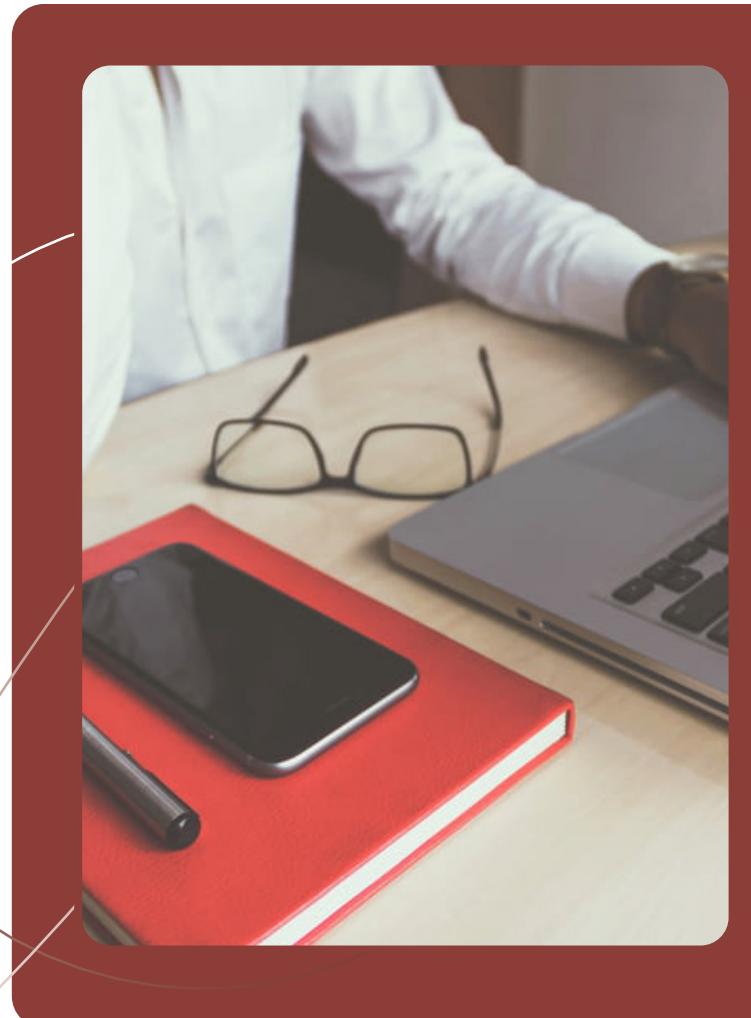
After his short stint in the world of being self-employed, Anthony made the practical decision to head back to a corporate job. In 2012, he got a job working as Tim Horton's National Operations Manager for all of the Cold Stone Creamery locations across Canada, a platform which was eventually removed and now no longer exists.

"I was finding that my clients would often ask me, 'Can't you just do it for me?'" recalls Anthony. "They were too busy to do what needed to get done themselves or even to find someone reputable to do it for them."

So, for the next five years, Anthony accrued a talented pool of local service providers in Niagara - copywriters, bloggers, videographers, web designers, digital experts, etc. -- each with their own unique set of skills. Most importantly for Anthony, however, was finding talent that aligned with his vision, values and delivery standards, people who believed in maintaining his motto of "client-first servant leadership".

"I wanted people who understood that we can accomplish more together than we could apart", Anthony explains. "Collaboration is a powerful tool and will become a cornerstone for any business in today's quick changing markets!"

Anthony continues, "We are a unified front, all entrepreneurs who are passionate about what we do and subject matter experts in our space. The advantage for the client is that it can all be accessed through a single point of contact who manages the project for the entire team, so strong organization and communication is a big key to our success."





Dragon's Eye has formed itself into one of Niagara's most reputable collaborative agencies. Having a team of experts behind him, Anthony is in a unique position to help small to medium sized businesses scale from small to large projects.

Now Anthony has turned his focus onto supporting some of the struggling non-profit organizations by donating some of the proceeds from his merchandise sales to multiple different charities. Dragon's Eye Community Care Initiative has been redesigned for 2022 after helping support 14 charities within it's first year.

At the end of 2021, Anthony's creative team came up with a design of two dragons, a big one named Ash and a little one named Phoenix, which now serves as the mascot for his philanthropic efforts.



Dragon's Eye has partnered with "Kits for a Cause", which allows the chosen charity to create their own kit that will best service the community they serve.

The Community Value Pack includes a co-branded T-shirt featuring Ash and Phoenix in an activity related to the charity, along with their kit and additional shirts can be purchased separately. All T-shirt proceeds go to the charity of choice along with one of their own uniquely designed kits.

