



Photo by Sharon Kallaste

Robin MacKinnon, 11, and her brother Nathan, 14, along with their mother Anne MacKinnon and her parents Nora and Rob Barber of Barber's Flower Shop, become the human version of their family business slogan, 'The Picky Petal People.' Anne is the great great granddaughter of Samuel Stanley Potter, the original owner, in 1890. Five generations of Barbers have run the family business and they've been in the same location at 122 Front St. for the past 36 years.

# Flower family still blooms after five generations

*Great great granddaughter continues tradition of 'flower pot people' dating back to 1890*

By Sharon Kallaste

Thirty years ago Anne MacKinnon said, "I'm never going to be a florist."

But she soon gave up thoughts of being a marine biologist, took a two-year course for retail floral culture and joined the family business. She has been arranging flowers at Barber's Flower Shop on Front Street in Belleville ever since.

Anne MacKinnon is the first 'flowerette' of her family, succeeding a long lineage of 'flower pot men' stemming back to 1890. She took over the ownership of the family business in 1976.

MacKinnon is the great great granddaughter of Samuel Stanley Potter, who was affectionately known as S.S., a prominent vegetable grower and cannery owner in Prince Edward County.

In the early 1900's, it was not considered appropriate for women to become business owners. One of Potter's four daughters, Lottie Mae Barber, worked in the store while her son Stanley Barber, MacKinnon's grandfather ran the business.

When Stanley retired, his eldest son took on the greenhouse operations and Rob Barber, MacKinnon's father, came in

to manage the store front.

Approaching 125 years and five generations of operation in 2015, the future succession of Barber's Flower Shop is yet to be determined.

"I have not really thought that far. I guess once my kids are old enough to know whether they do or don't want to be in the business— if they do, I will hang around as long as they need me or want me," MacKinnon, 43, explained with a smile.

"My son Nathan, 14, has his sights set on becoming a pilot. He is involved in the air cadets and has talked and thought about being a pilot for a few years. He keeps the idea of the flower shop in his back pocket for when the time comes to make any sort of decision for his own future. Robin, my daughter, 11 is a go-getter. She will try anything once, the world is going to be her oyster," said MacKinnon.

Since MacKinnon took over Barber's Flower Shop, now 36 years in the same location, she has not worried about being a small business surviving in downtown Belleville.

"I have never had to do that—come in to start up a business. It's always been here. Being a small business owner, you are wearing multiple hats. The flower shop is never boring with no two days a like," said MacKinnon.

Barber's Flowers has a complement of seven staff including MacKinnon, two full-time and one part-time designers, four clerks and delivery staff. At busy times like

Christmas and Valentine's Day, the staff is doubled to meet customers' needs.

When the Barber children were young, Anne and her older brother Paul and sister Lynn, would spend time at the shop while parents Rob and Nora Barber would fill orders during peak business.

"Mom would pop me in a flower box for the day and shuffle me around the store floor. My children spent time in the slings attached to me all day if need be. Our standing family saying is you are not a true florist until you have slept in a flower box."

Constant changing trends within the industry along with global economic barriers challenge small business owners to adapt to new ways of keeping their businesses profitable.

"The Picky Petal People' have an edge within the struggling small business market through their longevity in the downtown area.

By keeping her ear to the ground and finding out what is going on in the community, MacKinnon picks up "tidbits" about what works for other businesses that she had never thought of for her own. She has recently joined the Belleville Chamber of Commerce and will be the supplier of the table centerpieces at their annual meeting.

"Keeping up to date in the constant changing styles, techniques and trends of the flower industry is very important to me. The head designer and I just attended a workshop on wedding bouquets back in

the fall. In the spring, my other designer and I went to a workshop on corsages and boutonnières."

Small business survival today relies heavily on a committed and loyal customer base.

"We really pay attention to quality. If it is not good enough to sit on my table, then it's not going out the door. It has our name on it, so obviously I want us to do our very best for our customers. I want something that's going to be pleasing to their eye aesthetically and give them good value for their money.

"In this business, our customers are ordering something they may never see. They could be in another country sending flowers to someone here in Belleville and they trust us and depend on us to express their sentiment. We don't take that trust lightly and we do our very best."

Old-fashioned basic business practice has certainly stood the test of time in the Barber's family.

If we have any customers that may make a mistake in over-watering one of our flowers, or put it near a heat register or whatever – doesn't matter. We ask them to bring it back or we'll go pick it up if we have delivered it. We will replace it and then go as far as helping the customer get the next one to last longer."

"We really take care of our customers and over the years they have taken care of us."

## Shedding light on local native entrepreneurship

By Kelly Michelle Gagné

The room is small, with a low ceiling and a yellow light hangs above a table cluttered with tools, fabrics, moccasins and dolls. The walls are all shelved, with piles of neatly folded and colourfully arranged patterned fabrics and other craft supplies stored side by side. The room has a fuzzy feeling to it, with the scent of leather and cats.

Seated in her chair that she spends hours working in, is Narda Kathaleen Iulig. Her face is rounded with a beaming smile, and Gui Henri her "sucky-poo" of a cat, is rubbing up against her leg for affection. Iulig is a successful entrepreneur based out of her own home in Tyendinaga, where she has been making authentic native wear since 1993.

