

Animals disruptive and a threat, say councillors

By BRAD REAUME
The Champion

Town councillors heard complaints of coyotes threatening domestic animals and beavers doing property

damage in the rural area at Monday's general committee meeting.

Councillor Barry Lee passed around pictures of a dog which was attacked by a coyote. "That dog was

attacked not 30 feet away from a house. You don't normally have a live animal to exhibit after a coyote attack. Usually it's just some blood that's left or nothing."

Mr. Lee explained that the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) spoke to council several years ago regarding the coyote problem, but he felt the talk accomplished nothing.

"The MNR gave us a biology lesson," Mr. Lee said. "They talked and gave us figures and threw the problem back to us, saying it was a coydog (dog-coyote crossbreed) problem. They suggested it was our problem because we were not controlling our dogs."

"The MNR didn't help us when they had money, so they aren't about to help us now. We have to do it ourselves."

Mr. Lee suggested the problem animals exhibit a very strong coyote strain, almost pure coyote. He said the public should be educated to take

caution with their pets.

"Coyotes actually brought down a cow and calf," said councillor Marion Howard. "I'm worried they'll bring down a foal."

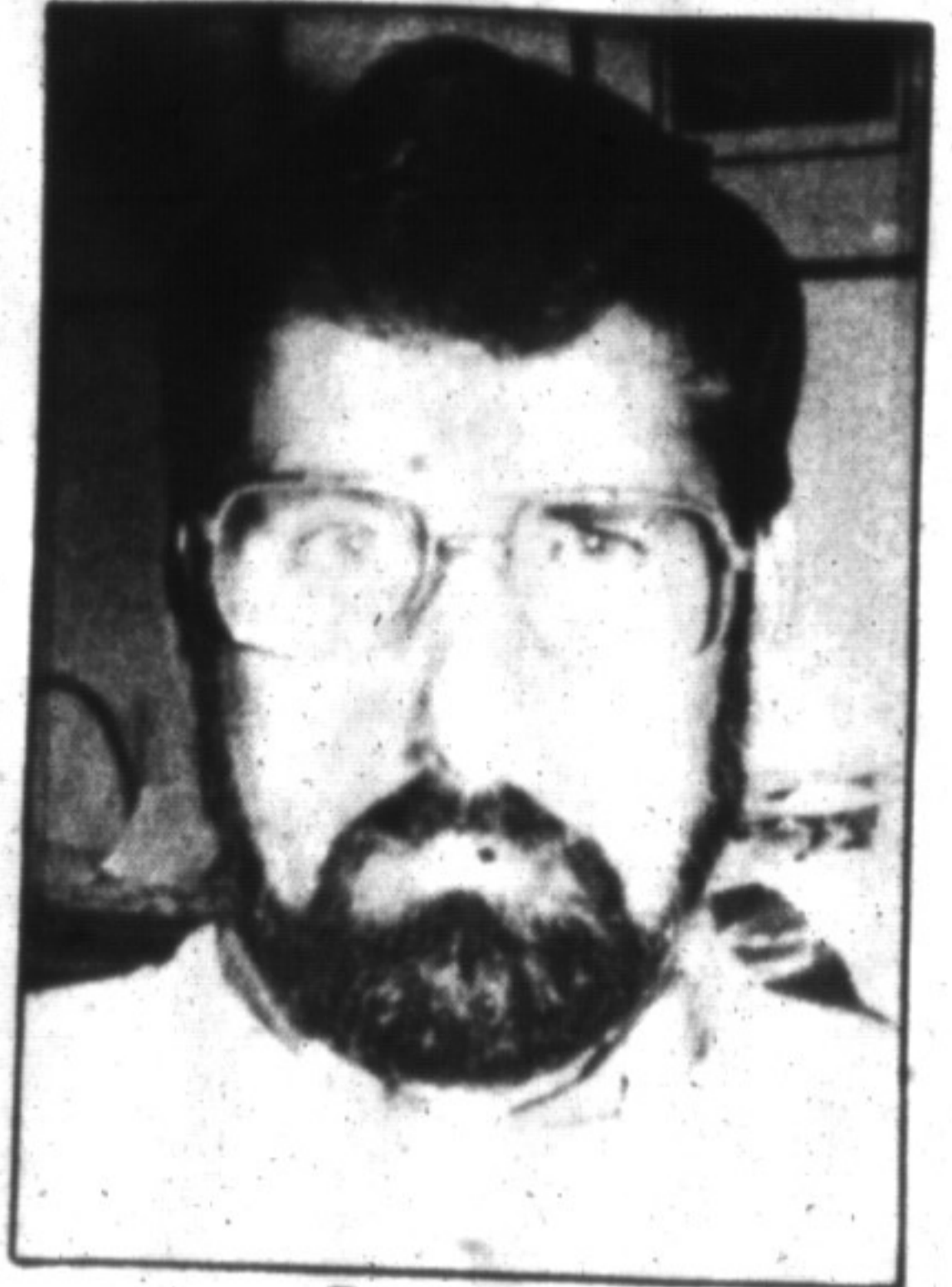
In addition, Ms Howard told committee that beavers are getting out of hand in some parts of the rural area. She cited 20 Sideroad as a problem.

