

# A COMMUNITY LOSS: CAPE JOHN CRABS AND SEAFOOD

By: Christiane Gill

Doing our dinner dishes shortly before 9 p.m. on the evening of Wednesday, March 12, 2025, I was not too thrilled when I heard the sirens of fire trucks racing by. I was hoping it was something minor, maybe even “just” a false alarm? Then more, more and even more fire trucks kept racing by, so I asked hubby. He said that there was a call out for an industrial structure fire. Oh, no! The only one that came to mind was the Cape John Fish Factory, but they hadn’t started work yet. Dishes done, now to some paperwork. Suddenly all lights were out - in the whole house! In all of River John! This was no community call for bedtime. Change of gears here, namely change into winter wear and off I went into the cold. It was -3C with a wind chill of -10C at that time.

I had barely turned at Meh’s when I saw even in the dark of night a huge plume of smoke. My heart sank. The closer I got to the fish factory, the heavier the smoke became. Eerily, the orange cloud in the sky loomed larger and larger. The horizon was ablaze with gigantic flames and highlighted with a myriad of flashing emergency vehicle lights. Our entire River John Fire Department and seven (yes, 7) other fire departments battled insatiable flames until well past 3:30 a.m. Luckily, no one was hurt, especially considering the threat of explosion from the numerous propane



tanks on site. When the worst was over, around 11 p.m, power was restored, and everyone, except for our firefighters, was able to go to bed, now knowing that we all were safe to do so, thanks to all the brave, selfless firefighters, EMTs and the people of NS Power.

CristyAnn Langille’s grandfather, Everette Heighton, was the original builder of this factory. It was called Heighton’s Lobster Pound back then, and with that he earned his entry into the Hall of Fame of Entrepreneurs for Nova Scotia. Most

recently it was called Cape John Crabs and Seafood and was owned by Jinhui Chen, also known as Hui, who has lived in Cape John for the past five years. It was a place of work for many of us River Johners. Maybe, one day, the fish factory will be a place of work again.

So many memories remain while gazing upon the smouldering rubble that right now spells the loss of sorely needed job opportunities, but also opportunities and growth in the future. Time will tell.



# BEULAH’S BOOK LAUNCH “MUSINGS & MEMORIES OF RIVER JOHN HISTORY”

By: Mary Beth Sutherland and Julie Windebank



(L-R) John Ashton, Pictou County historian and writer, Beulah Wright, author, Marco MacLeod, MLA Pictou West. Pic. credit: Steve Goodwin

Excitement was the mood of those at St. George’s Church Hall on April 5th as folks arrived early to buy and celebrate Beulah Jane Wright’s newly published book, “Musings & Memories of River John History.” The hall was filled with family, friends, and those interested in the local stories. Folks started arriving early and by the time we started the program at 2 p.m., the 150 books were nearly sold out. Many left empty-handed, but we have a new shipment of books in now, for all to purchase at the museum or at the Overstreet Café.

Beulah is donating all proceeds from the book sales to the River John and Area Historical Society, which operates and maintains the River John and Area Historical Museum.

The official program began with Linda Thompson-Reid, President of the Society, welcoming all those in attendance. Jane Morrigan spoke of working with Beulah to compile the contents into book form. Benson Wright, Beulah’s brother, spoke on behalf of the family and their pride in her. Nephew, Gavin MacLean, who had come from Yarmouth for the event, introduced the members of the family table.

Congratulations were read from Clyde MacDonald, a fellow Pictou County author. Beulah read from her book and answered questions from those in the audience. Long-time friend, Florence Craib, spoke of how Beulah became so interested in the history of this area from early on, and has made it a life-time commitment to preserving and sharing these stories. Beulah read passages from her book and welcomed questions from members of the audience. After the speeches, Beulah signed books with personalized autographs, and accepted best wishes, as well as a bouquet of flowers from her friends at the local museum, where she is a dedicated volunteer. These flowers were presented to her by ten young children who were thrilled to take part in the event. Of course, we enjoyed a cup of tea and light lunch, with music performed by Blaine Brown and Myrna Phillips, and visiting and conversation to end the successful afternoon.

This book was Beulah’s labour of love, compiling writing, history and genealogy all into one. It has presented us with a treasure trove of history and knowledge, her gift to all. She has collected the facts and stories over the years, and written columns for newspapers; it was a dream of hers to put them into book form. We are so grateful she did, and that we could celebrate the book launch with her.

