

Read by the Sea Returns to River John in July 2026

By: Diane Kennedy



Back (left to right) Stacey Gillis, Ed Kennedy, Kelly Shaw, Alina Seukowska. Middle (left to right) Barb Acker, Diane Kennedy, Joan MacLeod, Doug Campbell. Front (left to right) Debby Shaw, Vicki Patton. Photo Credit: Barb Acker

Returns? you might say. Where did it go? you might ask. There is a story here to be told.

In 2000, a small group of local North Shore women established a festival called Read by the Sea (RBTS) to bring some of Canada’s best authors to River John each summer. It began as a one-day event, with authors reading to a small group of book-lovers. I remember attending the event the summer that Margaret Atwood was a guest author. Of course, she was a big draw and – having Nova Scotia roots – she was happy to take her place on the lawn of the Legion. She read from one of her books and signed many copies for her fans.

As often happens with many new endeavours, the early festivals sparked new ideas and RBTS gradually evolved to include WordPlay, a literary festival for children of all ages. Who doesn’t love a beautifully illustrated book used by the author to tell a funny story or a teaching lesson? I know I do.

Another addition was OnWords, a meet-the-author event experience for middle grade/young adult readers. Pitch the Publisher provided the opportunity for future authors to present their stories to a panel of publishers, and a family story event at Caldera Distillery, as well as historical walks through River John were also added to the RBTS program.

As the festival grew in popularity and size, the organizing committee members, who had done an outstanding job of promoting our small village on the North Shore and bringing in award winning authors, were growing tired. The demands of time and energy - acquiring funding

through grant applications and donations from local organizations and businesses, in addition to developing and marketing interesting programs and recruiting volunteers for the events - were high.

While River John has an amazing pool of generous volunteers, there are a great many organizations seeking volunteers to run them. In 2024, the organizers of RBTS faced the reality that it was time to leave the future organizing of the annual festival to a new group of volunteers. The RBTS committees had achieved so much in 24 years, bringing literary greats to our village. They helped to put River John on the map as a great tourist destination for a weekend each summer, and for this we are very grateful. Thank You!

With the 25th anniversary of RBTS coming up, a couple of members of the existing committee from the New Glasgow area rallied to organize a festival in 2025. They built a small committee of volunteers from that area and partnered with the deCoste Performing Arts Centre, Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library, and other sponsors. They introduced Books on the Breeze workshops for writers series, which were presented in libraries across Pictou County, building interest and momentum for the big 25th Anniversary RBTS at the deCoste Centre on June 19, 20 and 21. The organizers did an amazing job, acquiring grants and sponsors, attracting star quality presenters, and using a very professional venue.

However, history repeated itself with that organizing committee. Though very proud of their great event, they found themselves overworked and unwilling to stay on the committee for another year. In August, they posted

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***Life is like riding a bicycle.
To keep your balance, you
must keep moving.***

a Facebook message saying that if new volunteers did not express their interest in taking over, RBTS would be finished. Interested book lovers in River John were shocked, and responded with “This can’t be!” and “We need to bring this great literary festival back to River John.” That’s where we came in.

After two meetings of people interested in volunteering, we formed a committee with major changes in mind. A plan was developed to return to the original one-day event and bring in local Pictou County authors and promote local. Excitement grew in the committee to organize a program for the day in the village, in Bissell Park and the River John Library, with access to coffee, snacks and food trucks, and a book market for published as well as self-published authors to promote and sell their books. Yet, we welcome additions to our volunteer team. If you have a skill set in event planning or marketing, maybe even website hosting... WE.NEED. YOU! Please reach out to rjreadbythesea@gmail.com with your contact details.

Our goal here is to raise awareness in our community, to increase local attendance, as well as come-from-away participants. We want to celebrate writing good stories and the joy that comes with reading them. So, we are looking forward to raising our RBTS banners again in 2026 and packing our village with young and old on July 11th to celebrate bringing home the Read by the Sea Literary Festival for good!



URANIUM: CONCERNED and Unfortunate Touch of DEJA VU

We both grew up and lived in the south-east corner of British Columbia, and for many years we traveled to Nova Scotia, more specifically to River John. After retirement, we bought property and built our new home on River John Station Road and moved there in July, 2022. We enjoy the area, have health care and do not feel at risk.

But then we heard that the Nova Scotia Provincial Government had repealed the ban on uranium exploration (potential future mining) and was encouraging companies to explore here in River John.

This took us back to the late 1970s, when uranium prospectors were swarming all over B.C. and identified a handful of areas to explore. Public opposition to uranium mining quickly spread across B.C. One area was our small community of Genelle.

In 1977, a protest erupted in Genelle, after a company set up to begin exploration in the local area, leading to public backlash and the formation of a grassroots resistance against potential radiation exposure, water contamination and the overall threat to our community. Protests were successful, leading to a significant victory for health and environmental justice advocates, and highlighted the power of community. This led to a Royal Commission review and subsequent moratorium on uranium exploration and mining in February, 1980. For more details and history, search the web for 1977 Uranium Protest Genelle B.C.

The information from 1977 regarding uranium contamination of watersheds, environment, and effects on our health, still stands true today in 2025. Uranium exploration is not allowed in B.C. still today.

We are concerned and frustrated, as we did not anticipate having to go through this again 48 years later. We are fortunate to enjoy good health in a beautiful village and province and want it to stay that way.

We hope our leaders are listening.

Sincerely,
David and Julia Langille

URANIUM: Why Leave it in the Ground?

By: Barb Harris

Many River Johners breathed a sigh of relief when the government did not receive any bids to explore for uranium in the Louisville Road area last June.

Unfortunately, this does not mean that River John is free from the threat of uranium exploration or mining. Last March, the provincial government repealed the ban on uranium that had been in place for 44 years. Without this ban, a mining company can apply for a uranium exploration license anytime, anywhere in the province. A license could be granted without a local community having any input – or even being notified.

Without a ban, exploration for uranium can take place before any evaluation of risks is done. Uranium is different from other minerals. Even exploration can have serious and irreversible effects. Regardless, Premier Houston insists his government will only evaluate risks if a company registers a project proposal – long after exploration has been completed.

Exploration for uranium was carried out in River John and other areas of Nova Scotia in the 1980s. The government still has the studies and core samples from that time. Any new exploration would involve new ground disruption, more core sampling, and quite possibly trenching and even bulk sampling -- in effect, small scale mining – so that a company could determine the economic viability of an open-pit mine.

Because uranium dissolves in water, these activities increase the risk of contaminating drinking water. Disturbing uranium also releases radon gas and can generate radioactive dust. These are well-documented risks to community health. When uranium is released into the environment, the harmful impacts continue for thousands of years.

The rolled-front type of uranium deposit that exists in River John lies close to the surface. It is low-grade uranium – at best only 150-200 parts per million, according to government documents. Nova Scotia’s uranium is nothing like the uranium deposits being mined in Northern Saskatchewan, which are the second richest in the world. Saskatchewan’s mines lie hundreds of miles from populated areas.

The proposed uranium mining site in Louisville lies in the River John watershed, close to homes and farms. Dissolved uranium goes where water flows and can be carried long distances. Water from the proposed site in Louisville flows through 100 separate properties before it drains into the tidal waters of River John and the Northumberland Strait. We know that uranium levels in many local wells are already above safe levels for drinking. Increasing the risk of uranium contamination of wells makes no sense.

Beyond the risks to drinking water and health, it is shocking that this government refused to even consider the risks to the fisheries before promoting uranium exploration and mining just a few kilometers from the fishing grounds of the Northumberland Strait.

These are some of the reasons a group of people from River John and other parts of Pictou County formed the new group Citizens of Pictou County Against Uranium Development (COPCAUD). We were part of the delegation that presented a petition signed by 7000 Nova Scotians to the Nova Scotia Legislature in October. The petition called on the government to reinstate the uranium ban to protect our communities. It was the second largest petition ever presented to the provincial legislature.

With others from around the province, our goal is to stop any exploration for uranium until there is a full, science-based evaluation of risks and benefits. We believe the science will show, as it has before, that a ban on uranium exploration and mining is the right choice for Nova Scotia.

If you would like to stay informed, or you would like a lawn sign or car decal or to help gather more petition signatures, contact us at pcaudns@gmail.com.

I stand with “Leave it in the Ground”

Uranium mining has been a hot topic in Nova Scotia since the current Nova Scotia government repealed its decades-long ban on uranium exploration and mining this past March. Their stated goal is to promote economic growth, create jobs and support industry opportunities. I am not against any of these goals, and I am not against mining.

I am ardently against mining uranium in Nova Scotia because I do not believe it can be done safely and without huge costs to our health, our healthcare system, our farming and fishing industries, and the environmental impacts to air, water and soil in our province. Modern mining practices may have stricter regulations, but I do not have trust in the mining companies and government who say that the regulations will be enforced and are effective based on past practice.

Also, I am not thrilled that my property falls into the area where the government is encouraging mining companies to explore for uranium. Since the 1700s, generations of my family in River John and many Nova Scotians have worked hard to make a living in this province from the land and the water. Let’s do our best to take care of it for future generations.

I encourage everyone to read “Nova Scotia physicians issue urgent warnings on uranium mining health risks as the government advances exploration” at <https://cape.ca/the-hidden-health-costs-of-uranium-nova-scotia-doctors-sound-the-alarm/> and information about the risks of radon gas from the Canadian Lung Association at <https://www.lung.ca/radon> for additional information.

Linda Sutherland
River John, NS

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The Pea Factory

By: Beulah Wright



Earl Johnson remembers when there were many fields of green peas grown along the shore from Caribou to Cape John, that provided summer work for a good number of men in the area, including himself and his neighbours, during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Our pantries were stocked with cans of the quality vegetables produced in our very own locality.

It all began with Fred Magee, an astute and successful businessman from Baie Verte, New Brunswick, who operated a grocery store in Port Elgin, and decided to enter the canning business of lobster packing and eventually owned and operated a canning plant in Pictou. It was successful but could only operate in the relatively short two months of lobster season, so herring was added to the production line, but more was needed. Magee was looking to expand production with vegetables but needed some careful planning and experimentation. As early as 1935, he persuaded several farmers in the Pictou County area to plant peas as test plots. They were harvested and canned under his established brands. He enhanced production with fertilization, staggered planting seed selection, and soil quality, etc.

Magee had been using the brand Mephisto which was a shortened form of Mephistopheles (the devil in disguise), and came from his interest in music and opera. Who can forget the saucy red devil on the can label of Mephisto Peas? It was unique and it caught on. But there was also a fancier brand called Pictou Peas. Eventually there were more than a hundred farmers involved in pea production, and as the lobster canning ended in the spring, attention turned to pea production. The growers bought their seed from Magee but provided their own fertilizer. Magee owned the tractors and all the machinery. Austin Baird and Allan MacLeod were two of the men that drove the tractors.

Jim Ross from Caribou would visit the fields to determine if the crop was ready for harvesting. In the first years, the peas were cut by hand. It was heavy work. One unusually wet summer, tractor and wagons were required to haul the peas off the fields, requiring handling the vines twice. Later, hay loaders were brought in which resulted in smaller crews. Henry MacDonald was one of the truckdrivers. Costs and prices being so much less in that time period; the income could be about \$8.00 per load. Hard to believe compared to nowadays!



Laura Elliott remembered that the young people would follow the trucks hoping that a few vines would fall off the load, providing a tasty treat of fresh green peas. Fred Magee, always looking for new markets, found a purpose for the vines and pods, as silage. But Magee passed away in 1952 and after he was gone, the Mephisto operation slowed and finally closed. The end was mainly due to new technology in food production. Canned goods were replaced with frozen products that were tastier and more convenient and allowed for speedy delivery and expanded markets.

Yet some of us older folks still remember the lush green fields of peas and the flourishing industry of food production in our community.



Waiting for the trucks to come and be loaded are workers (left to right): Archie Johnson, Earl Johnson, Angus Johnson, Wilbert Henderson, John David Henderson, Harry Murphy, George Johnson, Donnie Langille, Gerald Johnson, Duncan Henderson and Elmer Langille.

Editorial

Your Voice Belongs Here

As the leaves change, and we ready the Fall issue of The Pioneer, it's important to remember that this newspaper is really a community conversation. It is written by and for you all. Every story and photo we print, from a photo of the first frost to a reflection on local history or a note of thanks, adds to the collective voice that makes this place special.

If you've ever thought, "Someone should write about that," we want you to know that someone could be you. The Pioneer welcomes a range of submissions:

- Local news and updates from organizations, churches, or community groups
- Profiles and features highlighting interesting people or projects
- Personal reflections, historical pieces, or stories about life in our community
- Letters to the Editor sharing your thoughts, gratitude, or suggestions

Not sure where to start? We are sure you are not alone and assure you that you don't have to be a professional writer to contribute. Our editorial team is here to help with ideas, editing, formatting, and even photo selection. We can assist you in shaping a short note, a feature article, or anything in between. Sometimes a single paragraph can spark connection or preserve a moment that might otherwise be forgotten.

If you have questions please reach out to the editorial team pioneereditors@outlook.com. If you've written something and you are ready to share it, please send your article or letter to rjpioneer.story@gmail.com. We love to help first-time contributors through the process from draft to publication.

Our next submission deadlines are posted on our Facebook page and shared through community boards, so keep an eye out. Articles should generally be 1,200 words or fewer, and obituaries up to 450 words. Photos are always welcome, too (please send them separately in .jpg format).

The Pioneer belongs to all of us — and your stories, letters, and ideas help ensure it continues to reflect the vibrant, resilient, and creative community we call home.

Let's keep writing the story of River John together.

Warmly,
Kelly Shaw

On behalf of *The Pioneer* Editorial Team

The Pioneer Editorial Team wants to be sure you know where you could find the Pioneer should there be a disruption in postal delivery.

You can find copies available for pickup at the following locations:

- River John Library
- Pictou Library
- River John Post Office
- Scotsburn Post Office
- Meh's/Leetik Esso
- Overstreet Cafe
- Fulton Pharmacy River John
- River John Motor Company
- Country Bread Basket
- River John Old School

Kristine Stallman: Designing Connection in Community

By: Debby Shaw

When readers pick up a copy of the River John Pioneer, they might first notice the clean lines, the crisp balance of text and image, and the way every story feels comfortably at home on the page. That's the touch of Kristine Stallman - the graphic designer behind the Pioneer's layout and the founder of Pink Lemonade, a creative design business based in River John.