"Beavers are doing significant property damage," she said. "I know they're good for the land to some extent but too many can be a problem. Twentieth Sideroad will be flooded in the spring."

Mayor Gord Krantz said he was aware of both problems but questioned what could be done short of putting a bounty on the animals.

"There's no incentive for hunters and to cover the area you'd need a large number of hunters to do the job," he said. "I'm not saying every yahoo should get a gun. I don't want to eradicate all wildlife, just keep it under control."

John Mathews, Milton's director of public works, said a trapper took six beavers out of a pond at 20 Sideroad but others have just moved



Barry Lee

in. He said a trapper could be there all year attempting to solve the problem.

It was also mentioned that beavers have been spotted dam building in the back channel of the downtown Mill Pond.

Council merely discussed the item as new information, taking no formal action.

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WEEK #11 Gizo, Solomon Islands

A weekly series of letters home from Brent Hetherington, an OAC student from Milton currently spending 5 months aboard the S/Y Concordia visiting 20 ports of call on 3 continents.



Dear Milton,

When we arrived in Gizo this week, we were surprised by the mountains and the lush vegetation on the island. The last few places we visited were flat and sandy.

The second day in Gizo I took a truck tour with thirteen other students around the island. It was hosted by Ron, a white-haired gentleman who originated from Australia. He has lived on Gizo for twenty-five years, where he met his wife and had eight children. His first language is English, but he has become fluent in the island's dialect of Pigeon English.

We were told that the tour would begin at "one o'clockish" in island time, this meant a good hour later. So after waiting for sixty minutes outside of Ron's house, his truck pulled up. It was an old grey (originally white) truck. The back of it had two rows of wooden seats, that were coated with a thick layer of dust. Ron got out and welcomed us to Gizo. The fourteen of us got in and we took off.

Ron sat in the back with us, while Henry, his native friend drove. The truck sounded worse than it looked and when we started up a hill, we held on for dear life. The truck coughed out black smoke and threatened to stall, but we made it up.

As we toured, Ron told us about the vegetation and history of the island. Every now and again, Ron would tap the roof of the truck and yell, "all right Henry. Stop!" We would get out and look at a flower or a tree. Ron showed us one plant that is called "sensitive grass" it looked like grass, but as soon as it was touched it would shrivel up into a little ball. Ron said that after about twenty minutes, it would open up again.

All the roads on the island were dirt and barely one lane wide. There were also bridges that we crossed periodically. They were made out of rotting wood slats. As we drove deeper into the island, the quality of the bridges got worse. The last one we came to, Ron said we had to get out for our own safety. Henry then manoeuvred the truck across, as the bridge cracked and cracked. We walked behind and got back in the truck.

We drove by a dirt hill where some children had gathered. They were using large palm tree leaves as sleds. Ron said children all over the island played like this when they weren't in school or doing chores at home. This was the Solomon way of tobogganing.

After two and a half hours of touring, we came to a village where we got out and looked around. As soon as the truck stopped, children came running with sea shells, hoping the tourists would buy one. From one little girl, I bought a shiny conch shell for five Solomon dollars (about \$1.50 Canadian).

The village was beside a large lagoon, where a big palm tree hung over the water about ten metres high. The students on the tour and I played with the children by jumping off the tree and diving in the water. The villagers just watched and laughed at "the crazy Canadians," while they wove leaf baskets.

We stayed at the village and played with the children for a little over an hour. It started to get dark and Ron said we should head back. We loaded into the truck ready to go. Ron forgot his starter had burned out, so we all had to get out and push the truck. Finally after a quarter of a mile, the engine kicked in, and we left. Children ran behind the truck yelling, "lookin' you behind". This means "see you later" in Pigeon English.

We travelled back the way we came, but this time Ron didn't talk. We simply sat and admired the sunset. Occasionally we'd have to get out for an unsafe bridge, or duck as bats swooped by our heads.

Ron dropped us off at the "Gizo Hotel" where we ended our long day by having a Coke and dancing to a bamboo band.

"Lookin' You Behind",
Brent Hetherington



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