Congratulations and Thank You, Beulah!

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# RIVER JOHN FESTIVAL DAYS

[www.rjfestivaldays.ca](http://www.rjfestivaldays.ca)

## Celebrating 40 Years!

River John Festival Days' history dates back to 1985 when River John celebrated its 200th Birthday with a week-long festival. The event was so successful that it was decided to hold a week-long celebration every year!

Join us and take part in our many events and activities for all ages. Become a part of the celebration of our beautiful community!

Thank you to all the residents and visitors, and to all the volunteers who help make Festival Days an annual success.

### Schedule is subject to change.

Information will be added and updated. Please watch for our brochures and check out our website. **For the most up to date information visit our Facebook page!**

[www.facebook.com/riverjohn.festival.days](http://www.facebook.com/riverjohn.festival.days)

### FRIDAY JULY 18

**10am** Open house at River John Pickleball courts (Outside the Royal Canadian Legion). Learn to play Pickleball for adults. Sneakers must be debris free.

**10am-12pm** Learn to Play Pickleball! Ages 16+. River John Pickleball courts. Sneakers must be debris free. Eye protection required. Paddles and balls provided. Pre-register with Elaine: [thelangilles@hotmail.com](mailto:thelangilles@hotmail.com)

**12-3pm** Pickleball Tournament at the courts. Ladies doubles, 2.0-2.99 players. \$25/player.

**3-6pm** Pickleball Tournament at the courts. Mens doubles, 2.0-2.99 players. \$25/player.

**6pm** Baseball Tournament begins at the ball field. Contact Jay Reid 902-351-3396 to register.

**7-11pm** Caldera Distilling Inc. Live Music IWK Fundraiser. 19+. Please bring your own chairs as there is a limited amount.

### SATURDAY JULY 19

**8-11am** Pickleball tournament at the courts. Ladies doubles, 3.0+ players. 25\$/player.

**9am** Baseball Tournament continued

**TBD** Bridge to bridge fun paddle. Bring your own kayak, canoe, etc. Weather permitting. Meet at Bissell park. More parking behind fire hall.

**11am-2pm** Pickleball tournament at the courts. Mens doubles, 3.0+ players. \$25/ player.

**12pm** (Until Sold Out) Lobster Dinner at the Fire Hall. Price TBD.

**2pm** Cardboard Boat Races at Bissell Park dock. Build your own cardboard boat and compete to cross the river! Only use cardboard, tape and paint. **Sponsored by Humane Gains**

### SUNDAY JULY 20

**9am** Baseball Tournament continued.

**10am-3pm** Festival Day at Lismore Farm. Sheep shearing, spinning demos, wool crafts, bbq, local foods.

**11am** Combined congregation Church Service at Salem United Church

**12-2pm** Foam Party at the Old School. All Ages.

**12-4pm** Carnival Games at the Old School. All Ages. Cash only.

**11am-3pm** Market at the Old School.

**2pm** Tug of War competition at the Legion. Come watch and cheer on the teams!

**6pm** Children's Parade and Family BBQ at the Lions Club Playground. Participants meet at St. Georges Presbyterian Church. Categories include best fictional character, best original, best on wheels, best group, best festival theme.

**7pm** West Branch Singers Concert at St. Georges Presbyterian Hall.

### MONDAY JULY 21

**6:45-10am** Breakfast on the veranda by the Community Support Society of River John (\$12/\$8).

**10am** Historical Cemetery Walk at Bellevue Cemetery. Donations welcomed in support of Bellevue and Hamilton cemeteries. Come learn about interesting and influential citizens of River John's past.

