



The Pioneer is published by the River John Community Action Society. It is a not-for-profit community-owned paper.

In Lieu of a Full Winter Carnival, Make Your Own

by Jay Reid

Planning a Winter Carnival during a Nova Scotia winter can be wrought with complexities, most of them weather-related. Snow and ice are necessities, volunteers are vital, and participants mandatory. River John has had its share of successful events. Historically, they were a well-organized assortment of activities that you could look forward to. Get excited for. Make time for. The Carnival was always a winter touchstone that brought families and community together, created memories and offered a reprieve from an occasional brutal winter season. To this day, anytime I take a sip of hot chocolate I am automatically transported to a memory of a Winter Carnival sleigh ride in 1989ish, where I can hear "The Living Years" by Mike and the Mechanics. Where I hated my snow-suit, scalded my mouth, marveled at Clydesdales and froze my fingers. I might have been cold then, but the memories are warm and I now appreciate everything that had to happen to create that experience.

Fast forward a few years - out of the 1989ish. Optimal weather conditions have been few and far between the last decade or more. It seemed like we could always count on snow and ice in the 80s and 90s, making it easier to anticipate the fun, easier to plan.

Nowadays we hope for good weather, good turnouts and especially, good health! The bulk of the 2022 Winter Carnival was unfortunately negated by COVID exposures and wild weather. A few

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Lots more winter photos inside!



Rylan Algarra sledding



Valarie Langille enjoying cross country skiing.

Forest School Opens in Meadowville



A tree planting and habitat creation project along the Caribou River, creating a buffer zone between the river and agricultural land. November 2021

by Kristin Ross

There is no country in the world that has greater access to the outdoors than Canada, yet our youth spend a fraction of the time outdoors as compared to other countries with a similar climate. It is with this in mind that Scott Ross, teacher, experiential educator and entrepreneur, founded the Pictou County Forest School in the spring of 2021

The Pictou County Forest School is a not-for-profit, nature based, experiential education centre for youth. The Forest School shares the belief of many experts and researchers that spending time outdoors benefits youth in a variety of important ways, including physical and mental well-being, performance at school, positive self-esteem and feeling connected to their community and the environment.

Located down a long dirt road on a family

..... Continued on page 2

New Gym Opens in River John - It's Actually Pretty Simple

by Rob Assels

There are many reasons to join a gym. You may want to lose weight. Your doctor may have suggested you get at least two 20-minute aerobic workouts a week to keep your heart healthy. You may want to overcome the winter blahs because exercise helps minimize depression. Or you might want to see what other humans look like after being cooped up for so long because of COVID.

Don't overthink it. River John has a new gym and if you join, you'll find a welcoming group of people who will encourage you to achieve whatever your fitness goals are. The Johonor Gym is on the second floor of the old school. It's run by the River John Cultural and Wellness Co-operative, a non-profit community co-op.

There are currently 20 members, so no fear of not being able to access the equipment you'd like to use. It has treadmills, elliptical machines, stairmasters and standing cycles with aerobic, endurance and distance programs.

Sometimes it's nice to work out alone. At other times it's nice to have a buddy. At the Johonor Gym, you'll be able to find a schedule that works for you. It is open from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., seven days a week.

Because it is a non-profit, a group of volunteers runs it. That's why we can keep the membership fees so low. Any profit generated is re-invested in new equipment. No more driving to New Glasgow in the winter, join the Johonor Gym.



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A New Kind of School in Pictou County: Forest School Opens in Meadowville

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owned woodlot across from Scott's home in Meadowville, the Forest School base camp is nestled in a beautiful hemlock grove. A network of trails that meander through woods, meadows, and along the marshy headwaters of the Caribou River, where many species of plants, animals, birds, and insects can be observed.

Programming at the Forest School is entirely outdoors with the exception of a large canvas tent built on a platform that provides shelter from more extreme weather. There is a wood stove in the tent for warming up during winter months. Every season at Forest School is different. The February/March students are participating in snowshoeing, tapping trees and making maple syrup. Some of the skills learned at Forest School include plant and animal identification, survival skills and shelter building, navigation, nature appreciation, and teamwork. A typical day consists of lessons, hikes, discoveries, quiet time (often spent in hammocks), picnic lunches, free time and lots of games. All sessions conclude with a final expedition where participants get to put their new skills to use.

Regular programming for four- to fourteen-year-olds happens during the week. Students take one



All tied for Gold at the Forest School Winter Olympics! February 2022

day off from public school per week for a five-week session. Groups are divided by age and include a Goslings group (ages 4-7), Foxes (ages 8-11) and Wolves (ages 12-14). A course for girls ages 14 to 17 (Lynxes) is being offered on Saturdays in February and March and Mondays are dedicated to hosting school groups. Starting this winter, Forest School staff are also available to travel to public schools within a one-hour drive of Meadowville to deliver half- or full-day programs to students. The Forest School maintains a staff-to-student ratio of no more than six students per staff member. Staff are all trained in wilderness first aid

and have a background in education.

When Ross started the school he knew he was taking a gamble and really had no idea how the idea would fly. After consulting extensively with the founder of the Guelph Outdoor School in Ontario, (much of his program design has been modelled after this successful school), Ross decided to go for it. He and his team have been surprised and overwhelmed with the extent of government, community and individual support and interest in the new Pictou County Forest School. Grants and donations have been received to help with staffing, facility development, equipment and a scholarship fund. It is the goal of the school to make its programs financially accessible to anyone wishing to participate. The number of volunteers and community members who have come out to lend a hand in one way or another has been impressive.

"People are obviously very excited about the importance of connecting children to nature and believe in what is being done at the Forest School," says Ross. Feedback from students and parents alike has been phenomenal with some students returning session after session. As one student put it when asked to explain what Forest School was like for him, "Picture carrying a 50-pound backpack around all week and then getting to take it off."

For more information or to register you can visit pictoucountyforestschool.com, Pictou County Forest School on Facebook, or by contacting Scott Ross at (506) 292-1778.

Mission of the Pictou County Forest School:

1. To help youth connect with nature in a meaningful way that will leave a lasting impression, thereby developing future environmental stewards.
2. To make learning fun and instill a sense of curiosity and wonder.
3. To help kids become resilient and confident. By teaching life skills including teamwork, communication and decision making, we aim to help students become more successful at school, at home, and in their community.

Habitat for Humanity Building a New Home in Pictou County

by Ed Kennedy

The Pictou County Chapter of Habitat for Humanity is building its first home for a family in need of affordable housing. On a lot donated by the Town of Stellarton, the Chapter plans to break ground in early Spring 2022 and deliver the home to the Partner Family by the end of the year.

Founded in 1992, Habitat for Humanity Nova Scotia is a provincial charitable organization working toward a world where everyone has a decent and safe place to call home. Habitat brings communities together to help families build strength, stability and independence through affordable homeownership. With the help of volunteers, donors and Habitat Partner Families, Habitat provides a solid foundation for better, healthier lives in Nova Scotia and around the world. Since 1992, Habitat for Humanity Nova Scotia has partnered with over 70 families to help them break the cycle of poverty and provide their families with safe, affordable homes.

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River John Old School

by The Bigneys

Another year has come and gone and we are headed in to our fourth year! Although the pandemic has definitely slowed us down we still stayed community strong. With COVID measures in place we managed to hold quite a few events, and took over the Sunday Market which was much enjoyed by all featuring local vendors, food trucks and local music. The Rustic Piper opened, serving locally made Meeting Waters “Skinners Cove” coffee and a large variety of locally made crafts, including macrame, photos, paintings, ceramics, knitted goods, T-shirts, and much more. We also had several very successful take-out dinners. A political debate was held; Public Health came 3 different times to give vaccinations; we also had 2 businesses open offices and we were finally able to open the Johonor Gym which is being enjoyed by all the members. A public auction was held with many items donated to raise funds for the roof, run by our auctioneer, Karan Sidhu. With plans already started for a great 2022 and restrictions hopefully soon easing up, we feel this year is going to be a “BIG ONE.”

The event would not have been possible without donations from Marie Langille and Norma Bailie, and help in the kitchen from Geraldine Titus, Bobbi Bigney and Olivia Matheson. Thankyou all for your help, it was very much appreciated.



A yummy takeout dinner of homemade fish cakes and baked beans was held January 23 at the old River John school . Picking up their takeout dinners from Shelly Bigney were David Steele of Pictou and Norma Baillie of River John. Also pictured is the dinner , once plated at home.

West Branch Hall Renovations

**by Bernadette MacDonald,
Maggie Howatt and Charlie Kennedy**

In early October 2021, volunteers in the West Branch Community put their energies together to replace the supporting beam under the kitchen. Charlie Kennedy and Maggie Howatt were the leads on the project, and Reg Crewe and Bernadette MacDonald managed to help make the job a little less arduous.

The hall, built in 1933 by the community, has a long history of being a meeting place in the West Branch community; it has been, and continues to be, used for everything from dances to fundraisers. Ruth (Tattie) Smith, one of the eldest in the community, with a memory as sharp as a tack, shared some of the history about the hall.

“Square dances have always been popular, but the real heyday for them was between the 1940s and 1960s. There were so many people attending the dances they hung the chairs on hooks on the wall to make floor space for everyone who wanted to dance. Any musicians who came to the dances were welcome to play with the mainstays.” Between 1944 and 1951 the mainstays were Battis Harrington, first violin/fiddle, Sandy Sutherland, second violin/fiddle, Sandy Mingo, banjo, and Ruth (Tattie) Smith , piano. Ruth was 14 years old when she started playing the dances. Two of the callers in those early years were Eddie Tattie and Davy Harbourn.

The room at the back of the hall, referred to as the “back kitchen,” was used to prepare the “lunch” for many events, including those early dances. With the dances starting at around 8:30 p.m., lunch would be served at about 10:30, and the end of the dance could vary from midnight to 2:00 a.m.

When the West Branch School burnt to the ground on March 2, 1951, the hall was used as the school until the new school, built of brick, was completed. The little brick school house still stands today as a private home.



West Branch Hall

The expansion to the hall in 1991/1992 enabled a modern kitchen and washrooms to be added. This expanded the possibilities to host special events and fundraisers like the Maple Syrup/ Pancake Festival each spring that is attended by hundreds. Lloyd McIntosh from Loganville donated the wood for the hall expansion, and Charlie Smith and David Murray cut the logs that were milled at George Chisholm’s lumber mill. Once the lumber was on site, community members helped with the construction.

The hall is now a designated a Comfort Centre in case of emergencies.

With the new girder under the kitchen and the strong community spirit in West Branch, the hall will continue to be an important and essential meeting place for the people of West Branch and surrounding communities.



Charlie coming out of the crawl space—mission accomplished.

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Habitat for Humanity continued from page 2

Formed in 2018, the Pictou County Chapter was created to address the growing need for affordable housing in the communities of Pictou County. Since then, the Chapter Committee has been actively fundraising to generate the necessary funds to support this project. The committee is made up of industry leaders from professions such as Engineering, Real Estate, Marketing, Finance, Social Services and Construction. They are working together with the community and Habitat Nova Scotia to build homes and partner with Habitat Partner Families in need.

Applications from families in need of affordable housing were accepted by Habitat in December 2021 and January 2022. A Partner Family is being chosen that meets a range of eligibility criteria, including level of need, ability to repay a no-interest, no down-payment mortgage and willingness to work in partnership with Habitat on the home construction.

To meet the full fundraising target, the Chapter is seeking additional sponsorship, which can take a number of forms. Habitat home sponsors can make financial donations or gifts-in-kind (GIK) of labour or materials for the build. Donors can also give new and used building materials to the Habitat ReStore in Dartmouth. Since Habitat is a registered charity, sponsors receive charitable donation receipts for monetary or GIK contributions. For more information on the sponsorship program, or on how to get involved as a volunteer, you can contact Ed Kennedy, Chair, Habitat for Humanity Pictou County Chapter, Phone: 613.240.8792, or Email: kennedyeda@gmail.com.

events were able to go forward, but the majority were put on hold for the aforementioned reasons. This was an inopportune development, however, there is reason to be optimistic for its future. The kids. There are more kids in River John than in years past, and they are the key ingredient in a successful winter carnival. The volunteers are here, the kids as well. Now we just need good weather and good health. We owe it to them as a community to build back up the Winter Carnival. To use it as a meeting place for families and the community at large, to congregate and make new lasting memories.

In the meantime, you can make your own memories. COVID might presently prevent larger gatherings, but – if you are able - get out there and enjoy your winter surroundings. Do it alone or in small groups. Do it day or night. The recent storms have given us enough snow to ski, sled, snowshoe and so on. The blizzards have also helped me recall a time when my father managed to convert one of the crazier winters of my life into one of the best winter days I’ve ever had. In lieu of reporting on Winter Carnival events that unfortunately didn’t happen, I’ll briefly expound on a winter activity that was a resounding success.