Kristine's journey into design began early. She shared that in high school; she took a marketing class where the task was to design a cereal box. She recalled loving it and having her interest in design piqued at that time. That interest carried her to Sheridan College in Ontario, where she studied advertising. After graduating she moved through various roles in newspaper production and software administration. After the birth of her fourth child, she made a pivotal choice - to work from home and build a freelance design career. For nearly two decades, Kristine has freelanced full-time, honing her skills in layout, branding, and web design. Nine years ago, while collaborating on a magazine project in Port Dover, Ontario, she found a name that would stick: Pink Lemonade.

Today, Pink Lemonade represents Kristine's creative independence and her vehicle for community connection. "Layout design is like putting together a puzzle," she explains. "You get all these pieces - articles, images, design elements - and you figure out how to make them fit so the final product is both beautiful and easy to read."

Kristine produces the Sunrise Trail Magazine, which promotes local tourism and businesses along the north shore from Tidnish to the Canso Causeway. Through her work and volunteerism, she gives generously to the region she now calls home. As President of the North Shore Community Development Association, a member of the Colchester tourism board, and a sponsor of River John Festival Days, Kristine's creativity and community spirit are tightly intertwined. She donates

promotional space in every issue of her magazine to highlight local producers and artisans, which reflects her belief in buying and promoting local.

Kristine enjoys the outdoors and spending time with her family. In the warmer months, she loves gardening and can be found in the flower or vegetable gardens or sitting on her dock on the river. When winter comes, she turns to jigsaw puzzles and movies.

Her advice for anyone starting a small business? "Get out and meet the other local business owners. Get involved in your community. They will be your biggest supporters."



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For more information, contact Melanie Miller (address above).

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Community News

West Branch Singers

By: Heather Smith



Welcome to an Old-fashioned Christmas Concert for an Audience of All Ages.

Performed by the West Branch & Area Singers.

Where: Bethel Presbyterian Church, Scotsburn, NS
When: Sunday December 7th, 2025
Time: 7 p.m.
What: songs, skits, a lovely lunch

Special guest star: SANTA!

Following the concert, we all contribute to a lunch that feeds 200 people or more. The group also creates Christmas baskets to sell tickets on; admission to the concert is by donation. Santa arrives with treats for the young folk and Santa’s elves greet the audience as they come in, handing out treat bags containing cookies or fudge and tea.

There are parts of the concert where the audience gets to participate in the singing, so come join us on Sunday, December 7th for our 16th Annual Old-Fashioned Christmas Concert.

This amazing group is nearing 50 members, and we rehearse Sunday evenings at 6 p.m. at the River John Legion. Anyone who wishes to sing with us for Christmas is invited to come to rehearse.

West Branch and Area Community Association

By: Reg. Crewe

Hello from West Branch and area. Fall is moving into winter and most of the leaves have fallen. At the hall we continue to hold West Branch Wednesdays, a monthly gathering to meet and chat with our community neighbours, and listen to a topical speaker and share a meal. These have been a huge success and after November, we will take a two-month break and continue in February, holding them on the first Wednesday of the month. These get-togethers encourage social connections and hopefully reduce isolation for our community members.

The Pictou County Net-Zero Community Buildings Project is finished, and we are so pleased to be able to reduce our carbon footprint and lead Nova Scotia in installing solar power in the Pictou County community halls. As part of the project, we had a major upgrade to our electrical system, installing a 200-amp service and re-routing some wiring. We installed 3 new windows, a complementary ductless heat pump in the kitchen to keep our pipes from freezing and had the hall insulation upgraded and added to. This project eliminated our need for fossil fuel for our regular heating and provided the many upgrades that very importantly reduce our overall monthly expenses.

Terri Clark and her Aunt Margaret presented the West Branch Hall with an award given posthumously to John Alexander Murray, a past resident of West Branch. He is a descendant of Billy “Sheep” Murray. Many of the Murrys in the area descended from him, as are the McCulloughs and others. Recently, by chance, an acquaintance found some of his medals at

an auction and researched them; they were awarded for highland dancing and heavy weight competitions. One of the medals was presented to him by Sir John A MacDonald at a Highland Games in British Columbia. He was nominated for The Pictou County Sports Hall of Fame. The family wanted his award to go to the community in his honour. The West Branch Hall gladly received his award and will proudly display it. Picture shows Terri Clark presenting the award to Hall Board President Jim White.

We are holding our Fall Supper fundraiser, scheduled for November 1. We hope to raise enough funds to pay the hall expenses over the winter. As always, we have such great support from the community and many volunteers that make these events possible. Our thanks to everyone.

Five of our members completed the Volunteer Food Handling Course given at the Earltown Hall on October 15.

We would like to extend a warm welcome to all newcomers to the area and encourage anyone that would like to participate or contribute to the West Branch and Area Community Association to contact one of the board members.

Wishing everyone a great fall and winter!

River John Square Knitters’ News

By: Netta Heukshorst



What a lovely busy summer we had here in beautiful River John.

June 14th was World Wide Knit in Public Day. For those not familiar with this, yes, it is a thing, lol. Some of us were out knitting in front of the Lismore Sheep Farm and out in front of the Country Bread Basket. Many folks came by to ask what we were doing; some even joined us for a bit. A happy day it was.

September 21st was Open Farm Day and that found us again at the Lismore Sheep Farm with some knitted items to sell.

A generous donation of \$100 was gratefully received from the AMS society of St. George’s Presbyterian Church to help us with the cost of mailing the bundles of knitted squares. A donation of \$200 was received from a friend of a friend for the sole purpose of buying yarn. A great deal was found on Amazon to keep our needles busy.

Also 3 lovely shawls and 19 lapghans were donated to Tatamagouche Palliative Care and to Hospice in Truro. During River John Festival week we participated in several craft market days to raise postage money, a very busy one at Lismore Sheep Farm and the one at the Old School.

Remember a few issues back I had mentioned that one of the bundles in Africa was stolen and held for “ransom”? (we didn’t fall for that one). Well, we got another shock when our little account at the bank was discovered to have been breached by hackers! The bank staff was wonderful in assisting with this, numbers changed, more security added, etc. The fraud department made sure all monies were safely returned. In this day and age, we all must be vigilant in this area of our lives.

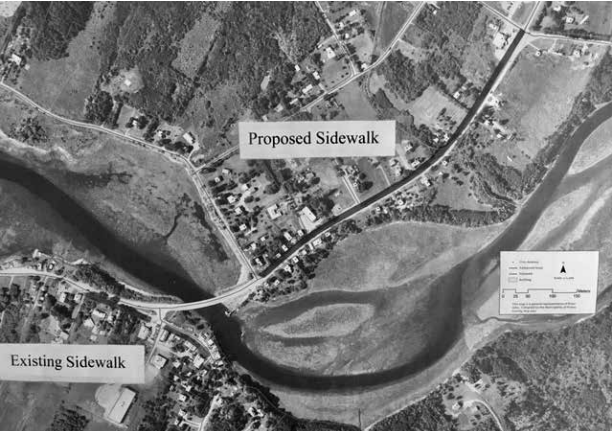
You can find us each Friday morning from 10 a.m. -12 noon at the River John Library.

Donations of yarn are gratefully accepted. If Friday mornings are not convenient, yarn may be left at the library during open hours.

Smile, knit and always be kind to one another.

River John Sidewalk

By: Mike Topley, RJCAS Sidewalk Lead



Submitted by: Mike Topley

In May 2021, we started conversations and applications for a new sidewalk along Route 6, from the bridge to Meh’s on the churches’ side of the road. Our petition conducted in 2024 received over 550 signatures. County engineers have conducted preliminary surveys, and provincial approval is in place. But we still await the go-ahead from the MOPC Council. If we hope for construction in 2026, then funding allocation and detailed design work should be ongoing right now.

River John Community Food and Health Centre

By: Paul Barron

Well, what a busy time for us at the River John Community Food and Health Centre. A big shoutout to everyone who has volunteered time, food and expertise to help us complete the greenhouse. We have had at least 20-25 people show up at various work groups to get this crucial project done, and we are grateful for all of you.

Work will continue on the garden boxes for the greenhouse, and planting will start early spring. If this is your jam, we would certainly appreciate your help. Our Greenhouse Grand Opening took place Saturday, June 21 from 11-2 and we had a wonderful turnout. Lots of people from the community as well as many of our volunteers enjoyed the BBQ with free hotdogs, hamburgers and drinks.

Our Food Drive in March was a huge success and is helping us feed over 100 individuals who are registered at the Food Centre and are experiencing food insecurity.

ty. Watch for the announcement for the Fall/Christmas drive. Again, thank you to everyone who donated food and cash. Your compassion and generosity contribute to our long-term sustainability.

The Food Centre is open Friday afternoons from 1-4 p.m. to accept donations and to help anyone in need. Our co-ordinator CristyAnn can be reached at 902-324-8897 by phone or text. Another great place to volunteer.

A huge milestone achievement for us has been obtaining our Official Charitable Status designation. We would like to gratefully acknowledge the Board Members and Directors who have worked tirelessly over the last year submitting and re-submitting documents, talking with CRA officials on the phone for eternity, filling out endless paperwork and assuring that all the criteria are met. CRA granted us Charitable Status retroactive to January 1, 2025, so if you have donated and would like a receipt, please notify us by email cssriverjohn@gmail.com and as soon as our official receipts are ready, we will start sending them out. Please include your home address and whether you prefer regular post or email receipting.

Our community building continues to offer expanded services. We currently have two foot-care specialists, Melony Billard and Connie Smith; Registered Massage Therapy - Chelsey Scott who can be reached by phone or text at 902-817-6884; Tearmann House workshops alternate Friday afternoons; the new Neighbourhood Watch Group meets in the Boardroom the first Wednesday of each month - Contact Cindy Mac Kenzie at 416-797-8744 for more information.

In addition, the V.O.N. continues to offer their Frozen Meals Program - contact Tammy Kehoe at cssPictou@von.ca or 782-233-1097.

In May, we welcomed four long-time volunteers as Society Members. If you are interested in joining the Community Support Society as a member or to volunteer in any capacity, please reach out to one of the Board Members, Directors or email your expression of interest to cssriverjohn@gmail.com and we will get back to you as soon as possible.

We are in the process of updating our website to include a Membership Application. It may be live by the time of this printing. There is also a direct link for monetary donations. You can e-transfer directly to cssrjdonations@gmail.com or visit <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/community-support-society-of-river-john/>

River John Community Action Society

By: Gillian Joudrie



It's been a busy and rewarding year for the River John Community Action Society (RJCAS). Along with launching a new logo and website at www.rjcas.ca, we've continued to invest in projects that make a real difference in our community.

We're proud to share that nearly 200 copies of the River John Cookbook have been sold, raising over \$3,000 to go directly back into our community. Cookbooks are still available for purchase at River John Motor Co. and Lismore Sheep Farm, a great gift idea and a way to support local projects at the same time.

Spreading Holiday Cheer “Be a Santa for a Senior” Returns to River John

By: Gillian Joudrie



Last year, I was looking for a meaningful way to give back during the holiday season. It's easy to get caught up in the hustle and bustle, but I wanted to do something that truly spread joy, especially to those who might need it most. That's how “Be a Santa for a Senior” began. And now, it's time to gear up for year two.

This year, we're once again partnering with Willow Lodge and Maplewood Manor to bring a little extra holiday cheer to local seniors who may otherwise go without. By taking part in Be a Santa for a Senior, you can help brighten someone's holiday with a thoughtful gift and a reminder that they're not forgotten.

Starting Monday, November 24, stop by River John Motor Co. to pick a tag from the Christmas tree and purchase a gift for the senior listed. Every gesture, big or small, makes a real difference.

We're also inviting the community to create Christmas cards for the seniors. These will be included in the gift bags to add a personal touch and a few extra smiles. Please drop off all cards and gifts by December 18 at River John Motor Co.

Let's come together once again to make the season a little brighter for our seniors.

Roger's Landing Improvements

Roger's Landing received quite the facelift this year. Over 60 tons of gravel were added, and a new pole and light were installed along with updated rules and regulations signage.

A big thank you goes out to Coast Line Electrician, Wade Redmond, Daling Excavation, Stewart Joudrie, JC Mechanical, and River John Motor Co. for lending their time, skills, and support to make these upgrades possible.

A Thank You from Roger's Landing: Celebrating a Safe Boating Season.

We want to thank everyone who visited and enjoyed Roger's Landing this year. Your respect for safety and the environment helped make it a successful and enjoyable season for all. We loved seeing families and friends making memories along the river, and we look forward to welcoming you back next spring for more scenic days and community fun.

Join Us for the Annual Christmas Tree Lighting.

Mark your calendars for November 30th and join us at Bissell Park for the annual Christmas Tree Lighting. There will be hot chocolate and cookies. Enjoy festive entertainment on the veranda and celebrate the start of the holiday season with your neighbours. We can't wait to see you there!

Recipes


Jacob Leegwater's Famous Snickerdoodles

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1½ cups sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 1/3 cups flour
- 2 tsp cream of tartar
- 1 tsp baking soda
- ¼ tsp salt
- 2 tbsp sugar
- 2 tsp cinnamon

Heat oven to 400°F.
Mix butter, sugar and eggs thoroughly.
Blend in flour, cream of tartar, baking soda and salt.
Shape dough by rounded teaspoonfuls into balls.
Mix the 2 tbsp of sugar and cinnamon well.
Roll the balls in the mixture.
Place them 2 inches apart on ungreased baking sheet.
Bake 8-10 minutes or until set.
Immediately remove from baking sheet.

Yields approx 6 dozen cookies.





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Community News

Climate Change Action Moving Forward in Pictou County

By: Ed Kennedy



MOPC Tree Sapling Distribution team, left to right Councillor Larry Turner, Ed Kennedy, Little Sister Lilly Bennett, Lucas MacInnis, David Parker, Emma MacInnis, Warden Robert Parker, Big Sister Diane Kennedy, and Councillor Donald Parker

As a member of the Municipality of Pictou County (MOPC) Climate Change Advisory Committee, I am happy to report that progress is being made on the implementation of the Municipal Climate Change Action Plan 2025-2029 that the Council adopted in May. A brief overview of the work that is underway on the seven action categories in the plan follows.

Action 1. Replacing the MOPC Transportation Fleet: MOPC Staff will be seeking an energy-efficient vehicle in the upcoming RFP for replacement of an old MOPC vehicle. Funding has been acquired from the Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund provided by the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM) for 2 EV charging stations providing 4 EV plugins. The installation will be part of the expansion of the public parking area at the MOPC Administration Building, which is expected to be started this fall. Charging will take 3 hours and there will be a small fee for use.

Action 2. Replacing emission-generating energy sources: Through EfficiencyOne's Roving Municipal Energy Manager (RMEM) Program, MOPC has received a free assessment report from the RMEM specialist. It includes recommendation options for solar panels on roof and ground and air to water heat pumps and suggests possible funding from several sources. The assessment covered the Administration Building and three wastewater treatment plants.