Anthony and the Dragon's Eye team will be working with five charities this year, kicking off their first 6-week campaign from mid-April until the end of May, with all proceeds going to the Niagara SPCA. To support, visit their page at <http://cci.techcards.ca>.

"Our goal is to put as much of a spotlight as possible on the charity itself", states Anthony. "We'll be using our platform and resources during each six-week campaign to both try to raise funds and grow awareness about the organization."

Anthony continues, "Every campaign will end with a celebratory event the public can attend. This is when the donors can pick up their T-shirts and watch the kits being delivered, so they can see the direct impact of their donations" BL.

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For more information on Dragon's Eye Community Care initiative, visit: <https://www.dragonseyeconsulting.com/community-support/#cci>

*Article written by Sheri Hawkins. Sheri is currently the Chief Editor of Business Link Media digital magazine and the operator of the community platform, Mainly Niagara.*

# COMMUNITY CARE



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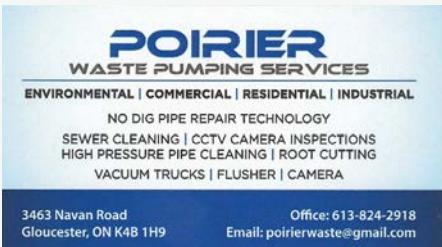
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*Photo: Honourable Mike Lake*

# THE NEXT GENERATION OF POLITICS:

## Talking with The Honourable Mike Lake

INTERVIEWED BY: MIA LIU, KAREN  
LI, DAVID QIAO, AND TIFFANY LI

WRITTEN BY: MIA LIU



*GYP is a non-profit organization that supports the youth by building a youth-friendly environment for those who have passions, initiatives, and motivations in making the world a better place. In partnership with GYP, Business Link Media helps to promote aspiring young writers by publishing their written works in our magazine.*

*Recently, students Mia Liu, Karen Li, David Qiao and Tiffany Li had the opportunity to interview The Hon Mike Lake, a Conservative Member of Parliament for the Edmonton-Wetaskiwin riding.*



## QUESTION 1

THERE ARE MANY KIDS THAT WANT TO BE INVOLVED IN POLITICS. WHAT DO YOU THINK IS ONE OF THE BEST WAYS FOR THEM TO GET INVOLVED AT A YOUNG AGE? DO YOU HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS ON THINGS TO DO?

A: For sure. We have lots of young volunteers on our campaigns and every party runs campaigns in every part of the country, so there are a lot of candidates to choose from. Regardless of what party you support, do your research to best understand what you truly believe in. At any point of time, you can get involved with the party that most reflects your views. During campaigns, candidates do things such as phone calls, knocking on doors, handing out literature, and more. Every party needs volunteers, so the best way to get involved right at the start is to just get engaged in a campaign, whether it's federal-provincial or a local campaign.

## QUESTION 2

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE POSITION? AND HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH THOSE RESPONSIBILITIES?

A: The core responsibility of a Member of Parliament is to represent constituents, so before anything else that I do, I have to make sure that I hear from the constituents of Edmonton Wetaskiwin. I also need to have a broad understanding of what people are thinking. Obviously, everybody has different views, but it's my job to really try to understand what the consensus of those views are so that when I'm in the House of Commons, I can best reflect them when I'm speaking or placing my vote.

This is why it's really important to stay connected to people. As you may or may not know, Edmonton Wetaskiwin is the biggest constituency by population in the country, so it's a lot of work to ensure myself and my staff are hearing from as many people as we can. We've got 209,000 constituents in Edmonton Wetaskiwin and the average constituency size is probably about 110,000.



### QUESTION 3

**COULD YOU TELL US ABOUT A SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCE YOU HAD DURING YOUR CAMPAIGN OR YOUR CAREER AND HOW IT HAS Affected YOU?**

A: There were many significant experiences in my career, so I'll split this question into two parts.

Firstly, an important moment of my career was during an election. As a politician, I've attended 6 elections, and have had 3 nominations. In the 2019 election, the Conservatives (which is my party) had the second highest vote total, and the highest vote total in the last 2 elections. That was quite memorable.

Secondly, when serving in the cabinet, I once worked to get a balanced budget, which was hard work but worth it once our efforts paid off. I've also helped to raise funding for Canadian Autism which has been very rewarding.

### QUESTION 4

**DUE TO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY'S IMMENSE DEVELOPMENT, WHAT DO YOU AIM TO ACHIEVE IN THE YOUNGER GENERATION?**

A: There are many things that we aim to achieve to help younger generations, and it's all about balance.