About 15 years ago or so, we experienced a pretty robust winter. Plenty of snow accompanied by heavy freezing rain. I was home from college for some winter weekend. So was my brother. It was early Saturday morning; I was probably hung over. My father opened my bedroom door and definitively announced, "Today is the Day." Bleary-eyed, I made my way downstairs to see what the old man was talking about.

He was already dressed for a serious winter excursion. He made sure that my brother and I followed suit. Outside the truck was running. In the

back of the truck were 3 GT Sno Racers. It was at this time that I realized how motivated he was to make this day happen. We only owned one GT. So Dad, in his late 40s, with sons in their 20s, went out of his way to “borrow” 2 more sleds so that we could all enjoy the day. We had always loved sledding as a family, but it had been quite some time since we all hit a hill together. I had thought that I had aged out of this kind of activity. Dad was about to prove to my naive self that I had not, and also, that he had not.

The importance of THIS sledding trip was accentuated by the destination. For years and years my father had been driving both my brother and me to hockey in Truro. On almost every trip towards Nuttby we would pass a monstrous hill and lament that ONE DAY, ONE DAY we'll scale it and sled it and be able to say we did. We passed this hill for a decade, and we never ever made a serious attempt to get there. Logically, it would have made more sense to try it when all of us were younger, especially the old man. But maybe we just needed the perfect day to make it happen. Dad knew the day had come, and made sure we knew too.

Upon arrival at the undisclosed location, (we may have been trespassing,) we donned sunglasses because the sun’s glare was so intense. It was the best day. There was a crust of ice on the snow that reflected the sun, making everything kind of sparkle. We marveled for a minute, then made our way. To begin our journey to the top, we had to jump a guard rail on the side of the road, rappel down a long steep embankment, slalom past trees, hop a barbed-wire fence and then lunge over a brook which was 4 feet wide. Two out of three of us did it all perfectly and didn't get wet. My brother’s brook-jumping skills left a little to be desired. Next, we had to traverse a thicket of alders and then cross a snow-covered, windswept field covered with 5 inches of ice. Slips were had. Falls were made. The

trip was beginning to feel more like Homer’s Odyssey than Dad’s GT Trip, but we were loving it more by the minute.

Getting to the top was tough. Finding solid footing was a difficult task, and, all told, it likely took us an hour and 30 minutes to go from the truck to the top. But the payoff was substantial. The view was perfect. We all collapsed into the snow, side by side, cracked a beer and absorbed the power of the moment. I can't remember how long the moment lingered, but we eventually sipped enough beer to become brave enough to try to go down the hill. Normally, in deeper snow, you can sled under control and crash comfortably. On this day we were sledding on pure ice at an extraordinary speed. Dad and Bro had sleds with foot brakes, my GT had some sort of modified ice cream scoop lever device that did nothing to slow my ice rocket. Dad and Bro went at an almost controlled pace, I rocketed by them around Mach 3 with fear in my eyes and a scream on my lips. I was heading for trees way too fast, so I bailed off the sled... and went faster on my snow pants. In order to avoid a collision, I had to dig my elbows into the ice as hard as I could. I blew holes in the elbows of my jacket, cut myself up, and stopped just in time.

Once the adrenaline subsided, we all laughed so hard, tears froze on our faces. We still laugh about it to this day. We continued to sled that day, but it was the journey to the top and the first attempt to sled this monstrous hill that stays with me in vivid technicolor. It was all because of my father, who took a winter day and made sure that we made the most of it. A day with no regrets, a few bruises and memories that'll last 3 lifetimes. So, if you can, be like dad and use this crazy winter to your advantage and make memories.


Just remember to return the GT Sno Racers you stole off some kids’ front lawn.

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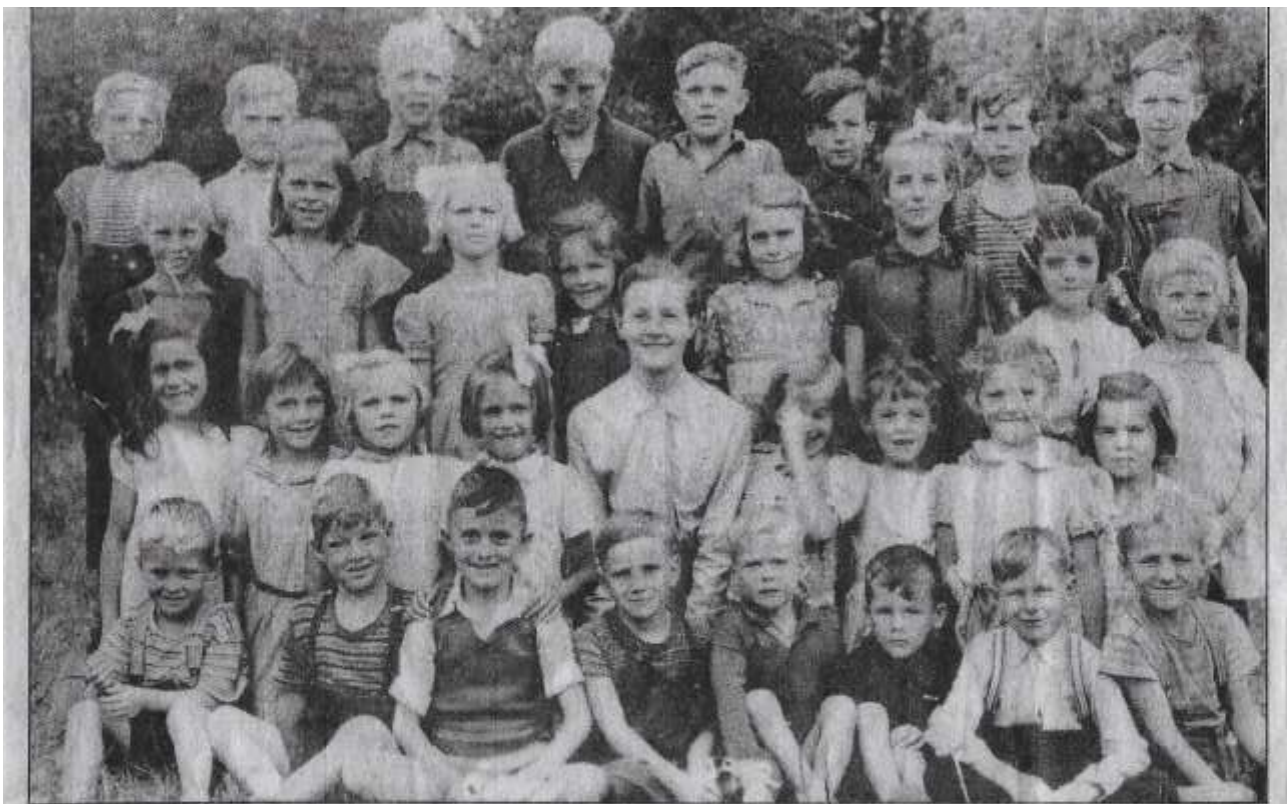
The Mystery of the Village Clock

The mystery of the whereabouts of the village clock continues. In one of the previous year's editions of the Pioneer, we posted the story of the missing clock. The clock was a gift from RJs Ladies Group. It was installed above Fulton's Pharmacy veranda on the Odd Fellows Hall. The movement was made and donated by Chris Gill. The case was designed and built by Douglas Watt, dated September 2, 1990. Sometime in the early 2000s, as the story goes, the clock was damaged in a storm. It was taken down to be repaired and has never been seen since. Sadly, we feel that it was a beloved village symbol which is still missed.

Again, please, we are asking for anyone with information about the clock to contact Dan Ferguson 351-2593.



River John School, 1942



Flashback to yesteryear: This is the River John School in 1942. The teacher was Betty (Munro) Langille and the school contained grades primary, one and two. Front from left: Alvin Heighton, Larry Dewyer, ? Holmes, Raymond Langille, Jackie Langille, Jackie Heighton, Donnie Joudrey, Percy Thompson; second row l-r: Geraldine Murray, Alice Heighton, Myrna (Bubs) Langille, Alice Langille, Betty Munro (teacher), Betty Brown, Grace Langille, Muriel (Puff) Langille, Bertha Elliott; third row l-r: Austin Hiltz, Elsie Fisher, Eleanor Langille, Margie MacLeod, Evelyn Thompson, Jean Langille, Molly Redmond, Elsie Langille; back row l-r: Leo Langille, Leo Shannon, Eddie Langille, Merle Thompson, Aubrey Langille, Berton MacLeod, Victor Heighton, Eugene Shea. (Photo/information courtesy of Bertha (Elliott) Sutherland)

Editor's note:

We love printing old school photos. This photo from 1942 was submitted by Ian MacLean ,West Branch, and was originally printed in the Pictou Advocate.

In the last issue, we also printed a school photo from 1954-55. However, in that one we had no names and wanted our readers to submit the names as a contest. Sadly, we had no entries, so if you still have your copy, it is not too late to submit. Send the names to our address PO Box 161, River John or pioneereditors@outlook.com . You will get recognition in the next issue of the Pioneer. Thank you.

The Year the School Bus Got Stuck in the Snow

by Joan MacLeod

Many of us have seen photos on Face book of children in the 1940s and 1950s walking to school in a snow storm. These are usually accompanied by an assertion of how pampered “modern day” children are. School is cancelled at the first sign of dangerous conditions.

I have been trying to find information about an event that happened to our high school children over 60 years ago in 1960 (although some people think it was 1961). Do you see my problem? I am trying to find out the facts and there seem to be few reliable witnesses or perhaps too many! But remember, everyone can be at the same event and recall it differently. So, this is simultaneously a version of events which I am trying to cobble together and also a call for submissions to clarify.

Here is the story: In 1960, West Pictou District High school was planned to be completed to take in all the rural students who did not fall into the catchment areas for the towns. In hindsight, it was accommodating the baby boomers who had swelled the ranks and were now of high school age. Until this they attended the nearest town schools. East Pictou District High school had been built in Sutherland's River and was by then established. The only trouble was that when September came, the school was still not completed. The authorities, in their wisdom, decide to operate two shifts out of East Pictou. The local kids went from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. and the West Pictou kids went from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. All extracurricular activities were cancelled. The thing is, there was no causeway at that time, so the buses had to travel through Lyon's brook and Alma, New Glasgow and the old highway to Sutherland's River. Our children from River John who were the furthest away had a two-and-a-half -hour commute each way.

In December 1960, on the way home from East Pictou, the bus got stuck in a drift in Seafoam, near

Henderson's. There are a number of Henderson families along there, but there is a big gully just past where Jamie Craig lives now. My brother Ned was on the bus. The driver was Bob Bain (since deceased). Ned's friend, John Zinck, thinks they were on the bus for 6 hours until the plow came along to rescue them. What did they do? Did they sing? Did they tell stories? Were they hungry?

I remember the event from the safety of home. Word had come through about this. So someone must have called around. I remember Ned getting home at 10 p.m. and being given the next day off school.

Several reliable sources have since told me that, although it is a great story that the poor kids were on such a long journey back from East Pictou, in fact it is not true. They left in January 1961 from West Pictou in Lyons Brook in a snow storm and were indeed stuck in the drift for 6 hours.

(Editor's note: perhaps I have spent too much time on River John's famed "Liars Bench".)

So, if you are one of the people who was in that school bus on that fateful day in 1961, please feel free to write in and tell us your version of the event.

A picture would be wonderful, but I doubt that any exist.

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Building Iron bridges

by Rev Glen Matheson

What an exciting day when this bridge opened in River John around 1900. All across our nation water - rivers, swamps, lakes and oceans - separated people and then a bridge was built. It was such a normal part of life years ago to be separated. At River John and hundreds of other villages you'd need to cross the river by boat or on the ice get to the other side of the village. To literally drive across with a horse and buggy without delay would be so exciting!

There are very few of these old iron bridges left. My grandfather used to chuckle remembering the sign at each end of the iron bridge at Indian Brook where I grew up, saying, "Walk your horse." In other words, no speeding. Go gently. Let the bridge adapt to the load, slowly. Over the last century these remaining iron bridges have certainly been reinforced, but what a marvel in technology and industry. These bridges literally opened up the world and sped up travel significantly.

In the distance at the left is St. George's Presbyterian Church. Going to church would be so different without a bridge. The same with a funeral. If the funeral was on one side and the cemetery was on the other, what a difference having a bridge made. Likewise, shopping, visiting family, going to a dance or hauling logs. Everything depended on how to get across the river.

Each one had a cement abutment built at each end, and this river was so wide that a heavy stone abutment needed to be built in the middle. Cement would be mixed by hand and poured by wheelbarrow. Hard work by strong workers. The iron beams no doubt came by rail or by boat, but then had to be hauled to the site by teams of horses. No giant cranes, no hydraulics or machines.