**1pm** Strawberry Tea at the River John Legion (\$7/\$4)

**3pm** Children's author reading and signing at the Overstreet Cafe.

**6pm** Scrabble Walk. Register at Bissell Park, \$2. Cash Prizes.

**7pm** Firefighter Competition/Demo on the Old School.

**7pm** Cribbage Night at the Legion. Ages 19+. \$20/ team, teams of two, all money returned in prizes. Cash bar.

**7pm** Entertainment on the Veranda: Family Karaoke. All Ages Welcome.

### TUESDAY JULY 22

**6:45-10am** Breakfast on the Veranda by River John 4-H Club. Bacon, eggs & beans (\$12/\$8).

**1:30pm** Kite Flying at Caldera Distilling Inc (65 River John Road.) Treats provided.

**6:30pm** Striped Bass Fishing Tournament Registration at Bissell Park, \$5.

**7pm** Trivia Night at the Firehall. Ages 19+. \$20, teams of four, winners take all. Hosted by Kristyn Green.

**7pm** Music by the Trail Fiddlers at St. Georges Presbyterian Church Hall.

### WEDNESDAY JULY 23

**6:45-10am** Breakfast on the Veranda by Sunrise Trail 4-H Club. French Toast and Sausage (\$12/\$8).

**12pm** Washer Toss registration at the Legion. Games to immediately follow registration.

**1-4pm** Community Picnic Skinners Cove (West). **Sponsored by MOPC**

**6:30pm** Family Chocolate Bar Bingo at Fire Hall. Bring a chocolate bar to "buy" a bingo card (1 chocolate bar = 1 bingo card). Open to all children with parent/guardians.

**7pm** Entertainment at the Lions Den: Donald's Music Circle

### THURSDAY JULY 24

**6:45-10am** Breakfast on the Veranda by the Oddfellows & Rebekah's. Ham and eggs (\$12/\$8).

**11am** Children's cupcake decorating. Ages 1 to 13, first come first served. Gather on the Veranda. **Sponsored by the River John Lions Club**

**2-4pm** Wardens Tea at the Fire Hall.

**6pm** Children's Scavenger Hunt. Register at Bissell Park. **Sponsored by Appleton Chocolates**

**7pm** Bingo at the Legion.

**7pm** Entertainment on the Veranda: Route 6.

### FRIDAY JULY 25

**6:45-10am** Breakfast on the Veranda by the Melville/ Seafoam Group. Pancakes, Sausages & Beans (\$12/\$8).

**10am-12pm** Family Fun Fest: Petting Zoo and Bouncy House Extravaganza. All ages welcome. Location TBD.

**1pm** Bake Sale and Pie Auction at the Firehall by the River John Festival Day Committee.

**1:30pm** Tie Dye. Ages 12 and under. Dress in old clothes, it could get messy. Supplies will be provided. Register ahead by calling 902-351-2898 by July 23rd. Please leave a message. **Sponsored by the River John Lions Club**

**6:30pm** Striped Bass Fishing Tournament Weigh-In at Bissell Park, \$5.

**7pm** Euchre at the Legion, \$6/person. 19+.

**7pm** Entertainment on the Veranda.

**7:30-9pm** Old Time Dance at the Lions Club Den. Music by Geezer.

### SATURDAY JULY 26

**6:45-10am** Breakfast on the Veranda by The Lions Club. Pancakes and sausages (\$12/\$8).

**10-11am** Antique Car Show Registration.

**11am-2pm** Antique Car Show open to public at the Old School parking lot.

**2pm** Antique Car Show trophies & prizes.

**TBD** River John Volunteer Fire Department Lucky Duck Race on the River.

**2pm** Lobster Crate Run on the River. Register at 1pm, Bissell Park dock, \$5

**6:30pm** Street Parade. Awards following the parade at St. Georges Presbyterian Church.

**9:45pm/Sunset** Fireworks over the river.

**10:15pm-2am** Festival Dance (DJ), at the Fire Hall, \$10. 19+. Photo Booth.

## PRESENTING SPONSOR:



# WATERMAN

By: Maggie Howatt

Dear Dad.

You remember that old cistern at the side of the house we grew up in? It was made of concrete, a couple of feet deep and maybe 4' by 8'. I was crazy about turtles, frogs, salamanders, all kinds of reptiles and amphibians. I would wade through our neighbour's pond, holding a glass jar pushed down into the water and watch all the creatures moving around underneath the surface of the water. I dragged home some of those creatures and started my own pond in that cistern - frogs, a couple of turtles and tadpoles. I had a snapping turtle named Waterman and a green turtle I called Pal. We didn't know any better at the time and that pond was eventually filled in and houses built over top.

That was 60 years ago, give or take, and we humans are still filling in ponds, marshes, and swamps. Thriving, life-giving ecosystems treated as if they are dead zones to do with as we please. But let me get to the point of this story.

