

TOO GROOVY

ISSUE
1

LOCAL STORIES. BIG IMPACT.

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REAL PEOPLE. REAL STORIES. REAL NIAGARA.

TOO GROOVY

People • Places • Community • Niagara

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FROM THE EDITOR

*People Doing Good Things
Are Still Worth Talking About.*

Welcome to Too Groovy.

This magazine was created around a simple idea: there are interesting people, businesses, organizations and community projects all around us doing things worth celebrating.

Sometimes the best stories are not the loudest ones.

They are the volunteer who keeps showing up. The local business that supports a community event. The person who sees a problem and decides to do something about it. The attraction that brings families together. The organization creating jobs. The individual whose generosity makes somebody else's day a little easier.

That is what Too Groovy is about.

In this issue, we begin with an extraordinary Niagara story — the Toolbox Project Niagara and its approaching delivery of its 10,000th Toolbox. What began with the hope of creating just 25 care packages has grown into a decade-long demonstration of what can happen when ordinary people decide to help their neighbours.

Throughout the issue, you'll also meet businesses, attractions and organizations that contribute to the character, employment, tourism and community life of Niagara.

Thanks for reading.

Matt Paul
Editor — TOO GROOVY



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THE 10TH CAMPAIGN • 2026

10,000 TOOLBOXES.

ONE VERY GROOVY IDEA.

What began with a goal of just 25 care packages has become one of Niagara's most durable grassroots acts of kindness. This year, Toolbox Project Niagara is kicking off its tenth campaign - and preparing to deliver its 10,000th care package.



Jamie Symons, founder, Toolbox Project Niagara

25

ORIGINAL GOAL

364

FIRST CAMPAIGN

10

CAMPAIGNS

10K

MILESTONE

FROM A SMALL ASK TO A NIAGARA TRADITION

The story is almost impossible to tell without stopping at the numbers. In 2017, founder Jamie (James) Symons set out to assemble 25 care packages for people experiencing homelessness. Niagara answered with 364. The following year reached 550. Year after year, the idea kept growing - more volunteers, more drop-off points, more partners, more people reached.

Now the tenth campaign carries a milestone that would have sounded unbelievable at the beginning: the 10,000th Toolbox. But the most important part of the story has never been the number. Every kit is a practical collection of warmth, hygiene, comfort and a reminder that somebody in the community noticed.

THE TOO GROOVY TAKE: Big community projects do not always begin with committees, strategic plans or giant cheques. Sometimes they begin with one person saying, "Could we make 25?" - and a community answering, "We can do more."

THE BOX ISN'T THE POINT. THE PERSON IS.



Jamie Symons speaking at a CAA Niagara event

A SIMPLE CARE PACKAGE

- travel-size shampoo / conditioner
- toothbrush + toothpaste
- deodorant + soap + washcloth
- warm socks, gloves and a toque
- a notepad, cards or puzzle book
- granola bars, candy and small comforts

Toolbox Project Niagara was born from a gap Symons could see clearly: people living without stable housing still needed the ordinary, personal things most of us take for granted. Soap. Toothpaste. Clean socks. Something warm. Something to eat. Something to do. Something that feels like a gift rather than an intake form.

That distinction matters. A care package is small enough to hand directly to someone, but thoughtful enough to carry a message: you are part of this community. Public reporting on Symons' work includes one story that captures the emotional weight of that gesture - a man in his sixties told him a Toolbox package was the first gift he could remember receiving. Symons' reaction was simple: "Can you imagine going your whole life and never receiving a gift?"

“

“While there's a need, we've still got to help.”

- James Symons, 2025

The project first focused on unhoused men, a group Symons felt was often missed by seasonal giving campaigns. As the need became more visible, the campaign widened. Recent drives have included women as well, and the scale has increased alongside Niagara's growing housing insecurity. The contents are practical, but the philosophy is personal.

There is also a refreshingly unglamorous side to the whole operation. Someone has to find bins, collect donations, sort items, pack bags, coordinate volunteers and get kits into the hands of organizations that already know where the need is. That is where the “toolbox” idea becomes more than a name: it is a way of gathering useful things, then putting them to work.



Community support in action

NIAGARA BUILT THIS TOGETHER.

The tenth campaign is not a solo story anymore. It is a network - volunteers, businesses, first responders, community agencies and donors moving thousands of small essentials across the region.



Packed Toolboxes ready to go

LOCAL DISTRIBUTION NETWORK

Toolbox Project Niagara works through a growing network of frontline organizations and community partners to help care packages reach people experiencing homelessness and hardship across Niagara.

25+ FRONTLINE CONNECTIONS

Recent campaign plans routed kits through roughly 25 agencies across Niagara, with Niagara Regional Police and EMS also helping reach people where they are.

CAA NIAGARA

CAA Niagara selected Toolbox Project for a 2024 Community Boost: \$10,000 plus volunteer, fundraising and promotional support.

PENFINANCIAL

A 2025 Truly Local Grant of \$7,000 was directed toward expanding personal-care packages and supporting more year-round distribution.

WHY THE NETWORK MATTERS

The strength of Toolbox is not that it tries to become every service. It works because it connects with people and organizations already on the ground. Police officers and paramedics encounter people at times traditional outreach teams may not. Shelters and community agencies know who is arriving, who is sleeping outside and what supplies are running short. Donors supply the raw materials. Volunteers do the packing. Toolbox becomes the connective tissue.

10,000

PACKAGES = 10,000 MOMENTS

of practical dignity, warmth,
comfort and human connection.

WEAR THE MILESTONE.

HELP BUILD THE NEXT BOX.

Ten campaigns deserve a celebration - but in true Toolbox fashion, even the celebration is being turned into another way to help. The idea: a commemorative T-shirt marking the 10,000th Toolbox, with proceeds helping the campaign reach more people.



THE ASK

Would you buy a commemorative Toolbox Project T-shirt? If the answer is yes, let the campaign know. Interest will help determine the size of a potential run. No price or final design has been announced in the material provided for this feature, so the best next step is simple: send a direct message and say you're interested.

FROM 25 TO 10,000 - AND STILL MOVING.

The milestone is extraordinary. The need behind it is sobering. The most meaningful way to celebrate ten campaigns is to make sure the next person who needs a kit can receive one.

GET INVOLVED

- 1 Express interest in the 10,000th Toolbox commemorative T-shirt by direct message.
- 2 Donate requested hygiene, winter and comfort items when the campaign collection opens.
- 3 Volunteer to sort, pack or move donations through an approved campaign partner.
- 4 Follow Toolbox Project Niagara updates and direct-message the campaign about T-shirts, donations and volunteer opportunities.