Firstly, it is very important to protect the environment for younger generations. It's also critical to ensure that young people have the same, or better opportunities that we have now. We have a fantastic quality of life in Canada, but I'm worried it will be broken soon. Home ownership and the price of houses in the country are rising, which brings the concern on whether young people will be able to live in the same types of houses that my generation lived in when we were growing up. Houses are getting incredibly expensive, especially in the GTA and Ontario, along with Vancouver and Montreal. Thankfully, this issue hasn't reached Alberta yet, but I believe that it is coming soon. (continued)

## QUESTION 6

**WHAT WERE SOME THINGS THAT INSPIRED YOU TO GET INTO POLITICS? MORE SPECIFICALLY, WHAT WAS THE TIPPING POINT FOR YOU THAT INCENTIVIZED YOU TO TAKE THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS YOUR CAREER IN POLITICS?**

Getting the economic situation under control right now will be crucial. Looking at our history when this issue had previously shown up in the 70s and 80s, Canada had to cut spending for health care, social services and education by the late 90s. I do not want to go down that road again because it is the youth that would be hurt the most.

## QUESTION 5

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE ACTIONS YOU HAVE TAKEN TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY SAFETY IN THE AREAS YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR?**

A: Community safety is a tricky subject because public safety isn't a factor I've been tasked with. Right now, I am the shadow minister of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention. However, I think mental health affects everything and everything affects mental health. We are trying our best to keep kids safe and healthy and to help people who have made some bad decisions in the past. I believe we should invest more into mental health and make sure people get help when they need it because community safety is so intertwined with our collective mental health.

A: Before I became a politician, he worked for the Albertan Hockey Organization for 16 years. During an election while I was still in the sports industry, 24 out of 26 seats taken were by the Conservative party. However, the seat that I have now was held by a different party.

One day, some of my friends were visiting me, hanging out by the fireplace, simply talking, when they encouraged me to start a political career. Those conversations got me thinking and the more I thought about it, the more inspired I became.

## QUESTION 7

**COULD YOU TELL US ABOUT ANY OF YOUR RECENT OR FUTURE PROJECTS THAT AIM TO BETTER THE COMMUNITY YOU SERVE AS A GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL?**

A: One of the things that have really struck our society is how people are politically communicating on social media platforms - not only in Canada, but also in the United States and other parts of

the world. There has always been a lot of friction in elections and politics, and it is really a tough place to go. Many good people aren't wanting to get involved because they're seeing what is happening, and I am hoping to change that.

One of the things that I have started to do, is something we call "Zoom Happy Hours", with a 'no harm' rule that allows only friendly discussion and conversation. About three times a week, I'll invite approximately ten people who are doing great things to just discuss how we can make the world better. We've talked to presidents and CEOs of organizations including; Save The

Children, Unicef, World Vision, and Jack.org. We've had reporters and broadcasters attend to discuss things and try to bring civility to the conversation, which is something I believe is especially crucial at this time.

Politics is definitely a place where you're going to have passionate debates, but I believe that debates shouldn't get overly personal. I hope that one day they can be fair, relevant, and respectful without diffusing the passion. It's okay to be angry, but the line is being crossed way too often these days, and that needs to be resolved.

## QUESTION 8

**IN A DIVERSE COUNTRY WITH DIFFERENT OPINIONS, WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE BEST WAY TO ENGAGE IN POLITICAL DISCUSSION AND EXCHANGE OF IDEAS ON CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS?**

A: That is a great question, and it kind of goes with what I was saying before about the way we talk to each other on social media.

One of the things that I've noticed is that everybody is quick to weigh in on a subject, and people aren't as ready to wait and listen to other people. What I've found helpful in





my life is to listen to people who I might instinctively disagree with. It doesn't mean when I listen to someone I'm going to change my mind. It just means I'm going to hear them out and be open to new information. So if I can take that approach, by listening to someone articulate what it is that they believe, and even if I don't come around to their way of thinking, if I can understand why they think the way

they do, that's the most effective way to have respectful conversations, especially about divisive subjects.

What I find almost invariably happens is that, if I take that approach, after I've walked away and had time to think about it, I sometimes start to process my thoughts differently. Maybe I become open to a different way of thinking. It doesn't mean I have to completely agree with everything, but in some cases, what I've found is that it helps me think differently, even if it's about something unrelated to what we were specifically discussing.

