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## Guelph musical artist got singing voice while busking in Thunder Bay

Community Nov 08, 2018 by [Ned Bekavac](/guelph-on-author/ned-bekavac/E8C148A1-A0C2-47A5-A2DE-275F6221349F/) [\(/guelph-on-author/ned-bekavac/E8C148A1-A0C2-47A5-A2DE-275F6221349F/\)](mailto:nbekavac@guelphmercurytribune.com)  [Guelph Mercury](mailto:nbekavac@guelphmercurytribune.com)

Don Sawchuk is bringing it home with My Home on Remembrance Day weekend in Guelph.

The Guelph musical artist is performing at the Guelph Black Heritage Society on Saturday night in support of his debut album, Underdog.

Among songs that attendees can expect to hear is one called My Home. The first single from the album was written based on a true POW story and is dedicated to Canadian veterans and current military service personnel.

"It's an important anniversary — 100 years," says Sawchuk, about the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Armistice, ending the First World War. "And I've got this song that seems to fit well with what's going on, My Home."

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The Windsor native, who has called Guelph home for the past six or seven years, will perform with The Underdog Band on Saturday. Along with the live show, the night will include a screening of the film Let It Rock at the Crossroads of Rock 'N' Roll, a tribute to the early Black settlers responsible for the birth of rock 'n' roll.

For Sawchuk, the birth of his singing voice took place in the 1980s in Thunder Bay when the chips were down.

Sawchuk was there as a student at Lakehead University. He was suffering through tragedy as his sister, who had introduced him to her collection of records and told him to keep following his dream, was murdered.

He had a young family back at home, in Kitchener.

"So . . . expenses were more than I expected; I had to do something to earn some more money," says Sawchuk.

He decided to pick up his guitar and go busking, to help pay his way through school and send money back to his family.

Story continues below▼

The experience was eye-opening for him.

"I went out busking and I wasn't making any money," he says.

"I was playing guitar, (and then) I realized that I have to sing and play my guitar to get people to recognize a familiar melody. I learned the importance of singing and melody because I really wasn't doing much singing before that; it's what really got me singing, that busking experience."

He describes busking for the first time.

"It was a little scary. I felt like there was some sort of shame associated with that," says Sawchuk.

While there, he also ate at a soup kitchen and it wound up giving him some appreciation.

"I was actually eating in a soup kitchen once a day, and I saw lots more people in much worse condition than I was in," says Sawchuk.

These days, he's giving back. Sawchuk plays the Welcome In Drop-In Centre in Guelph twice a week during lunch.

"I don't get in people's faces too much; I just go there and acoustically play. I've been there. I've eaten at soup kitchens before, so I know what it's like; I try to pick some of the songs from my own repertoire, songs that are uplifting and can bring a little inspiration and hope to people. And it seems to work," Sawchuk says.

He loves doing it.

"I'd rather play for somebody who is going to appreciate the music than go to a noisy bar, and do all that," says Sawchuk.

There is a lot to appreciate in Sawchuk's music for those checking out his debut album and seeing Saturday's performance.

"It's very impactful, uplifting and inspiring," says Sawchuk, of the music. "There are a variety of genres on the album; I think there is something there for everyone."

Doors for Saturday's event open at 7 p.m. Tickets are available in advance ([eventbrite.ca](http://eventbrite.ca) (<http://eventbrite.ca>)) and at the door. The Guelph Black Heritage Society is at 83 Essex St.

**Don's favourites . . .**

**Band or musician:** Pete Townshend songwriter for The Who

**Actor:** Jack Nicholson

**Actress:** Meryl Streep

**TV show:** Modern Family

**Movie:** Something's Got To Give

**Food:** Toast buttered to the edges with love like grandma used to do

**Drink:** Molson Canadian

**Sport:** Trail cycling

**Day of the week:** A productive Monday after a lazy Sunday

by **[Ned Bekavac \(/guelph-on-author/Ned-Bekavac/e8c148a1-a0c2-47a5-a2de-275f6221349f/\)](/guelph-on-author/Ned-Bekavac/e8c148a1-a0c2-47a5-a2de-275f6221349f/)**

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