Recently, Julie Windebank, (my editor,) and I ventured down to the Cobequid Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre (CWRC) in Hilden and spent a couple of hours picking Brenda Boates' brain about just what goes on there. Brenda had agreed to our visit once I explained that it was for our community newspaper, because she is keen on increasing public awareness and respect for the preservation of wildlife. The centre is an unassuming collection of buildings that house the various wild creatures being assessed and rehabilitated from a variety of life-threatening situations: ailments and injuries from lead poisoning to vehicle strikes or being orphaned. Their focus is primarily on turtles and raptors; they also take in a variety of small mammals, birds, and reptiles. The centre depends on donations and fundraising to keep the lights on and pay for food, supplies, and transportation, whether it is with gift cards for gas, groceries, or hardware, it is all welcome and needed. Volunteers help out with care and cleaning, and there are five veterinarians who donate their time and expertise.

The late Dr Helene Van Donick and her husband Murdo Messer originally founded the CWRC in 2001, and Mr. Messer continues to act on the Board of Directors. Brenda runs the facility now after starting as a volunteer. She is a certified Wildlife Rehabilitator herself. CWRC is dedicated to rehabbing reptiles and raptors. Doesn't that have a nice ring to it? We learned a lot about both of those species and a lot more besides, but I'm going to focus on reptiles for this article, in particular turtles.

Species at risk are categorized both provincially and nationally. Turtles in Nova Scotia are a protected species: Blanding Turtles are on the Endangered list, while Wood Turtles are listed as Threatened and Snapping Turtles are considered Vulnerable. We don't really give them much thought and rarely see them. Painted turtles also found in Nova Scotia, are being monitored. Habitat loss and vehicle strikes are the two main causes of turtles' decline.

Wetlands are critical heat sinks and water sources. They capture carbon and have huge biodiversity. In 2011, the Wetland Conservation Policy for Nova Scotia was put in place as a way to protect them. (There were changes made in 2018 and in 2023, which were criticized by the Ecology Action Centre). In Nova Scotia, draining, filling, flooding, or excavating a wetland is prohibited without approval from the NS Department of Environment and Climate Change. The idea of filling one in and replacing with another one somewhere else I guess is better than nothing, but it takes a couple of years for a new pond to build up all that life.

Under the Wildlife Act, deliberately harming or keeping a turtle could result in charges or fines, as they are considered a protected species. Witnesses are encouraged to report any turtle strikes. If you discover injured wildlife, it is suggested you take a photo but resist posting on social media, secure the animal if it is safe to do so, but do not offer food or water, and contact CWRC and the Department of Natural

Resources. Turtles are often victims of vehicle strikes. They are sometimes seen crossing a road or highway, and they're slow. If you come across a turtle crossing a road you can give it a helping hand by raising the back end by the shell and carefully moving it forward. Never attempt to relocate it or try to turn it around. The turtle knows where it's going. If a turtle has needed rehab, then it must be returned to the exact location it was found. Last fall I stopped and helped a big snapper get across the road - kept my hands on the very back of the shell, not that he or she appreciated my help judging by the hissing - but I was happy to help it and thrilled to lay eyes on a snapper once again.

So, Dad, my intentions with the cistern when I was younger were innocent and done out of love, but turtles belong in their own habitat, not in a bowl or an aquarium. It is illegal to keep turtles as pets in Nova Scotia.

If you come upon wildlife that seems to be in trouble, contact NS Department of Natural Resources: in Pictou County, the office is in McLellans Brook, 902 922 4020. Brenda says many of the animals they help have been brought to them by DNR staff. Sometimes those same people participate in the release once the animal is cleared for take-off. But back to Brenda; besides several reptiles, small mammals and a number of birds, Brenda and her helpers were caring for over a dozen raptors, some recovering from injuries and others almost ready to be released. But that story is for another day...  
(In loving memory of Donald Bell Howatt, my dad.)

<https://novascotia.ca/natr/wildlife/species-at-risk/>  
<https://cpaws.org/grasslands-forests-wetlands-natures-carbon-capture-storage-solution/>

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# SEW & SEW, ADULT SEWING LESSONS AND SUPPLIES

By Featured Crafter -Griselda Manning



Griselda Manning working away in Room 205, Old River John School.

It has been a year since I moved from the shop space that I shared with a friend in the old River John school and took over a larger room in the same building. This new shop space can house large work tables and has lots of room to allow for the teaching of many different crafts.