**10,000
TOOLBOXES**

DM TO SUPPORT
T-SHIRT • DONATE • VOLUNTEER

 VOTE
JAMES SYMONS
FOR THOROLD
CITY COUNCIL



Building A Stronger Thorold Together

A STRONG VOICE FOR THOROLD

Dedicated • Driven • Community Volunteer

As the founder of the Toolbox Project & a dedicated community volunteer, I'm committed to making Thorold an even better place to live, work, and raise a family.

 **VOTE JAMES SYMONS**
FOR THOROLD CITY COUNCIL

Election Day: October 26, 2026

905-347-2189 | [jamesymons79@gmail.com](mailto:jamessymons79@gmail.com)

TOO GROOVY FEATURE

BIRD KINGDOM

NIAGARA'S INDOOR RAINFOREST

Walk through the doors on River Road and Niagara changes. The roar of the Falls gives way to birdsong, tropical air and flashes of colour overhead. Bird Kingdom is part wildlife encounter, part history lesson and part all-weather family adventure - and it has become one of the region's most distinctive tourism experiences.

Inside the multi-level rainforest, tropical birds fly freely around visitors. The route winds past a waterfall, nocturnal animals, a 19th-century Javanese house and interactive experiences where lorikeets and parrots can come startlingly close.

A BUILDING WITH STORIES

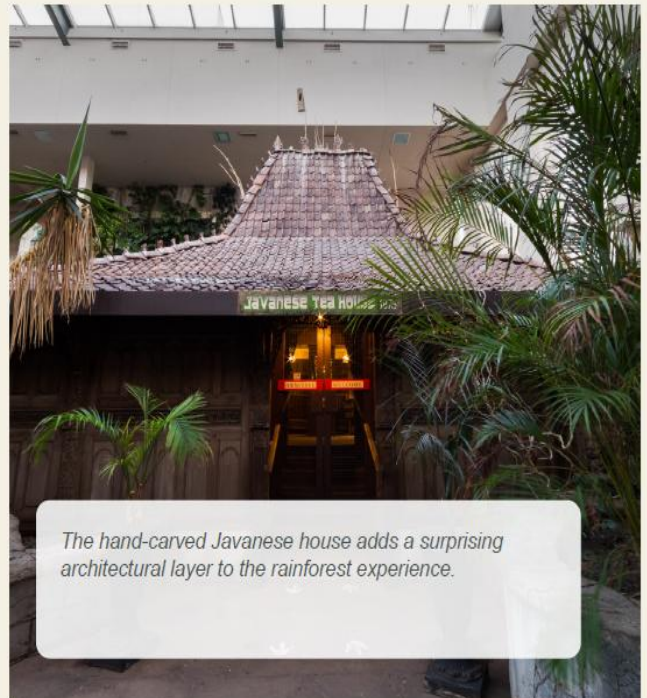
Bird Kingdom's address at 5651 River Road has been telling Niagara stories for more than a century. The original building was constructed in 1907 for the Spirella Corset Company, an unusual early poured-concrete industrial structure. In 1958 it became home to the Niagara Falls Museum, whose collection traced its own roots to 1827.

FROM CORSETS TO A MUMMY

The museum became famous for its Egyptian collection. One of its most remarkable chapters came after the museum closed, when a mummy that had spent more than a century in Niagara was identified as King Ramesses I and ultimately returned to Egypt in 2003. That history still gives the property a layer of intrigue before visitors even reach the birds.

THE AVIARY TAKES FLIGHT

The building was purchased in 2000 and extensively renovated, with a major addition created for the aviary. Bird Kingdom opened in the early 2000s and has since become known as the world's largest free-flying indoor aviary. The attraction has also been recognized for preserving the original architectural character of the historic structure while adapting it to a completely new use.



The hand-carved Javanese house adds a surprising architectural layer to the rainforest experience.

"You do not simply look at the rainforest. You move through it."

THE BIG REVEAL

The route builds toward the Main Aviary: a broad, bright indoor rainforest where birds move above, beside and sometimes directly in front of guests. The pathway begins high and descends through the habitat, passing behind the waterfall and down toward the jungle floor.

Bird Kingdom says the Main Aviary alone is home to roughly 200 birds representing more than 40 species. A separate Small Bird Aviary adds around 20 species, including some that are rare or endangered.

A HOUSE INSIDE A JUNGLE

Then there is the Javanese house: a hand-carved teak structure from the 1800s, built without nails and described by Bird Kingdom as the only one of its kind in North America. It is the sort of detail that makes the attraction feel less like a single exhibit and more like a series of discoveries.

That mix of wildlife, architecture and Niagara history gives Bird Kingdom something many attractions cannot manufacture: a genuine sense that the building itself has lived several lives.

THE EXPERIENCE GETS PERSONAL



LORIKEET LANDING

One of Bird Kingdom's signature moments happens when a cup of nectar turns a visitor into a temporary landing pad. Rainbow lorikeets may hop onto hands and arms to feed, creating a close-up encounter that children remember and adults immediately reach for their phones to capture. Feeding periods are scheduled throughout the day, with limited participation, and the birds take part by choice.

PARROT ENCOUNTERS

Parrot encounters offer another opportunity to meet one of the facility's donated parrots. Guests age five and older can, subject to availability, hold a participating parrot while family members watch and take photos. The result is personal, unscripted and often a little funny.

Bird Kingdom is not only displaying animals. Its educational programs are built around biodiversity, enrichment and the everyday work of animal care.

LEARNING THAT MOVES

For school and group bookings, Bird Kingdom offers guided tours led by knowledgeable staff and a Living World Walking Class that combines live-animal experiences, interactive activities and a guided exploration of biodiversity.

Its Enrichment Workshop takes visitors behind the scenes conceptually: participants build a real parrot toy while learning how zookeepers use enrichment to support animals' mental and physical wellbeing. Afterwards, they can tour the aviary and look for enrichment in action.

The attraction also offers self-guided group visits, birthday arrangements and virtual educational options, making the building useful to teachers and community groups as well as tourists.

CONSERVATION IN PRACTICE

Bird Kingdom is a CAZA-accredited facility and says it participates in Species Survival Programs intended to help maintain genetic diversity among species in human care.

Its conservation approach also shows up in less glamorous operational choices: heat pumps help maintain tropical temperatures; recycled materials are used for parrot enrichment toys; and water from exhibits is stored and reused for plants.

Those details matter because conservation becomes more credible when it is not only something printed on an exhibit sign. It becomes part of how the attraction operates every day.

WHY BIRD KINGDOM MATTERS TO NIAGARA

LOCAL JOBS BEHIND THE BIRDSONG

A tourism attraction is also a workplace. Bird Kingdom's operation depends on people in animal care, admissions, retail, education, guest service and the day-to-day work required to keep a large indoor habitat running. Current hiring has included retail and ticket-booth positions, while its group programs are led by animal-care staff who work directly with the birds and other animals.