When the church up home was built they said the builders had three tools: a hammer, a saw and a saucer. The hammer and saw are obvious, but they'd level the beams by putting a saucer with water in it on the beam. Think about building a bridge with the same technology.

Tomorrow I'll move down off Fitzpatrick Mountain. My week at the chalet will end but work has not yet begun replacing the furnace in the manse, so I'll continue this mild inconvenience of being 'homeless.' But what will not be inconvenient will be the journey. Each day, whatever direction I travel or wherever the cat and I stay, there are challenges that weather will throw at us like snow and ice and mud, but how rare an occasion for one to travel and be required to get out of the vehicle. Think about that.

Go back a century. Like tractors years ago with an iron seat and no cab, working outdoors in rain or bitter frost was not relaxing. Neither was travel. A horse and buggy had little or no protection in the rain. A horse and sleigh in winter was limited by what a horse could haul you through. If the road had not been 'broken' and a horse could not haul a sleigh through the show drifts, you didn't go.

Early this week social media showed lots of stores with empty shelves, especially for fresh vegetables. Trucks had been shut down for several days with blizzards, so shelves were bare. A century ago shelves went bare often, even with basic essentials. How blessed (and how spoiled) we are when empty shelves are almost unheard of.

That's why the railroad coming made such a difference. If your village got the railway, the village grew. If the railway line missed your village,

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Reducing Barriers to Virtual Care in Pictou County

Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library, the Aberdeen Health Foundation and Nova Scotia Health have launched a pilot project to help people in Pictou County access virtual care. Known as Virtual Care @Your Library, this project is part of each organization’s commitment to improving health equity by reducing barriers to services and resources.

There are now computers and mobile devices connected to broadband for people to use at three of the libraries in Pictou County – New Glasgow, River John and Westville. These devices are set up in safe and secure rooms for confidential virtual appointments.

Additionally, the library staff have been trained on the virtual care technology and processes.

“Everyone working at these libraries is very excited about this pilot project because it is an opportunity to provide people with direct assistance accessing virtual care,” said Eric Stackhouse, Chief Librarian at Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library. “It is part of our commitment to making health care and other services more accessible.”

There are currently over 10,000 people in Pictou County who do not have a primary care provider and are on the Need a Family Practice Registry. They have been sent an invitation to sign up for VirtualCareNS.

VirtualCareNS is an innovative virtual program that enables people on the Need a Family Practice Registry to access a family doctor or nurse practitioner online through a computer or mobile device.

For people who may experience barriers accessing virtual care appointments, from comfort using technology to not owning a computer or having internet, the library staff can help. They can assist people who are having trouble signing up for VirtualCareNS, and with logging into the app.

The rooms can also be used by people who have a virtual appointment scheduled with their family physician, nurse practitioner, or specialist.

“Our goal is to make sure that technology is not a barrier to accessing primary health care,” said Michelle Ferris, Executive Director of the Aberdeen Health Foundation. “The Foundation has a particular interest in investing for equity in access to health services and worked to bring these partners together to further its vision of a Pictou County where every person has the oppor-



Sheila Newell-Fagan, Branch Assistant at the Westville Library, assisting library patron, Albert MacDonald, with accessing Virtual Care online.
Photo credit: Christine Whelan-Hachey

tunity to attain their best health.”

Nova Scotia Health’s Innovation Hub will be assisting the Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library to evaluate this proof-of-concept program to identify what type of supports people need to access virtual care, including having a reliable internet connection, access to smart devices, and technical assistance. Through this evaluation, if people indicate that they see a value in accessing virtual care services in a community location, there is potential for expansion of this program over time to additional communities.

“Over the past two years, we have seen positive results from the implementation of innovative, virtual care solutions for Nova Scotians. Having community-based support at libraries in Pictou County to access VirtualCareNS and other virtual care appointments with health care providers is an important option for those experiencing challenges using virtual care from home,” said Dr. Gail Tomblin Murphy, vice president of Research, Innovation and Discovery, and Chief Nurse Executive at Nova Scotia Health. “We are pleased to be a partner to establish this much-needed service, and we look forward to learning about patients’ experience with this new program at the library.”

Residents of Pictou County can pre-book space and technology for virtual appointments at the libraries in New Glasgow, River John and Westville by telephone, through email, or by stopping by in person. The Virtual Care@Your Library program is a free service for the public.

For more information, please contact:

Eric Stackhouse 902-755-6031
estackhouse@parl.ns.ca
Michelle Ferris 902-752-7600 x 4442
michelle.ferris@nshealth.ca

..... Building iron bridges continued from page 5

your village declined.

In the late 1800s Millsville was larger than Scotsburn, but the train station being built in Scotsburn in 1889 led to the growth of Scotsburn and the decline of Millsville. Around 1850 the first route surveyed for the railroad showed the train station being built at the corner of Scotsburn Road and Campbell Hill Road. Wherever the train station was built normally became the center of the community, which is why Bethel Church was built at that corner in 1862, to be at the centre of the village. Several starts and failed attempts to build the railway led to change in the route and the train station being built 30 years later where the fire station now stands, quite a distance away from Bethel Church and the built school beside it.

The route for the Short Line railway was changed so that the train would go into River John (and the hope by the government of that day to gain votes from that community either as a reward for past votes or the hope of new votes if they had not voted heartily for them in the past).

With the railway came growth, including the building of a large (at that time, complicated) bridge across the River John.

So this morning, wherever your travels take you, may your journey be safe, and comfortable. May you not have to row across a river or wonder if the ice is safe, and then “find a ride” on the other side. We have come a long way. And yes, we live in a good land, at a good time in history.

Pray with me, please: Lord, in our lifetime we’ve seen so many changes. For paved roads and gravel roads with bridges, thanks be to God. For plows and graders, winter and summer, maintaining our roads, and vehicles now that rarely have flats or breakdowns, thanks be to God. For being ‘indoors’ in our vehicles, not exposed to snow or rain in our faces, not having to worry about the horse, we give thanks. Mud season in spring is not always fun, but thank-you that we don’t need to switch from sleigh to buggy and back again as our weather changes. For all we have, especially our current transportation system, may we be truly thankful. It’s not perfect, but we’ve come a long way! Amen



View of the old bridge, looking from the west side of the river. The old wharf can be seen in the foreground of the photo. Our present bridge makes a wide curve around starting close to where the old wharf was. The old abutment was removed when Roger’s Landing was created.

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A Mi'kmaq Celebration of Life Tradition

by Paul Martin

Following my Silent City Cemetery article, (Pictou Advocate; July 2021), I was asked and agreed to contribute three pieces per year to the River John Pioneer. My hope is that each article will inform the reader of an interesting aspect of Mi'kmaq culture, tradition or belief. Whenever possible I will include information that is pertinent to the North Shore of Nova Scotia and in particular the area of what the Mi'kmaw people called Katjipokoek, (a lonely river flowing through the wilderness), or River John.

While there is so much to write about, one has to begin somewhere and so I have decided to write about, not the beginning but rather the end of, one's journey here. In our culture an important and interesting part of celebrating a person's life is what is called a Salite'. In English this Mi'kmaw word translates to "charity auction." A Salite' is synonymous with a funeral and usually takes place immediately following a funeral celebration at the local community hall, (or virtually over a longer period of time due to COVID), to raise money for the bereaved family. I have been to many Salite's in my lifetime but only recently did I fully realize and was surprised to learn that this event, as far as I know, is held mainly in Mi'kmaw communities. It is a tradition however that would work well in small close-knit communities such as River John.

My parents, Ben and Jean Martin of the Millbrook First Nation in Truro, were at one time residents of this village and long after they moved back to Truro, they often spoke fondly of the River John people and how they were always made to feel welcome. My mother's Salite' was held prior to Christmas 2021 where money was raised to help our family pay for all funeral expenses and several more related costs such as travel, accommodations and food, etc. As with all deaths in our Indigenous community, the Millbrook First Nation people came together and were instrumental in easing the financial burden during a time of deep mourning. It is without a doubt a tradition that can easily be adopted by any community and it would please my mother to know that a Mi'kmaw tradition is being recognized and practiced on a wider basis in order to help those in time of needed support.

The Salite' auction items are usually treasured items that are donated by members of the local community and as in any auction they are put on display for viewing prior to the start of the event at



Ben and Jean Martin, Paul's parents

the local community hall. At my mothers Salite', community members gathered and offered up some of their most treasured possessions like handmade baskets, beaded earrings, quilted blankets, native artwork, moccasins, clothing articles and many other items. The range of goods is wide and varied and can also include anything from power tools to a case of Coca Cola or a pair of sunglasses. Often a monetary donation is offered in lieu of an article. The Salite' auctioneer is a community volunteer and is helped by other volunteers to keep track of necessary logistics as in any public auction. In this way it is guaranteed that all funds raised go directly to the family of the deceased. There is often a meal, or traditional "feast" as we call it, prepared by volunteers or it could simply be coffee, tea, and snacks served prior to or during the auction. Through it all there is ample time for all to socialize and catch up with family and friends.

The Salite' is a fantastic way to bring the community together. It is a meaningful and supportive way to help the family and it is a fun, enjoyable and relaxing way to alleviate the pain often associated with losing a loved one. There is much to learn from the Mi'kmaq and, for that matter, all cultures. Aside from the name, the Salite' is an event that is not completely foreign to the non-Indigenous population and so it is one that can easily be adopted and practiced. Try it! It's a win, win event.

Wela'liog (Thank you to all).

Note: Mi'kmaq pronunciation of Salite' Salite' is pronounced sa-lee-day. In Mi'kmaq, the i is pronounced as an e, the t is pronounced as a d and the e is pronounced as ay. I am not a fluent speaker by any means but I do have a small grasp of the language. Paul.

How I Came to River John as their Presbyterian Minister

by Reverend Jeanette Fleischer

I was a graduating student at Knox College in Toronto when it came time to send out profiles to vacant churches. As I never left my home in Wyoming, Ontario, it was decided that I would circle an area of where I wanted to begin my ministry. At Knox there were three students from Nova Scotia who, after a lot of persistence, thought I should apply to churches there. So my profile went to River John/Toney River, and Westminster, New Glasgow. I declined Westminster so pursued the other profile. What a surprise when I received a call at Knox from the Reverend Kenneth MacLeod inquiring about my sincerity in pursuing the Pastoral Charge. I agreed, and after many phone calls I was invited to come to Nova Scotia for a weekend to meet with both churches. I arrived back in Ontario and a few days later a phone call came from Reverend MacLeod with an invitation to come and preach for a call. That I did, and a few days later was invited to come and be their minister. Wow! God does work in mysterious ways as my idea of being in Ontario for my first charge was blown out the window. But that is what God does. His plans, not mine.

So began my ministry in River John/Toney River and I could not have asked for a better place to be. My late husband and I were welcomed as if we had been there all our lives. The people were kind and supportive. My ten years there were fulfilling and exciting, and it was a very difficult decision to leave. The community that was built between Salem United Church and St. John the Baptist was so meaningful.

Our first Christmas in the manse was one of my favorite memories. Little did I know that when Session approved having an open house there, that our home would be transformed into a Christmas dream. All the workers who came to decorate, and then the crowds that walked through, (boots and shoes in a bag,) were amazing. Also, the time that the late Marguerite Grant and I rode horses in the River John parade and won first prize for best riders, was hilarious. Nobody recognized us! There are so many that I cannot write about as this is probably long enough but thanks, River John and Toney River, for the memories.

Blessings to Reverend Anje as she continues the ministry there, and may God bless each and every one.

Merv and I look forward to another trip east, hopefully next year. Stay safe and healthy everyone!



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Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor may be emailed to PioneerEditors@outlook.com

A new name for The Pioneer?

Dear Madam:

I very much appreciate and enjoy your publication and am always delighted when a new issue is delivered.

On page 4 of the fall 2021 issue, in her article, "The Pioneer Still Wants to Hear from You," Joan MacLeod asks, "Should we change our name in keeping with modern sensibilities?"

My answer is decidedly not. The name is part of the heritage of the area, as well as the publication. The people who arrived here were indeed pioneers, settlers and colonists, that is fact. Changing the name does not change history, but does contribute to the erosion of truth. There was nothing wrong with being a pioneer, the people who arrived as such made the difficult and challenging decision to follow the opportunities set in motion by government and circumstance long before they settled. The history of all peopled nations and states has been one of conquest, colonialism and conflict in some shape or form. To be sure this was not without sometimes dire consequence. It becomes hard to judge such events many centuries later holding the 'colonialists' up to current standards.

Please keep the name and do not bow to the 'politically correct' revisionists. The paper has had this name since the 1850s. Should we also then change the name of River John? Of Pictou County? Of the Pioneer 10 spacecraft? Of Pioneer Electronics? Please let the name stand, it reflects the truth and if for no other reason, serves as a point of discourse.