Action 3. Enhancing the MOPC Tree Planting Program: Starting in 2023, MOPC developed a tree planting program as a visible, tangible action on carbon capture in which anyone could participate (e.g., school plantings, volunteer plantings on abandoned farmland fields, and homeowner plantings on their properties). 15,000 spruce seedlings and 1,500 oak and maple saplings have been planted so far, with plans to grow the program with help from Clean Foundation's Thriving Forests Program. Clean Foundation cancelled a planned tree planting project this fall due to the wildfire risk. The project is expected to proceed with spring and fall planting in 2026.

Action 4. Developing a Storm Surge and Flooding Risk Analysis Tool: An application has been submitted for funding from the Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund to develop a database of coastal erosion and flooding high risk areas and a user-friendly online tool on the MOPC website that property owners can use to assess erosion and flooding risks. The NSFM expects to announce if this project is funded by the end of October.

Continued on page 22

Lighting up the Night at River John Pickleball Park & Celebrating a Successful Season

By: Theresa Rath Spicer, River John Pickleball Club



On August 29, as the sun was setting over River John, things were just getting started at River John Pickleball Park on the picturesque Legion property. Festive pickleball-themed decorations were hung, snacks were served, and celebratory music was playing as many club members gathered on the courts to play under the lights for the first time. There was a whole lot of cheering and applause as the courts were illuminated, allowing games to be played as darkness fell.

With the new court lighting – made possible with generous federal funding through the New Horizons for Seniors grant program – the game that's only growing in popularity can now take place day and night. The lights cast a bright, even glow across the courts, enabling the space to be a welcoming hub after dark. This allows members to use the courts longer each day, providing additional opportunities for physical activity and human connections in our community.

The Light it Up event was just one of the many great events of a wildly successful season. This year, River John Pickleball Club grew to include a whopping 150 members, an 11 percent increase over last year. With this increase, the club has recognized the need to cater to its many members' varied needs, offering both recreational and competitive play in our jam-packed schedule.

We held numerous events for club members from May to October, such as Ladies' Night, Men's Night, Partners' Night, Round Robins with weekly social gatherings at the Legion, our second annual dance in partnership with the Legion, and an end-of-summer BBQ and sing-along. We also offered numerous player development opportunities throughout the season; special thanks to RJPC's own Tully sisters for their many educational sessions, which they offered to members in exchange for a donation to a local charity.

We also hosted two Learn to Play sessions and a sold-out tournament as part of River John Festival Days and were pleased to be a part of this busy and successful week.

The outdoor season is winding down, but members will continue to play at the Pickleball Park when the weather allows; last year, one enthusiastic group played outside on New Year's Eve! Otherwise, we'll be playing inside at the River John Fire Hall until Spring 2026, after which we'll hit the outdoor courts once again.

Want to join RJPC and expand your social circle, while getting exercise and having lots of fun? Contact us at riverjohnpickleball.com for membership information and we'll get you out on the court...hope to see you there!

October at Mabel Murple's

By: Sheree Fitch



Photo credit: Jayden Brown
From left to right: Lily, Chantal O'Kane and Ceilidh. Karen Mattatall, Kayleigh, Grace Choi, Jett, Millie (in the background) Sheree Fitch holding Clyde, Cheyenne McInnis holding Clint and Malcolm, Ally Campbell holding baby John, in front is Jade and Violet

On a gold and orange and fresh air October day Mums and toddlers picnicked and frolicked at Mabel Murple's Book Stoppe and Dreamery. Sheree Fitch wandered over and then held an impromptu story time. Nothing better than the sound of children's laughter to bring joy to all.

According to Sheree, the property is community space and welcomes anyone who wants to do the same kind of outing as this great group of Mums. Our youngest was 11 days old and taking the photo was Jayden at 14 years of age!! Quite the natural, for sure.

The Life of Raymond MacKenzie

By: Beulah Wright



Raymond MacKenzie with two of his creations that he made especially for the River John Museum.
Photo credit: Mary Beth Sutherland

Raymond Mackenzie is ninety-four years old, but he seems, acts, creates and remembers, more like a man half his age. Although his parents lived on a farm in Skinners Cove, Cape John, in March of 1931, his mother, Jennie MacKenzie, went back to her hometown of Bayfield, New Brunswick, to have her baby and that’s where Raymond was born. He was raised in this River John community, along with his siblings, and attended Melville School. He remembers one day, when his teacher, Florence Killen, took her pupils to River John, where the area schools had been invited to watch a show in the town hall. His school arrived a bit early and had settled in to wait for the show, when fire was announced and the teacher and her pupils had to be evacuated in a hurry. No casualties, but the town hall was demolished.

Raymond quit school after getting his grade eight and joined his father, Dan MacKenzie, in his fishing boat. In 1949, he acquired his own boat and from then on, wherever he was, he was always back home for fishing season. That year he went to Ontario with Angus Gollan, travelling on a motorcycle. He got a job at Massey Harris, polishing plough shares. Back in Nova Scotia, Raymond worked at Shearwater, building container tanks, then doing cleaning and repairs in Windsor Junction. In 1957, he joined Stright-MacKay in Pictou, building boats. Off for fishing season, as usual, then back to Stright-MacKay. Raymond can rhyme off these dates and various locations without a pause, and it was obvious that he gained valuable experience at every point.

In the early 1970s, Harold Russell bought out John Doyle’s cannery in Lismore and planned some new construction there. He asked Raymond if he could do the job and Raymond hired some men and began, with a completely new cannery, an office for me, repairs to the cookhouse and more. All in all, Raymond spent four years at Russell Seafoods.

He went west again to Saskatoon and Fort MacMurray, Alberta, in 1991, with his brother. His next job was at a Cree reservation, where he enjoyed a different way of living, and had great admiration for the Cree people and in 1996 he went to Yellowknife working in a gold mine. The weather was cold, but they had a great cookhouse! He wrote an examination for a journeyman’s certificate, which he still carries in his wallet, both in theory and practical and easily passed the stiff exam.

Besides all those, he was registered with the Fisherman’s Loan Board and certified for building boats of up to 45 feet, so he built seven or eight boats. He also built several houses.

As for retirement, it seems he never really retired but turned his hand to crafting very unique and lovely things, blanket boxes, display boxes, tables, picture frames, shadow boxes, many of which he has donated to the various service clubs, churches, Oddfellows, Rebeccas. He built more than fifty picture frames for the Oddfellows, to display their early founders. Some of his workmanship items are used as fund raisers by raffles, like the ornate blanket box currently being offered. Anything he creates is a work of art!

Obviously, Raymond has seen many changes. He says River John used to be self-sufficient. If you needed something, you went to Carl MacLeod’s and bought it, but now he says you have to go searching. He also notes that there are many new people moving in, so he no longer knows everyone, but that is a good thing, he adds.

Raymond’s interesting life is one well lived, and we wish him many more years of creating beautiful things for himself and others to enjoy.

Drought

By: Maggie Howatt

Wow! What a summer! Sunny day after sunny day, brilliant blue skies, starry nights, warm seas.... No storms, no hurricanes - and no rain.

The last good summer rainfall was in early June and by late July, the driest month on record, there was no question about the drought conditions. In August, the woods travel ban was announced as drought persisted. By the end of the month, we were officially notified we were amid a severe drought. I don’t think there was much question in most people’s minds, as wells and ponds dried up, lawns seared, trees drooped, and wildfires started.

According to weather history, 2023-24 was the worst year for drought conditions in Nova Scotia in over 130 years, despite the torrential rains in late July that year. We have likely broken that record now.

At our property, stones rose out of the shrinking ground, spruce branches bent down, and footfalls were noisy with crunching needles prematurely dropping from parched trees.

We know droughts affect human activity; farmers’ crops dry up, wells dry up and we didn’t have to mow our lawns for weeks.

But how does drought affect wildlife and wilderness? We are fortunate enough to have water cubes filled by rainwater off the roof, from the few showers we did have. That kept our vegetable garden. I saved several young oak trees by carrying water out once a week or so. All vegetation is stressed by drought conditions... different species find different ways of coping. Nut and seed-bearers may prioritize survival over production. It’s hit or miss. I’m hearing stories of great piles of acorns in one place and poor, wormy acorns in others. Acorns are a boon to wildlife; bears, deer, squirrels and blue jays all feed on acorns, high in fat and protein, essential for building up resources before winter. White oak acorns are preferred as they have less tannin but are less plentiful than the native red oak.

Our blackberries dried up completely... a neighbor reported a good crop. Apples were smaller but very plentiful. They are an important food source for a range of wildlife, bears to bees - and our dogs. Our dogwood osier berries dried up. The flickers usually clean the tree in the fall before they head south. Juncos were not so fussy they picked the tree clean.

As food sources dry up, wildlife is forced to move to greener pastures, so to speak, forcing animals to move into smaller areas and increasing competition for food, water and shelter. This can get them into trouble with domestic animals and humans, create more incidents of vehicle strikes, and displaces them from their normal territory. This increases their vulnerability to predators and diseases.

Lack of rainfall impacts plant growth and leads to malnutrition and loss of nesting sites and safety. Ground nesting birds lose protection as grasses dry up or don’t grow tall enough to provide shelter for their nests, and the seeds that are food can wither and die or are less plentiful.

As ponds and brooks dry up, there is more risk of algae and bacteria. Cold water fish such as salmon are particularly sensitive to drought conditions. Water levels drop and heat up, oxygen levels decrease, creating a greater risk of disease as fish are forced into smaller pools of water which decreases access to spawning areas.

Salamanders and turtles escape temporarily by burrowing into mud or under rocks, fallen trees and rotten

Drought continued

logs. I found lots of salamanders under rocks and logs in the woods, but the fields were too dry and hot to support them. Turtles are slow to develop and already facing population reduction, they may be forced to leave their ponds to find alternate water sources which increases vulnerability to predators and vehicle strikes. This can also impact their opportunity to reproduce. I’ve seen fewer snakes this summer, I’m sure they are around but keeping a low profile, staying cool and less active during the heat of the day. The great crop of grasshoppers this summer will provide a food source, but snakes can also suffer from dehydration.

I didn’t hear many tree frogs till mid-October when we finally got precipitation.

Hummingbirds, bees and butterflies all depend on pollen and/or nectar for survival, and as flowers, trees and shrubs dry up there is less of this food source available. Butterfly numbers seemed down on our property, but we had lots of honeybees, bumble bees and hornets, thanks to our fields full of wildflowers. The milkweed didn’t suffer from lack of rain, but I noticed very few monarchs or caterpillars. In only a few weeks a monarch lays 300-700 eggs, but I saw no evidence of that. I hope there was enough food for the final monarch to have enough energy to make the long journey south.

We had twenty or more hummingbirds, much to the delight of the children visiting us this summer. I had five feeders going steadily. A recommendation for hummingbird feeders on hot days is to wrap the feeder tube with foil to reflect the sun’s heat, and daily cleaning is needed as the slime and mould builds quickly.

Other ways we can support these pollen/nectar seekers is planting drought-tolerant native shrubs such as dogwoods, viburnums, elderberry, serviceberry and winterberry holly, which will also provide berries for the foragers in the fall.

I saw very few of those big, yellow garden spiders this year; usually by late summer I try to avoid walking through their webs hanging in the fields. Wind can make it more difficult for spiders to build and maintain their webs, which then makes it harder to catch prey. We had strong winds early in the summer which may account for fewer spiders even around the yard and porch.

The domino effect continues, as plants dry up and seeds are less plentiful. The rodents who feed on seeds have fewer offspring, or aren’t as active and available, and the many animals that depend on mice and voles are suddenly in greater competition. For instance, raptors such as owls and hawks may lay fewer eggs or the young fail to thrive because parents are unable to feed them. Adults may abandon the nest; populations decline.

Our tree and barn swallows had a successful summer with very few unhatched eggs and only a few didn’t make it to fledging. Both these avian feeders headed south around the end of July or early August as usual, seemingly unaffected by the drought.

A bear took down five tree swallow boxes, but it was late enough in the season that the bear wouldn’t have had much of a meal. Was the predation an indication of a desperate, hungry bear or a young, curious bear? So, in closing, it’s going to be interesting to see how these progressive years of drought continue to affect our local habitat and the wildlife that inhabit it, and how our communities and governments find ways and spend money to support habitat loss and protect our forests, streams and coastlines. We don’t really have a way to measure the long-term effects unless we are counting and keeping track in our own back yards.

Barb Harris: Knitting with Purpose

By: Debby Shaw



During his time as UN Special Envoy (2001-2006), Stephen Lewis witnessed and introduced the world to the devastating impact of the HIV-AIDS crisis in Southern Africa, particularly on women and children. Entire generations were being lost, and millions of children were orphaned. In response, he founded the Stephen Lewis Foundation to support grassroots organizations in African communities addressing the crisis.

One initiative of the foundation is the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign. What started with a few groups in Canada has grown into a global movement of over 10,000 grandmothers and “grandothers” working to support people and children affected by HIV and AIDS in Southern Africa. The campaign focuses on building a future free from AIDS through compassion, care, and community support.

Barb was inspired by the work of the foundation and wanted to support it. She realized she could help - one stitch at a time. She turned to her knitting, believing that small acts can make a difference. That’s how her fundraising project MITTEN-AID began.

Barb hand-knits one-of-a-kind mittens from natural fibres, then felts them for extra warmth and wind resistance - perfect for Nova Scotia’s chilly weather. Practical and cozy, the mittens are designed for everyday use (and occasional loss!), which often brings customers back for more. She also makes fingerless mitts. Barb is committed to using high quality natural-fibre yarns – but tries to keep costs low so she can donate as much as possible. She finds her yarn from multiple sources, including upcycled yarn from sweaters and donated yarn from friends and neighbours. 100% of the proceeds from mitten sales are donated to the Grandmothers to Grandmothers campaign.

Each pair of mittens is unique - often a playful mix of colours and textures. Barb, a lifelong lover of textiles, enjoys the creative process, whether she knits for five minutes or five hours.

While Barb does almost all the knitting and felting herself, she credits others for making it all possible. Their support, through helping with sales, or donations of yarn, fuels her work, and she’s always quick to share the credit.

Over 25 years, her “small” project has added up in a big way. Barb has been able to donate over \$23,000 from MITTEN-AID sales to the Stephen Lewis Foundation. Way to go, Barb! You’ve shown that even the smallest stitches can weave a legacy of love and impact.

MITTEN-AID felted mittens and fingerless mitts can be purchased at the Lismore Sheep Farm retail shop in River John. Barb can be contacted through Mitten-Aid Knits on Facebook.

Celebrating Ed Kennedy



Ed Kennedy is pictured here with his wife, Diane, on the right and their daughter, Kristi, on the left of the picture.