For Niagara residents - including young people building experience in tourism and customer service - attractions like Bird Kingdom create jobs that connect local employment with the region's visitor economy. For those interested in animal care or education, the setting also provides exposure to a specialized field that simply does not exist in every community.

GROUPS, BIRTHDAYS & BOOKINGS

Bird Kingdom offers group rates for parties of 10 or more with reservations, guided and self-guided options, educational programming and special birthday admission arrangements. That flexibility helps the attraction function as more than a place for individual tourists: it can host school outings, clubs, family celebrations and organized group visits.

A YEAR-ROUND TOURISM ADVANTAGE

Niagara Falls has spectacular outdoor attractions, but weather is part of life here. Bird Kingdom is open year-round and located only a short walk from the Falls. That makes it especially valuable on rainy days, winter trips and family itineraries that need an indoor experience without giving up the sense of discovery.

The typical visit is roughly 45 minutes to an hour, although animal encounters and a slower pace can stretch the experience. It fits naturally into a Niagara day alongside Clifton Hill, the Niagara River, restaurants, hotels and other attractions.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Bird Kingdom's impact also reaches local events when attraction passes are used as prizes and participant incentives. Its support of Niagara community initiatives, including Live Chess by the Falls, shows how a tourism business can turn admission experiences into something useful for grassroots fundraising and volunteer-driven events.

That kind of contribution does not require a stage or a cheque presentation. Sometimes two passes, placed in the hands of a community organizer, become the prize that helps sell a raffle ticket, thank a volunteer or give a family a memorable day out.



THE TOO GROOVY VERDICT

Bird Kingdom works because it gives Niagara something different. It is colourful without being artificial, educational without feeling like a classroom and family-friendly without talking down to adults. It preserves a remarkable historic building, creates local work, supports education and conservation, welcomes groups and gives community events an experience worth sharing. Hundreds of birds. One indoor rainforest. A very Niagara story. Bird Kingdom - that's Too Groovy.

Bird KINGDOM[®]

— NIAGARA FALLS —

WORLD'S LARGEST
INDOOR
FREE-FLYING AVIARY

An unforgettable
Niagara Falls
family attraction.



SEE
EXOTIC
BIRDS



CAPTURE
MEMORIES



FUN FOR
ALL AGES

COME SOAR WITH US!

 www.birdkingdom.ca 

5651 River Road, Niagara Falls, ON | Just Minutes from the Falls!



NATIONAL HELICOPTERS

Niagara looks different from up here.

A 20-minute aerial adventure, a 1985 aviation story, and a local tourism partner.



There are places you visit, and then there are places you suddenly understand from a completely different angle. Niagara Falls is one of them. From the ground, the river feels enormous. From a helicopter, the pieces connect: the Niagara River, the gorge, the bridges, the city, the vineyards and the curve of the Horseshoe Falls all become part of one remarkable landscape. National Helicopters has been putting passengers into that view for decades, combining a memorable visitor experience with a much broader aviation business built around charters, maintenance, utility work and specialized flight services.

SINCE

1985

National Helicopters says it has been elevating experiences since 1985.

IN THE AIR

20 MIN

Its Niagara Grand Tour is promoted as the longest flight over the Falls.

NIAGARA BASE

NOTL

The touring operation flies from 468 Niagara Stone Road in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

THE TOO GROOVY QUESTION:

What happens when a tourism attraction is also part of a working Canadian aviation company? You get a story that is about much more than a sightseeing ride.

THE FLIGHT

FROM NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE TO THE FALLS - AND A VIEW YOU CANNOT GET FROM THE ROAD



National Helicopters over the Horseshoe Falls. Photo source: Niagara Falls Tourism.

The experience starts before the helicopter ever leaves the ground. There is the sound of the rotor building speed, the headset going on, the pilot's briefing and that unmistakable moment when the skids become light. Then the airport drops away and Niagara opens up below. National Helicopters promotes its signature Niagara Grand Tour as a full 20-minute flight. The route takes passengers over the Niagara River, Whirlpool Rapids, Rainbow Bridge, the American Falls and the Canadian Horseshoe Falls. The company's Niagara Falls Tourism listing describes the operation as locally owned and operated and notes that flights can be customized. The difference between seeing the Falls from an observation point and seeing them from the air is scale. From above, you see how the river bends, where the rapids gather speed, how the gorge cuts through the landscape and how close Niagara's urban attractions sit to vineyards and agricultural land.

ONE FLIGHT. A WHOLE REGION.



National Helicopters route graphic showing the Niagara River, Falls, gorge and Niagara-on-the-Lake corridor.

THE VIEW

Whirlpool Rapids, Rainbow Bridge, American Falls, Horseshoe Falls and the Niagara River become one connected panorama.

THE OPTIONS

Winery landings, wedding flights, sunset flights and private romantic tours turn sightseeing into a special-occasion experience.

THE PRACTICAL SIDE

Reservations are recommended, walk-ins are accepted when space allows, and the company says it can accommodate wheelchair users and guests with mobility needs.

MORE THAN A TOUR

THE PEOPLE, MACHINES AND AVIATION WORK BEHIND THE SIGHTSEEING EXPERIENCE



Guests boarding one of National Helicopters' aircraft at the Niagara operation. Image: nationalhelicopters.com.

National Helicopters' story reaches well beyond tourism. The company dates its operations to 1985 and today describes itself as a full-service helicopter organization. Its public service menu includes private and executive charters, utility and infrastructure work, Transport Canada-certified maintenance and inspections, aircraft sales and leasing, and Medevac-capable operations. That matters to Niagara because a helicopter tour is supported by an aviation ecosystem. Pilots are only the most visible part of it. Aircraft maintenance engineers, operations staff, customer-service teams, ground personnel and technical specialists all contribute to getting passengers safely into the air and keeping aircraft mission-ready. The fleet listed by National Helicopters includes Bell 429, Bell 430 Medevac, Bell 206 LongRanger and Bell 206 JetRanger aircraft. The sightseeing side may be the part visitors photograph, but maintenance, contracts and specialized flying are what make this a working aviation company rather than a single-purpose attraction.

Visitors see the waterfall. Behind the experience is a team of pilots, aviation professionals and ground staff keeping the operation moving.



LAND AT WINE COUNTRY

National Helicopters works with local winery partners, allowing selected tours to add a winery landing and tasting experience.



MAKE AN ENTRANCE

Wedding and private packages turn the helicopter into part of the celebration, not simply transportation.



CHASE THE LIGHT

Sunset flights trade the midday panorama for long shadows, warm light and a completely different Niagara mood.

LOCAL CAREERS, REAL SKILLS

Aviation tourism creates visible front-line work and also supports specialized careers in flight operations, maintenance, technical services and customer experience - jobs that connect Niagara tourism with Canada's broader aviation sector.