In a world where there's a cacophony of noise and distractions coming at us all of the time, sometimes it's just good to stop, ask some questions and listen. Try to build your understanding a little bit and learn something that will help you move forward.

A: I think it's a huge opportunity. Social media has made it easier to connect to people, but we do have some issues.

At first, everyone thought what social media would do was enhance our democracy because everyone could weigh in on the situation and participate in debate. What we discovered, though, is that social media companies have algorithms, and the algorithms tend to connect people with similar interests - and sometimes we don't even know we are being 'manipulated'.

Firstly, what social media has done is unconsciously create these echo chambers, and we only talk to people that believe what we believe. If what we believe is wrong, we are



## QUESTION 9

SOCIAL MEDIA HAS BECOME THE NUMBER ONE WAY PEOPLE COMMUNICATE, ESPECIALLY DURING COVID. WHAT IS YOUR OPINION ON THE SHIFT TO MORE SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE?



just reinforcing that within these echo chambers. After all, we aren't even challenged by opposition, and therefore we won't see the world differently because not everything is painted in black and white. We will also start to believe that everyone else thinks the same way as we do because that's all we'll ever see or hear. So if you meet someone that has a different worldview they might come off as shocking or radical.

Secondly, another problem with social media is its toxicity. If someone posts

a mean comment, now that doesn't always feel good, but most of the time these accounts are anonymous. There's no name or geographical information attached, so anyone can just comment whatever they want without me even knowing if they live

in Canada. We need to work on improving transparency on social media. It's a tough balance because we also want free speech and privacy, but complete anonymity also has its problems. We need to strike the right balance.

## QUESTION 10

**WHAT IS YOUR ENDING MESSAGE TO EVERYONE WATCHING THIS INTERVIEW?**

A: First of all, get involved. When I say get involved, I mean more than just posting your opinions on social media or throwing tweets at people. Meaningful debate on social media is important, so start there. Very few people actually participate in a campaign and go out door knocking with a candidate. That needs to happen during campaigns. No matter what party it is that you affiliate with, it's that act of getting involved that matters.

Secondly, inform yourself, read information

from credible sources and listen to different points of view. And don't just read the same newspaper, website, or social media feed all the time. Try and find people who say things in a thoughtful way, even when their message might not resonate with you.

I love following thoughtful people, even people who give my party a hard time on social media. When I read their criticism I actually think a little bit about our position. It might not change our stance, but if they make me think about



our position on a particular issue, that's a good thing.

As a member of Parliament, I will actually try to engage with people. And I've had situations - I have a very specific one in mind where a writer (who comes from the more left part of the political spectrum) sent me a public tweet. But rather than throwing a snarky tweet back at him, I responded, "Hey, you don't really know me, why don't we grab a cup of coffee?" So we went and had a chat over a cup a coffee and now he's a friend of mine.

We bonded over hockey, and we disagreed over politics, but we also found out we even agreed on a few things. I think we need to have those kinds of constructive conversations.

The last thing I'll leave you with is to be passionate, but also be respectful. It is so important that we up our respect for one another as Canadians.

The bottom line is, whatever it is we're advocating for (or whatever party we get involved with), our mission always has to be "country first". Our col-

lective mandate must be to create a better world, a better life, better opportunities for our fellow Canadians, and I would say people beyond Canada as well. That should be our goal, first and foremost, regardless of our political labels. BL.

---

*To learn more about Hon. Mike Lake, visit*

*[https://www.ourcommons.ca/members/en/mike-lake\(35857\)](https://www.ourcommons.ca/members/en/mike-lake(35857))*

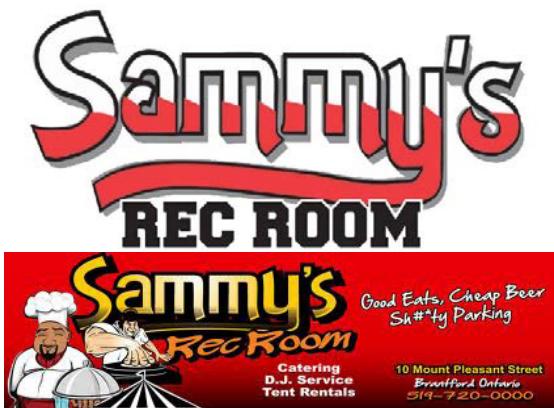
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INTERVIEWED BY:  
RYAN LI, ADELLA FU, ALLAN XIONG  
WRITTEN BY: RYAN LI



PHOTO: MR. STEVEN SHEN

# SPOTLIGHT ON STEVEN SHEN

Chairman of China-US Business Summit  
President of Newshen International Consulting Group  
President of Beijing Newshen Cultural Communications  
President of Shenhart Entertainment  
Vice President of the International Education Leadership Foundation  
Founder and Chair of Board of Trustees of "A Perfect Love Foundation"

# SPOTLIGHT

When Steven Shen first came to America, he was a man on a mission. That mission was to help Chinese adoptees with disabilities thrive with their American foster parents. Not only did his calling drive him to create a charity for Chinese adoptees, but his philanthropic efforts continue to make a lasting impact today.