Lying on the table in front of Iulig, is her published book that she wrote called, *Are You Ready To Mind Your Own Business?* The book is Iulig's guide to helping those interested in starting their own businesses, and although it was originally meant to help those interested in the aboriginal community, the book is full of information and tips that can work for anyone interested in starting an entrepreneurial business.

"Before the book was published, I actually used my ideas to teach workshops around the province for about three or four years, and then one day, one of the girls in my workshop said, 'Narda, why don't you turn this into a book? It's really good.' And I thought to myself, 'You know, maybe I should.' So, it took me a few months, and then I converted the workshop into what the book is now," said Iulig.

Reaching across the table after giving Gui a nice scratch, Iulig begins to speak about her doll collections that she crafts and sells. The first collection is called "Standing Proud" a series of dolls, a grandmother and her six granddaughters, each with its own name and story, all dressed in their own unique, traditional Iroquois outfits. The second collection is called "Wrapped in Love" which has six individual dolls, each with a different name and story, all Aboriginal baby dolls.

"It was actually a dear friend of mine, Jim, who nagged at me and nagged at me to get into doll making, until about four years ago when I actually tried to make one. I just copied a model of one that my mother had made, but instead dressed mine in traditional Mohawk clothing, and kept her face blank, like the dolls we had when I grew up, leaving it up to a child's imagination for the faces," said Iulig.

Setting down the "Seesfar" doll, Iulig gets up and walks over to the beautiful light brown patterned jacket hanging on the shelf, it's the jacket she made herself years ago and it still looks as if it's brand new.

"This is my jacket," Iulig said with pride. "It's gotten a lot of attention over the years, and it has definitely helped me get business just by having random people stop to ask me where I got it. They are always so surprised when I tell them I made it myself," chuckles Iulig.

Iulig has been making jackets, ribbon shirts, casual men's and women's clothing and you name it, for years. Every piece of clothing that is requested online, Iulig likes to add the pieces own personal touch too, to add a one of a kind feel to it.

Everything that Iulig crafts can be ordered and seen online on her website, [www.nknativeoriginals.com](http://www.nknativeoriginals.com). "Entrepreneurship for native people is almost an ingrained skill, because we had too many years before where we sustained ourselves from the land. It almost seems to flow naturally into the fact, that if we have something that we can do, even in modern times we can turn it into some kind of a business. It's when we have to learn how we're going to go about offering and selling our business or services, that the stumbling blocks occur," said Iulig.

Gui Henri and Sir Giles Mudmore are weaving around her legs, both looking for attention as Iulig clears the table of the doll parts and clothing she has under way, for a doll she is currently making. She sits up, and walks back over to the wall to hang up her favorite jacket, smiling.

# Catering business expands to include downtown café

By Carlee Schmidt

Once again, 240 Front St. in Belleville is home to a new venue.

The building, located in Belleville's downtown core, was owned by Shoppers Drug Mart. In November of 2008, it was taken over by Glenn Mifsud who did some renovations and opened up a yoga studio called The Tenth Ox, a centre for wellness and spirituality.

In March 2011, The Tenth Ox closed and the building was purchased by award-winning caterer Greg Sheridan. During renovations to the building, the ceiling and bathrooms were redone, a back entrance and commercial kitchen were built, the electrical work was upgraded and everything was painted.

Spiffed up and ready to go, the doors to Café Sans Souci and Sans Souci Special Occasion Centre opened up Jan. 18. The café, open from Monday to Saturday, offers breakfast and lunch and will soon be offering wireless Internet.

There are a couple of cafés on Front Street. The only difference is that this café has a triple threat. Ninety per cent of the food sold at the café is homemade, including fresh sandwiches, family recipe mustard and more.

Café Sans Souci is not only a spacious café for people to hang out, but it is also host to a 150-person banquet hall in the back. Sheridan is going to be a busy man running the new café, the banquet centre and continuing with his well-known cater-

ing service.

"Running a catering business is more profitable because you know how many people you are cooking for, whereas with a restaurant, you have to estimate the amount needed for the day," said Sheridan.

"The fact that it is three businesses in one is what separates this café from others and makes it unique," said Sheridan.

He wants this new location to help take care of his clients so they can be carefree, hence the name of his company, Sans Souci, which is French for "carefree or without worry."

Sheridan has gone from working out of a garage packed with equipment for the past 13 years to this new location. It is a big change.

"My legs are very tired," said Sheridan. "The kitchen is three times the size of the one I was working out of in my garage and things that used to be two feet away are now farther away. It's a lot more moving around at work."

He studied hotel restaurant management at Loyalist College as well as advanced chef training at George Brown College. In 1994, Sheridan opened his own catering business.

He has worked as a chef at various hotels and has won the *Intelligencer's* Readers' Choice Award for best caterer numerous times, including 2011.

After 17 years of business, Sheridan said his catering business "has been a long evolution."



Photo by Brynn Campbell

Proud new owner, Greg Sheridan of Café Sans Souci, opened the doors to his cafe on Jan. 18. This locally owned business offers catering, a banquet hall for 150 people, and the café.