Along with experienced friends, I have enjoyed instructing classes in rug hooking, rug braiding, quilting (various techniques), basic and advanced sewing (yes stretch fabrics too!), sewing machine maintenance and also some private lessons offering personal assistance.

All these classes and more will resume in early September, 2025, and will run again through until next spring. Most classes are offered as a two- or three-week set.

This new, large space which I call “Sew & Sew” is open every Tuesday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and also most Sundays, for several hours.

There are many lovely, donated fabrics, yarns, and notions in stock, always at very low prices, as well as an assortment of pre-used sewing machines, for use or for sale, quilting frames, vintage finds, homemade soap, raw sheep fleece and much more.

I can’t say enough good things about being a part of the old River John school. For me, the building definitely has a special vibe, and the Bigney family owners do a wonderful job of looking after any needs, and our well-being.

I always look forward to Tuesdays here in Room 205 where I can meet customers and friends, sort and price new stock and spend time sewing. Perhaps I’ll see you there too. I have neither a website nor computer access, but my phone number is 902 485 8287. Do give me a call if you have any questions.

Happy sewing!

# WELCOME TO RIVER JOHN

By Maureen Topley, River John and Area Welcome Committee

The River John and Area Welcome Committee, in partnership with the River John Library, hosted an evening meet-and-greet information session on Tuesday, May 6, for anyone new in the area, as well as longstanding residents. A similar event was held in 2023 with many people attending and very positive feedback.

So, it was time for another welcome to the area event. The format was similar to 2023, and our ever-helpful librarian, Helen, sent out a request to local service and community groups, with an invitation to attend and represent their organization. All were invited to bring along an information sheet for newcomers to take home. The library and welcome committee provided light refreshments.

This year attendance numbers were down from 2023, however, the turnout from local community groups was fantastic. Fifteen plus organizations were represented. Each representative outlined what their organization does, how it contributes to the community and most importantly, what they offer to anyone who would like to join. We all know that the best way to meet new people and to feel part of a community is to get involved!

Unfortunately, our main organizer, Diane Kennedy, was unable to attend so Lynn MacLeod and I headed up the evening.

The evening was very successful. Everyone made connections and learned a little about the many service groups and organizations available in the community. As a follow-up to this event, packages of the handouts were put together and left at the library for anyone to pick up.

# RIVER JOHN SQUARE KNITTERS

By Netta Heukshorst

Spring is here and winter is behind us once again, our needles didn’t freeze up during the cold months, lol. So far, since the last issue, we mailed out six bundles in March and nine bundles in May. As well, we donated five lapghans to the Lillian Fraser Hospital for palliative care patients. We hope it gives them a little comfort to know that the community thinks of them with love.

We are looking forward to all the local summer markets so we can sell our boutique items to raise money for postage.

Look for us on World Wide Knit in Public Day on Saturday, June 14th. Anywhere from River John to Tatamagouche, you may see knitters out and about, even if it’s at the end of the driveway and not only the Square Knitters but anyone all around the world can join in the fun. One man even knitted out in his kayak! So, make a cuppa and find a spot and knit/crochet.

A big thank you to the local businesses that display our pretty dishcloths and aprons that we

sell to raise money, The River John Library, Overstreet Cafe, River John Post Office, and the Country Bread Basket.

We also have an outreach program at the Women’s prison in Truro to help them with their recovery. Just lately they presented us with 300 lovely squares that were mailed out in May. Well done ladies.

As always, donations of new or unused yarn may be left at the library or on Friday mornings from 10 a.m.-noon, when we meet. If you wish to learn how to knit the squares, come along, you are welcome. Yarn and needles can be provided.

Smile, knit, and always be kind to each other.



# BOOK REVIEW: MUSINGS & MEMORIES OF RIVER JOHN HISTORY

Review by Christiane Gill

Wright, Beulah Jane; Musings and  
Memories of River John History.  
Publisher: Amazon.ca, Bolton, ON,  
Canada, 2025; 1st Edition; 177 pp.  
ISBN: 979 830 262 9128

“*Musings & Memories of River John History*” is a history book depicting River John’s history by means of a closer, more personal look at visible elements of its social and economic basis. Chronology is of negligible importance here since most of the eight main topics co-existed, if indeed they were not intertwined. The eight chapters are each brought to life by up to eleven instances that perfectly illustrate the topic at hand. Churches, shipyards, enterprises, and services are as vividly depicted as is River John’s civil and military history. River John’s residents were so productive and fascinating that a whole chapter dedicated just to notable citizens was needed.