NIAGARA LIFTS WITH IT

LOCAL TOURISM, COMMUNITY EVENTS AND THE VALUE OF GIVING PEOPLE A MEMORY

A strong tourism economy is not built by one attraction. It is built by businesses that send visitors to one another, give them reasons to stay longer and help turn a day trip into a Niagara experience. National Helicopters does exactly that. The company's winery partnerships connect aerial sightseeing to Niagara's wine industry, while special-event flights create links with weddings, anniversaries and other celebrations. Niagara Falls Tourism lists the attraction as open year-round. There is also a community side to the story. In 2026, National Helicopters again provided helicopter-tour passes in support of Live Chess by the Falls, marking the third year the company had contributed passes to the local community event. A donated attraction experience can become a fundraiser prize, a participant reward or a volunteer thank-you - and, for the winner, often a first chance to see their own region from the air. That kind of support is easy to underestimate. Grassroots events rarely have the resources of major festivals. Local businesses that contribute passes, services or sponsorship help those events create excitement and value without adding major costs. The result is a small circle of local tourism helping local community activity - and community activity introducing residents back to local tourism. National Helicopters' public social channels also show the other side of aviation life: aircraft returning from contracts, pilot explainers, tour footage and the view coming back from Niagara Falls. It is a reminder that the aircraft visitors see circling the gorge are part of a much wider operation.



FROM THE FEED

[@nationalhelicopters](#)

Tour footage, pilot explainers, fleet updates and behind-the-scenes aviation content.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

A pass can become more than a prize.

When a local attraction donates an experience, it can help a charity or community event raise money, reward volunteers and create a memory for someone who may never have tried it otherwise.

THE TOO GROOVY VERDICT

There is something beautifully Niagara about lifting off beside vineyards, following the river, circling one of the world's great natural wonders and then coming home with a completely different sense of where you live.

National Helicopters combines tourism, skilled aviation work, special occasions and community support in one operation. The view is spectacular. The bigger story is what happens around it: local jobs, local partnerships, local events and a business that helps visitors - and residents - see Niagara differently.

NATIONAL HELICOPTERS - THAT'S TOO GROOVY.



SOAR

ABOVE THE ORDINARY

SEE NIAGARA LIKE NEVER BEFORE

There are countless ways to experience Niagara. Only one lets you witness the power of the Falls, the beauty of the Niagara Parkway, and the breathtaking landscape of wine country from thousands of feet above it all.

National Helicopters has been creating unforgettable memories for visitors and locals alike for decades, offering one of Niagara's most spectacular attractions.

**LOCALLY OWNED.
UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCES.**



YOUR NIAGARA ADVENTURE BEGINS HERE



**SCENIC HELICOPTER
TOURS OVER
NIAGARA FALLS**



**THE LONGEST
HELICOPTER TOURS
IN NIAGARA**



**CUSTOM FLIGHT
EXPERIENCES
TAILORED TO YOU**



**WINERY LANDING
EXPERIENCES
AVAILABLE**



**PROFESSIONAL,
EXPERIENCED
PILOTS**



**YEAR-ROUND
OPERATION**



Because Some Views **WERE MEANT TO BE EXPERIENCED FROM THE SKY**



As the helicopter lifts above the Niagara River, you'll witness the majesty of the Horseshoe Falls, the winding Niagara Parkway, lush vineyards, historic landmarks, and the stunning beauty of the Niagara Peninsula unfolding beneath you.

IT'S MORE THAN A TOUR. IT'S A MEMORY THAT LASTS A LIFETIME.



**BOOK YOUR
FLIGHT TODAY!**



468 Niagara Stone Road
Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON



905-641-2222
1-800-491-3117



nationalhelicopters.com

EXPERIENCE NIAGARA FROM A WHOLE NEW PERSPECTIVE.

MERIDIAN CREDIT UNION • PORTAGE ROAD

BANKING WITH A NEIGHBOURHOOD HEART

Members. Local jobs. Leadership. Community. At 4780 Portage Road, the credit-union idea becomes very practical: know the people you serve, help them make confident financial decisions, and stay connected to the community outside the branch doors.

380,000+ Meridian Members across Ontario

2,200+ employees across Meridian

\$3.3M invested in community initiatives in 2025



BRAD SHARP

Branch Manager • Niagara Falls - Portage
Leadership close to home is part of the point. Meridian lists Sharp as the current manager of the Portage branch, supported by local mortgage, planning and small-business specialists.

A MEMBER, NOT JUST A CUSTOMER

The word Member is not decoration. A credit union is owned by the people who use it, and that changes the philosophy behind the relationship.

Meridian describes itself as Ontario's largest credit union, serving more than 380,000 Members. It offers the familiar financial tools - chequing, savings, mortgages, lending, investing and business banking - but through a co-operative, Member-owned model.

At the Portage Road branch, that larger idea becomes personal. The branch at 4780 Portage Road, at Portage and Morrison, is built around face-to-face advice as well as access to Meridian's digital services. For many Members, the important difference is not a product list. It is having a place where a financial question can become a conversation.

That can mean a first mortgage. A retirement plan. A small-business expansion. A young person opening an account. A family trying to make sense of debt, savings or a changing interest-rate environment. Financial institutions are at their best when people leave with more confidence than they arrived with.

WHY THE CREDIT-UNION MODEL FEELS DIFFERENT

MEMBER-OWNED

People who bank there are Members of the co-operative.

LOCAL ADVICE

Branch teams can build relationships over years, not transactions.

PROFIT WITH PURPOSE

Meridian says up to 4% of pre-tax profits can be reinvested in communities.

PERSONAL + DIGITAL

Local specialists are paired with increasingly sophisticated digital tools.

"Around here, banking is different."

That line works best when it is visible in the everyday stuff: remembering a Member, returning a call, explaining the fine print, helping a local business, and being present when the community asks for support.

THE PORTAGE ROAD BRANCH

4780 Portage Rd., Niagara Falls • Branch Manager: Brad Sharp

The current Portage team also includes Guri Anand Singh, Mobile Mortgage Specialist; Marie Phillips, Senior Financial Planner; Mike Wagner, Senior Small Business Advisor; and Tania Howe, Small Business Advisor.

THE PEOPLE AT PORTAGE

A local branch is ultimately a team of people. The titles tell you what they do. The relationships tell you why it matters.



Brad Sharp
Branch Manager



Guri Anand Singh
Mobile Mortgage Specialist



Marie Phillips
Senior Financial Planner



Tania Howe
Small Business Advisor

LOCAL JOBS, REAL CAREERS

Meridian employs more than 2,200 people across its organization. A branch is only one piece of that workforce, but it shows the range of careers a financial institution can support: front-line Member service, mortgages, financial planning, business banking, leadership, operations, technology, risk, marketing and more.