In 1989, Shen arrived in America to pursue a Master's degree in Radio and Television. He already had a degree from Beijing University and six years of experience at China National Radio, but he knew he wanted more. He became an instructor at Pomona College but he continued to aim higher.

In 1993, Shen decided to use his credentials and experience to found his own business, called Newshen International Consulting Group in order to provide advice and guidance to Chinese entrepreneurs to assist them in bringing their business to a country with an entirely different culture.

"The cultural difference between Chinese people who predominantly like listening to authority and following instructions versus Americans who generally fight for their freedoms and are very creative and self-motivated was the biggest challenge for me when I was first creating my business", states Shen. "In fact, they were the main

factor in motivating me to create Newshen so that future Chinese entrepreneurs would not have the same challenges that myself and many others have had to face."

However, Newshen wasn't Shen's only project. In 2009, he used his expertise as well as his numerous connections to create the first China-US Business Summit, which has over 1,500 members in both China and the United States today. This summit has facilitated

many different business ventures and strives to connect Chinese entrepreneurs with American businessmen to create strong connections that can benefit both parties.

Steven Shen is a man of many talents and qualities, one of which is his generosity. It would have been easy for Shen to simply rest on his laurels after founding such a successful company and business summit, but he noticed an even greater problem that almost nobody knew existed.

Shen was already aware of the cultural differences that Chinese entrepreneurs faced when entering the American market, but he also noticed that these differences were even bigger for Chinese adoptees living in America, and in particular those with disabilities.

Shen was already aware of the cultural differences that Chinese entrepreneurs faced when entering the American market, but he also

noticed that these differences were even bigger for Chinese adoptees living in America, and in particular those with disabilities.





In response, he founded A Perfect Love Foundation, which has started five different projects to assist Chinese kids and their American parents in everyday life. For example, one of A Perfect Love's main projects is providing free Chinese language and culture classes to Chinese adoptees so they can maintain their child's culture of origin and pass on their traditions to the next generation. Other projects of the foundation include, building new handicap-accessible homes for families; providing funds to families to help cover medical expenses for their adoptees; gifting families with everything on their Christmas wishlist, and filming documentaries about these Chinese adoptees to raise awareness about their plight and increase support for them.

While Shen has accomplished many outstanding feats, he has a mes-

sage for any young person out there trying to make a difference just like him.

"Just get a foot in the door and start by changing the world, step by step." Shen advises. "It's so important to build on your past achievements and using them to help others."

To conclude, Steven Shen

represents an inspiration for us all to change the world and help others. His humility and perseverance have made a huge difference in regard to Sino-American relations on a macro and micro level. His altruism should act as a call to action for other people who also want to improve the world. Shen has not only achieved his mission, he has

well exceeded it, which is why he is truly a role model for all of us trying to build a better future.

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*To learn more about Steven Chen and A Perfect Love Foundation, visit <https://www.aperfectlove.org/founders>*



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# CATCHING LIFE'S MOMENTS THROUGH LIFECASTING SCHOOL OF ART

HOW ARTIST GABRIELLE FISCHER IS  
HELPING CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURS  
GROW THEIR HOME-BASED BUSINESS

**CATCH THE MOMENTS**





**A**s a lifelong enthusiast of the arts, Niagara-raised artist Gabrielle Fischer has devoted her life to learning and practicing her artistic craft of sculpting. Gabrielle has been mentored by wonderful teachers at notable art academies through the US and Canada, including the Art Student League of NY, Scottsdale Art School in Arizona, Pink House Casting in Vermont, and the Koffler Centre of the Arts in Toronto, to name a few.

In the early 90's, while in attendance at an arts & crafts trade show in New York, Gabrielle discovered a skin safe molding cream that would add a new element to her art. Fascinated by this impression material, she started making mold impressions of children's hands for family and friends.

A creative soul in every measure, Gabrielle has been heavily reliant on her hands to not only sculpt and create, but to enjoy her other favorite activities, including gardening and cooking.