History is boring – or so they say. Black and white is bland – or so they say.

This book obliterates those notions. Quite the contrary is true. The many old black and white photographs highlight and vivify this history book to the point where colour would have felt blasphemous.

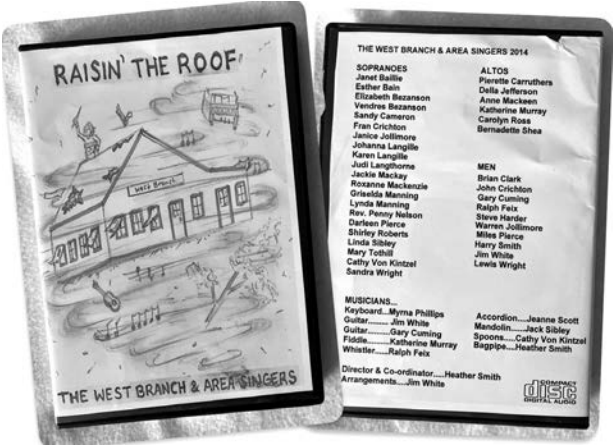
This book can be studied as a whole, each chapter can be explored by itself, each sub-chapter can be enjoyed by itself. This book can be looked at as a factual depiction of a time long gone. This book can be savoured as entertainment. This book can be read from cover to cover, or it can be opened at random, and you can immediately immerse yourself. This book is open to whatever you feel you want to get out of it. Each time you open this book it will reveal something different to you, something new, something you didn’t think you would find as fascinating as you do. This is because each section is brought to life not only through the author’s decades long, meticulous research of people’s and establishments’ fate and long forgotten items that you find in each section but through the warm, knowledgeable, and respectful way that the author portrays the history of this village.

Even while writing these lines, I open “Musings & Memories of River John History” time and again to remind myself of what I want to mention and find myself having to stop myself from losing myself in it again. My favourite English teacher, Mrs. Belle, once shared her belief that a good book is one that entices you to read, just as it entices you to put it down to reflect upon what you have read. This history book would have been one of her top five favourite books for sure.

Thank you, Beulah!

# A CLOSER LOOK AT THE WEST BRANCH & AREA SINGERS

By Heather Smith



In early September 2010 I decided that I wanted to try to create a singing group in the small community of West Branch near River John, so the call went out and eighteen people showed up the first night. That night Jim White came to sing and he said that next time he could bring his guitar and play as he played a “little bit” – well, he played a whole lot, and so with his wonderful arrangements and my ideas we have been working side-by-side helping people have fun for almost 16 years! Before COVID we were about forty participants strong, with five to six musicians. Now we have a headcount of about 30-35 singers and 2-3 musicians - but growing back stronger every week. We were so very lucky to have Gary Cuming and Katherine Murray on guitar and piano. They have since retired so now we have David Palmer on guitar with Jim; I play the electronic bagpipes when needed for a tune and we are hoping that my daughter-in-law, Kayla Mulholland, may join us on piano. Over the years we have raised over \$60,000 for community halls, churches and people just needing some assistance. The choir takes no pay for playing anywhere and helping out for funerals is one of our mandates.

We have made six CDs, all of which we sold out and had to order more of. We sing a variety of music from old rock’n’roll to Celtic, gospel, country, and anything in-between. No matter what your age, you can always SING! and since we don’t use music, you learn from Jim and me, singing the parts and making up harmonies.

Our youngest singer is 58 years old and the oldest is 92 years young. Literally everyone is welcome to come join us. We rehearse every second Sunday at the Legion in River John, then we are off for the summer and back at it in the fall, to prepare for Christmas.

If this sounds like fun to you - and believe you me - IT IS, please call Heather or Jim at 305-1759 or 351-2260 for more information, or just come and give this amazing group a try.

# EASTER VIBES



Tim Roeterdink and Cheyenne McInnis took their children Clint and Millie to join the Easter egg hunt to meet and greet the Easter Bunny.