Those jobs matter locally because financial services are part of the economic infrastructure of a community. A small-business advisor may help an entrepreneur think through growth. A mortgage specialist can help a family understand what is realistic. A planner can turn retirement from an abstract worry into a roadmap.

And branch leadership matters because culture is local. The quality of a Member experience is shaped by the people in the room - how they listen, how clearly they explain, how quickly they follow up and whether they understand the community they serve.

LEADERSHIP, TWO LEVELS

At the branch:
Brad Sharp leads the current Portage Road team.

Across Meridian:
Jay-Ann Gilfoy serves as President & CEO. Meridian says her mandate includes strategy, transformation, Member value and long-term growth.

The common thread:
Leadership is not only a title. In a Member-owned institution, it is stewardship - of trust, people, capital and community relationships.

WHEN PROFIT CIRCLES BACK

Community involvement is where the credit-union idea becomes visible beyond the branch.



MERIDIAN EMPLOYEE COMMUNITY CARE KIT PROGRAM



REFRAME: SKILLS, WORK EXPERIENCE + FINANCIAL CONFIDENCE

\$3.3M

community investment in
2025

576

organizations supported

1,121

employees packing care kits

9,973

care kits packed in 2025

Meridian says it invested \$3.3 million in non-profit and community initiatives in 2025, supporting 576 organizations across its focus areas. Its employee Community Care Kit program brought 1,121 employees together to pack 9,973 kits containing 168,510 items.

The Portage Road branch also matters at the grassroots level. It has supported local community activity including Live Chess by the Falls, where branch support helped a volunteer-driven Niagara event create a better participant experience. That kind of contribution may be small beside a province-wide investment figure, but local events are built from exactly those relationships.

THE TOO GROOVY VERDICT

A financial institution can be measured by assets, deposits and rates. A community institution should also be measured by relationships.

Members who feel known. Local people with meaningful jobs. Leaders accountable for the culture. Small businesses getting advice. Employees volunteering. Community groups getting a hand when it counts.

Meridian Credit Union - Portage Road: that's Too Groovy.



AROUND HERE, **BANKING IS DIFFERENT.**

As a credit union, we're not-for-profit and Member-owned. That means we're focused on helping you succeed and investing back into the communities we serve.

**BANKING. BORROWING.
INVESTING. BELONGING.**



**Proudly supporting
the Niagara Falls
community.**

SOLUTIONS TO HELP YOU MEET YOUR GOALS



Personal Banking

Everyday banking
that fits your life.



Mortgages

Competitive
rates and expert
advice.



Savings & Investments

Grow your money
with confidence.



Wealth Planning

Plan today for
tomorrow.



Business Banking

Solutions to help
your business grow.



Local Advice

People who know
you and your
community.

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— Ontario's —
LARGEST
CREDIT UNION



RONA+ Niagara Falls

*Building projects, supporting jobs,
and showing up for the community.*

4-Page Feature • Page 1

At 7959 McLeod Road, RONA+ Niagara Falls is more than a big home-improvement store. It is a place where homeowners, contractors and weekend DIYers come for materials, advice and inspiration. From lumber and appliances to seasonal garden needs and renovation services, the store plays a practical role in everyday life across Niagara.

What makes it especially interesting for *Too Groovy* is that the story goes beyond products. RONA+ connects home projects to local jobs, skilled trades, community fundraising and the simple satisfaction of helping people build, repair and improve the places where they live.

“
**A good
local store
helps people
build more
than homes.**
”

AT A GLANCE



RONA+
Niagara Falls



7959 McLeod
Road



Pickup
in store



Delivery



Pro Desk



Installation
services

Where Projects Begin

Advice, inventory and services that keep Niagara building.

RONA+ Niagara Falls serves a wide range of customers. Some come in for a single can of paint. Others are planning a deck, replacing a kitchen appliance or sourcing materials for a larger renovation. The appeal is variety. One visit can connect customers to lumber, tools, flooring, décor, appliances, seasonal outdoor products and practical project advice.

The store also offers services that matter to busy households and professionals alike, including pick-up in store, delivery, a dedicated Pro Desk and installation-related support. For local contractors, tradespeople and serious DIYers, that combination makes the McLeod Road location more than a storefront. It becomes a working partner in getting projects done.



WHAT YOU'LL FIND



Lumber & building materials



Tools & hardware



Appliances



Kitchen & bath



Seasonal garden



Flooring, paint & décor

SERVICES

Pickup in store

• Delivery

• Pro Desk

• Installation support

“For many Niagara customers, the right project starts with the right advice.”





Jobs, Skills and Community

Why a home-improvement store can matter beyond the checkout.

A store like RONA+ Niagara Falls supports more than shopping. It creates local work in sales, customer service, merchandising, receiving, seasonal departments and contractor support. Across the wider RONA network, careers range from cashiers and stockers to department managers, sales specialists and lumber-yard associates.

RONA also presents itself as a workplace that values mentoring, inclusion, work-life balance and opportunities for students and people building long-term careers. That matters in a region where retail and service jobs often provide a first step into leadership, responsibility and skilled customer care.

Community involvement is another part of the story. Through the RONA Foundation and campaigns such as Build from the Heart and Home Sweet Home, the organization supports charities and projects that strengthen communities and improve living environments. The larger brand message is simple: building materials can also help build community.

“
The best local employers help people grow while they help customers build.
”

COMMUNITY IMPACT



RONA Foundation



Build from the Heart



Home Sweet Home



Support for local charities and housing-related causes

CAREER PATHS

- Sales Specialist
- Cashier
- Stocker
- Department Manager
- Pro/Contractor Support

Why It's Too Groovy

A practical store with a local role in everyday Niagara life.

Home-improvement retail is not always glamorous, but it is deeply connected to everyday life. People come to RONA+ to fix a fence, plan a renovation, replace a fridge, improve a garden or prepare a space for family and friends. In that way, the store becomes part of the rhythm of the community.

The Niagara Falls location also reflects a broader local story: jobs, service, support for trades and homeowners, and participation in community-minded initiatives. In local terms, support for grassroots events like Live Chess by the Falls helps show how a major retailer can still play a neighbourly role.

That is what makes RONA+ Niagara Falls a fit for *Too Groovy*. It is useful, visible, people-focused and connected to the practical side of building stronger homes and communities.



STORE SNAPSHOT



RONA+
Niagara Falls



7959 McLeod Road



For homeowners,
pros and DIYers

TOO GROOVY VERDICT

**Helpful people.
Real projects.
Local jobs.
Community support.
That's Too Groovy.**

“

Sometimes the grooviest places are the ones that help a community get things done.