"Making things with my hands is hugely satisfying", Gabrielle explains. "The hands are so integral to

our ability to work and create, and they are usually our first point of connection when we physically connect with others. So, creating sculptures from 3D casting impressions of mothers' hands with their babies, or a bride and groom, is giving them a way to tangibly hold that moment in time."

As word spread, requests for larger castings made Gabrielle realize she needed to

fast track and study with notable lifecasting artists.

"The creative license to incorporate body casting with sculpture fascinated me," says Gabrielle, "Requests for personalized sculptures inspired me to bring out the best possible pose for each person I worked with. These sculptures were artistically designed for posterity and would reflect their essence for generations."





Now Gabrielle has turned her attention to passing on her knowledge to people who want to learn to do casting for themselves. Her LifeCasting School of Art was born out of the many requests from individuals - moms in particular - wishing to create a home business in a lucrative and creative space.

"I think an artist has a responsibility to teach, to pass on acquired experiences not available in books," Gabrielle affirms. "Experiencing various mediums and methods in the arts is an important part in the learning curve."

For the past twenty-five years, Gabrielle has been building an impressive resume. With live performance casting at shows and exhibitions, interviews on television, magazine, and newspaper, she is now widely regarded as an expert in this artistic niche. She has worked with and created busts for multiple celebrities including boxing legends Jake LaMotta, George Chuvalo, Ken Norton, artist Robert Bateman, guitarist Don Ross, musician Walter Ostanek, as well as a wide range of bodybuilders, dancers, politicians, and even the average person who understands what it means to be "one with the art". Some casting sculptures were commissioned in bronze for gallery exhibitions.



# CATCHING THE MOMENTS

LIFE CASTING SCHOOL OF ART

As a mom, Gabrielle remembers the challenges in raising a family while simultaneously working on her craft.

"Your children become your focal point", Gabrielle reflects. "It's very easy to lose yourself and your connection with your own creative pursuits while still being fully engaged as a parent.

That's who I'm trying to reach, the mom who dreams of both contributing to the family finances by running a home-based business, while also providing a way for her to tap into her own creativity and connect with others.





outlet and the reward of having a deeply personal and lasting effect on others."

Before starting your own business, she encourages people to "know their Why". According to Gabrielle, your "why" should involve decisions on the dynamics of your family

and how to monetize your time.

But, she advises that it's important to find genuine joy in your business, and it should be more than just making money. It should satisfy your passion to do something creative, provide a way to give back to the community and/or bring joy into the lives of others.

"Anyone with an entrepreneurial spirit wishing to express their creativity and realize the value they offer to the public will be welcome to join this fascinating recession proof industry".

Gabrielle continues, "That's literally what this program can offer you, is the opportunity to structure a homebased business around the needs of your family, while also giving you a creative

**“ CREATING  
LIFECASTING  
IMPRESSIONS FOR YOUR  
CLIENTS GIVES YOU  
THAT OPPORTUNITY. ”**

“Creating LifeCasting impressions for your clients gives you that opportunity”, Gabrielle states. “If you love making a positive impact on people’s lives, learning how to create lifecast sculptures will help you capture time sensitive moments that will remain in that person’s life forever. An heirloom passed down through familial generations.”

Gabrielle concludes, “And with so many significant occasions in our lives, learning to create beautiful sculptures of those notable moments in time, you’ll always have a customer. And those special moments, such as the birth of a child, engagements, weddings, graduations, birthdays and even end of life reflection, I think those are the moments worth catching.”



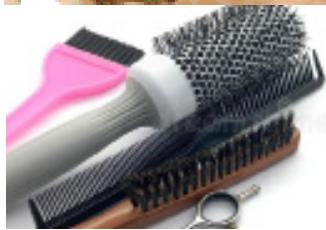
Want to learn more about Gabrielle’s LifeCasting School of Art?

Visit: <https://catchthemoments.ca/>! Get all the information you need to begin your journey by downloading LifeCasting School of Art’s FREE EBOOK for details. Workshops for business, designs taught, retail cost for commissions and much more.

