

# Local author captures immigrant experience

BY JOAN RANSBERRY  
Staff Writer

James McPherson has made a huge success of his new life in a new country. He has a thriving business, a wife and three daughters, a beautiful home, a public image — and a private shame.

Mr. McPherson is the main character in the book *Magpies and Sunsets*, written by Whitchurch-Stouffville resident Neil Alexander Marr.

The 238-page paperback, the first book published by Mr. Marr, has been picked up by a British publisher.

"I'd almost given up on it and then I sent it to a publisher in my hometown in Scotland," Mr. Marr said. "He sent it to an editor and they liked it."

*Magpies and Sunsets* is very much the "immigrant experience," he said. "You have to know where you came from to know where you are going," he added.

A voice from Mr. McPherson's secret past kept calling him. The voice was from 1,000 miles across the Atlantic Ocean.

It was in the thick dialect of the



NEIL MARR: Whitchurch-Stouffville resident had almost given up on finding a publisher.

Edinburgh gutters. The voice haunted him.

So he returned to his native Scotland to confront his personal demons and exorcise the evil memo-

ries that bedevil him. Can he ever recapture the simple, guiltless pleasure of watching magpies and sunsets, forgiving the past and laying to rest its ghosts once and for all?

The publisher describes *Magpies and Sunsets* as a "magnificently crafted and courageous" book.

"Neil Marr makes no concessions to the English language as he throws the reader into the deep end of heavy, rough, tough dialect," the publisher writes. "A delight for all Scots, a journey of adventure for millions of ex-patriot Caledonians around the world."

Mr. Marr was born in Edinburgh in 1959 and emigrated to Canada in 1974. He and his wife Prescilla have lived on Ivy Crescent for 14 years.

The couple has two daughters. Mr. Marr teaches English and history at Bayview Secondary School in Richmond Hill.

*Magpies and Sunsets* will be officially launched Sunday from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m. at the headquarters of Christian Blind Mission International, 3844 Stouffville Rd.

# New leader has local NDP optimistic

BY MIKE ADLER  
Staff Writer

Growing more confident behind a new national leader, local New Democrats are preparing to wage the next federal campaign with new boundaries in York Region.

The party is staging founding meetings for Oak Ridges-Markham and Richmond Hill at 2 p.m. Feb. 22 in the Richmond Hill Central Library, Yonge Street and Major Mackenzie Drive.

A federal commission last year broke up the overpopulated Oak Ridges riding and made Richmond Hill into a riding on its own.

It created Oak Ridges-Markham by combining the northern and eastern edges of Markham with King, Whitchurch-Stouffville and Richmond Hill's north end.

Oak Ridges-Markham is massive, and mainly rural, but it will start with a good core of NDP activists, said Adam DeVita, president of the Oak Ridges NDP. "We're looking to turn some heads there soon."

Janice Hagan, the party's 2003 provincial candidate in Markham and Pamela Cour-

tot, who ran in Oak Ridges, both live in the new riding. Neither has stepped forward as a potential candidate, Mr. De Vita said, but Michael Crang, an environmentalist from Gormley has expressed interest in running.

Election results in Richmond Hill for 2000 show the town has been of a York Region strong point for the party, Mr. De Vita said.

"You'll find a couple of polls around 15 per cent and a couple around 1."

The new Richmond Hill riding has greater housing density, said Mr. De Vita, adding that helps the NDP, which relies on legwork to spread its message. "The more we can do door-to-door, the better it is for us."

Perennial underdogs in suburbia, New Democrats in local ridings took 6 per cent of the vote in 2000, double some previous showings.

Its clear stance against the Iraq war and Jack Layton's leadership should help the party make further gains in York, Mr. De Vita said.

Local NDP associations can be reached through [www.ndp.ca](http://www.ndp.ca)

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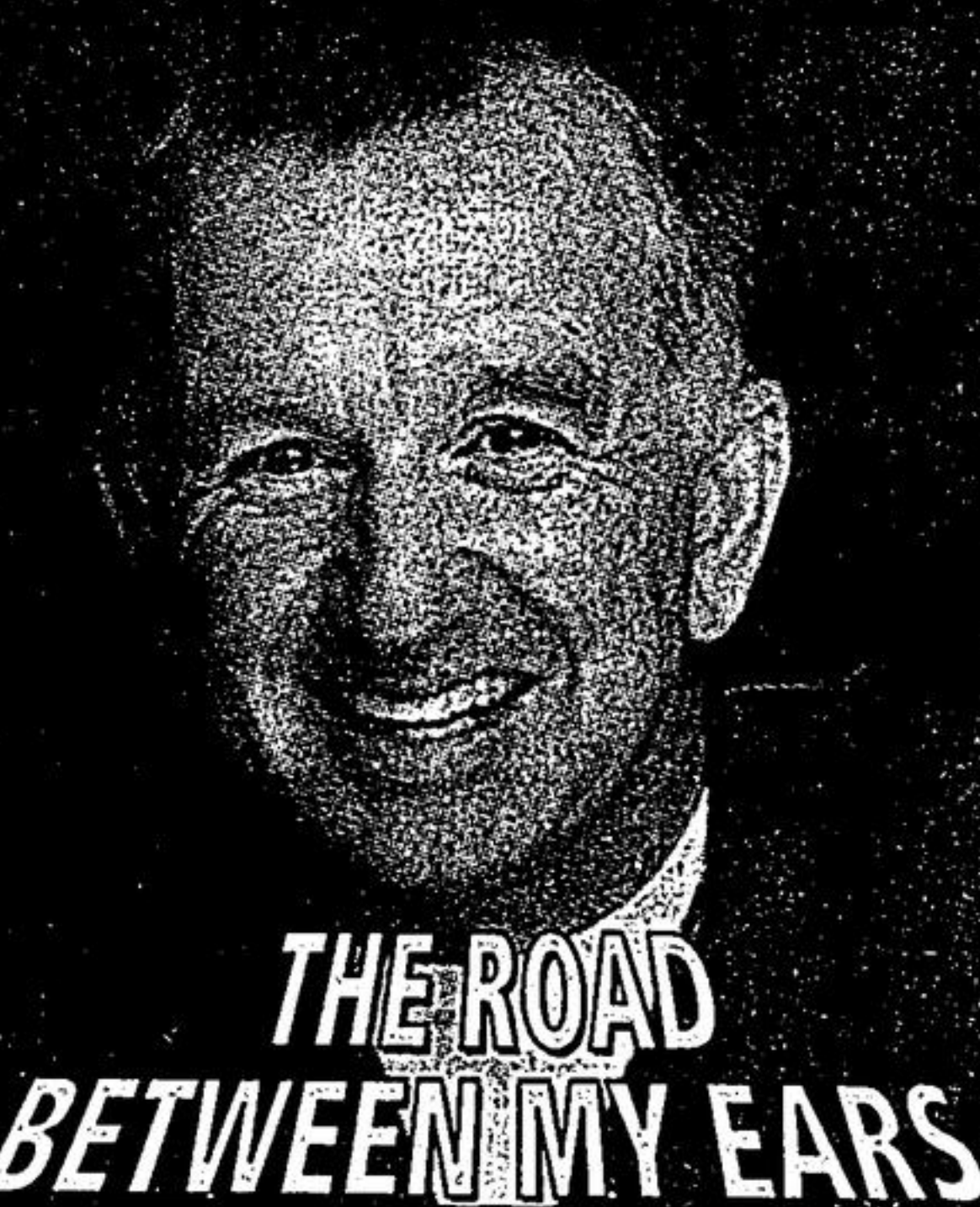
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