Ed Kennedy’s retirement to River John in 2020 became a springboard for his remarkable volunteer leadership in Pictou County. Locally honoured as the 2025 Volunteer of the Year, he has already made a lasting mark

through his sustained energy, conviction, and action. A founding volunteer with the Municipality of Pictou County’s Climate Change Advisory Committee, Ed now serves as Vice-Chair and leads its Climate Action Subcommittee. He has been central in recruiting new members, organizing tree plantings and giveaways (including a partnership planting of 2,500 spruce saplings), and fostering dialogues through public engagement meetings.

Perhaps his pivotal achievement is authoring the 2025–2029 Municipal Climate Change Action Plan, adopted by Council on May 20, 2025.

Ed chairs the Steering Committee for the Pictou County chapter of Habitat for Humanity, and contributes locally as a board director of the River John Pickleball Club and as a member of the editorial board for The Pioneer.

Double the Love with Two Golden Wedding Anniversaries

By: Beulah Wright



The pictures of Jean & Russel Maclean on the left, and Lorraine & Benson Wright on the right, are proof of everlasting love. Photo Credit: Christiane Gill.

Autumn 2025 brings a reason for a double celebration for the Wright family of River John, the Maclean family of Pictou, and the Murdock family of Merigomish, with two Golden weddings.

Jean Florence Wright, of River John, married Russel Robert Maclean of Pictou, on Sept 20, 1975, at the United Church in Pictou.

Benson Oliver Wright married Lorraine Carol Murdock on Oct 18, 1975, in St. Paul’s Presbyterian Church in Merigomish.

Jean and Benson are the children of the late Keith and Della Wright of River John. Russel is the son of late John and Margaret Maclean of Pictou, and Lorraine is the daughter of the late Arthur and Evelyn Murdock of Merigomish.

Their children, grandchildren, great granddaughter, and families and friends wish them many more years of happiness together.

Margaret Henderson

By: Beulah Wright



Audrey Brown designed and crafted the attractive jacket with the RJ bicentennial logo for Margaret to wear at the festival which in turn has been donated to the RJ Heritage Museum by Margaret. Submitted by Beulah Wright

“Margie” sits in her comfortable cozy farmhouse and reflects on an eventful and valued life.

Margaret Rose Parker was born on January 6th, 1931, in Truro, to parents, Kenneth York (yes, he always went by KY) Parker and Margaret Sharpe. The family moved around a lot as KY was a transfer agent with Canada Post and the Railway, so he was shifted from place to place, but fortunately they lived in Truro until Margie was ten. From there, the family moved to Bridgeville, Pictou County, then to Ontario for a year. Some time was spent in the Gaspereau Valley, Kings County, and finally they settled in Durham, Pictou County.

Margie had finished grade ten at age sixteen, when the school trustees of that area came calling, asking if she would like to teach. Margie would have only a permissive license, which was a common occurrence back in the day, but agreed and taught for two years in Kings County. She had definitely found her calling; went back to school for grade eleven in Wolfville and graduated grade twelve in Pictou Academy. Then on to the Normal College in Truro for her teacher’s license, and then into a varied and fulfilling teaching career. At Pictou Academy, Margie met John Henderson, who was undefeated in the Debating Club – until Margie took the title from him! She still chuckles at that. Apparently, it didn’t hurt their friendship, as they were married in Durham in 1953. The couple then decided to go west, where the wage was double what it was in Nova Scotia, and landed in Brooks, Alberta, where both filled a teaching position at the same school in Gem, Alberta, for two years.

John liked Alberta, but Margie, who had recently lost her brother, Donnie, wanted to go back to Nova Scotia, and so they did. Here both were interested in buying a farm. They found one for sale in 1955, on the Brook Road, River John, which at that time was owned by Ethel Morrow, a retired teacher.

They had found their forever home.

Margie decided she would keep on teaching until the farm was paid off, and to do so the couple moved temporarily to Sutherland’s River, where again both had a position at East Pictou, John as principal and

Margie as classroom teacher. Back in River John, both taught again while building up their now outrightly owned farm. Margie loved farming, especially their lovely herd of goats, which at times numbered as many as 70 to 100 animals, all pets for Margie!

Kerosene lamps were the source of lighting in the farmhouse, until Kay Ross wired the house around 1960. They planted an orchard of fruit trees which to this day provide plenty of fruit, and they attended many auctions where they found antique treasures that still beautify the home. They now began their role as dedicated members of the community.

In the early eighties, an auction was held at the late Cliff Carruthers’ home, and an early map of River John was included in the items for sale. Several concerned members of the village, John among them, got together and determined that the map should stay in River John, no matter the cost. Now it hangs in the Janice Gill Memorial Library. The idea of a celebration for the bicentennial of the founding of River John was talked about, planned and became the River John Festival Days under the leadership of many of the same citizens, including John and Margaret. Margie, as well as her daughter Carol Ann, served on some of the committees. Margaret, for example, designed the logo and the pennant and helped organize the festivities. It was such a success that it became an annual event which has now grown into a full week of celebration, drawing huge crowds and is an event that former residents of River John, who now live away, plan their vacations around.

Margie and John had four children, Dale, Carol Ann, Sheila, and Kenneth. John sadly died in 2015 and son Kenneth in 2022. Son Dale and wife Cindy successfully keep up the farming tradition (without goats) along with their son, Thomas. Thankfully, daughter Carol Ann then moved in with her mother, which enables Margie to remain in her own home, among her treasures and with her beloved dog, Freckles. She is very interested in the activities of her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, keeps in touch with her friends and family and reflects on a life well-lived, as a respected and much treasured citizen of River John.



Mother and daughter at the flower arrangement class at the Overstreet Café
Submitted by Margaret Cripps



Hey everyone! Watch out for the Craig family from Seafoam as they appear on the game show, Family Feud Canada in the coming months. The show will air on CBC sometime in December or January. We hope you can watch.

70th Wedding Anniversary

By: Joan MacLeod



Friends and family were delighted to help John and Florence Craib celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary on July 30th. John and Florence were married in Cornwall, Ontario, in 1955, as John worked in construction there. They returned back home in 1962 and built their present home where they still reside. Out-of-town guests included their daughter Cheryl and son-in-law Sandy from Fort Saint John, B.C., and their daughter-in-law Norma and grandson Brandon from the Halifax area. Florence has even preserved her original wedding hat.



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Community News

River John 4-H Club

By: Christine Heighton



The River John Club has started our year off with a successful registration of 12 returning members and 3 new members. The club offers beef, sheep, rabbit, cavy, foods, crafts, goat, light horse, dog, clover bud, dairy and waterfowl.

Members attended several community events, including the Remembrance Day service at the cenotaph. We held a chili supper fundraiser on February 28 from 4 to 6 pm, participated at the West Branch Community Hall craft sale, and the club's public speaking rally in March. The club also took some time to have fun as we had a mini golf fun night at Simply Golf in Westville. We had another busy year and greatly appreciate the community's support.

The club had a very successful Achievement Day on July 7, with most members completing their projects. Members, leaders, parents, guardians and community members came together to run a successful breakfast of bacon, eggs, toast and homemade baked beans and jam. We would like to thank the community for supporting us throughout the year, the Festival Days committee for allowing us to participate in doing the breakfast over the past years, and the River John Lions Club for allowing us to use their building, veranda and picnic area to host the breakfast.

Some members participated at the Pictou North Colchester Exhibition in September and did very well placing in many projects which gave them the opportunity to move on to the Nova Scotia Provincial show in Bridgewater, on the weekend of September 26-28.

Sidney Baillie competed in sheep classes receiving 1st in North Country Cheviot confirmation, 4th in showmanship, 1st and champion in sheep judging. In Dairy classes she received 2nd and reserve champion in dairy showmanship, 1st in Ayrshire fall heifer confirmation and Champion Ayrshire. At the Provincial Show she received 2nd for dairy showmanship, Ayrshire fall heifer, North Country Cheviot sheep and 4th for sheep judging.

Kay Lee Scotland received 1st Jr and reserve champion beef and light horse judging, 1st Jr and Grand Champion rabbit judging, 2nd in beef showmanship, reserve champion Angus calf, Grand Champion rabbit, showroom 4 Sr buck, showroom Sr Doe. At Pro Show she was 4th rabbit showperson, 7th light horse judge, 3rd showroom 6 doe and 4th showroom 4 Sr buck.

Nora Lowden received 4th showperson rabbit and reserve champion showroom 4 buck.



Cassie Sutherland received 2nd dog showmanship, 1st and reserve champion dog obedience and 1st Jr dog judging. 2nd and reserve champion cavy Jr cavy judge and showmanship and 3rd conformation. At the Pro show she received 2nd in dog obedience, 6th in dog showmanship, 4th in dog judging and 3rd overall novice obedience.

Olivia Sutherland received Champion Jr Cavy Showmanship and Judge and 2nd in cavy confirmation and at Pro Show she received 1st Jr cavy judge and 7th cavy showmanship.

James Ferguson 1st and champion purebred other (Specked Park heifer) and 3rd at Provincial show.

Cally Rae received 1st and Champion Charolais and Reserve champion overall beef calf.



In Pro Show she received 1st and champion Charolais overall. Cally was also selected to be a member of the Nova Scotia Royal beef team, which represents Nova Scotia in Toronto at the Royal Agricultural Fair. Congratulations, Cally!

Garrett Yantzi received a 1st in calf and reserved Champion Purebred other (Specked Park calf).

Parker Campbell received 1st for her Cloverbud box. The Club meets the first Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at St George's Church Hall, River John. Please email at riverjohn4h@gmail.com for further details.



I would like to express my sincere gratitude to our community groups for sponsoring students in the summer jobs program. It's a true blessing for our local youth, allowing them to work close to home while contributing to our community. This year's program was a resounding success, thanks to our amazing students: Tina MacLean, Cohen Cameron, Izzy McNutt, Eva Jollimore, Ryan Forbes, Jack Reid, Connor Langille, Ria Suidgeest, Cohen Mckay and Tristan Fraser-Shepherd.

These young individuals demonstrated exceptional dedication in and around the community, especially given the extreme heat conditions this summer. It was a pleasure working with each of them. Parents, you should be incredibly proud of their commitment and hard work. They each bring something unique to our community's growth, serving as role models for our younger children, who also had an amazing summer. A simple thank you hardly conveys how grateful I am to have had them on my team.

Our recreation program thrived this year, with successful T-ball, day camp, Festival Days, and numerous community events. The family Halloween dance was a memorable highlight, bringing our little ones together in a special way. Thank you to everyone who supports our program; we have an incredible group of volunteers. It truly takes a village, and we are fortunate to have such strong community support.

Looking ahead, we welcome the winter season with anticipation, eager to create more family fun and lasting memories.

Sincerely,
Ashley Langille
Community Coordinator/Recreation Volunteer

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River John Garden Club

2025 Season Update

By: Linda MacLean



Photo: Submitted by Maureen Topley

The River John Garden Club convened five times this year, beginning in April and wrapping up in September. As is tradition, our first meeting focused on setting objectives and developing a plan to achieve our goals for the season.

This year presented unique challenges, particularly due to an unusually dry summer, which made it difficult to accomplish everything we had hoped for.

Welcome Sign at Bissell Park

We continued to monitor our perennials in the back section of the garden bed, while concentrating annual plantings at the front. This approach has helped us maintain continuous bloom throughout the summer and into early fall. In addition to our main projects, we assisted with weeding and replanting perennials in the rock garden. We are pleased to report that the flowers planted late last season survived the winter and are beginning to fill gaps among the larger rocks.

Flower Installation at Cape John Road

We faced some setbacks at this site, as several of our reliable perennials did not survive the winter. Nevertheless, we replanted and remain optimistic about improved results next year. We welcome suggestions from the community on how to further beautify the bed around the sign - please reach out to any club member with your ideas.

A rose bush was planted in memory of a friend of one of our members, and despite the dry summer, it has persevered. We will continue to monitor its progress to ensure a strong start next year.

We are a small, dedicated group who enjoy sharing gardening stories and experiences. Our first meeting is typically held in April, and we warmly invite anyone interested to join us. We meet on the third Tuesday of each month at 2 p.m. in the River John Library board room from April until September.

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The Ladies Auxiliary Update

By: Gillian Joudrie

The Ladies Auxiliary is thrilled to reflect on a successful year of community engagement and fundraising.

Our recent block draw raised \$1,750 for the fire department. Congratulations to our prize winners:
1 dozen lobsters: Linda MacLean
1 dozen lobsters: Brad Hayman
\$250 cash: Randy Redmond
Grand prize Yeti cooler: Nicole Lyle Langille (pictured below)

Thank you to everyone who participated - your support makes a real impact. Keep an eye out for our next block draw.

At the Firemen's Banquet in November, we were proud to present the fire department with a \$5,000 cheque to support their ongoing efforts to keep our community safe.

In addition to fundraising, our team has supported the firefighters by preparing meals during their training sessions, helping ensure they're well-fed while they train.

We look forward to continuing our partnership with the fire department and finding new ways to support them in the year ahead. Together, we make a difference.



Submitted by Gillian Joudrie

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River John and surrounding area have much to be proud of. I have seen first hand the important work that community volunteers and advocates continue to do to make your community a great place to live and visit.

I hope you all enjoy the months ahead.

#HERETOHELP

Community News

River John Lions Club and Cub News

By: Lion Karen Mattatall

First off, we would like to thank our community members for supporting our Annual Chicken BBQ in July. It was a huge success! Thank you to everyone who has dropped off and continues to drop off their empty recyclables to our drop-off location on the veranda, as well as the donation of board games for our Lions Cub Program. It is greatly appreciated. Donald's Music Circle has been doing amazing every Wednesday night at the Lions Club from 7-9pm. Come check it out. Everyone is welcome!

It was a busy summer. In July, the Lions Cubs helped with Vacation Bible School at St George's Presbyterian Church, and picked strawberries at Minney's Mountain Farm - Strawberry U-pick for the LFMH Ladies Auxiliary, Tatamagouche, for their Strawberry Tea.



From left to right: At VBS it's Gwen MacKinnon, Vanessa Brown, Jayden Brown and Julien Skoke



In the strawberry fields it's Braden Babin picking and carrying this delicious load of a summer now gone by.

During River John Festival Days, we held an Old Time Dance and Donald's Music Circle. The Cubs helped with our free BBQs at the Children's Parade and Family Fun Fest, and we opened a canteen outside the Lions Club in the Lions Shed, selling hotdogs, chips and pop. Some Cubs volunteered during the Lismore Sheep Farm Day while others helped make animal balloons at the Carnival event with our local RCMP officer. They were also at our cupcake decorating, tie-dye event and breakfast. All events had a great turnout.