**Thanks for spending four pages with us.
Support local. Build better. *Keep it groovy.***

TOO GROOVY

PEOPLE • PLACES • COMMUNITY • NIAGARA

ADVERTISE HERE

*Reach local readers. Promote your business.
Support community storytelling.*

➤ **Great rates. Strategic results.** ⚡

Too Groovy connects local businesses and organizations with an engaged audience through eye-catching print and community-focused editorial presentation. Showcase your brand in a publication that celebrates the people, places and organizations making a difference.



LOCAL
BUSINESSES



COMMUNITY
ORGANIZATIONS



TOURISM &
ATTRACTIONS



PROFESSIONAL
SERVICES



PROMOTE
YOUR BRAND



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AND ORGANIZATIONS
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➤ **BOOK YOUR SPACE IN TOO GROOVY TODAY.** ⚡



| Proudly celebrating the people, places and community of Niagara.



Safari Niagara

**Wild encounters, family adventure,
local jobs and a park that keeps Niagara smiling.**

Just minutes from the falls, a world of adventure unfolds. Safari Niagara is one of Ontario's most distinctive family attractions—where close-up animal encounters, exciting rides, splashy fun and hands-on learning come together for an unforgettable day in Stevensville.

But the story goes beyond the animals. Safari Niagara fuels local tourism, creates meaningful jobs, and brings our community together through events, education and experiences that leave a lasting impact—for today and for generations to come.

AT A GLANCE



Safari Niagara



**2821 Stevensville Rd,
Stevensville**



Over 1000 animals



150-acre animal park



Family attractions



**Events, shows &
education**

“A great local attraction creates more than a fun day — it creates memories, jobs and community pride.”





Where the Adventure Roams

Animals, attractions and all-day family fun in one remarkable outdoor park.

Safari Niagara is more than a place to see incredible animals — it's a full-day destination designed for families to explore, play and connect. Between exciting attractions, up-close encounters and engaging experiences, there's something to spark every interest.

From big-cat habitats and giraffe feeding to splash pad laughter and ropes course challenges, the adventure keeps going. Add interactive talks, live shows and plenty of room to roam, and you've got a day that's as active or relaxed as you want it to be.

“For many Niagara families, the best attractions are the ones that let kids learn, move and explore.”

WHAT YOU'LL FIND



Animal encounters



Splash pad



Ropes course



Educational talks



Shows & events



Playful family fun

ALSO GREAT FOR



Day trips



Birthday fun



Family outings



Group visits





Jobs, Learning and Community

Why Safari Niagara matters beyond the gate.

Safari Niagara is more than amazing animal encounters — it's a place where people build careers, share knowledge and make a difference. From spring through fall, the park creates hundreds of local jobs and provides valuable experience for students, families and professionals alike.

Opportunities range from grounds maintenance and admissions to retail sales, food services, tram drivers, animal care assistants and educational counsellors. Every role helps create the safe, welcoming and memorable experiences our guests enjoy every day.

Our team members receive training, build confidence and develop skills that last a lifetime. Many return each season — and many go on to careers in conservation, education, hospitality and beyond.

Safari Niagara also supports the community in meaningful ways. Through school programs, summer learning, volunteer opportunities and local partnerships, the park gives back and inspires the next generation to care for animals, people and our planet.

“Great attractions don’t just entertain — they teach, employ and bring a community together.”

LOCAL IMPACT



Seasonal employment



Animal care roles



Admissions & customer service



Educational counsellors



Volunteer opportunities



Community partnerships

CAREER PATHS



Grounds maintenance



Retail sales



Food services



Tram driver



Animal care assistant



Educational counsellor





Why It's Too Groovy

A wild, welcoming Niagara destination with staying power.

Safari Niagara does more than entertain—it strengthens our region. It brings visitors together, supports local tourism and gives families another reason to choose Niagara for quality time that matters.

From school groups and summer camps to group tours and birthday celebrations, the park offers meaningful experiences that connect people to wildlife, nature and each other.

Events and seasonal experiences—like Pumpkin Town, Holiday Magic and special weekend activities—keep the energy high all year long. Every visit creates memories, supports local jobs and helps Niagara thrive.



PARK SNAPSHOT



Safari Niagara



2821 Stevensville Rd



Over 1000 animals



Family-friendly outdoor adventure

TOO GROOVY VERDICT

Wild animals. Family fun.
Local jobs. Learning, play
and community spirit.
That's Too Groovy.



“

Sometimes the grooviest places are the ones where nature, laughter and community all meet.

”

Thanks for spending four pages with us. Stay wild. Support local. Keep it groovy.

WILDLY UNFORGETTABLE *Adventures!*

Discover amazing animals,
exciting exhibits and
up-close encounters
at **Safari Niagara**.

*Conservation.
Education.
Inspiring Connections.*



INCREDIBLE ANIMALS

Meet a wide variety of
fascinating species
from around the world.



IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES

Explore our walking trails,
habitats and interactive
exhibits.



FUN FOR EVERYONE

Perfect for families,
friends, school trips
and special outings.



Plan Your Visit
TODAY!

MEMORIES. DISCOVERY. CONNECTION.
ALL IN ONE PLACE.



SAFARINIAGARA.COM

NIAGARA FEATURE

GREG FREWIN

WHERE NIAGARA MAKES MAGIC

World-class illusion. Live entertainment. Local jobs. Community events. Animals, artistry and a theatre that keeps finding new reasons to bring Niagara together.

A TOO GROOVY FEATURE

Niagara Falls, Ontario • Performing Arts • Tourism • Community

THE EXPERIENCE

A NIGHT BUILT AROUND THE IMPOSSIBLE

Niagara Falls has never been a place that thinks small. So perhaps it makes sense that one of Canada's most accomplished magicians built his theatrical home here.

At 5781 Ellen Avenue, just off Niagara Falls' Clifton Hill tourism district, the Greg Frewin Theatrical Centre operates as more than the home of one magic show. It is a dinner theatre, concert venue, event space, workplace and performing-arts stage. When the house lights drop, the room changes quickly: music rises, assistants cross the stage, objects appear where they should not, and large-scale illusions unfold under theatrical lighting and video.

Today's Niagara Magic Live brings Greg Frewin together with Alexandra, Canada's Lady of Magic, for an updated, fast-moving family show built around grand illusion, escapes, sleight of hand and audience connection.

The theatre experience also offers something that Niagara needs: a reason for visitors to stay after sunset. A day at the Falls can become dinner, drinks and a live show - an evening rather than a quick stop.



Performance photography: Greg Frewin Theatrical Centre official gallery.

FROM WORLD STAGES TO NIAGARA

Greg Frewin's career has taken him from international stages and television appearances to major magic competitions and Las Vegas. His long-running Niagara production brought that experience home and helped establish a purpose-built local destination for theatrical magic.