# SCHOOL OF ART

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*Article written by Sheri Hawkins. Sheri is currently the Chief Editor of Business Link Media digital magazine and the operator of the community platform, Mainly Niagara.*



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# LOCAL LIVE SPOTLIGHT ON NIAGARA'S OWN

*As an on-site live-streamer and events promoter for Mainly Niagara, this busy digital marketer is also building his own brand on his YouTube channel, writing his prose on a vintage typewriter and collaborating with the best of Niagara's talent to showcase what Niagara has to offer in local food, arts and entertainment!*

*We've seen him around a lot lately, so we wanted to get to know him better. Check out our Q & A with Local Louie!*

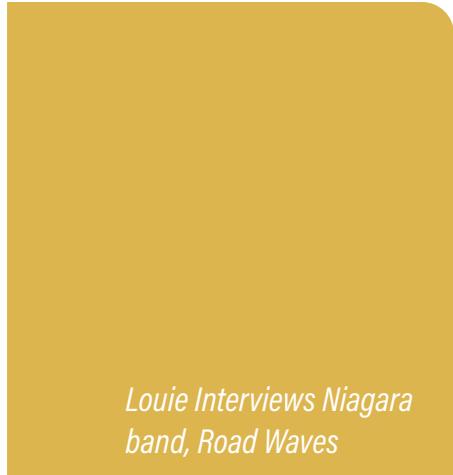
NIAGARA'S OWN

LOCAL  
LOUIE





*Louie with Niagara Falls' 420 Expo organizer, Matt Guarasci*



*Louie Interviews Niagara band, Road Waves*



1

## HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED IN NIAGARA?

I was born and raised in Niagara. My father came here by boat from Italy in 1963 when he was five years old. He met my mother who is from Niagara Falls, New York. He crossed the border the next day and brought her back to Can-

ada, and 42 years later, they're still here and together. I have lived here for 26 of my 28 years, excluding the 2 years I lived in Toronto. Niagara is my home and my happy place.

**2**

## WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT LIVING IN NIAGARA?

What I love most about Niagara is the mix between the tourist world and the local land. Niagara is like a small world all on its own. A lot of families know each other or are intertwined in some way. I love the connection the community has with

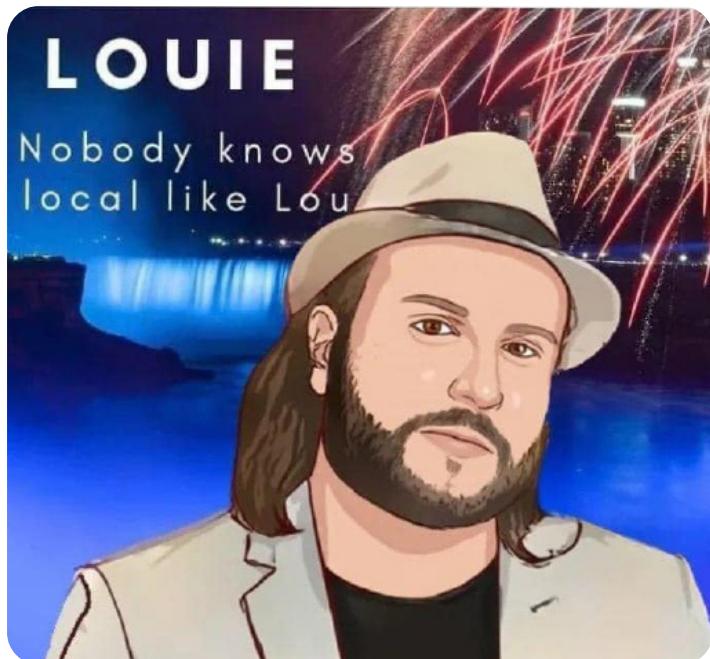
each other. The togetherness of the people of the city during events. It's a feeling of joy when I think about my hometown that I love so much. It feels like everyone knows somebody here.

**3**

## WHAT HAS LOCAL BUSINESS MEANT TO YOU?

Local business means everything to me. Coming from a large family we have small businesses everywhere in the city. The last resort / Monticello was my uncle's restaurant and was a Victoria Street sta-

ple. Now I drive along the road and see friends opening up shops and everyone is doing their best to support each other. It brings tears of joy to my eyes just thinking about it.

**4**

## WHY DID YOU REACH OUT TO CONNECT WITH MAINLY NIAGARA?

I reached out because I saw what Sheri was doing and I wanted to help in anyway that I could. I thought now would be a good time to give back to the community that raised me and to bring recognition to the city that I love.

**5****WHAT WERE YOU DOING PRIOR TO COVID?**

Prior to covid I was managing Gino's Pizza on Lundy's Lane. I had worked there for almost 9 years.

**6****HOW DID YOU PIVOT WHEN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HIT?**

When COVID hit I almost lost everything. The income I was making from Gino's was not enough to support me as the store had closed multiple times and revenue went down. I had to step away from the business, take a loss and explore new ventures.