We are looking forward to seeing everyone at the Tree Lighting and BBQ at Bissell Park in November. We will also have free calendars available.

We are planning our free Community Christmas Dinner on December 25th, 2025. Anyone who wishes to donate towards this event or is wanting to participate in our dinner, please contact a Lions member to arrange a drop off/pick up time for any donations, or to be put on our Christmas dinner list. You can also find us on Facebook under River John and District Lions Club. Feel free to reach out anytime.

Thank you again for all your support this past year.

What's Up at the River John Library Fall 2025

Trecia Schell, Community Services Librarian, Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library, & Helen Chudley, Managing Branch Assistant with the River John Library

We had another very busy summer, with lots of visitors and great programming too.

Thanks to a grant from @NS, we had a summer intern with us, Abby Falconer, who was a great help, and who created lots of fun programs for all. Thanks, Abby, for a great summer!

Over the summer, we had a presentation from Rural Water Watch; the Amazing Mr. J performed for everyone during Festival Days. After caring for our caterpillars for a couple of weeks, we released them into the garden. The Summer Reading Club for kids was a great adventure this year, and we had lots of local participants, and two lucky winners of Grand Prize scooters: tiny mighty "T," and Oliver Watson. Our Big Summer Book Club for adults was a hit, and one of the very lucky Grand Prize winners was Helga Heighton. This fall, many library programs resumed in September. Young Readers' Book club has started up again, so anyone between the ages of 9 and 12 is welcome to join us in person, or by Zoom, on the 1st Thursday of every month. We have daily Scavenger Hunts (always popular, and always changing monthly), and an "I Spy Challenge" tank too. Children's Playtimes are on Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and LEGO Time happens on Fridays after school, from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Both are drop-in programs. For adults, we have Barb's Book Club (meets monthly on the 3rd Tuesday at 4 p.m.) and continue with a full house, although we are taking names for a waiting list. The River John Square Knitters meet on Friday mornings at 10 a.m. This dedicated volunteer group knits squares to be assembled into blankets for vulnerable and orphaned children in South Africa. (Needles, yarn, and assistance can be provided).

At the end of September, we showed an NFB screening of "Waapake" for Truth & Reconciliation Day. In early October, local children's author and wish worker, Camilla Thompson presented her new book "Nova Scotia Bummer" for a special Saturday Storytime, and kids were quite in awe of her. Since the week of Halloween, we have new children's book giveaways at the library, courtesy of Adopt-a-Library Literacy Program. All are welcome to drop by; we'd love to see your Trick o' Treat costumes.

Feeling crafty? We have a new monthly program, "Beginner Acrylic Painting with Lise," that began on October 17th, and hoping to continue. If you're interested in joining in, please call the library to register. On Thursday, November 15, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., Sarah from Creative Pictou County will have a pop-up information session at the library (with light refreshments). All are welcome to drop by and chat, learn about the community studio space in Pictou at the deCoste Culture Hub, and share details on art projects you may be working on too.

Looking to connect with your neighbours? The Tuesday Afternoon Tea & Coffee Socials resume, beginning in November. All are welcome to drop in and join us for a cuppa and chat, Tuesday afternoons from 2 - 4 p.m.

Need more reasons to love reading books? Try our 50+1 Best Books reading list. Many thanks to everyone who shared suggestions for their "best books to read, ever!" The library welcomes sharing the reading list - with a few perks too.



"Nova Scotia Bummer!" an enchanting author reading with Camilla Thompson, children's author & wish worker

Drop by and pick up a reading list bookmark, and we invite you to "discover a new read... rediscover an old favorite!"

We'll also have monthly branch prize draws for a book bag or a mug. (Remember to fill out a ballot when you read a book that's on the list.) #PARLreads!

And just around the corner... the festive holiday season! The "Write to Santa, He'll Write Back" returns at the end of November, and we will have templates and envelopes available for the kids to write their letters to Santa. The library will also deliver everyone's letters to Santa to the Post Office by December 8. We'll have some special Christmas crafting sessions for kids, and kids at heart, coming up on Saturdays at 11 a.m. at the library, December 6, 13, and 20. Gillian Crawford from Lismore Sheep farm will be doing a felting project with adults on Tuesday, December 2 at 6:00 p.m. Seating and supplies are limited, and registration is required. Please call the library to register.

This winter, we also look forward to having a Senior Technology Trainer join us in the library - who will be available for technology training and assistance. More details are coming soon. If you need another great reason to visit, our libraries are Wi-Fi hotspots, both outside and indoors. If your internet connection is not the best at home or you're on the road travelling, feel free to drop by anytime and get online. And thanks to a partnership with @NS Community Technology, public libraries in Nova Scotia have some portable mobile hotspots that can be borrowed too - with your library card. For more information, please contact your local library.



The tiny and mighty "T," winner of a Summer Reading Club grand prize



Oliver Watson, another very happy winner of a Summer Reading Club grand prize

Please note that the Regional Library will be closed on Tuesday November 11, 2025, for Remembrance Day. For the Christmas holidays, the library will close early at 12 p.m. on Christmas Eve, December 24, and will be closed all day Christmas Day and Boxing Day, December 25 & 26. For New Year’s holidays, the library will close early at 12 p.m. on New Year’s Eve, December 31, and will be closed all day on New Year’s Day, January 1, 2026. The library’s Virtual Services are available online, and our Book Returns are always open. Did you know, some of the other things that you can borrow from the River John library include... a




The Amazing Mr. J's Magic Show, "For the Love of Reading!" during River John Festival Days

telescope, a metal detector, ukuleles, walking poles, jigsaw puzzles, radon detectors, and we have a cool Makerspace too with lots of gadgets from button makers to a Silhouette cutting machine that can do vinyl stickers and nifty paper cards too? See you soon, at the River John Library!


Library programming and services suggestions are welcome. Please let us know if you have something to share. For more information on all our upcoming library programs and services, please call (902) 351-2599, email riverjohn@parl.ns.ca, or drop by the River John library – we’re open Tuesdays to Saturdays. You can also follow us on Bluesky, Instagram and Facebook, and visit us online at www.parl.ns.ca .

River John Public Library’s Open Hours:
Tuesdays: 12:00pm - 8:00pm
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Mabel Zinck would like to thank everyone who attended her 104th birthday party at the River John Fire Department on July 24th, 2025.

Mabel also wants to express many thanks for the many lovely cards, flowers, and greetings she received on this joyous occasion.

A special thank you goes to Cindy Langille and her helpers who so wonderfully looked after the arrangements and served the delicious food.

God bless you all.

Mabel Zinck

The Heritage Museum

By: Beulah Wright



The Heritage Society Thank You breakfast at the Overstreet Cafe is enjoyed by (left to right) Beulah Wright, Jack Reid, Connor Langille, Cohen MacKay, Ria Suidgeest and Mary Beth Sutherland

The Heritage Museum has now closed for the season after many people, including the staff, have enjoyed a multifaceted summer. Having been gifted with many more artifacts for display made this summer even more fascinating. Noteworthy is that all financial donations, for which we are very grateful, strictly go towards the upkeep of our River John Museum. Our many thanks go to all visitors, supporters, and donators.

In case you want to have a “quick glance” into River John’s diverse history, let me remind you that Beulah’s book (2nd edition no less and stock is running low again) is still available for purchase, either from the author, from Amazon, or at the Over Street Café. Look into it and you won’t want to put it down again.

River John Recreation generously handled our summer employees and instead of having just one student, we had four, namely Ria Suidgeest, Jack Reid, Cohen MacKay, and Connor Langille. Thanks to their dedication and perseverance, the museum was able to stay open 7 days a week all summer long. They did an exceptional job of greeting and aiding visitors as they did improving our internet connectability. Not only did our summer assistants do all that, they also renovated our venerable entrance, giving it a fresh, bright, welcoming vibe that you cannot help but follow. Lastly, our wonderful aids did not shy away from the most thankless task of them all, dusting and cleaning all our artifacts, keeping everything pristine and shiny (as far as that goes).



Ria Suidgeest renovating the entrance of the RJ Museum (not in the picture are the boys moving furniture). Photo Credit: Christiane Gill

It was a great joy to work with you and have you around. THANK YOU!

The River John Heritage Society wishes well you all with your future endeavors, and of course we hope to see you again in whatever capacity you choose.

Editors note: In case you want to have a “quick glance” into River John’s diverse history, you are reminded that Beulah’s book (2nd edition no less and stock is running low again) is still available for purchase, either from the author, from Amazon, or at the Over Street Café. Look into it and you won’t want to put it down again.

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River John Legion News October 2025



By: Mike Topley, President

The Remembrance banners are all up around the village in preparation for Remembrance Day, 2025. This day of remembrance included the 11 o'clock ceremony at the Memorial Site at the flashing yellow light, followed by a church service at Salem United Church. Then we hosted 60 members and friends at the Legion that evening for our annual dinner.

As many know, the No. 2 (Black) Construction Battalion initially formed in Pictou in 1916 was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Sutherland, a native of River John and great-grandfather of our own Branch Chaplain, Mary Beth Sutherland. In 2023, the Royal Canadian Mint issued a pure silver collector coin honouring the battalion. In further commemoration, the River John Legion Branch 108 will soon unveil a monument on the Legion property recognizing the work of this battalion.



Next year, 2026, is the 100th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Legion, and branches across the country are preparing to celebrate. Part of that celebration is an offer of free membership to any new or prospective members who join the Legion at any time during the anniversary year. New members will help us play a role in supporting veterans and their families in promoting Remembrance Day and supporting our community. We hope that many new members will stay beyond 2026 into the future.

At the local level, fall activities are back in swing with Kids First and line dancing on Mondays, cribbage the 3rd Saturday and washer toss on the 4th Saturday each month. Our recently initiated Saturday breakfasts have been a big hit in the community, and we plan to continue on the 2nd Saturday of each month.

Thanks go to Ashley and the summer students for the great job they did all summer at the Legion and the parks in and around the village. Members and friends added to their work at the Remembrance Garden with a fall clean-up, which spruced up the Legion entrance and prepared the gardens for winter.

Pickleball play at the new courts in our Legion Garden was intense all summer with pickleball players pitching in to help at the Legion whenever asked. The new outdoor lights have allowed play to continue into the evenings.

Anyone wishing to join our Legion or become a "Friend" please call 902 351 2261. While we certainly encourage full membership, Friends are welcome and are not obliged to contribute anything. It just means that you will receive our monthly e-newsletter.

We at the Legion Branch 108 wish everyone a safe and happy fall.

IOOF Helping Hand and Frazee Rebekah Lodges

By: Jacob Leegwater, Recording Secretary

Hello once again, from the Helping Hand and Frazee Rebekah Lodges.

After a successful Festival Days breakfast, when we served 267 meals and due to the Labour Day weekend, Helping Hand Lodge got back to regular business on September 8. At this time, District Deputy Grand Master- Brother Peter Richardson installed the officers for the next year, as follows: Noble Grand - Sister Joanne Ferguson; Recording Secretary - Brother Jacob Leegwater; Financial Secretary - Brother Dan Ferguson; Treasurer - Brother Rod Hayman; Vice-Grand - Sister Mary Jennings.

Appointed Officers are: Conductor - Brother Peter Richardson; Right Supporter of the Noble Grand - Brother Earl Johnson; Chaplain - Brother Brian Emoff; Colour-Bearer - Brother Steven Craib; Right Supporter of the Vice-Grand - Brother Willis Langille; Left Supporter of the Vice-Grand - Sister Sylvia Stewart. Absent were: Warden - Brother Don MacKenzie; Left Supporter of the Noble Grand - Brother Bob Dwyer; Inside Guardian - Brother Terry Hovey.



Helping Hand Lodge #34 & Frazee Rebekah Lodge #33 float in the Festival Days parade.

We were pleased to have an application for membership by initiation from Ryan Doggart. Under the direction of Degree Captain Brother Richardson, we conferred the initiatory degree on September 22. Also at this meeting, we welcomed some of the Grand Lodge Officers who were given the Honours of the Order. The Officers are: Grand Master - Brother Jeff Dewtie; Grand Secretary - Brother Jim Wilson; Grand Chaplain - Brother Jacob Leegwater; Junior Past Grand Master - Brother Dan Ferguson; Past Grand Patriarch - Brother Rod Hayman; Past President of the Rebekah Assembly - Brother Alan Hayman; and District Deputy Grand Master - Brother Peter Richardson.



Conferring the Initiatory degree for our new member, Ryan Doggart.

Fund raising efforts continue with ticket sales on an oak hope chest, built and donated by Raymond MacKenzie and a \$200.00 Overstreet gift card. By the time this article goes to press, the draw will have taken place on November 10. Also, we had our seventh annual coat drive with a cutoff date of November 8.

Brother Dan Ferguson and Brother Peter Richardson took the opportunity to travel to Maine on October 17-18 and attended the Grand Lodge Sessions of the state of Maine. They attended sessions of Odd Fellows,

Rebekah, Encampment, and Canton. All in all, they had a very enjoyable experience. As per ritual, we received a letter informing us of the death of Past Sovereign Grand Master - Brother Jimmy Humphrey with a request to drape our Charter for a period of thirty days.

On the Rebekah side, our officers were installed by District Deputy President - Sister Joanne Ferguson. She was assisted by Assembly Warden - Sister Debra Robichaud of Fredericton. Installed were: Noble Grand - Brother Dan Ferguson; Vice-Grand - Sister Joanne Ferguson; Secretary - Sister Greta Langille; Financial Secretary - Sister Chris Patterson; Treasurer - Brother Peter Richardson; Warden - Sister Marie Langille; Colour-Bearer - Sister Agnes Murray; Inside Guardian - Sister Janet Baillie; Right and Left Supporters of the Noble Grand - Sister Cathy and Brother Jim Giles; Right and Left Supporters of the Vice-Grand - Sister Sylvia Stewart and Sister Audrey MacLellan; Chaplain - Brother Jacob Leegwater; and Past Grand - Sister Annie Scott. Absent was Conductor - Sister Margaret Langille. Brother Jacob Leegwater reported on his visit to Silver Spray #1 in Pugwash. They meet during the summer months and recess for the months of January and February.

Both the Odd Fellows and Rebekahs donate funds to Tatamagouche Regional Academy and Northumberland Regional High School for bursaries for graduating students. Ria Suidgeest received the Odd Fellows bursary and Riley Allan received the Rebekah's bursary. Ria and Riley graduated from TRA. There wasn't any correspondence from Northumberland Regional High School.

The District meeting for District #17 of the Odd Fellows will be on October 30, at Eastern Star #1, Pictou. The meeting will be reported in the next edition of The Pioneer, as well as the results of the draw. Until then, enjoy the fall season and I regret to say this so early - have a happy holiday season!