There is something wonderfully direct about live magic. You cannot pause it, rewind it or ask an algorithm what happened. The audience sees an impossible-looking moment together - and then spends the ride home arguing about how it was done.

AT A GLANCE

5781 ELLEN AVE. • DINNER + SHOW

GROUP BOOKINGS • EVENT RENTALS

Official site: "over 1 million audience members amazed."

**"NIAGARA NEEDS REASONS
FOR PEOPLE TO STAY AFTER SUNSET."**

Dinner + live performance turns a visit into an evening.



MORE THAN A MAGIC SHOW

A venue is also a workplace, a stage and a piece of community infrastructure.

LOCAL JOBS

THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE CURTAIN

Someone sells the ticket. Someone prepares the food. Someone serves the tables, focuses the lights, checks the sound, resets the stage and makes sure a complicated illusion happens on cue.

The theatre actively invites applications for a wide variety of positions in a professional theatre environment, including performance roles such as dancers. For Niagara workers and students, live entertainment creates practical experience in hospitality, production, customer service and the arts.

BOOKINGS + EVENTS

A ROOM THAT CAN DO MORE

The Greg Frewin Theatrical Centre markets itself for fundraisers, private events, corporate meetings, gala events, conferences, appreciation nights, weddings, graduations and group outings.

Its Grand Theatre can accommodate up to 550 guests, with dinner-and-show options, staging and audiovisual support. That flexibility gives schools, community groups, businesses and independent producers another sizable Niagara venue to work with.

PERFORMING ARTS

A STAGE FOR MORE THAN MAGIC

The current calendar extends beyond illusion. Canadiana: The Musical, Niagara Adventure Theatre, tribute concerts, special events and the Niagara Falls Elvis Festival demonstrate how a theatre can become a platform for musicians, singers, dancers, technicians and producers.

A healthy local arts scene needs stages. Every night that a venue is active creates opportunities for performers and audiences - and gives Niagara another reason to think of itself not only as a sightseeing destination, but as an entertainment city.

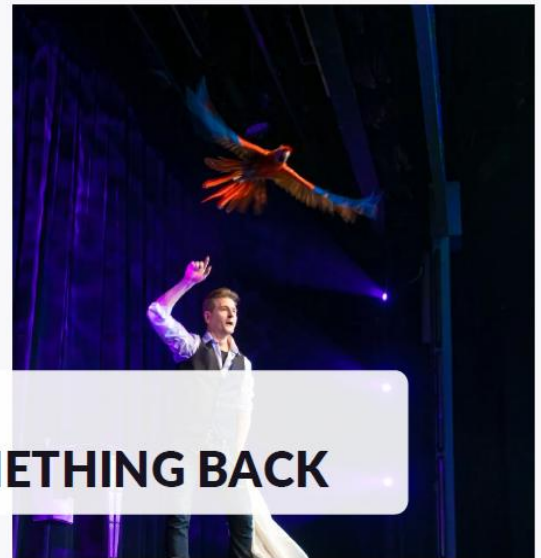
TOO GROOVY

ORIGINAL PEOPLE. LOCAL ENERGY. NIAGARA.



COMMUNITY + ANIMALS + TOURISM

WHEN ENTERTAINMENT GIVES SOMETHING BACK



ANIMALS WITH PERSONALITY

Animals remain part of the personality of Niagara Magic Live. The theatre's current show material names Chuck the Duck, Barry the Dog, and parrots Magik and Mika as familiar faces in the production. The animals add warmth and surprise to a form of entertainment already built around wonder.

COMMUNITY ACCESS

The theatre also offers special arrangements for community service groups, care homes, assisted-living organizations and supportive-care programs. Discounted rates, accessible seating, no minimum group size and complimentary admission for support workers on in-house shows help make live entertainment easier to reach for audiences who may need additional support.

SUPPORTING CAUSES

The venue has hosted fundraisers and community-oriented productions, and its event calendar has included shows supporting organizations such as Crime Stoppers and Diabetes Canada. Its dining program has also promoted Greg Frewin wine produced with Reif Estate Winery, with a portion of proceeds identified for the Niagara Falls Humane Society.

THE TOO GROOVY PART

MAGIC, MUSIC, JOBS & A LITTLE WONDER

Greg Frewin could have taken his magic almost anywhere. Niagara Falls became home. Over time, the building bearing his name has become something broader than one magician's showroom: a workplace, a dinner theatre, a concert room, a community venue and a stage for local and visiting talent.

Outside, Niagara performs one of the world's great natural spectacles every day. A few blocks away, Greg Frewin and his team keep adding another kind of wonder to the city's entertainment story.

TOO GROOVY VERDICT

**WORLD-CLASS MAGIC. LOCAL ENERGY.
A STAGE THAT MATTERS.**

TOO GROOVY

EXPERIENCE

NIAGARA MAGIC LIVE

GREG FREWIN THEATRICAL CENTRE

NIAGARA FALLS, CANADA



Canada's
got Talent



BRITAIN'S GOT
★ LENT

THE
CW
NETWORK



**SCAN TO BUY
TICKETS & INFO**

GREGFREWINTHEATRE.COM

TOO GROOVY FEATURE

RIDE THE RAPIDS.
FEEL NIAGARA.
GIVE SOMETHING BACK.

Whirlpool Jet Boat Tours is one of those Niagara experiences that refuses to stay in the background. It is fast, loud, soaked in spray and built around one of the region's greatest natural assets. But behind the whitewater is another story: more than three decades of local tourism, seasonal jobs, young people gaining first-work experience, and a company that supports Niagara charities and community events with ticket donations.

THE EXPERIENCE

NIAGARA, FROM RIVER LEVEL



THE WET JET MEANS WET.

Open-top whitewater, Niagara Gorge, full sensory commitment.

Most people meet Niagara by standing at a railing and looking toward the water. Whirlpool Jet Boat Tours changes the relationship completely. From its Canadian base in historic Queenston, the trip heads into the Lower Niagara River and the Niagara Gorge, where the scenery becomes both a backdrop and part of the ride. The company's standard adventure is about 45 minutes on the water, with guests choosing between open wet experiences and the enclosed Dry Freedom Jet.

The route is not a trip to the brink of Niagara Falls. Instead, it explores the lower river toward the Niagara Whirlpool and the Class 5 whitewater at Devil's Hole. That distinction is part of what makes the experience so memorable: this is Niagara's gorge and river system viewed from inside it, not from above it.

Then there is the moment everyone remembers. The boat meets the whitewater. Spray explodes over the bow. Passengers grip the rails. The river stops being scenery and becomes an experience you can feel in your shoulders, your clothes and — if you picked the Wet Jet — pretty much everywhere else.