In the early months of the pandemic, I ended up forming Livestream Niagara with Kevin Jack from WeeStreem. What had started off as a live two-hour concert hosted by Mainly Niagara became a weeknight evening show called "TMI with Local Louie". Kevin, myself and other guest hosts ran a live show for almost a year to give others who were feeling isolated by COVID lock-

downs a connection to their local community. Our motto was, "by Niagara, for Niagara". It was very rewarding.

Additionally, I delivered fresh food and produce from Small Scale Farms to their customers and volunteered for Community Care to drop off groceries to those who needed them.

**7****WHAT WAS THE HARDEST THING YOU EXPERIENCED ABOUT COVID?**

The hardest thing was to find the motivation to get up and keep moving despite the world being at a stand still. I will admit it was not easy and my mental health paid the price. In retrospect, it was a blessing in disguise because I got to learn more about myself and become more comfortable with being on my own. I do fear loneliness, but I became one with myself and now I no longer fear being alone. But I'm so



# **LOCAL LOUIE**

glad that businesses are open again and we can go to live events again. Now we can all work together to pull through by putting our money back into our local economy.

8

## HOW DID YOU FIND YOUR SENSE OF PURPOSE DURING COVID?

I found my purpose through entertaining people with my show TMI on Livestream Niagara.

I lost my purpose when the pandemic continued growing stronger, and my show was no longer sustainable

I was in a dark place for a while. I needed to find my purpose again and shake the mental health struggles I was facing.

Eventually with self realization and the help of my lifelong friends they pulled me out of the hole and back on my feet. Now "Local Louie" is back - bigger, better, and more motivated than ever.

9

## WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE SMALL BUSINESS/HIDDEN GEM IN NIAGARA AND WHY?

See, I don't have one hidden gem that is a favourite. There are however many places I frequent that are Niagara staples. One example is "Yanks Old Niagara Bar and Grill" because the people, the food, and the atmosphere represent

everything that Niagara values. It is a family run business that really makes you enjoy the little things Niagara has to offer, simple pub food, like pizza and wings, which is always a favourite.

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## WHAT ARE YOU PLANNING TO DO NOW?

I am planning many things. First is the official launch of the Local Louie YouTube page and website. This will feature various content all about Niagara and my adventures interviewing musicians, attending concerts, special events, and showcasing everything local. There are many musical acts and comedy acts that I have been shadow-

ing so there will be lots of coverage about the local scenes in the near future.

One thing I'm really excited about is my passion project I am working on for the summer. I plan on filming a documentary on the story of my immigrant Italian family and how they traveled from Italy to create a life in Niagara.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

*Article written by Sheri Hawkins. Sheri is currently the Chief Editor of Business Link Media digital*

*The future looks bright, and I have never been more happy, excited, and motivated to continue this journey we call 'life'.*

*magazine and the operator of the community platform, Mainly Niagara.*



## Landscaping Wealth Tips & Return on Investment of Rental Properties



Daniel Chin strongly feels that the exterior of your multi-family investment property is just as important as the interior when it comes to doing renovations for your prospective and existing tenants.

"A well-maintained landscape significantly improves the appearance of your property", explains Daniel. "After spending a hectic day away, everyone wants to come back to a home that is welcoming. The surrounding space makes a lasting impression, so excellent landscaping is the best way to make your home one of the most attractive properties in your neighbourhood; even as a rental investment property."

According to Daniel, quality landscaping makes your yard one well-knit component. It is not only about flower beds on their own, but the umbrella that is landscaping also includes elements like trees, shrubbery, and the lawn (grass) in front yard or backyard, and consistent upkeep and/or cleaned exterior premises.

Re-paving or asphalting the entire exterior driveway or parking area is also important to your investment property because it also adds to the curb appeal. Tenants will appre-

ciate a well-maintained and newly asphalted driveway with no pot holes, cracks or deficiencies which may cause potential vehicle damages.

Curb appeal of multi-family rental properties are important factors to consider in attracting higher quality tenants. It also shows that the Landlord or Property Manager and/or Property Owner is taking care of all property maintenance.

"Additionally," adds Daniel, "If the property is in a good location with excellent curb appeal and upgraded interior finishes; the Landlord can charge maximum rents (based on current market conditions), which in turn, will increase your Net Operating Income, and greater positive cash flows (profits)."

In relation to the location, condition and unit finishes, generally a multi-family property (more than 5 units), that is in an above average condition with higher quality tenant profile, will have greater marketability, should you decide to sell your investment property.

"At Chin Properties, we allow tenants to have the privilege of gardening, which is noticeably an increasing request of residents", concludes Daniel. "Allowing this option makes our tenants feel happier and more at home on our properties."

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