Arlette Langille Said Goodbye to her 30s



Crewe, Larkin, and Jack Reid loved celebrating the 40th birthday of their amazing mother, Arlette Langille.

On October 23rd, Valarie Arlette Langille bravely said goodbye to her thirties and slammed wholeheartedly into her fourth decade. The boys showered her with love, homemade cards, and presents.

A celebration followed on the 25th, at her mother's riverfront estate. There, children and adults alike joined together to celebrate this caring, loving beauty. Mixing Fireball shots with Limp Bizkit melodies, Arlette, Valarie and sister Kels danced late into the night, surrounded by family and close friends. She was lucky enough to be serenaded by local celebrity Terry Jollymore, 4th place finisher in this year's Pictou Exhibition Demolition Derby. What a treat!

The Reid and Langille families would love to thank everyone who made it to the party. And many thanks for bringing your kids. Seeing all the children gathered around Arlette as she opened gifts was a heartwarming sight, one not soon forgotten.

Sports

Rising Star in the Ring Boxer Lilly Jollimore Making Her Mark

By: Debby Shaw



Just over a year ago, 16-year-old boxer Lilly Jollimore was first featured in the Pioneer. Since then, the Welsford resident has continued to impress both in and out of the ring.

Lilly began boxing in 2020, joining the Albion Boxing Club in Trenton. With a membership skewed 60% male, Lilly found the environment both challenging and empowering.

“It helped me feel more confident,” she says, reflecting on how the sport has positively shaped her self-image. Having faced bullying in elementary school, Lilly was drawn to boxing as a less traditional sport for girls - a space where she could feel strong and independent.

She trains three times a week, with three-hour sessions, commuting to training with the support of her family - her grandmother Brenda Jollimore and her parents, Lisa and Winston Jollimore, all take turns driving her. Since our last report, Lilly has competed in eleven sanctioned bouts, taking home six wins and several trophies, and a broken nose. Her dedication has taken her across the country, from Cape Breton and Toronto to Newfoundland and most recently, Saskatchewan. Her next competition, not yet scheduled, is hopefully going to occur in Quebec.

Travel for these matches is partially funded by the boxing club, with athletes responsible for covering the remaining costs. Lilly raises her share through local fundraising and extends a heartfelt thank-you to the community members who have supported her journey. Now in Grade 11, Lilly has her sights set on Acadia University, where she hopes to study nursing. Whether in the boxing ring or in a future hospital ward, there’s little doubt that Lilly Jollimore will continue to make a difference.

Borden Nicholson A Young Man to Watch

By: Rachelle Nicholson



Borden started golfing during the pandemic with his family and soon found a deep love for the game. He has been very fortunate to have wonderful support from Brule Golf Club, Abercrombie Golf and Country Club and Fox Harb’r. His weekly lessons and work ethic have helped strengthen his game and provided him the wonderful opportunity to compete on the Maple Leaf Junior Tour, Nova Scotia Junior Invitational Tour and Nova Scotia Provincials. His hard work and dedication have paid off with a U13 provincial title and top merit points in both tours in the U13 division. He is now in off-season training with his coach as well as some group training with GolfNS. He is looking forward to next season.



T-Ball and Blue Jays A Young Man to Watch

By: Jay Reid



Another summer has come and gone in River John. I think this one went faster than the last. And that one faster than the one before. And so on. So, if the old adage is true, “Time Flies,” we must be having some kind of fun here in River John. At least in the summer. At least at the ballfield.

This was another summer that we were able to have a T Ball program at the local ballfield. Fun was had by all: volunteers, parents and kids. Having been able to run the program for a few years now, it’s rewarding to see how good these kids can actually become, even with basic instruction and Tik-Tok era attention spans. We are getting terribly close to having enough skilled kids to field a real team, or an actual LEAGUE, if fortune continues to favour us. Don’t get me wrong; the program as it exists right now definitely suffices. It gets kids outside, socializing, being active, and hopefully getting to absorb the benefits of a “team” atmosphere. Community support is at an all-time high. Attendance has become reliably consistent. I look forward to drawing upon this forward momentum to build the program into something bigger and better in the years to come. And speaking of forward momentum...

HOW ABOUT THEM BLUE JAYS! The Jays being relevant in October has re-awakened the baseball-loving kid in me. The kid that consumed baseball stats in the Chronicle Herald while eating Cap’n Crunch in the mornings before school. The kid who wanted to be able to throw as hard as Jesse Barfield, or steal bases like Ricky Henderson in ’93. I’m sure I would’ve played baseball and loved baseball whether the Jays were good or not, but being able to witness their rise to the World Series in the early 90’s help fuel that fire. Those teams galvanized an entire nation of sports fans and undoubtedly elevated little league enrollment across the country. Hopefully the kids of today are getting the same enjoyment out of the modern Blue Jays roster. Kids today have far more distractions in their lives that might limit their ability to enjoy the October Classic. But hopefully, a healthy percentage of kids are able to put down their phones, cease their scrolling and tune into a playoff game. You could do far worse than having an Ernie Clement or a George Springer as one of your role models. As I write this, we are on the eve of game 6. Hopefully the good guys come out on top, but either way I’ll be looking forward to the coming summer to see if any of the little leaguers I coach have any new favourite players or an increased love of the game. I know I will.

Happiness is not by chance, but by choice.

Church News

St. George's Presbyterian Church

By: Rev. Enjei



St. George's and St. David's Presbyterian Churches having a worship service together at the Loch Broom Log Church

Fall greetings to everyone in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Fall is that time of the year when leaves change and the air grows chilly. These changes remind us about God's beautiful design of the earth for every season. Fall invites us to pause and reflect on what we are thankful for in this season. Just as the harvest brings in the fruits of our labour, we take time to celebrate the spiritual fruit God is cultivating in our community – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control. May we take this time to draw nearer to God and to each other. Let us also continue to grow together, rooted in Christ, bearing good fruit for God's kingdom.

Upcoming Events

Church services:
Every Sunday at 9.30 a.m. - St. David's Presbyterian Church, Toney River
Every Sunday at 11.00 a.m. - St. George's Presbyterian Church, River John

Morning Coffee Hour every Wednesday from 9.30 a.m. Organized by Earl Johnson at St. George's Church Hall.

Fall Bible Study Wed., 2 p.m. at St. David's Church Hall.

Nov. 9: 22nd Sunday after Pentecost - Remembrance Sunday
Nov. 30: 1st Sunday of Advent - Hope - Communion Service
Dec. 3: Advent Luncheon - St. John's Anglican
Dec. 10: Advent Luncheon - Salem United
Dec. 17: Advent Luncheon - St. George's Presbyterian Church

St. Michael's Church

By: Netta Heukshorst



Regularly scheduled Mass is on Saturdays at 4 pm.
In July the church was contacted to help out the Union Church in Brule with extra chairs for a large funeral that was held there, so of course, always happy to share.
September 29th is the feast day of our patron saint, St. Michael the Archangel; as this date fell on a Monday this year, a special Mass was celebrated on the previous Saturday followed by a reception in the hall.
Each Saturday in October, just before Mass, the Holy Rosary was prayed as the month of October is dedicated

to that beautiful prayer for peace in the world.
A very successful flea market was held on October 19th; moneys raised will go toward a new ramp. Another one was held on Saturday, November 1st.
Our choir is busy with organizing another Gospel Sing, to be held on Sunday, November 30th, a wonderful start to the Advent season.
Everyone is welcome at St. Michael's.
Remember to smile and be kind to one another.

St. John the Baptist Anglican Church

By: Monica Graham



Jim White and Carol Smith playing for our Pentecost service.

Members of the “Little Church with the White Picket Fence” have been busy over the summer and fall, possibly making up for lost time during a building closure last winter due to serious electrical issues.
There is definite joy in being open again – and thankfulness to Salem United for sharing their worship and space with us during our closure.

Some of the summer highlights included a well-attended Holy Communion service on June 15, celebrated by Rev. Canon Lisa Vaughn from Halifax, a welcomed visitor to our Parish of Northumberland. The following Sunday offered an afternoon of gospel music at the church.

On July 13, Hannah Martin of Brule was a guest speaker at an evening service. The time was selected to allow visitors from the other churches in the community to attend – which they did! Hannah's discussion of Indigenous spirituality was informative, thought-provoking and reverent. Following the service, she conducted a smudging ceremony in the church yard.

Church members participated in the annual River John Festival Days service on August 10.

Muffin Sunday – the popular practice introduced by Jocelyn Heighton and Faye Jefferson of having muffins and coffee on the last Sunday of each month – has staying power. Folks stay after church and chat – a great way to catch up on news and come up with worship ideas and plans. Church members took the muffins on the road on September 28 when we attended Holy Communion at our sister church of St. Andrew's, Wallace. Our usual Sunday morning troubadours, Carol Smith and warden Jim White, provided music before that service just as they do every week at St. John's.

On September 14, as well as having Morning Prayer at St. John's, the congregation was represented at the 150th anniversary of another sister church, Holy Trinity in Middleton Corners; and at the deconsecration of St. John the Divine, a tiny country church in Oxford Junction that closed many years ago and now has a private owner.

When we do not have guest clergy or attend services at other churches, St John's worship is mostly led by our licensed lay ministers, Denise White, Gerry Bowles and Monica Graham. There is another team who takes turns reading scripture each Sunday, and several teams that clean the church weekly on a month-by-month rotation. Needless to say – most church members are on more than one team!
Thanks are due to warden Dana Jefferson for the tidy state of the church grounds, meaning that many historic grave markers are easier to see; also, to treasurer Denise

White for her financial management, and to secretary Eliz Langille for keeping track of our information.
Looking forward to Advent and Christmas, St. John's will look after the December 3 ecumenical luncheon at St. George's Presbyterian Hall. It is currently anticipated that our Christmas Eve service will be at 7 p.m. Otherwise, most of our Sunday services take place at 11 a.m. All are welcome – and please, sign our guest book.
In the new year, watch for information about annual general meetings and other events.

Salem United Church

Connie's Comment



Submitted by Rev. Connie

The church calendar year begins anew on Sunday November 30th as the four weeks of Advent lead us toward the birth of a baby in a stable in Bethlehem. Advent is traditionally a time to prepare our hearts and minds to better understand and to more fully live out the hope, peace, joy, and love of God, as the light of the world is born anew. And how might we do that? Well, Christmas parties and gift giving and big family meals are all good ways to delight in such things, but so are the opportunities provided by our churches in community.

We may find joy at the Ecumenical Advent Luncheons on Wednesdays at 12 Noon at St. George's Presbyterian Church Hall. December 3rd will be led by St. John the Baptist Anglican, December 10th led by Salem United, and December 17th led by St. George's Presbyterian. Please join us for one or two or all three gatherings, to gain insight into the Advent journey during our brief program time, and to share in food and conversation.

We may experience peace on Sunday, December 7th at 9.30 a.m. at West Branch United Church and at 11.00 a.m. at Salem United Church as we celebrate White Gift Sunday - that age-old tradition of wrapping gifts in white paper promoting equality for all. There may or may not be a lot of white paper that morning, but there will be a lighthearted skit to enjoy, and a sharing of our gifts of food, hygiene products, gift cards, mittens, socks, and other necessities and niceties, which will then be distributed by the River John Community Food Bank. Please join us in bringing such gifts to worship on December 7th that we might work together to help others.

We may share in hope at our ecumenical Blue Christmas Worship Service at Salem United Church on Thursday, December 11th at 7.00 p.m. The lead-up to Christmas is not a happy anticipatory time for everyone, and this worship service will help us to consider both the blessings and the struggles of Christmas. Please join us to light candles in honour of those who are no longer with us, to sing comforting hymns, and to listen to meaningful reflections.

We may know love on December 24th as our Christmas Eve worship at 4.30 p.m. at West Branch United Church and 6.00 p.m. at Salem United Church will enable us to join the shepherds and the angels on the hillside before

we meet Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus in the stable. Please join us as we gather together as family and friends to share in the warmth and the welcome of being ‘home’ for Christmas.

And we may see light on Epiphany Sunday, January 4th, when we will celebrate the three wise men who followed the star, during worship at West Branch United Church at 9.30 a.m. and at Salem United Church at 11.00 a.m. Please join us to receive a “star word” - a unique word for each of us - that we may hold as an impetus and a guide as we live into the new year.

As 2025 ends and 2026 begins, may we acknowledge the gifts of hope, peace, joy, love, and light, and may we strive to share them with all we meet.

150 Years Anniversary of The Holy Trinity Anglican Church

By: Heather Forbes



Mary Tothill, on the far left, is having a marvellous time, while former Rector, the Rev. Nicole Uzans (centre left) is chatting with Keith Driver from Brule and Donna Mackinnon of Holy Trinity Church in Middleton Corner. Photo Submitted by Monica Graham



The Holy Trinity Anglican Church at Middleton Corner celebrated its 150th anniversary on the afternoon of September 14th. Historical displays brought the past right into the here and now. These included records of accounts, correspondence, ceremonies, previous ministers, and events. Labels around the church acknowledged and invoked awe of the craftspeople who had made items such as the altar and communion rail.

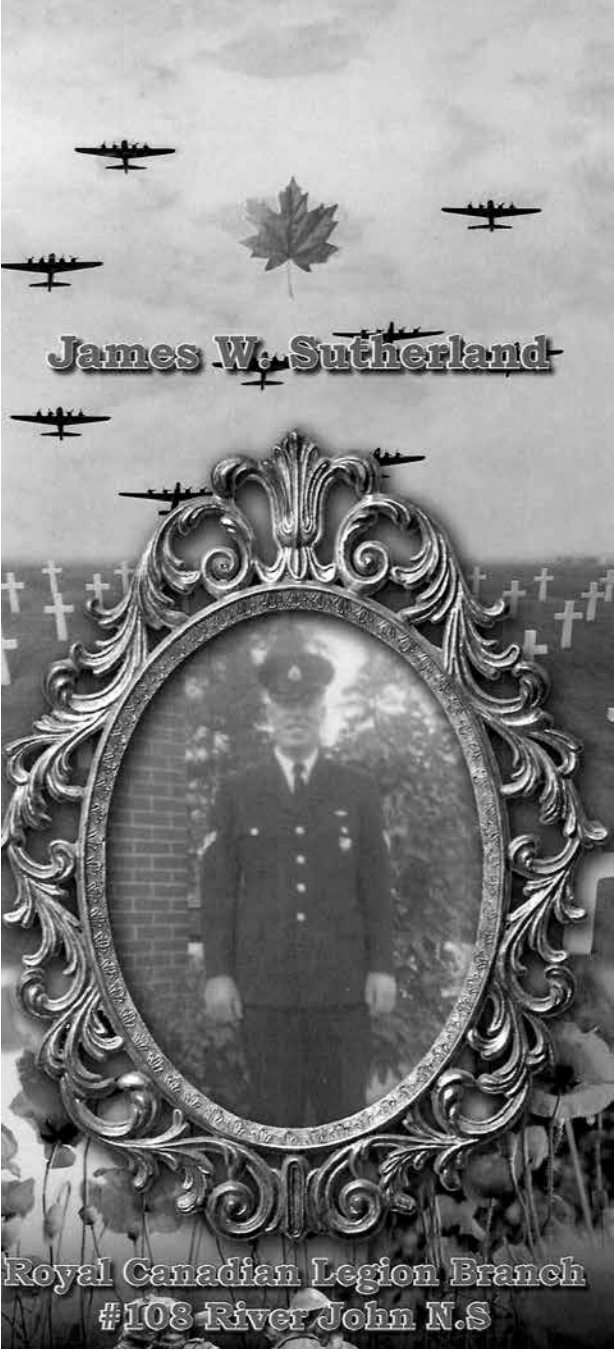
It was fascinating to note that the total cost of the church and furnishings at the time of its completion was \$1,016.21. This included stained glass windows - of course custom hand-crafted - that came from England. The pay rate for workers at that time was 90 cents a day. Just doing the math here makes one's head spin and demands even more respect for the deep dedication shown for this church and all it has represented for the past one-and-a-half centuries.