Eric Allen, West Branch

To the Editor:

In the fall issue of The Pioneer, there was a column entitled, "The Pioneer Still Wants to Hear from You," in which you asked if The Pioneer should change its name, given that "pioneer" refers to "the colonial settlers." I would like the name to be changed because I feel it gives the impression that colonial settlers were the first people to come here, which is not true. Mi'kmaq people lived in this part of Turtle Island (North America) for thousands of years before Europeans arrived. Many early settlers survived because of the assistance they received from Mi'kmaq people. I also think the name is an uncritical reference to colonialism which was based on the egregious notion by the leaders of European Nations that it was right for them to take over lands around the world, set up colonial governments in them and plunder them with little regard for the culture or local governing systems of the people who already inhabited those lands. I don't know if it does or not, but if "The Pioneer" refers to people who settled here under the British Empire in particular, then the presence of the Acadian settlers in this area before the expulsion, (and maybe some who somehow managed to stay afterwards,) is also ignored. You asked for suggestions for a new name, if the name is to change. I thought about this and the image of blue herons fishing along the river at sunset came to mind, but it was my partner, June Daley, who came up with the name, "Sunset Watch." I think this would be a good name and could be accompanied by an image of herons at sunset. The Mi'kmaw name for this place could also be included in the title page. This name could be Kajipukwek or Kwejpukwek. I could investigate further to see which name we should use. Thank you very much for considering these suggestions.

Catherine Hughes

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The MacKay Road/ James MacKay Road (Toney River) Fiasco

Dear Madam;

In reference to the Fall 2021 issue of The Pioneer, page 28, there is a map which says, "Compiled by Municipality of Pictou County October 2021". Here lies the problem: a road listed as the James MacKay Road has two names, the other being the MacKay Road.

This has been going on far too long and it is time to fix the mistake. Someone arbitrarily put James MacKay Road on maps as a through road without doing their history or homework or even consulting the people living on said road.

The signs at the end of the road I live on (the north end) on Route Six (Sunrise Trail) read MacKay Road, one to the west of the road and one to the east of the road; they have been there for a very long time and are still there today. There are no signs at either end that reference the road being the James MacKay Road.

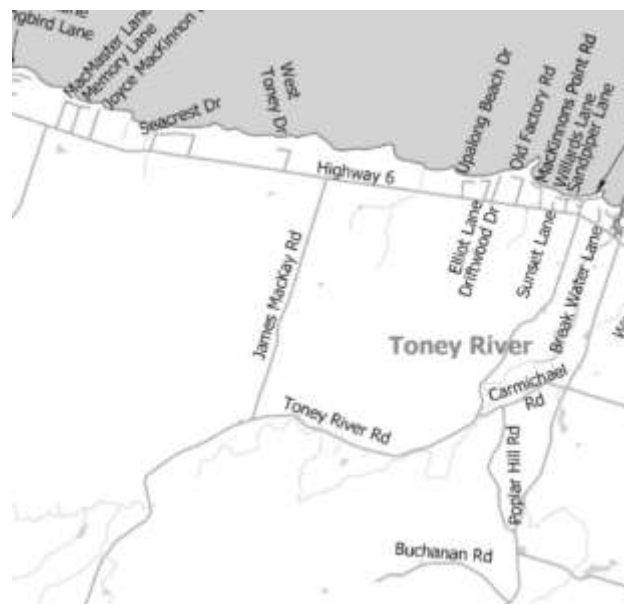
The south end of the road that branches off the Toney River Road - the Mill Road, (the James in days gone by,) used to have signs indicating that it was the James MacKay Road. But there are no longer any signs or support posts present; when they disappeared, I do not know. Only the Department of Transportation can remove both the posts and signs. MacKay Road pointing NNE towards Route Six only goes 0.3 kilometers and

about one hundred years ago turned left and ran along the property lines and continued through to the Johnson Road in a mostly westerly direction. The remainder of the road (2.4 k) towards Route Six was and still is known as the MacKay Road according to the signage at the Sunrise Trail.

I probably could have obtained more information from Pictou Registry of Deeds, if Premier McNeil had not eliminated a lot of that office staff.

Reference: Atlantic Canada Back Road Atlas (Map Art Publishing Corp) Page 53 (key 68-L). They refer to it as the James MacKay Road. Who do you suppose didn't do their homework! I suspect the gentleman in 1879 knew what he was doing.

Incorrect reference: Property Map titled "HODSON" 11E10-X3 at close to or approximately to Control Surveys Monument #6673. There is a road branching North from the Toney River Road, (the Mill Road in days gone by,) called the James MacKay Road on the map which is incorrect; this road was known as Johnson Road. It runs north to the junction of the James MacKay Road and continues on to Route Six, the Sunrise Trail. It is unusual according to my other property maps to have the roads named, but someone made a mistake on this map.



Reference: Property Map titled "SEAFOAM" 11/15-R1 does not list the name of any roads. Base compilation spring 1976 from aerial photographs flown in July, October 1973 1974, project 2208000 LRIS date printed April 6, 1987.

Verifiable information and comments are welcome.

Rennie MacKenzie

Editorial

Belonging

by Joan MacLeod

We hope you enjoy this issue of the Pioneer. Each issue takes hours of time by our production team and other contributors. We feel proud of what we have produced and hope you enjoy it. We welcome a new contributor, Paul Martin. Besides the usual historical sketches and community organizations updates, this issue has three letters to the editor. Two of the letters have opposing views which provide us with food for thought and an opportunity to think about our origins and our name.

My sister Diane, in her article*, “No Place Like Home,” relates how much she loves being in River John, where everyone knows her by name. I recall an incident which took place when I first moved back to River John, after having been away for 29 years. I was going through a difficult time with a relationship breakup and I stumbled into Salem Church. Ruth MacLeod, Robert’s mother, greeted me with a friendly, “Hi Joan, how are you today?” It is hard to describe the feeling of comfort this gave me to be recognized by someone who had known me since childhood.

I had been living away in other towns and cities, most recently, London, England. There was something wonderful and liberating to live where no one knew you or cared what you did or who you were, especially as a fiery youth in the 70s! It had come full circle to be embraced by someone from my past and I had a feeling of belonging.

Unfortunately, our Welcome Wagon visits have had to be suspended due to COVID. Although we welcomed quite a few newcomers to our community, there are more and more arriving all the time. We can each do our part to reach out and be friendly and hospitable to our neighbours and extend a “helping hand.” Everyone deserves to feel that they belong here.

But, how much harder it has been for the last two years. We are naturally social beings, some of us more so than others. It feels unnatural and restrictive to have to isolate to prevent the spread of the deadly COVID virus and its latest variant. It is even more frustrating that we have obeyed the rules, isolated, sanitized, masked and “Stayed the blazes home,” and it still continues to spread among us. No wonder there is resistance and protests. People are fed up. Yet, we are entreated to bear with it just a little bit longer, perhaps get another booster dose, and we will be through the pandemic by this summer. It may be wishful thinking.

We in northern Nova Scotia, however, have in the past had low numbers and relative freedom, which other areas have not. Also, in this area, we are blessed with an abundance of outdoor space where we can safely enjoy winter activities such as cross-country and downhill skiing, snowshoeing, skidooing and skating. And this year on February 16th there was a first-time event, a Full Moon Walk - ski, or snowshoe on the trail next to the Legion. What fun! An enthusiastic group enjoyed the fresh air and exercise while others stayed home and cheered for Canada at the Winter Olympics.

Be kind, be neighbourly, we all belong.

* Due to lack of space, the article “No Place Like Home” has been held over to the next issue.

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Community Announcements

Meals on Wheels Update

Joanne Wilkins has confirmed that Melanie Cote will be the new volunteer manager for Meals on Wheels, beginning in October. Anyone who wishes to apply for the service may contact Melanie anytime after the middle of September, at (902) 899 6750. Melanie plans to contact participants who are already on her list to introduce herself and update contact information. This is expected to take place during the last two weeks of September. Meals are delivered to seniors on Wednesdays from October until March for a nominal charge. A team of volunteers is needed to deliver the meals. Thank you, Melanie, for coming forward to maintain this valuable community service.

Roger’s Landing

We are excited to announce the re-opening of Roger’s Landing on the May long weekend (May 23rd). Please be advised some of our rules and regulations will be changing. Keep an eye out for updates on our new Facebook page: Roger’s Landing. Here’s to another year of safe boating!



Community Food Bank

River John Food Bank Society is pleased to announce that it will begin Food Bank operations and food distribution on Monday, February 21, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Lions Den across from the Library in River John. Please drop in to pick up a food hamper or contact us at riverjohnfoodbank@gmail.com if you need delivery. If you have any questions, please contact the Distribution Co-ordinator, Ann, at 902-324-2898. We plan to operate every Monday between 1 p.m. and 4 p.m.; food donations may be dropped off in that time period, or through other arrangements with Co-ordinator Ann.

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The Pioneer is published by the River John Community Action Society

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The views expressed in this newspaper are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the editorial board.

The Pioneer is distributed throughout the BOK 1N0 postal area which is primarily River John and West Branch. We welcome any articles or pictures from any of our newspaper friends and areas. Contributions to the next issue should be sent to the editors. Please send text files and pictures as separate attachments. Text should have the bare minimum of formatting. Photos should be 400-1200 pixels wide, and be accompanied by a list of captions.

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Full Moon Snowshoe/Cross-Country Ski/Walk 2022



Thirty-five people turned out in perfect conditions for a walk/snowshoe/cross-country ski under the full moon on February 16th, at the River John Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 108. Photo by Carol Smith

by Elaine Falconer

When we were asked to put on a COVID-compliant event for Winter Fun River John 2022, we wanted to do something different. By we, I mean Valarie Langille, Lynn MacLeod and I. In January, we had cross-country skied under the full moon, and enjoyed it so much, we knew we had to organize one for the community.

We wanted to make it so that any skill level would feel comfortable participating in our event, so we made enjoying the outdoors under the full moon more important than the distance covered. Our format was that we would all leave the River John Legion at 7 p.m., go for half-an-hour, and turn around and come back, regardless of distance. Up-

on return, we would go into the Legion for prize draws and snacks.

We received a lot of positive feedback from our advertisements and were hopeful that our event would be well-attended. Imagine how pleased we were when 35 people came out to support the event. We had many locals as well as visitors from East Loon Lake, New Glasgow, Pictou, and Mead-
 owville.

Even though the moon was obscured by a cloudy sky, the trail conditions were perfect. Some skied, most chose not to wear snowshoes and did the trek in boots. Most people had headlamps to light the way. The temperature was -6C with low wind speeds.



Georgie Manning, our youngest walker, and Faith Mulholland are on their way back to the Legion for prizes and snacks. Faith won a bottle of Partridgeberry jam. Yum!

Thanks for coming out and supporting this event, we had a lot of fun. If you missed this one, we have decided we are definitely doing this again. Thanks also to the businesses and people who donated prizes, (Yap's Place Restaurant and Lismore Sheep Farm).

Please enjoy our pictures.



Hon. Karla MacFarlane
 MLA, Pictou West

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Angus and Ellie Falconer spending a snow day in the woods. Photo: Elaine Falconer



MacDonald's Cove. Photo by Lynda Manning





Two-year-old Crewe Reid enjoys a cozy nap in his hammock while his Dad (Jay Reid), Nanny (Valarie Langille), and Sheree Fitch tell stories around the fire.



Christiane Gill's cats wanting to go outdoors or admiring the snow? Photo: Christiane Gill



Brooklynne Cameron sledding in Seafoam with Clyde



William & George Cripps with the snowman they built.



Valarie Langille and Sharon MacLean at Horse pasture Falls



Pat and Kayla Mulholland, children Faith-Ann and Trey, coasting on the river. Photo by Christiane Gill



Brooklynne and Ellie's snowman on Saturday February 5, 2022



William, George and Isabel Cripps enjoying the snow fort their dad made for them.



Angus and Ellie Falconer with headlamps going night snowshoeing. Angus said he wanted to go because it was something interesting you could say about yourself.



Brooklynne and Ellie's snowman on Monday February 7, 2022



Ann Patriquin cross-country skiing in Seafoam



Audrey Weatherby and Elaine Falconer cross-country skiing



Blair Falconer out for a winter stroll with son Mav Falconer



Cathe MacLean with the head high snow drift in her front yard. Photo: Jan 14th by Cathe 's cell.



Eion, Ellie, Brooklynne and Angus having hot chocolate and gingersnaps at the deer blind. Photo: Elaine Falconer



Eion Cameron with his snowman



Ethel Langill skiing



Our Scottish Highland cows enjoying the snow storm on Feb.5th. Photo submitted by Gillian Crawford, Lismore Sheep Farm, River John



Ski doo-er doing a “pop-a-wheely”



Snow angels: Making snow angels is a good way to give them a rest on the way home. Photo: Elaine Falconer



Ashley and Mike Schouten are delighted to announce the birth of their son, Sebastian James Schouten on November 30, 2021, at 1:40 p.m. Baby Sebastian weighed in at 7.5 lbs, length 20 1/4 inches.

