Get the needle

by BRIAN LOCKHART

As part of my work, I do a lot of research.

Some of that research is about local history. As such, I have spent considerable time at the sites of ghost towns, pioneer cemeteries, and abandoned or former churches in the region.

There is a small pioneer cemetery in Mono that hasn't been used in years, however, it is well-maintained and preserves the memory of those interred there.

There is one monument in particular that is rather sad. Five children in one family all died within a month of each other. They range in age from a toddler to a 14-year-old.

The obvious answer as to why five children in the same family would die in a short period is an epidemic of some kind.

The year was 1889, so there are several diseases that could have gone through the area. It could have been scarlet fever, cholera, the flu, typhus, diphtheria, or yellow fever.

At the time, little could be done to cure those afflicted by such diseases.

The idea of preventing illness by deliberately exposing a person to the disease in a small way has been around for centuries.

It wasn't until the late 1700's, that Dr. Edward Jenner created the world's first vaccine. He realized that milkmaids who developed cowpox sores, were immune to smallpox.

Dr. Jenner reasoned that by contracting cowpox, a much milder form of the disease, their bodies created an immunity to smallpox.

He tested his theory by doing what any mad scientist would do, and convinced an 8 year-old neighbour boy, and presumably the boy's parents, to become his test subject.

It worked. Dr. Jenner had created the world's first usable and workable vaccine.

In 1980, the World Health Organization certified that smallpox had been eradicated globally.

Vaccination works - there is scientific proof.

At one time in North America, polio was a fairly common disease. Some people recovered, some developed lifelong disabilities, and some died.

However, due to vaccinations, the Americas were declared polio-free in 1994.

Vaccination uses a simple but effective technique to protect you from contracting a disease.

By introducing dead or weakened forms of infections, your body will naturally react by creating antibodies to fight the invasive virus or bacteria.

If you do get the real virus or bacteria later, your body will remember the invader and know how to fight it, thus saving you from

getting sick.

Have you ever been in a situation where a person with a raging cold shows up at work or some other event? Everyone around them will become uncomfortable knowing there is a risk they could catch that cold and experience their own week of sniffling, coughing, fever, misery.

While there is no vaccine for the common cold, a cold is not fatal.

Some people avoid vaccines for diseases that could be fatal. It makes no sense to avoid a person with a cold, but not have the foresight to receive a vaccination that could possibly save your life.

Disease in congregate settings has resulted in the deaths of millions of people as the disease can spread quickly through a town.

Schools are hotbeds of germs. There are several hundred, or possibly several thousand germy students showing up every day. A disease outbreak in a school can be a disaster.

That's why every jurisdiction in North America takes the advice of local health units and insists students be vaccinated for several common diseases.

The COVID pandemic delayed many students from getting their regular immunizations and health units are trying to get everyone back on track.

A student who is not immunized may face a suspension from school.

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit has reported that there are currently 5,000 students in Grades 4, 5 and 6 who do not have complete immunization records in that region.

While this means that records have not been updated, it doesn't necessarily mean most of those kids haven't been vaccinated.

However, it indicates that many of them are missing the required vaccinations and are now posing health risks to themselves and other students.

It is a risk for children who are not vaccinated and run the risk of contracting a disease.

Some people insist there is a danger in having kids vaccinated.

However, the science does not agree with this.

What would you consider more dangerous ? getting vaccinated or contracting the plague?

Those vaccinations, if available, would have likely saved five pioneer children from early deaths.