On this memorable day, the church was aptly and beautifully decorated with wildflowers and stunning quilts made by former parishioners. Adding to the festive atmosphere, wonderfully dreamy music reflecting the past was performed by Faye Jefferson, Carol Smith, and Jim White. Carol also generously donated one of her most beautiful paintings for a draw which was won by Ella Mingo.

Over forty guests enjoyed a delectable light lunch while touring the church and cemetery.

Ending this trip down memory lane with a highlight, we want to thank both our former ministers, Aiden Kingsbury and Nicole Uzans, for their very pleasant, surprise attendance.

What a blessed day it was.



40th Anniversary of River John Days

Bringing the Vibes Like It's 1985

By: Debby Shaw

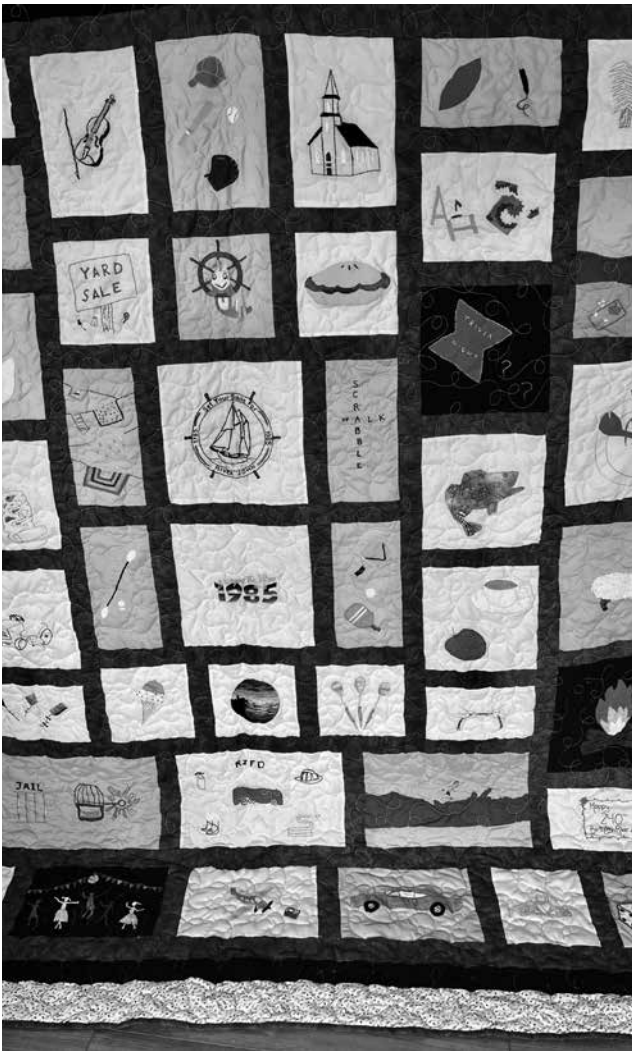
Elaine (Brown) Langille, with the help of her daughters, Kaylee and Cassie Langille, made a quilt – and the festival committee raffled it off. In the last edition of the Pioneer there was an article on Elaine’s quilt which far surpassed expectation. Each block beautifully illustrated an activity commonly associated with our Festival Week. They were colourful and skillfully made with embroidery embellishment. The proud winner of this quilt was Maureen Topley of River Road, River John.

Subsequently, Maureen met the owner of the 1985 quilt that was won by Arnold Brown in 1985. It had been crafted by Elaine’s mother and Arnold’s aunt, Audrey Brown. It is beautiful, too, with colourful blocks all around it in Log Pattern style. That quilt commemorated the 200th Anniversary of River John’s settlement. The theme that year was Set Sails for River John.

The quilts of both years were illustrated with the week’s activities. It seems this family has a history of quilting talent. Maureen got in touch with Christine (Brown) Heighton of Cape John Road who had received the quilt when her father, Arnold, passed on. He left the caveat that the quilt was NOT to be put on a bed!

Quilters have been recognized for their art down through the years, at festivals, exhibitions, and art galleries. When more people were quilting, there were sales held at the Presbyterian Hall during Festival Days, with the quilter receiving a commission. Quilts need to be stored in 100% cotton pillowcases to keep them acid free and preserved.

As we visited and talked about quilts, we also discussed how there are different kinds of people: some are savers and collectors, and some like to make way for the new, and therefore discard, or pass on. Luckily for us, the owners of these amazing quilts are savers.



Climate Change Action Moving Forward in Pictou County Continued

Action 5. Mitigating Wildfire Risk in Pictou County: The planned action involves assessing community wildfire hazards by a FireSmart Coordinator, prioritizing high-risk areas, and developing public education, infrastructure upgrades, and vegetation management strategies. Investigations of modelling software for assessing wildfire risk are underway.

Action 6. Emergency and Evacuation Preparedness Education: Work is underway on providing information to County citizens on how to prepare for climate change impact events like hurricanes and wildfires (e.g., Community meetings in Little Harbour and Scotsburn). MOPC plans to host up to six community meetings per year, which will be the responsibility of an Assistant Emergency Services Director who is expected to be hired within the next four months.

Action 7. Assessing and Modifying Vulnerable MOPC Infrastructure: MOPC Staff are starting to work on identification of necessary upgrades to reduce climate change impact risks on the MOPC Administration Building, wastewater treatment plants, lift stations, and culverts.

Support for MOPC climate change planning is being provided by Clean Foundation, which selected MOPC as one of 19 municipalities in Nova Scotia to participate in their Community Climate Capacity Program. The program offers specialized staffing support, including climate change experts and planners, to help communities identify their climate challenges and develop effective adaptation and mitigation strategies. The Climate Lead who is working with MOPC has been instrumental in accessing grant funding for the planned actions, including funding to co-hire an Environmental Specialist with the Town of Pictou. Emily Hodgson, who was selected for this role and will be taking on climate action responsibilities, began working with MOPC Staff on October 14th. Implementation of the Municipal Climate Change Action Plan 2025-2029 is underway!

COMMUNITY NOTICE

The Department of Public Works recognizes the concerns raised by residents regarding the bridge closures in Pictou West and the resulting impacts on the community, including emergency response and daily travel.

Both the Moors Ford Bridge and the Welsford Bridge remain closed due to structural deficiencies identified during recent inspections. For safety reasons Moors Ford Bridge will remain closed until replacement can be completed. The designated detour route for the Moors Ford Bridge is via College Grant Road. A tender has been awarded to complete gravel resurfacing on College Grant Road this fall to improve driving conditions along this detour.

It is important to note that MacIntosh Road is not part of the designated detour route. The Department is aware of concerns about traffic volumes and road conditions in the area and continues to monitor them closely. In addition, Vehicle Transportation Inspection (VTI) are monitoring for overweight vehicles to ensure compliance with posted restrictions and protect the integrity of the local road network.

The Department is currently studying options for the Welsford Bridge to determine the most appropriate course of action.

We appreciate the community’s patience and understanding as work continues to advance. Planning and design work for necessary bridge repairs and/or replacements are underway, and project timelines will be shared once finalized. Maintaining safe and reliable transportation routes remains a top priority for the Department of Public Works.

We appreciate you bringing your concerns to our attention. Should you wish to report any additional highway maintenance concerns, please feel free to contact our Operations Contact Center by calling 1-844-696-7737 or emailing DPW-OCC@novascotia.ca.



Obituaries



Ellen (Giles) Millard

Surrounded by her loving family, Ellen passed peacefully to the heavens on August 29, 2025, at Colchester East Hants Health Centre, aged 84.

Born in Springhill on July 3, 1941, she was the only child of Leonard and Bertha (Oliver) Giles. She was predeceased by her beloved sons Kenton Jay (1968) and Kevin John (1981) Millard, and by many cherished relatives and friends. Ellen is survived by her devoted husband of 65 years, LeRoy Millard of Tatamagouche; daughter Kim Wall (Mike), son Kendel Millard, both of Tatamagouche; daughter Katrina Millard (Darryl), Ottawa; grandchildren Kevin (Amy), Kelsey (Cody), Straun, and Saxton; and great-grandchildren Ashlynn and Sawyer.

Ellen grew up in Wentworth and was part of the first graduating class of Pugwash District High School, earning the award for highest marks. She married LeRoy soon after and joined him across Canada on construction projects—years she fondly recalled throughout her life. In 1963, they settled in Tatamagouche (Sand Point) to farm the Millard homestead. A proud Nova Scotian, Ellen loved the ocean and swam off Sand Point’s shores from June to October well into her seventies.

A skilled hairdresser, she worked both independently and at Willow Lodge before turning to writing and advertising for The Light. Her passion for local history led her to publish the Back When series and other works on Tatamagouche’s past, including children’s books. One of the first vendors at the Tatamagouche Farmers’ Market, she sold baked goods and preserves under “Millard’s Farm Fresh.” A tireless volunteer, she gave to her community through the Tatamagouche Museum, Barrachois Hall, and numerous local organizations. She was also a devoted member of Sharon United Church. Curious and courageous, Ellen embraced learning at every stage of life—hosting an exchange student from the Philippines, completing a university English course in her sixties (earning an “A”), and eagerly taking on new adventures. She loved to travel, from family camping trips around the Maritimes to visiting relatives across Canada and the U.S., as well as Caribbean and European cruises. The Sand Point farmhouse was a welcoming “do-drop-in,” where everyone was greeted with a hearty meal and kind words. She held deep affection for her “son by choice,” Gilbert Ross Nelson, and was the “fun aunt” who made lasting memories with her nieces and nephews.

Above all, Ellen was the heart of her family—nurturing generations with love, laughter, and faith. Though Alzheimer’s affected her later years, her spirit of kindness and strength endures.

The family thanks VON and the palliative care team for their compassionate support. Donations may be made to the Kevin Millard Memorial Scholarship or the Alzheimer’s Society.



Mary Jane Craik
July 10, 1938 – September 14, 2025

Mary Jane Craik passed away peacefully on September 14, 2025, at the Valley View Villa, Stellarton, N.S.

Born in Newcastle, N.B., Mary Jane was a daughter of the late Robert Franklyn and Ruth Janie (MacCaul) Craik, and she was predeceased by her husband Norman Martin, sisters Dorothy ‘Sally’ Mather, Ivy MacKinnon, Roberta ‘Bertie’ Smerciak, and brothers Herbert and Robert ‘Bob’ Franklyn Jr. She is survived by her brother Stephen (Rachel) Craik, several nieces and nephews and their partners, great nieces and nephews, and many dear friends.

Mary Jane graduated from University of King’s College in Halifax and went on to be a clerical worker for Tourism New Brunswick. Later, she managed her own bookkeeping company with Norman (Craik, Martin & Associates) from her beloved seaside home at Cape John.

Mary Jane contributed much of her time and talents to the community; she was treasurer of the River John Library Board of Directors and was a member of Beausejour Ladies’ Club in Moncton, St. John the Baptist Anglican Church in River John, River John RJ’s Ladies Group, and Friends of the River John Library. Mary Jane will be fondly remembered for her love of curling, gardening, swimming at the Cape, reading, travelling, and a four o’clock beer in good company.

The family is very grateful to the amazing staff at Valley View Villa for their loving care provided to Mary Jane during her time there.

A funeral service celebrating the life of Mary Jane was held September 20 in St. John the Baptist Anglican Church in River John.



Sandra Lee Langille
July 9, 1954 – September 11, 2025

LANGILLE, Sandra Lee, 71, of River John, NS, passed away in Lillian Fraser Memorial Hospital, Tatamagouche on September 11, 2025. She was born in Pictou on July 9, 1954, the daughter of Elsie and the late Edward Langille.

Sandra was an avid baker and cook. Often making specialty birthday and wedding cakes. And we all loved her white fruit cake! If anyone was in need of her expertise with computers, she was more than willing to help. And then there were her fur babies to keep her busy, Penny, Foxy, Baby and Lily.

She is survived by her mother, Elsie (Fisher), brothers and sisters, Alfred, NS; Kevin (Arlene), BC; Velvet (Ralf), NS; Ronald, AB; Wendy (Brian), AB; Dennis (Robin), AB; 11 nieces and nephews, April L., Raymond, Sarah, Lacey, Laura, Alex, Crystal, Rhonda, April D., Andrew, Ryan and Dhara and 19 great nieces and nephews and her fur baby, Lily. Besides her father she is predeceased by her brother, Martin.

Graveside Service was held September 18, 2025, in Hamilton Cemetery, River John, with Reverend Connie McNamara officiating. Refreshments followed in St. George’s Presbyterian Church Hall. Donations to the SPCA are welcomed.



HOLMES, Sharon G.
1942 – 2025

On June 27, 2025, Sharon Grace Holmes, 82, Pictou, passed away peacefully with her niece Donna Patterson by her side at her home away from home, Willow

Lodge, Tatamagouche. The family appreciates the special care provided by the staff and by her doctor, Dr. Dan MacDonald.

Sharon was the daughter of the late Walter and Pearl (Heighton) Holmes of Hedgeville. She started her work life at the River John branch of the Bank of Nova Scotia. During her long career Sharon then worked at several branches of Scotiabank and retired from the Pictou branch in the late 1990s.