Proud grandparents are Terry and Lisa Redmond, and Willem and Nicolet Schouten.



Brittany and Matt Boss welcomed their first baby, Maxwell Gowan Boss, on Sunday January 16, 2022, at 10:22 p.m.. Maxwell was delivered at the IWK Health Centre, weighing 6 lbs. 15 oz. and 20.75 inches long. He was welcomed by all of his friends and family and his proud grandparents, Gowan and Cindy MacGregor, Terri and Chris Waldron, and Greg Boss and Marlies van der Horst. Maxwell is already looking forward to his first trip to his mom's hometown, River John.



Ethyn MacLellan leading his horses in from the pasture, "Lainey" (left), and "Jae" (right). Photo submitted by Krysta MacLellan



Rylan Algarra getting vaccine at fire hall



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90-year-old Frances Sutherland, David Sutherland's mother, out skating with her 5 great-grandchildren, William, George, Isabel and Charlotte Cripps and their cousin Lily. Frances had previously cleared the snow from the pond!



Rylan Algarra and mom Melisa enjoying the pond

Read by the Sea 2022

Organizers of Read by the Sea 2022 plan to hold the annual summer literary festival in person after the COVID-19 pandemic forced cancellation of the 2020 event, followed by a pivot to a virtual festival last year. “Fingers crossed that things will be improved by June,” said committee member Lana MacEachern, adding that safety is paramount to the volunteer committee. “Whatever happens, the stellar line-up for 2022 is not to be missed.” she added.

So far, the July 2 MainStage authors include Afua Cooper, Poet Laureate for Halifax Regional Municipality; Jon Tattrie, a mainstay of Nova Scotia literature and author of the popular *Peace by Chocolate*; Lawrence Hill, whose works, including *The Book of Negroes* and *The Illegal*, have won him Canada’s highest literary accolades; and Morgan Murray, author of the acclaimed novel, *Dirty Birds*.

Lana Shupe will read from her children’s book, *The Lonely Little Lighthouse*, at the July 1 festival for children, WordPlay, held at Mabel Murple’s Book Shoppe & Dreamery. The name of the second WordPlay author will be released upon confirmation.

Shupe’s book came about partly through her participation some years ago in Pitch the Publisher,

a continuing festival event that allows authors to publicly present their manuscripts to a panel of publishers, (like Dragons’ Den). Pitch the Publisher 2022 will take place on the morning of July 2 at the River John Legion. It will be accompanied by a virtual component due to the nationwide attention it drew in 2021. Interested authors should visit the festival website at www.readbythesea.ca for information on how to apply. Spectators are welcome.

WordPlay is followed the same day, July 1, by OnWords, a brand-new event for middle grade and teen readers. The featured authors include Lisa Harrington, author of the River John-based young adult novel *The Big Dig*, as well as *Rattled*, *The Goodbye Girls*, and more. Lawrence Hill - in the first of his two appearances at the festival - will read from his middle grade novel, *Beatrice and Croc Harry*.

The featured authors’ books will be sold on-site during their readings, and the authors will be available to sign books and meet their fans. As well, sets of books by two of the authors will be available soon to loan to area book clubs. To request the books, visit www.readbythesea.ca, contact your local branch of Pictou Antigonish Regional Library, or, in River John, reach out to Gloria Thompson at (thompsg@gmail.com).



June 30, the first day of the festival, features Story Walks led by members of the River John Historical Society; a writing workshop entitled Making a Scene: Putting the Narrative in Non-Fiction, led by Stephen Kimber, award-winning writer, editor, broadcaster, professor and director at King’s College School of Journalism; Open Mic hosted by Pictou County Writers’ Group and open to all writers; and the popular Family Storytelling Campfire hosted by Caldera Distilling.

More information will be furnished as it is confirmed.

Anyone wishing to volunteer with the festival please contact volunteer coordinator Gloria Thompson.

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At the Library, March 2022

by Trecia Schell,
Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library

Finally, spring is around the corner and new beginnings too! This month we welcome Wilma van der Veen, as our new Managing Branch Assistant with the River John Library. All are welcome to drop on by, and say 'hi!'. Wilma was a volunteer with the RJC@P Society for several years, along with many other local community organizations. We are very fortunate to have Wilma join us at the library

The Winter/Spring Author Readings series (& Illustrated presentations) continue on Wednesday evenings at 7:00 pm. All these presentations are held online via ZOOM webinar (with Closed Captioning (CC) available), and are also offered via teleconference by phone. Coming up in March, we explore the beautiful "Waterfalls of Nova Scotia" in all seasons, with author, adventurer and photographer – Benoit Lalonde on Wednesday March 9, at 7:00pm. And Genevieve Graham will be joining us on Wednesday April 13 at 7:00pm to share her newest historical romance novel, "Bluebird", (a dazzling novel set during the Great War and post-war Prohibition about a young nurse, a soldier, and a family secret that binds them together for generations to come). For full program details and information, please visit the PARL events calendar online, at www.parl.ns.ca.

Missing programs at the library? Well, we miss you too! We look forward to our Book Club, and NFB Film Club resuming at the library in March. For more details, and to register, please contact the River John Library, ((902) 351-2599; riverjohn@parl.ns.ca). And if you have some programming suggestions to share, please let us know! Looking for some crafting fun? We have Take & Make home crafting kits available at all our libraries - for all ages. Drop by and pick one up today to 'craft away' the winter blues. And new this spring, we look forward to starting a Seed Exchange Library. If you have seeds to spare, please let Wilma know.

And this June, we'll be celebrating our 20+1 Anniversary at the River John Library! Yes, it's hard to believe the River John Library was opened 21 years ago this June. Stay tuned for more details soon on some special activities at the library around June 16, 2022.

And a few more changes at the library,

In February 2022, the computer and desk in the



Photo caption: Barbara Acker, Branch Assistant (left), with Wilma van der Veen, Managing Branch Assistant (right), at the River John Library.

River John Library's Community Office was replaced, and updated with accessible equipment. Also this February, the River John Library became one of three designated public library sites in a pilot project sponsored by the Aberdeen Hospital Foundation, NS Health and Virtual Care NS, to assist people in Pictou County who are currently registered with the 'Need a Family Doctor Waiting List' to access the online Virtual Care services. The Library's Community Office is available for reservations to meet with a medical specialist or healthcare provider online, in a secure, safe environment. In addition, we can help you find the details to register on the 'Need a Family Doctor Waiting List', and help you open the technology to attend your medical appointment via Virtual Care NS (Maple), in the library's Community Office.

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 through to Saturdays. You can also follow us on Twitter, find us on Facebook, and visit us online at www.parl.ns.ca.

Trecia Schell is the Community Services Librarian, and Branch Librarian - Books-by-Mail, River John, Stellarton & Trenton Public Libraries

Book Review

"The Last Time I Saw Her"

by Margaret Cripps

Set in our beautiful village of River John, Charlotte shows up unannounced a year after suddenly disappearing. She is met with animosity by many, especially her ex-best friend Sophie, who is now confined to a wheelchair after a terrible car accident. Charlotte struggles throughout the book, as the reason her brother Sean sent her away haunts her. Growing close to Sophie's ex-boyfriend Max, together they deal with forgiveness, broken friendships, betrayal and all that summer has to offer in River John.

Knowing the area so well, the one thing I did struggle with was the geography and scene places. This book is a work of fiction but there were so many similarities that are well described that I struggled with locations not being exactly as they are today. However, she does a great job at describing the areas. The book is for a teen-age to young adult audience.

I reached out to Alexandra, as I was curious why she choose River John as her setting. She has in fact spent every summer here in River John when growing up. This explains why she was able to select some of the common last names in the North Shore.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book and would recommend it, if you enjoy fiction or if you're just curious to see how our little village is perceived. It can be purchased through Amazon, Indigo or through the library. Happy reading!

4.5/5 stars

Author: Alexandra Harrington



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River John and District Lions Club Report for 2021

by John McKim, Secretary

Even with ongoing COVID-19 restrictions, it has been a busy 2021 for our Lions Club members.

A large number of projects were undertaken to assist the local community. Lion members constructed and painted 10 new picnic tables for community use in Bissell Park, thanks to funding contribution from the River John Community Action Society; members provided assistance with village Christmas decoration and lighting; Adopt-a-Highway clean-up project was undertaken; assistance to family members of a victim of the April 2020 Mass Murder Tragedy; a donation to the Lillian Fraser Palliative Care Unit was made; members organized a COVID-safe Halloween evening treat distribution for children at the Lions den.

Other important projects undertaken included improvements to the Lions Community Playground involving the planning for a wheelchair accessible swing and preliminary installation of swing set frame to be used for this purpose (donated by Lion Alan McNutt). We are currently awaiting delivery of the swing and plans are in place to complete a wheelchair accessible ramp from the parking lot to the swing set.

The Lions are also in the process of making initial inquiries and identifying funding options for a construction of a water park in the playground area.

The second annual Seniors' Christmas Dinner project was successfully undertaken on Christmas Day, with 84 Christmas meals being prepared and hand-delivered to seniors in our community. We hope to do this every year.

The Lions Club also established a community garden (located on property of Eugene and Dolly Martin) and a food pantry (located on the side porch of the Lions Den) in the summer of 2021. The garden was used to grow produce to support the pantry (and will ultimately support the proposed Food Bank initiative). Both the garden and food pantry were very successful and hopefully provided some assistance to individuals in the community in need. The local community support was excellent, and the pantry was often overflowing with donated items. With the onset of cold winter weather and freezing of canned goods, etc., the contents of the pantry were moved inside the Lions Den for storage and distribution. Anyone in need can email riverjohnfoodbank@gmail.com or call Alan McNutt (902-324-0913) or John McKim (902-293-3461) and we can assist with a food hamper as needed.

The River John Lions Club is planning to move ahead with construction of a new food bank building to be located on lands owned by the Lions, be-

side the ball field. Currently, we are in the process of fundraising for the construction of the building (to be leased to the Food Bank Society), and have obtained some funding through the ACOA Community Revitalization Fund. In the interim, the Lions have renovated the upstairs of the Lions Den for a food bank storage area, and we hope to commence operation of a local Food Bank program.

Lions members have also been instrumental in establishing a non-profit Society to operate the River John Food Bank, Pantry and Community Garden (called the Community Support Society of River John or CSSRJ). Specific funding for Food Bank start-up and operating costs has also been obtained through the Provincial Government and local Community Health Boards. The CSSRJ needs volunteers, society members and Board of Director members - anyone interested in getting involved can email riverjohnfoodbank@gmail.com. Donations for the Food Bank can be made by e-transfers to that email address or care of the River John Lions Club, Box 67, River John, NS B0K 1N0.

General club fundraising activities have included: July 25, 2021 Chicken Barbecue (490 meals sold - 19 volunteers involved); September 25, 2021 Bottle Drive (14 volunteers); Hunting Knife Lottery (knife donated by Glen Babin - winner was



Lions preparing for Halloween children's evening.

Robert MacKenzie); two ½ cords Firewood Lottery (wood donated, blocked and split by Lion Kenny Langille - winners were Dave Cole and Donald Duggan; many thanks to Dave Cole who donated his winnings to the River John Food Bank initiative).

This year, the annual Lions Calendar fundraiser will look a little different. We plan to deliver a copy of the 2022 calendar free-of-charge to local River John residents, (as opposed to selling, as was done in the past). These should be available the week of January 24, 2022.

Please support your local Lions Club through the ongoing Lions 50-50 draw. Purchase tickets online at <http://lions5050.ca> and select the River John Lions Club to support.

If you are a Bingo fan, the River John Lions Club is also involved in the Lions Radio Bingo held each Tuesday evening at 7 p.m. on Pure Country 99.5. You can purchase your cards from various vendors listed at <http://e-clubhouse.org/sites/trurons>. Look for the list of "Radio Bingo Book Vendors - River John and Stellarton Areas" (which includes C.G. Fulton Pharmacy and Leetik's Esso in River John and C.G. Fulton Pharmacy and Needs Variety in Tatamagouche). Winning numbers can be verified by calling toll-free 1-877-897-9950.

As always, you can drop off your recyclable bottles, cans and batteries at the side deck of the Lions Den in River John - this is an important fundraising project for us and we appreciate your

ongoing support.

Lastly, we are always looking for new, community-minded members to join our club and get involved in our various projects. If interested in visiting the club and attending a meeting to see what we are about, please contact a Lions member, or King Lion Burns Elliott (902-351-2794) or email us at riverjohnlions@outlook.com

River John Square Knitters

by Netta Heukshorst

Even with COVID restrictions, we have not slowed down our knitting needles, as we continue to knit 8-inch squares, hats and little toys for these precious children of South Africa who have so little. We knit at home or at the home of other knitters as current rules allow. We hope to be at our regular place at the River John Library as soon as allowed.