A WHITEWATER STORY

Commercial Niagara operations began in 1992, but the company's whitewater roots reach back to the 1970s. The story begins with Wilderness Tours and experimentation with motorized whitewater craft on the Ottawa River and Montreal's Lachine Rapids. The lesson was simple: truly ferocious current demanded something faster and more manoeuvrable than a conventional raft.

Jet-boat technology provided the answer. By the early 1990s the concept was being tested in Niagara's Devil's Hole Rapids, setting the stage for the operation that visitors know today. More than three decades later, the colourful boats at Queenston are part attraction, part engineering spectacle and part Niagara icon.

“It is part sightseeing tour, part history lesson and unquestionably part adventure.”

PEOPLE + JOBS

THE SUMMER JOB THAT MOVES

Tourism's impact is often counted in visitors and spending, but in Niagara it is also counted in first jobs. Whirlpool Jet Boat Tours says it has a core year-round team of about 19 people and brings on another 100 to 150 seasonal employees across its Canadian and U.S. operations during jet-boat season.

For students and young workers, that can mean much more than a paycheck. Guest service, media, guiding, dock operations and eventually even marine careers teach communication, teamwork, responsibility and how to represent Niagara to visitors arriving from around the world. The company's 2026 recruitment materials include Whitewater River Guides, Guest Services Agents, Media Agents and Jet Boat Captains.



Queenston base • official Whirlpool Jet photography

19

YEAR-ROUND TEAM

100–150

SEASONAL STAFF

FROM THE FEED

@whirlpooljet



Whirlpool's social channels regularly feature staff and hiring. A recent staff spotlight introduced Ryan during his first season and directed applicants to openings in Queenston and Lewiston. It puts the people behind the attraction front-and-centre.

Social copy adapted from @whirlpooljet; image from official WhirlpoolJet.com media.



Dry Freedom Jet: the same gorge, without wearing the river home.

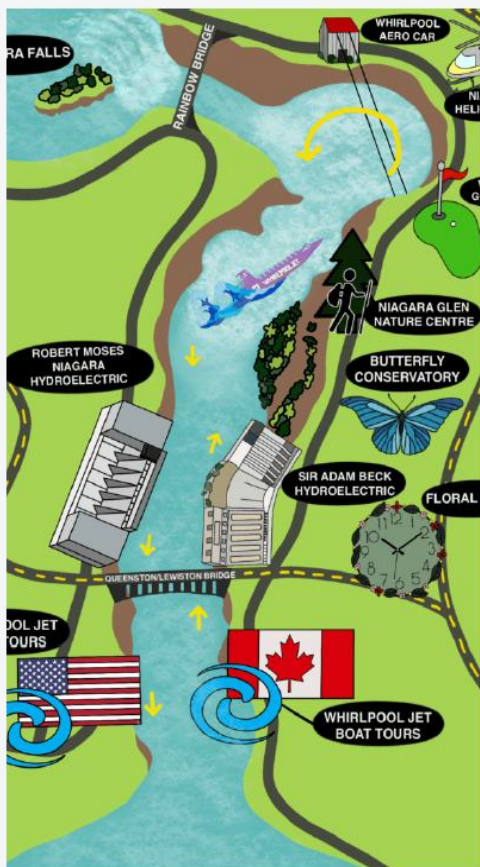
For guests who prefer the view without the soak, the enclosed Freedom Jet adds another way to experience the gorge.

WHY IT MATTERS

Those skills travel. A seasonal job can become a returning summer role, a leadership position or simply the first solid reference on a resume. Either way, keeping more young people working close to home is one of tourism's most practical community benefits.

COMMUNITY

WHEN THE RIDE GIVES BACK



Official tour-route map • whirlpooljet.com

Whirlpool Jet Boat Tours' relationship with Niagara extends beyond the dock. Through its Whirlpool Gives Back program, the company supports local charities, nonprofit organizations and fundraising events with ticket donations and internal fundraising initiatives.

Its published donation policy focuses on local organizations and events within Niagara Region/County and generally limits support to two jet-boat tickets per organization or event so the program can reach more groups. For a community fundraiser, those passes can become a raffle prize, silent-auction item, volunteer thank-you or participant incentive — a small contribution that can generate real attention and real fundraising value.

This is where tourism and community life intersect. An attraction draws visitors, but it can also help the service club raising money on a Saturday, the charity looking for a prize, the student searching for a summer job, and the volunteer who gets a memorable thank-you for showing up.

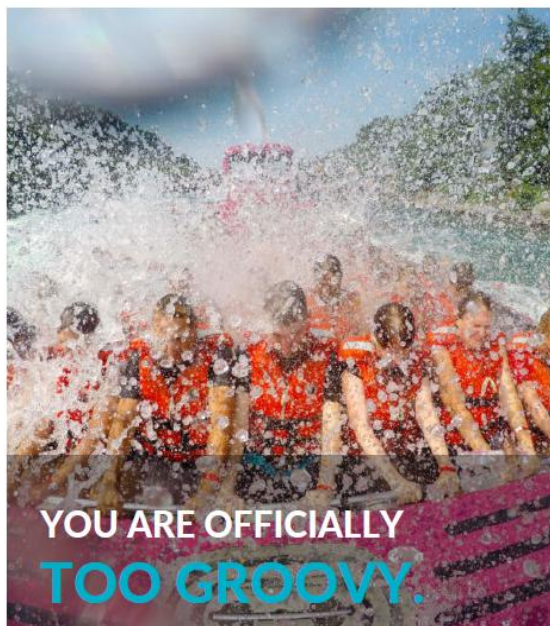
That combination is what makes Whirlpool Jet Boat Tours more than a ride. It is a Niagara business tied to the river, to the visitor economy and to the people who live here.

THE TOO GROOVY VERDICT

FAST BOATS.

BIG WAVES.

SUMMER JOBS. COMMUNITY SUPPORT.



There is something wonderfully Niagara about watching a boat full of people voluntarily charge into whitewater and return laughing. Add decades of history, hundreds of seasonal job opportunities over time, and a habit of supporting community events, and the story becomes bigger than the spray.

Whirlpool Jet Boat Tours — riding the rapids and giving something back.

NIAGARA'S ULTIMATE ADVENTURE.



45 MINUTE JET BOAT TOUR INTO THE NIAGARA GORGE

55 River Frontage Rd QUEENSTON ON - 1-888-438-4444 - WHIRLPOOLJET.COM

TOO GROOVY

PEOPLE • PLACES • COMMUNITY • NIAGARA

MADE IN
NIAGARA

LOOK FOR THE NEXT ISSUE

*More Groovy featured people,
businesses and community actions.*

Discover more local stories, inspiring people,
standout businesses and the community
spirit shaping Niagara.

Too Groovy continues to celebrate
the people and places making a difference.



STAY TUNED FOR THE
NEXT ISSUE OF **TOO GROOVY.**

Proudly celebrating the people, places and community of Niagara.