She is survived by nieces, Donna Patterson (Jimmy), Beverly Holmes (Eric MacDonald); nephew, Allan (Angela Cromwell); and sister-in-law, Marie (MacDonald) Holmes. She was predeceased by brother, Kingsley; sister, Helen; three siblings in infancy; nephew, David Holmes; and niece, Heather Holmes.

Sharon enjoyed her retirement playing fiddle with the Trail Old Time Fiddlers, being an active member of the Monarchist League of Canada accompanied by her good friend Olive Pastor, and going for her daily drives. Her friends will remember her love of animals and generosity to many organizations.

The funeral was held on July 3rd in McLaren Funeral Home Chapel, Pictou with Pat Wilson officiating. A family interment followed in the Riverbank Cemetery, Toney Mills. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Sharon’s memory to the Riverbank Cemetery.

Obituaries



Laura Catherine (Gollan) Elliott
April 26, 1938 – July 28, 2025

Laura Catherine (Gollan) Elliott, 87, River John, passed away on July 28, 2025, under the watchful, loving care of her nurses at Lillian Fraser Memorial Hospital in Tatamagouche.

Laura was born on April 26, 1938, the 13th child of James and Rosanna (Holmes) Gollan. She was predeceased by her siblings, Jessie, Annie, Bob, Iola, Irene, David, Lillian, Angus, Lloyd, George, Charles, Zelna as well as her special niece who was raised as a sister, Valerie.

Laura grew up in Melville working hard and having lots of fun on her family’s farm. After finishing school, she and her sister, Zelna, went to Truro, where Laura worked first at the Bank of Nova Scotia and later at Stanfields. It was in Truro that she met her husband, Charles “Bugs” Elliott, and they eventually married in 1963. Not long after his passing on November 1, 1993, Laura returned to Melville purchasing a cottage home on the same land where she had helped make hay in her younger years. Later she moved into the village of River John. She was baptized in 1999 and became an active member of the Salem United Church congregation. She was also involved with the Royal Canadian Legion, River John Festival Days Committee, River John Ladies Group, the River John and Area Historical Society, and the Campbell Cemetery Committee, as well as assisted in starting the Melville Corner Project.

Laura is survived by her sisters-in-law, Jessie and Gayle; 16 nieces and nephews as well as her dog, Molly.

Her family is forever grateful to the VON Nurses who became like family to Laura as they visited each day, going above and beyond in caring for her. Thanks also to her many good friends who “got her where she had to go” when macular degeneration affected her ability to drive, leaving her dependent on your kindnesses.

Memorial Donations in Laura’s memory may be made to Riverbank Cemetery, Toney River or to the Lillian Fraser Memorial Hospital Auxiliary.

Births



John and Carlin Heighton welcomed **Benjamin Nicolaas Heighton** on September 11th at 12:31p.m. 7 pounds, 3 ounces, 21 inches long.

Sarah and Geoff would like to announce the birth of their daughter, **Anna**, who arrived on February 11, 2025, weighing 7 pounds, 5.9 ounces. Proud grandparents are Sally & Mike Jackson of River John and Calgary, and Nora & Andy of Ottawa.



It’s a Girl!
Emmy Raye Falconer
Terri Lynne Reid and Blair Falconer are thrilled to announce the arrival of their daughter, Emmy Raye Falconer, born June 17, 2025. A sweet little sister for Maverick and Malcolm. Proud grandparents are Terry and Linda Reid, Fred Falconer, and great-grandmother Elaine Forward.



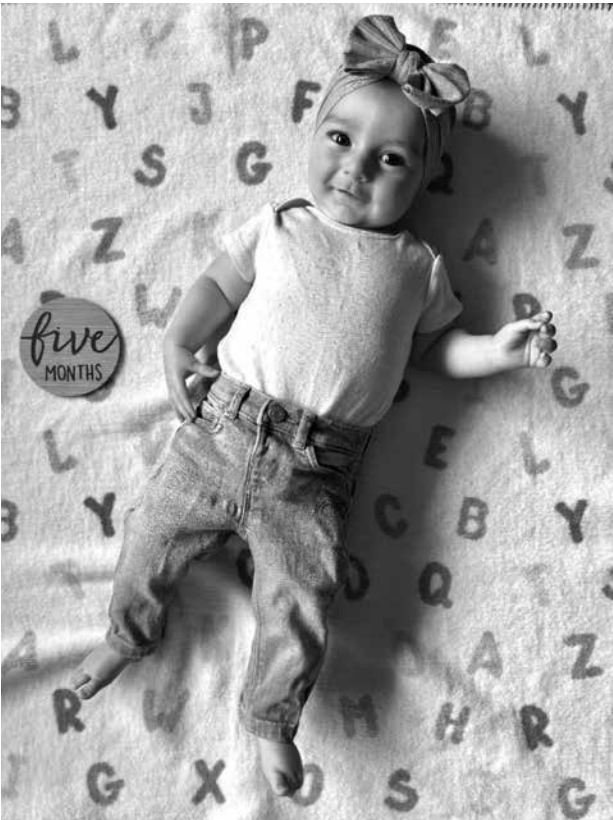
Tim and Cheyenne are pleased to announce the birth of **Clyde Roger Roeterdink**, born June3, 2025, baby brother to Millie and Clint.



With full hearts, Devin and Drew Myers are thrilled to announce the arrival of their daughter, **Rayna Hart Myers**, born on January 1, 2025, at Colchester East Hants Health Centre in Truro.

Weighing 7 pounds, 12 ounces and measuring 21.25 inches, Rayna made a beautiful entrance into the world - and into the new year - as Truro’s first baby of 2025.

Her arrival has brought immense joy and love to our family, marking the start of this year with deep gratitude. Rayna is lovingly welcomed by her proud big brother, Silas, and surrounded by the warm embrace of her grandparents: John Jollimore and Sandra Murray, Valerie Jollimore, Phillip and Shelley Myers, Lynn Casey and Charlie Waugh.



Maggie Jane Boudreau arrived March 30, 2025, to proud parents Ellen Pretty and Mark Boudreau. She is well-loved and protected by her big brother, James.

Maggie is the granddaughter of Lesley and David Pretty of River John, and Angela and David Boudreau of Pictou.

Announcements



The Caldera Barn in River John was the perfect venue to have a relaxing wedding, reception and dance, to officially join Cera Langille and Jesse MacKenzie in marriage on Saturday, Sept. 6, 2025.

The bride is the daughter of Cindy Langille and Stewart Joudrie of River John. Jesse is the son of Linda O'Hara and Junior MacKenzie of Tatamagouche. Cera's sister, Chelsey (Joudrie) MacLean, officiated with the assistance of Reverend Connie McNamara.

Among their attendants was their beautiful daughter Quinn as flower girl and the ring bearer was their adorable son Reese.

The MacKenzie family resides in Tatamagouche.



Ria Suidgeest of River John recently took part in the PNCE Queen Pageant, along with atleast four other girls who were also in 4-H. She says, "As a member of 4-H for 10 years, it is nice to see more kids taking an interest in 4-H. With the variety of different projects to take, such as crafts, beef, and great outdoors, there is definitely something for everyone."



Congratulations to Baylee and Bryton Gammon, who recently graduated from Cobequid Educational Centre, Truro. Baylee graduated with Honours and is attending St. FX University and Bryton is attending NSCC, Truro Campus and is enrolled in the Electrical Construction and Industrial pre-apprenticeship program. Billy and Marci Heighton-Gammon are the proud parents of Baylee and Bryton. Family members also include grandparents Eric and Maxine Gammon-Heighton, River John and Patsy Jollimore, Halifax; as well as great-grandparents Aubrey and Mildred Heighton and the late Bill and Ruth Gammon and Jim and Theresa Brown.

Baylee and Bryton's family and friends wish them great success!



Congratulations to Jordyn Peters on her graduation.

Age: 18
School: Northumberland Regional High School
Extracurricular: Jordyn was involved in Brigades
Future Plans: Jordyn has been accepted at NSCC Akerley for Culinary Management.


PICTOU WEST CONSTITUENCY OFFICE

Offsite dates and locations:

Union Centre Community Hall
1 Salter Road
Monday, November 17th
12:00pm - 4:00pm

River John Community Food & Health Centre
2456 River John Station Road
Monday, November 24th
12:00pm - 4:00pm

For assistance with the Senior Property Tax Rebate, Heating Assistance Rebate Program, Senior Care Grant, and any other Provincial matter.



Marco MacLeod, MLA
info@marcomacleod.com



Festival Days

Thank You from River John Festival Days

By: Gillian Joudrie



From left to right: Ashley Langille, Gillian Joudrey, Chelsey & Lee MacLean, and Cody Joudrie

A heartfelt Thank-You to everyone who joined us for River John Festival Days, both locals and those who travelled from away. This year’s festival saw record-breaking turnouts for all our events, including the always-popular Lobster Crate Race (winners pictured below).

The festival wouldn’t be possible without our incredible volunteers, whose time, energy, and community spirit make it all happen.

We’re so grateful for the support, laughter, and memories shared throughout the week, and we can’t wait to do it all again next year!

With appreciation,
Your Co-Chairs,
Gillian Joudrie and Chelsey MacLean



Lobster Crate Winners River John Festival Days 2025

Festival Days Parade

By: Joan MacLeod



Elsie Langille is sporting a white hat with Cindy Morrison at her side in this sporty sports car.

The Pioneer team wishes to congratulate the Festival Days Committee for honouring some of the elders in our community by having them head the Festival Days Parade in chauffeur- driven cars.

Mabel Zinck had recently celebrated her 104th birthday. Elsie Langille (90) had worked with the Festival Days Committee for many years and had been the parade marshal. Florence and John Craib also enjoyed their chauffeured drive as they celebrated 70 years of marriage. Florence served on the Festival Days Committee for over 25 years, starting from its inception.

What a wonderful way to honour our elder community members who started these great traditions.



Mabel Zinck is clearly enjoying her ride alongside a truly happy Leona Baillie.

River John Car Show 2025

By: Linda Thompson-Reid

The River John Car Show was held on July 26, on the premises of the River John Old School. A total of 84 participants registered. The show was organized by David Langille and his capable crew of volunteers, who were responsible for the details of the day.

The Car Show Committee would like to take this opportunity to thank the Bigney family for their cooperation and use of their property, which is an easily accessible venue for the event.

The 2025 results include the following:
Best Chev. in Show: 1955 Chev Bel Air owned by Charlie MacKinnon

Best Dodge in Show: 1970 Dart Swinger owned by Kevin Sutherland

Best Ford in Show: 1964 Ford Comet owned by John Jollimore

People’s Choice Award: 1977 Austin Mini 1000 owned by Derek Lynds

Best Truck in Show: 1990 Chev SS 454 owned by Steve Groves was presented by David Langille.

The Raymond E. Thompson Memorial Award for the Best Ford in Show was awarded to John Jollimore and presented by his granddaughter Carlie Thompson and daughter Linda Thompson-Reid.

The Larry L. Reid Memorial Award for the Best Dodge in Show was awarded to Kevin Sutherland and presented by Terry Reid.



Kevin Sutherland, pictured with Terry Reid (Dodge Award)



Steve Groves, pictured with David Langille (Truck Award)



John Jollimore, with Carlie Thompson (left) and Linda Thompson-Reid (right) (Ford Award)



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- Heat Pump Installation / Wiring
 - Service repairs

First Annual Cemetery Walk

By: Robert Holton



Photo credit: Barbara Young

Established in 1878, Bellevue is not the oldest River John cemetery, but with its long, gently-sloping grounds, it certainly lives up to its name. Although it lies close to Station Road, its buffer of woods lends it a secluded and peaceful atmosphere. Thanks to the work of the Bellevue Hamilton Cemetery Committee and Jay Reid, Bellevue Cemetery is as pleasant a place as any on a fine summer morning. On July 21st, however, that peaceful atmosphere was overturned as a lively crowd, cheerful and chatting, arrived to take part in the Bellevue Cemetery Walk.

The event was organized by Mary Beth Sutherland, and although it was not typically part of the River John Festival Days program, it was timed to take advantage of the many visitors –including former residents and family members – who were here for the annual festival. With Read By the Sea moved to Pictou and the River John Historical Walk not scheduled this year, it seemed that this might be a good initiative.

In the days leading up to the walk, however, grave doubts were expressed by some concerning the appeal of a cemetery walk, but all doubts were soon laid to rest as more and more cars began rolling into Cemetery Road, and visitors began to gather near the entrance. At least thirty people joined the walk; special thanks to River John historian Beulah Wright, author of Musings & Memories of River John History and curator of the River John Heritage Museum, who helped fill in the blanks when questions arose during the tour. Other members of the River John Historical Society and members of the community with long memories of stories buried in the past were consulted as well, in preparation for the walk, including Minnie Cormier.

Mary Beth was the main guide for the walk, sharing interesting stories and details about those buried at Bellevue. She began with the unusual story of Frederick Crawley, whose stone is the first one to be encountered on entering the cemetery. He was a black fiddler and fiddle-maker who arrived in River John from the Caribbean after jumping ship. He lived for many years on the Mountain Road until his death; Crawley Hill on that road is named for him.

The walk then continued up the hill, pausing for discussions at a number of stones: Colter, Fitzpatrick, Kitchin, Mackenzie, MacLeod, Murray and Stromberg.

In addition to Mary Beth Sutherland, Christiane Gill, Julie Windebank and Rob Holton provided commentary, as did many of the people in attendance.

It is no surprise that those who join a cemetery walk would be knowledgeable about the friends, relatives, ancestors or local legends who lie there and this led to spirited conversations among the attendees throughout the walk. The organizers received many compliments

on the successful event. One man, who had no local connections at all, said that he just enjoys going on cemetery walks and that this was among the best he'd attended. He noted as well the high quality of some of the stones at Bellevue, particularly those beautifully restored by Grant Fraser.

A good deal of work has indeed been done at the cemetery recently, and the work is ongoing. In addition to the stone cleaning, fallen stones in the older part of the cemetery have been raised; others have been levelled and stabilized, while still others have been rescued from the encroaching woods. All this, in addition to the regular mowing and trimming of bushes, of course requires money, and the cemetery walk was conceived not only to bring Bellevue's history to life but also to raise funds for its upkeep. Donations generated from the walk amounted to approximately \$200. Anyone interested in making tax-deductible donations anytime may direct funds to the Committee Treasurer, Margaret Cripps: msutherlandcrippsw@gmail.com 902-759-4595.

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The spooky winner queen at the recreation dance is Katherine Hefler.



Photo Credit: Melissa A.



Highest royal honours were bestowed on Cody's shop on Halloween night - IMAGINE!



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RIVER JOHN HALLOWEEN 2025



Photo Credit: Melissa A.



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Who wears her yummy on her tummy? Ella does.



Rough ridin' law and order at the Lions Den



Photo Credit: Melissa A.



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