This article is a little update to previous ones as we like to keep folks informed.

Since 2014-15, the squares mailed out total 31,515. It takes 35 squares to make one blanket by these devoted grandmothers there, who gather every Tuesday at "The Barn," just like the quilting bees of old.

Each bundle mailed contains 60-70 squares for a cost of \$42.00. To date it has cost the group \$15,574 on postage. All monies raised are from donations and sales of various knitted articles at local markets. Every parcel is mailed right here at the River John post office. We support local!

How do you know that these bundles arrive safely at their destination, you ask?

Well, we receive regular newsletters and grateful thank yous, as well as pictures of our bundles, which are uniquely wrapped so we can pick them out. Some of our knitters have even picked out their own squares from a picture of a finished blanket. We really appreciate the feedback as it keeps us motivated.

If anyone wishes to check it out, simply google Knit-A-Square. All knitters are welcome, local or not.

Donations of yarn and/or monies are gratefully accepted and may be left at the River John Library.

The group is all volunteer and there are no dues to pay. We gather with our yarn and needles. You don't even have to buy yarn as it can be provided for you from our stash. It is mandatory to bring smiles and giggles, LOL, as a nice cup of tea and treats are enjoyed.K

Our motto is "Knit Locally - Share Globally."

Smile and be kind.



Lions prepare Christmas meal

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River John Food Bank

by John McKim
CSSRJ Board of Directors Member

The River John and District Lions Club has been working towards the establishment and operation of a local food bank to provide assistance to community members in the River John area. Recently, the Community Support Society of River John (CSSRJ) has been registered as a non-profit Society (and hopefully attain charitable status in near future) and the Board of Directors is moving forward with its plans to establish and commence operations of a food bank in River John.

With the current inflation rate skyrocketing and the impact on food prices, food security assistance for some local residents is crucial, particularly for the elderly on fixed incomes and those with unemployment and transportation issues.

Conceptually, the ultimate plan is to operate a food bank out of a newly constructed building, to be constructed by the Lions Club on property it owns beside the ball park. Partial funding for construction through the ACOA Community Revitalization Fund is now in place and the CSSRJ is currently investigating other funding sources for remaining construction costs and carrying out fundraising. It is hoped to have the new storage building completed and in operation by the fall of 2022, with future plans to expand into a fully operational food bank centre, as funding becomes available.

In the interim, the upstairs floor of the Lions Den in River John is being renovated for use as a food bank storage area, and assistance to those in need is to be done through pre-arranged drop-in or food box delivery. Anyone needing to access this service can email riverjohnfoodbank@gmail.com or call Alan McNutt (902-324-0913) or John McKim (902-293-3461) and we can assist with preparation and delivery of a food box as needed.

An important part of the operation will include continued operation of the food pantry on the side deck of the Lions Den (in operation during non-freezing weather). Local community support for the pantry was excellent, and the pantry was kept well-stocked with donated items. With the onset of cold winter weather and freezing of canned goods, etc., the contents of the pantry were moved inside the Lions Den for storage and ongoing distribution. We hope to re-open the pantry in April, 2022.

The CSSRJ will also be looking after ongoing efforts with the Community Garden, which was established by the local Lions Club in the spring of 2021, located on lands owned by Dolly and Eugene Mertin, near the Legion. The concept was to grow produce and vegetables for use by the food bank and pantry in the coming years. Community members were asked to donate a part of any produce grown for this purpose. The plan is to expand the garden in the spring of 2022 and to install electric fencing to keep out the deer population. Also planned is a possible "incubator" or community kitchen program, involving a certified commercial kitchen in which individuals prepare value-added food products and meals from the community garden produce or their own gardens. Anyone interested in gardening or assisting in this aspect of the project would be very welcome. Please email riverjohnfoodbank@gmail.com and we will be in contact come the spring.

In order to ensure the successful operation of the food bank, support (in the form of food donations and monetary donations) from members of the local community will be essential. The CSSRJ is currently working to set up a monthly recurring financial donation system, in which community members can make ongoing monthly or one-off

contributions. In the interim, anyone wishing to make a donation can do an e-transfer through their bank, directed to riverjohnfoodbank@gmail.com or send a cheque to the CSSRJ c/o Lions Club, P.O. Box 67, River John, NS B0K1N0. These donations will be put towards defraying direct costs of the food bank, including costs of operating the building, (power, telephone, internet, insurance, taxes, computers, equipment etc.) and the ongoing food bank costs of purchasing food products required (over and above donated food items, Feed Nova Scotia provision, multiple food drives, the River John Community Garden produce production, etc.) The CSSRJ has been successful in obtaining funding through a Provincial program and Pictou West and North Shore Area Community Health Boards for initial start-up costs and operating expenses for the food bank, but the long-term sustainability of the food bank will require ongoing financial support of the local community.

Lastly, the CSSRJ and River John Food Bank need volunteers, society members and Board of Director members; anyone interested in getting involved in this project or having any questions can email riverjohnfoodbank@gmail.com and we will let you know dates and times for Society meetings that you can attend.



Lion Donald in the community garden



Lion Ann in the community garden



Alan McNutt (middle) and John McKim (right), members of the Community Support Society of River John (RJ Food Bank) accepting grant cheques from Gregor Hardy (left) on behalf of the West Pictou and North Shore Community Health Boards

Bubo Who? (hoo?)

by Maggie Howatt

Bubo Scandiacus, otherwise known as the Snowy Owl, Polar Owl, White Owl and the Arctic Owl, have been showing up in Nova Scotia in greater numbers the past few winters. This owl flies close to and hunts on the ground, and can be seen perched on fence posts, farm equipment, hay bales and telephone poles.

There are a couple of theories that account for the frequency of sightings. One has to do with the number of lemmings. A lemming is a small rodent found in the high Arctic, related to voles, muskrats, mice and hamsters. They do not hibernate during the northern winters, but survive and thrive in a system of tunnels under the snow, feeding on mosses, grasses, bulbs, lichens and leaves. They are an essential food for the Snowy Owl, who need to consume at least 5 lemmings a day - which equals 1600 lemmings a year. It is not understood why the lemming population fluctuates from one year to the next, but it seems that about every 4 years there is a huge population explosion. The myth of lemmings pouring over cliff edges comes from the urge to spread out to new territories in vast numbers across the land, searching for food and lodging. These fluctuations can affect the 'irruptions' of the Snowy Owl and influence the number of eggs they may lay in a year. Lots of lemmings equals lots of eggs, lots of eggs equals lots of young owls, looking for food themselves and sometimes being forced south in search of prey, still learning to hunt, often arriving hungry and weak.

In the southern climes, the Bubo Scandiacus hunts what small rodents it can find as well as rabbits, ducks and even something as large as a pheasant.

According to Diane LeBlanc, president of the Nova Scotia Bird Society, some of these owls who arrive weak and starving are being brought into wildlife rescue centres. Sometimes owls and other raptors are found injured and unable to fly and hunt, as a result of a vehicle strike occurring while chasing down prey or hunting along roadsides where rodents are attracted to garbage tossed out of vehicles. But unless a person is convinced an owl is injured, it is wise not to approach a hungry bird, forcing it to move on or scaring off its prey.

The Snowy Owl is protected in Nova Scotia and it is suggested to keep a safe distance, observe quietly, and do not entice with food or bird calls. Hope for Wildlife and the Cobequid Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre in NS will accept injured birds with the goal of releasing after rehabilitation.

The heaviest of our owls, the Snowy Owl has a wing span of 5 feet. They have a dense layer of down, overlaid with thick feathers from beak to feet, that protects this beauty from the coldest of winter weather. They can maintain a body heat of 38-40 degrees C even in -50 degrees C temperatures and will huddle behind a bail of hay, a pile of rocks or snowdrift to escape the bitter wind. The oldest adult on record is 24+ years old and owls have been represented in cave paintings from the Ice Age Paleolithic time. I would love to see one swoop by me in the 21st century.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HXwrB216bgE&t=522s>

<http://atlanticwildlife.ca/>

<https://www.hopeforwildlife.net/>

<https://www.cwrc.net/>

<https://www.nsbirdsociety.ca/>

https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Snowy_Owl

Book Review — “The Two Michaels”

by Joan MacLeod

This book is a chilling and convincing analysis of how two innocent Canadians became pawns of a bullying state that refuses to follow the rules essential for countries like Canada.

On November 30, 2018, Wanzhou Meng was arrested at Vancouver Airport on an extradition order from the USA, accused by the USA of a number of charges including bank fraud, and stealing trade secrets. The chief complaint about her was that her company had sold equipment to Iran and lied about it, in violation of American trade sanctions. Meng is the chief financial officer of the company Huawei, started by her father and the world’s largest telecommunications equipment company.

The story starts earlier when Huawei, supported by the Chinese government, invested billions of dollars researching and developing the new wave of internet technology, called 5G, which was sold worldwide. It did not take long for the USA to realize our internet security could be compromised by being developed in China as there were “back doors” for companies to gain secure information. Cyber security is a huge concern worldwide as spying and gaining information has become more sophisticated, elaborate and prevalent, through our electronic devices.

Michael Kovrig’s parents were Hungarian and he was drawn back to Budapest after the fall of the Berlin Wall. He became a diplomat and as a fluent Mandarin speaker, based in Hong Kong, he visited China on a regular basis on behalf of an organization called “International Crisis Group.” On December 10, he disappeared on a routine trip to Beijing.

Michael Spavor grew up in Calgary, Alberta, and became enthralled with Korea when he watched the 1988 Seoul Olympics. He became fluent in Korean and also Mandarin and carved out a career as an expert in all things Korean. He loved the North Korean people especially. It was when he did not turn up for a lecture he was delivering in Seoul on December 11 that people realized that something strange had happened. Three days later China confirmed that he had been arrested.

Both men were accused of being spies, but clearly, they never were! Enter the world of “Hostage Diplomacy.” Although they adamantly



denied it, China had arrested the two Michaels in retaliation for Meng’s arrest on an extradition order with the USA.

There could not be a bigger contrast with the conditions under which Meng and the two Michaels were held. She was freed on bail of \$10 million with an ankle GPS tracker and 24-hour surveillance and a 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew. She lived in one of her 7-bedroom, multimillion dollar mansions in a smart area of Vancouver. She was free to pursue studies, have tutors attend her home, and even went for massages. Of course, she had to attend court hearings while lawyers argued her rights had been violated.

The two Michaels were arrested and detained in horrific conditions. Initially they were thrown in what amounted to a cement holding tank without even beds and the toilet was a hole in the floor. They were in solitary confinement for the first 6 months. It was several days before the Chinese authorities would even admit they were being held and then on unspecified spying charges. Over time, their conditions improved and they had thin mat-

tresses to sleep on. Lights were on 24/7 and there was constant invasive surveillance. They were allowed books and letters after mid-2019. When they were eventually allowed consular visits for 30 minutes monthly, one of their requests was for sleeping masks.

While the Huawei Executive case wound its way slowly through the Vancouver court, the two Michaels showed excellent strength of character by reading philosophical books, Russian novels and generally expanding their minds. They also tried to keep fit by walking around their cells; Michael Kovrig tried to walk 7000 steps per day in circles in his small cell, doing push ups and also practicing meditation and yoga. In one of his letters to his wife, Michael K. said, “We don’t choose our circumstances but we do have a choice how we handle ourselves in those circumstances.”.Remarkable!

At the United Nations General Assembly in the fall of 2020, Bob Rae, our ambassador to the UN, said, “When you say to a country of 35 million people that we are somehow bullying a nation of over a billion - one of the great super powers of the world - and they have chosen to treat these two Canadian citizens in this way...this is something that we shall never forget.”

International pressure on China began mounting as there became more awareness of this case. On September 5, 2021, which marked 1000 days in captivity, a gathering and march was held in Ottawa, in support of the two Michaels, supporters walked 7000 steps (about 5 miles) in solidarity. Similar marches were held in other Canadian cities and around the world.

Meanwhile in the USA with Biden in the White House, there was a growing realization that other banks and institutions which had run afoul of the Iran sanctions were not being treated in the same way. Thus, on September 24, 2021, a “Deferred Prosecution Agreement” was struck. Meng pleaded guilty by video link in a New York court. Then the US withdrew their request for Meng’s extradition. The order was formalized three hours later in the Vancouver court and charges were dropped.

And then it was over! Jets took off simultaneously on September 24, taking Meng to a hero’s welcome in China and the two Michaels to Calgary. Meng changed into a red dress, (China’s national colour,) and was greeted by live music, a red carpet and speeches. In Calgary, the Michaels were met quietly by Prime Minister Trudeau, and Michael Kovrig dropped down into a push-up and kissed the ground. “Wonderfully Fantastic” were his words! Hostage diplomacy sadly, seems to have begun a new cold war.

In my opinion, this is one of the most important stories of the beginning of the 21st century. I highly recommend it.

Chase the ACE

At the River John Legion Supporting the Legion and Action Society

Next Chase the Ace series start to be announced

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St. John the Baptist Anglican Church

by Rev. John Morrell and Mary Tohill

Since the last issue of The Pioneer, much has happened within our church community. Two successful Sunday Breakfasts were held October 31st and November 29th. All of the servers were from St. John's and over 90 guests were accommodated at the two meals. Checking IDs and COVID vaccine shots did not present any problems.

On Sunday Oct 31st, we welcomed the Reverend Lisa Vaughan to officiate at an all-parish service with representatives of Holy Trinity, Middleton Corners and St. Andrew's, Wallace. Reverend Lisa is the Parish Vitality Coordinator for the Anglican Diocese of NSPEI. In her role she has been working for a number of years with the Parish of Northumberland Parish Review Committee in continuing ministry, mission and outreach with a substantial reduction in clergy time.

In January 2021, Church Warden Mary Tohill gave out Secret Pal information to members of the church. We were given a name, address, birthday and anniversary of another church member and asked to send greeting cards at the appropriate time. On Sunday, December 12th we had the "Big Reveal" in the church hall where each member tried to guess their secret pal and small gifts were exchanged.

St. John's was beautifully decorated for Advent and Christmas. The 30 people who turned up for a Longest Night celebration at St. John's on December 21st got to see the church in all her Christmas glory. \$185.00 was collected for the Red Cross. Unfortunately, with the lockdown on December 22nd, all in-person services were cancelled. Thus for the second year we could not gather on Christmas Eve to sing carols and have Christmas Communion.



Rev. John and Liz Langille at the door



Liz Langille and Mary Tohill making sure everything is all right

All during the COVID-19 lockdowns, we have relied upon the Reverend John Morrell and licensed lay ministers Denise White, Monica Graham and Gerry Bowles to provide an emailed morning prayer service for each Sunday.

On Sunday, February 20th we re-opened for the first time since December 21st. The church annual meeting followed a short service of Holy Communion.

Ash Wednesday is March 2nd and Salem United is responsible for an ecumenical service on that day.

The Overstreet Cafe Update

**by Elizabeth Baillie
and Patsy Chapman**

We have had a few setbacks to getting the cafe up and running.

Due to the type of oven we are installing, power had to be upgraded in several areas, and what was supposed to be a few weeks' wait for a certain breaker turned into months, however, it is finally here and installed.

The next step was to have the oven company representative do the first part of the installation. On the Friday he was to come we had a bad storm, and before the Monday rolled around his family tested positive for COVID. We hope everyone will be back on their feet soon, and Luke Otter can get in to finish the rest of the oven installation and plumbing. Then our stalwart contractors Blaine Elliott and John Little can do the finishing touches.

On the positive side our first order of items with the cafe logo have arrived. We have T-shirts, aprons, mugs, and tote bags.

Our plan is to start serving coffee and other non-alcoholic beverages, scones, cookies, sandwiches, soup, etc., and see where it takes us. We also will be running a fundraiser for the IOOF selling used books to help with the repair bill for their building.

The grand opening will not be until summer, once the kinks are out, if they ever are.

We are thankful for the support and encouragement of the community over this long haul, and hope we don't disappoint you with our finished venue.

We hope to see you inside the building soon.

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St George's & St David's Presbyterian Church News

by Rev Enjei Achah

Happy New Year!

Beloved in the Lord, 2021 was quite a trying year and we didn't enter 2022 any better because we had to suspend our Christmas Eve service and since then our church services have still not resumed. Once again, we are worshipping online, posting our messages on Facebook and sending them through emails and postage. If anyone is still not getting our worship services, you can contact me or any of the elders and we will make sure you get them.

So far, we have decided to make better use of the technology that has thankfully been made available to us. Our Bible studies, prayer meetings and youth meetings are now taking place on Zoom and it hasn't been such a bad experience. We have still had a wonderful time and lots of fun. Anyone interested is welcome to join us. I will include the dates below and you can contact the minister for the link. Our youth meeting, Sonrise Youths, is on Facebook and all the youths in our community from

River John Legion News

by Mike Topley, Branch President

Well, three weekend storms down so only a few more to go. Remember the Legion offers a comfort centre in your time of (electrical) need. A place to warm a cup of soup, have a coffee and recharge your cell phone. The comfort centre will be open as needed, normally from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. during times of extended power loss. Call 902 351 2261 before heading over.

Most Legion-based functions were on hold since just before Christmas. We resumed line dancing in early February and Chase the Ace by mid-February. Washer toss started up mid-January and has been ongoing. Everyone attending Legion functions has to be double-vaccinated, have no symptoms and must wear a mask when not at their table.

As of this writing, we plan to have our annual Smelt Fry on Saturday, February 26. It will be take-out again this year, no pre-orders, and available until sold out. Notices will be posted with price and starting time.

Meals on Wheels has continued without interruption, delivering 45 nutritious meals every Wednesday at noon. Thanks to JoAnne Wilkins, Sandra Patriquin and several volunteer deliverers for their dedicated work.

The Legion has been taking advantage of this most recent downtime by installing a new exit door, some new windows and exterior flashings. Burns Elliott Carpentry has been hired to do the work along with assistance from some Legion members.

Winter Fun activities at the Legion during the month of February included a Euchre Tournament, a Moonlight Walk, a Washer Toss, Family Day activities, and Line Dancing, not to mention our Chase the Ace restart on February 18th, featuring the music of Geezer Light.

The Legion Branch 108 Executive for 2022 will be installed at our March meeting. The Executive officers for this year include Lynn MacLeod - first VP, Barb Rondelet - 2nd VP, David Cochrane - Treasurer, Marilyn Heighton - Secretary, Wallace Sutherland - Service Officer, Willis Langille - Sergeant at Arms, Mike Topley - President and Harley White - Past President. New members are David McIntyre, Michael McIntyre, Charlie Kia, Victoria Kia, Suzanne Benjamin, They will be inducted at the same meeting.

I.O.O.F. and Rebekahs Update

**by Jacob Leegwater,
Recording Secretary,
Helping Hand Lodge**

Hello, Pioneer Readers, from I.O.O.F. Helping Hand Lodge #34 and Frazee Rebekah #3.

Odd Fellows were able to meet in November and December. Along with regular business, we had to deal with structural issues, which will take time and money. Many avenues are being explored to help offset the costs.

We were able to distribute Christmas cards and a gift to the widows of our deceased members, and to Brother Earl Holt, our most senior member and Adopt-a-Resident at the Maritime Odd Fellows Home.

Due to COVID protocols, we suspended our January meetings and resumed on January 30. It was agreed to continue meeting.

As the Rebekahs only had a few meetings there is not much to report. At the November 12 meeting our new slate of officers was installed by the District Deputy President for District 9, Sister Brenda Budd of Freedom Rebekah Lodge. Ten gifts were packed for our Adopt-a-Resident at the Odd Fellows Home. Due to COVID we did not meet in the month of January or on Christmas Eve which was a regular meeting day.

For the Odd Fellows our Noble Grand is Brother Willis Langille, and for the Rebekahs, Noble Grand is Sister Joanne Ferguson.

River John Community Action Society

by Valrie Suidgeest & Joan MacLeod

Past History:

The River John Community Action Society was initiated by Pictou Regional Development Corporation so that communities had a body to initiate development projects for the betterment of the whole community. In 2014-2016 we waged a valiant attempt to save our school. We lost, and attempted to save it as a community centre, but again that was unsuccessful but we were able to recover funds from the sale of unwanted contents of the school. Also, funds were collected to set up a scholarship awarded annually to former students of RJCS. Happily for the community, the Bigneys came forward and have been able to keep the school as a storage locker business as well as for other businesses and ventures, such as a gym. It is a valuable resource for the community. The Farmers' Market is now held there on Sundays throughout the summer.

We then turned our attention to developing the access to the river and enhancing Bissell Park. This was a four phase plan, including both sides of the river and using three levels of government funding, culminating this past summer with the grand opening of Roger's Landing. Work is still needed on Roger's Landing, we are hoping this summer to add electricity and floodlights. Now that the RJCAS has facilities, (for example a washroom) we need to manage these facilities. Regular maintenance and upkeep are needed. And we need people to step forward to help manage and serve on committees.

Our next project for the community is the installation of sidewalks on the east side of the village, from the bridge to Meh's. We feel that this will make the village more friendly for walkers and hopefully slow down the traffic to enhance village life. Mike Topley (civil engineer) is spearheading this project, which is still in the planning stages and will need community consultation.

Upcoming Events:

The River John Community Action Society is holding its Annual General Meeting on March 8, 2022, at the Lions Den in River John. The regular monthly meeting will follow immediately after the AGM. Any COVID restrictions in place at the time of the meeting will be followed.

At the AGM a new executive will be voted in. Positions available include chair, vice-chair, secretary, and treasurer, as well as a minimum of 2 directors at large. Anyone living in District 4 who would like to become more active within the society and/or become a member of the executive are welcome to attend the meeting. Please put your name forward to run for one of the necessary positions. Your community needs you.

Besides the Executive, There are several committees that need members.

Roger's Landing- this committee deals with the operations of Roger's Landing, including developing and enacting rules of the area, putting the docks in and removing them, lighting, safety.

Bissell Park- deals with the park maintenance, etc.

Pioneer- a quarterly community newspaper sent to the District 4 community. Includes getting articles, editing, printing, and collecting costs from advertisers.

Fundraising- this is another important committee that helps raise money for new and ongoing projects. Our main fundraiser for our ongoing maintenance costs is Chase the Ace which we share with the Legion. RJCAS volunteers are always needed to sell tickets and assist at the door.

If you are looking to be a part of a vibrant community, please join our society. We need help to keep these projects moving forward.

Excerpt from the Diary of Reverend James MacGregor, from the 1780s. Part 4

submitted by Rev Glen Matheson

"While the ice is no doubt a convenience, traveling upon it sometimes attended with considerable danger." Among James MacGregor's memoranda we find the words, "fright on the ice," and we have heard of several occasions of his being in peril of his life in this way. The danger may arise in various ways. One source is from snowstorms, suddenly arising when persons are at some distance from shore. The track is soon covered up, the shore cannot be seen - the sun is concealed - and the person gets blinded with drift, and losing his course, wanders hither and thither, and sometimes perishes. At present (as recalled in 1859), it is customary to place a row of bushes a few rods apart, along the principal lines of travelling, to guide the traveller, but in those times this expedient was unknown. We have heard of his being in danger, in this way, especially on one occasion while on Merigomish Harbour in the company of Thomas Fraser, Elder. It came on a snowstorm, in which they lost their way, and when they reached the shore they were nearly exhausted.

Another source of danger is the ice being weak, as it will be in spring or fall, or as it sometimes is, even in winter, in particular spots from local causes,

such as mussel beds, etc. We have heard also of his being in danger in this way. On one occasion, crossing, we believe, Pictou Harbour in the fall of the year, the ice at mid-channel began to bend with the weight of himself and his companions. They separated and got down on their hands and knees so as to cover as large a surface as possible, and moved forward as rapidly as they could. The new ice formed in the fall has considerable elasticity, unlike the ice in spring, which has begun to decay by the action of the sun. And this circumstance saved them, for before they got across, the ice had so far yielded that considerable water was upon it. On one occasion, perhaps the same, having arrived at Pictou to preach, the people beheld his arrival with actual amazement. They could scarcely believe it possible that he had crossed on the ice in the state it was. On being assured that he had actually done so, the reply was, "Well, it must have been your faith that brought you across."

We have heard of his being in danger crossing Pictou Harbour in a canoe. It was on a Sabbath morning, and so rough that those who were with him were unwilling to attempt crossing, but he encouraged them, saying that it was in a good cause, and their Master would take care of them. They got

over safely after being exposed to a considerable danger.

On one occasion many years after, he came on a stormy day to Donald MacDougall, who established the first ferry across the harbour and asked him to ferry him across. MacDougall replied that it was very stormy, and he would try. He immediately got ready his boat and ferried him across safely. But he said afterward, that there was not another person living, with whom he would have ventured to attempt crossing on that day.

Rev Matheson recalls that during his time at First Presbyterian Church, New Glasgow, a parishioner named Gary Ross's father was the last fatality from someone going through the ice while crossing from Abercrombie to Pictou, in 1956. He was driving across, as was common back then, when his car went through the ice. Today the harbour rarely freezes solid enough to walk across, let alone drive.

Editor's note: In 1968, the causeway across Pictou Harbour was built, so now we have a convenient modern highway for us to reach the services and shops of the other towns of Pictou County. Although in River John it is not uncommon to see cars on the river in the height of the winter!

River John Pickleball

by Wade Taylor

A local group has formed with the objective of bringing the growing sport of pickleball to River John and the surrounding communities. Pickleball provides opportunities for sport, recreation, social connections and community vitality to people of all ages and abilities.

What is pickleball? Pickleball is fun, affordable, and an inclusive physical activity. It's a combination of tennis, badminton and table tennis, and is the fastest-growing sport in North America. It is easy to learn, very social, and less stressful on muscles, tendons and joints than other racket sports, while maintaining all the health benefits. And while the 50-plus crowd has been responsible for much of pickleball's early growth it is starting to attract younger players.



In recent years, those interested in playing pickleball in the River John area have purchased portable nets and set them up on unused tennis courts and school parking lots, playing where they can. Last year, these players visited the newly built pickleball facility in Arisaig, a community of only 300, and thought why not River John? Recently, the River John Pickleball Club has been formed; we have registered as a not-for-profit society, are working to confirm a location for the River John Pickleball Facility. We are seeking the support of the multiple levels of government through the application for grants with a focus on healthy living, improving access to recreation in rural communities, socialization opportunities, and improving access for people living with disabilities. The club plans to construct a three-court outdoor pickleball facility like those recently built in Arisaig and Little Harbour, right here in River John. The club will supplement government funding with fundraising initiatives, donations, and sponsorships.

The addition of 3 outdoor pickleball courts will bring new recreation and active living opportunities to River John and the surrounding areas, creating a space where people of all ages can gather, interact, and participate in a fun and healthy activity. With its low equipment costs and ease of play for both the able-bodied and people with disabilities, pickleball has the capability of transforming communities in terms of mental, social, and physical well-being.

The pickleball facility will include three outdoor courts surrounded by an 8' fence. Total size of the court facility would be 64' by 104', (this size court surface would allow for para-pickleball played by wheelchair users.) Costs are estimated at \$125,000 which includes site preparation, asphalt, court coatings, nets, and posts, fencing and a gate. In the future, (depending upon our location partner and the demand for nighttime play,) lights may be added.

If you are interested in learning more or becoming a member of the River John Pickleball Club check us out on Facebook at River John Pickleball. Stay tuned for community updates as the project progresses, including introduction to pickleball sessions and fundraising events.

Local Realtor Profile: Meet Janet Butler

by Julie Windebank

Janet Butler and her husband, Tristan Butler, moved to the River John area in the summer of 2020. Janet spent her early childhood in Yarmouth, and then grew up in Winnipeg with occasional visits back to the Maritimes to visit family in New Brunswick. She attended post-secondary studies in Montreal, Winnipeg and Halifax, and then settled on the West Coast in Vancouver & later Bowen Island, BC. She also spent 2 years teaching English in Osaka and Sapporo, Japan. Through her travels & moving around, she maintained a great affection for Nova Scotia. After working in the Vancouver real estate industry on the financial side for almost 18 years, she and her husband, who is originally from Ireland, decided to follow their hearts east to Nova Scotia. They looked at places to live all over the province, but fell in love with the Northumberland Shore.

Janet sees Nova Scotia as Canada's best kept secret. People are attracted to its open space, sense of community, quieter lifestyle and natural beauty. Compared to many parts of the country, it also has more affordable prices for buying real estate. With more people able to work from home and looking to leave the city, we are seeing an influx of Canadians wanting to call Nova Scotia home. The average price of buying a home has increased by 17.2% in this province in the past year, and by 18.5% in Pictou County, but is still very affordable compared to most other provinces. BC and Ontario saw average prices increased by more than 22% in already very expensive markets. Janet says the majority of her customers have come from Ontario, some from BC, and there has been interest from England and other parts of Europe as well. Free comparative market analysis is something Janet can provide for people considering listing their property for sale, she can offer advice on staging your home for selling, and she'd be happy to help you find your next home or land to build on if you've been dreaming of something completely new.

Janet is a proud donor to the Royal LePage Shelter Foundation; it's one of the reasons she chose Royal LePage as her brokerage. Nationally, they support over 200 women's shelters and help fund violence prevention programs in every province through partnerships with the Canadian Women's Foundation and Women's Shelters Canada, (including support of the sheltersafe.ca website).



As a small business owner, she believes in giving back to the community she lives in, and looks forward to the opportunity to be more involved in local initiatives & fund-raising when the pandemic subsides.

Janet has been busy with her new home and business, and Tristan is developing a woodworking and cabinetry business. He is hoping to open Tristan Thomas Furniture in the spring or summer once his workshop is complete; (like many, he has been at the mercy of the pandemic delays on shipping & materials). They enjoy the support and company of their neighbours, and have been gradually making friends here, although socializing isn't easy these days, as we all know. They are impressed with Pictou County's eco-friendly waste management system, easy access to local produce through farmers' markets & easy access to trails in the area for hiking, biking & skiing.

Janet sees that the influx of newcomers is boosting opportunities for existing and new local businesses and trades in the region. She believes the increase in population and tax dollars also means better access and improved services for the area, as well. Janet says, "As real estate thrives, communities also thrive."



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Three Levels of Fun Sweet Treat Easter Nests



by Christiane Gill

Dough:

Level 1 dough:

You already have a fluffy yeast dough recipe using (AP) All Purpose Flour. Super! Do that if you want. In case you want your dough sweeter just add ¼ cup of sugar and proceed as usual. When it is ready to be shaped, skip down to shaping.

Level 2 dough:

If you are new to baking or want an easy yeast dough recipe, don't worry, I have you covered:

Rehydrate 12 g / ¾ Tbsp. dry active yeast in a small bowl with some lukewarm water until it starts to bubble.

In the meantime, put

500 g / 3¼ cups	All Purpose flour
5 g / ½ tsp.	salt (ONLY if you are using unsalted butter)
40 g / ¼ cup	sugar
40 g / 1.6 oz	butter
250 ml / 1 cup	warm milk

into a large bowl, and now add the bubbly yeast.

Now knead either by hand, (after it has come together, continue on a flat surface), hand mixer with dough hook or stand mixer with dough hook, until the dough comes together into a soft dough. Then put it into a bowl, cover it and let it rise to about twice its original size, which can take up to an hour or even more. Then take it out of the bowl and knead it a couple of times. Next comes the shaping.

Level 3 dough:

This is a brioche type dough which is sweeter and fluffier than the level 2 dough and also needs (no pun intended) the most patience but well worth the effort. It can be done with a hand mixer and dough hook, but a stand mixer is your best bet.

Rehydrate 14 g / 1 Tbsp. dry active yeast in a small bowl with some lukewarm water until it starts to bubble.

In the meantime, put

500 g / 3¼ cups	AP flour
5 g / ½ tsp.	salt (ONLY if you are using unsalted butter)
120 g / ¾ cup	sugar
60 g / 2.4 oz	butter
250 ml / 1 cup	warm milk

into a large bowl, and now the bubbly yeast.

Mix this with your mixer medium low for about 3 minutes. Please do not skip this step.

Finally, add 3 egg yolks, one at a time, waiting until each yolk has been incorporated into the dough. The dough will now be quite moist. This is where your patience comes in. Let the mixer mix for another 8-10 minutes. Towards the end you will see the dough coming together again, and pulling off the wall of the bowl. (If, towards the end you feel that you absolutely must, add flour a tablespoon at a time). At this point take the dough out of the bowl, knead it a minute or two on a well-floured, flat surface and then put it into a bowl, cover it and let the dough rise. Because of the egg yolks this can take up to 3 hours.

Shaping

Divide the dough into 10 relatively equal portions. Divide each portion into 2 or 3 relatively equal parts, depending on whether you want to



twist or braid your nest. Roll each part into an about 9"-10" long rope, twist or braid the ropes and pinch the end together. Put your nests on a parchment paper lined baking sheet and let them rest until your oven is preheated to 350 °F.

Brush the nests with an egg yolk and water mix just before you put them into the oven.

After about 20 minutes your nests should be golden brown and placed on a cooling rack.

Finally decorate to taste.

Decorating

I like a simple icing sugar and orange juice icing and a few sprinkles but you be you. Anything goes!



Easter Eggs

Boil as many eggs as you want.

Use one mason jar or any other heatproof vessel per colour.

Put one tsp vinegar into each vessel and add 1 cup of hot water and 20-30 drops of food colouring of choice.

Now put the boiled egg or two, depending how many you want of that color and how many fit, while still being covered, into the vessels and let them sit for 10-30 minutes.

Take them out and carefully dry them with a paper towel, be careful, it stains. Moisten another paper towel with a few drops of oil and gently rub the eggs in this to give them a deeper colour and wonderful lustre.

Have tons of fun and a Happy Easter.

Insider tip: Dough #2 with half the sugar makes an amazing loaf of bread. Just shape it into a loaf form, put it into a loaf pan, let rise for ½ hour and bake at 375 °F for 30-35 minutes.



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Ronnie Heighton - A Voice for the Fishermen

by Beulah Jane Wright

As a boy, Ronnie Heighton, River John, fished with his father, Ralph Heighton. In 1966 he began fishing on his own. Early on, he recognized the fact that the rules and regulations were not always in favour of the fishermen, and he figured there might be a way to change direction, with the right negotiation. Thus, Ronnie's involvement as a voice for the fishermen began. He was willing, dedicated, determined, and for thirty-one years, he worked hard, was the "go to" person for the Gulf Region, from Pugwash to Cape North, and he did make a difference. Now Ronnie Heighton has retired. He will no longer be fishing himself and he has given up most of his positions in fisheries organizations,



Ronnie has a big lobster there!

but there's no doubt that his opinion will still be sought and recognized.

It began when he joined the Northumberland Fisheries Association. After a few years, the president, Allan MacCarthy, wanted to step down and Ronnie was approached as a possible successor. Ronnie suggested that if Allan kept the position for another year, then he would try it for a couple of years. That was many years ago.

He was always looking for ways to educate himself, taking multiple courses on lobster, on other species, on safety, leadership and planning. He was willing to travel, from Newfoundland to Vancouver, and valued face-to-face contact with fishermen and government officials. He was on the Gulf of Nova Scotia Fleet Planning Board, and was president for more than twenty years. He was vice-president of the Canadian Council of Professional Fish Harvesters. He negotiated with Transport Canada. He was on species boards, safety boards, anything that might make life easier for fishers. At one time, his busiest time, he served on twenty-eight boards; he attended every local meeting dealing with fishery concerns.

Ronnie cites as one of their biggest wins was acquiring a quota for snow crab, where the revenue was shared, which put a little extra cash in the fishermen's pockets, right around Christmas time. Ronnie is still a board member of the Nova Scotia Fisheries Council, and is soon going to make a decision whether to re-offer as a member of the Fisheries Loan Board.

His efforts were noticed and appreciated. He was inducted into the Atlantic Canada Marine Industries Hall of Fame. He has a letter of recognition from the Legislature of Nova Scotia, a plaque from the Eastern Fisheries Association, "Twenty-



Ronnie, always happiest on the water

year Member," another plaque from the Nova Scotia Fisheries Sector Council.

Ronnie's wife, Sharon, has always been supportive and involved and she fished with Ronnie for twenty- five years.

Ronnie says the biggest challenge facing young fishermen today is to become involved in the regulatory part of the industry. There's lots of work still to be done, and it takes lots of work to gain results.

Ronnie's retirement is well deserved and whatever he does, he is wished much success and happiness in future endeavours.

New Postmaster, Melissa Baskin

by Debby Shaw

The baton has been passed. After interim "posting" by Jennifer Langille, we have our new Postmaster Melissa Baskin. Melissa took control of our River John Post Office on November 29, 2021. She and her husband, Darcy, moved to River John from Scotland, Ontario. They have bought ocean-front property near the golf course in Brule and will build a house this year. This coming September, their 18-year-old son, Connor, is transferring to NSCC Pictou Campus, and their 20-year-old daughter, Madison, has applied for a university co-op placement in Truro.

Melissa has been with Canadian Postal Services for 15 years. She began in a 3½ hour term position and moved along to Postmaster, a title which she prefers over Postmistress. She put in for many transfers and this is the first to come up for her. She and Darcy visited our shore in the summer and decided they wanted a slower pace of life and loved the ocean. She was very happy to take this position. Darcy was between jobs and his only requirement was to be close to an airport for travel with his work in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland.

Melissa's dad was born in Bridgewater but moved away as an infant. Her father has since passed away, but Melissa would like to explore and see if she has any Nova Scotia relatives.

She has felt very welcomed and says River John and area is a super friendly community. She likes her work and says it's been a great way to meet people.



For those of us who want to know her better, Melissa plans to learn to golf. For now, her hobbies include scrapbooking and cardmaking; and in Melissa's own words, "Handmade, not Hallmark!"

Welcome Melissa; we are glad you left Scotland, Ontario to come to New Scotland!



These wintery scenes taken at Murphy's Cove were submitted by Helen George. When asked what was with the brown snow, Helen explained, "We had a big storm surge the first weekend of January. That is sand over everything. Frozen on at that."