The Cripps children: Isabel, William, Charlotte and George were out enjoying the Easter egg hunt. Charlotte was particularly excited to see the Easter Bunny. It was a fun event and thank you to River John Recreation for hosting this for all the children.

# HAPPENINGS AT THE RIVER JOHN LIBRARY



It was a woolly full house for Felting with Gillian from Lismore Sheep Farm during March Break.



“BINGO!” on yummy healthy snacks (you can grow!) with Mandy, with SOUL fully SOIL and the Scotsburn Food Forest.

# WEST BRANCH HAY WAGON KIDS

By Ian MacCara



**1. Burdena Rae, 2. Murray Rae, 3. Jim Ross, 4. Jean MacKenzie, 5. Donnie Rae, 6. Sadie Rae, 7. Clifford MacKay, 8. Kathleen MacKenzie, 9. Rae MacKenzie, 10. Florence Gammon, 11. Stanley Gammon, 12. Pete MacKay, 13. Roy MacKenzie**

The picture above comes from Allan and Mary Fraser who have developed “A Walk Through Time Museum,” in Scotsburn, Pictou County. They entrusted me to explore the names of the children and to estimate the date when it was taken. This “West Branch Hay Wagon Kids” photo, as I’ve come to think of it, has lots of stories to tell.

For these children, the hay wagon would’ve been their playground, as well as a symbol of a working lifestyle that involved all available hands. These hay wagon kids knew how to “build the load,” whether hay or oats, and they also knew how to climb on, and jump off the wagon. Sometimes they even hauled their friends around the field, once the problem of gathering enough friends to make it fun and exciting was accomplished.

One can imagine some adult over 100 years ago being thoughtful enough to organize thirteen children from the community of West Branch, River John, on that fine example of an old-fashioned hay wagon, to take a picture. It was very helpful to find the names of the children pencilled in order, on the wooden back of the picture. The family names were all familiar, and being able to locate the children on Ancestry.com family trees helped with dates and information.

Coming up with a year when the picture was taken began with determining the date of birth associated with each of the children. Child #7, Clifford MacKay, and child #12, Pete MacKay, both born in 1909, were the oldest, while child #2, Murray Rae, born in 1920, was the youngest. That the picture was taken after 1920 is also supported by the 1919 arrival back in Canada of Florence and Stanley Gammon, #10 and #11 in the lineup of children. They were both born in the Boston area of the United States. The 1921 and 1931 Canadian census dates their return as 1919. Child #6, Sadie Rae, born in 1918, looks to be around 4 years old, when compared to the even smaller Murray Rae. This allowed me to place the circa 1922 on the photo.

None of our hay wagon kids are still living. Burdena Rae, child #1, who lived to be 101 years of age, passed in 2013. Runners-up in the race through time were child #3, Jim Ross, and child #7, Clifford MacKay, both passing in 2002.

The process of going through these dates, and other sources of information, moved one back and forth in time around the early 1920s, as experienced in West Branch. Some help in this was rendered by the children themselves, along with comments and conversations with their descendants.

Following up on the family names, in the case of the Gammons leads us back to early travel by stagecoach, the transport of mail, and the movement of goods around northern Nova Scotia. It turns out that one of their stagecoaches was used not once, but twice, to transport members of the royal family, generations apart. Sticking closer to home, with Clifford MacKay we experience the life of a general-store owner in the early years of the 20th century. It seems that Clifford could assist in the procurement of anything, from farm tractors, prosthetics, groceries, and fuel. He even sold maple syrup produced by local families. It is fitting that what was once his general store is now “A Loop in Time Museum,” only sixteen kilometres west from “A Walk Through Time Museum” in Scotsburn, which started me on this quest.

Clifford MacKay and Jim Ross were lifelong friends, and they carried on the tradition of storytelling, recalling stories that both predated the hay wagon kids, and included their lives going forward. Reviewing their stories in the booklet, “Stories Around the Branch,” available from the West Branch Community Hall, is a fun read. For more details on the West Branch Hay Wagon Kids, one can scroll back through my Facebook site, “Northern Nova Scotia Genealogical Fun”. You will recognize the picture posted several times and may even meet a relative or two in the comments section.

# RIVER JOHN LEGION NEWS

By Mike Topley, President

As summer approaches, activity at our Legion normally picks up; and maybe more so this summer as the first full summer of pickleball play gets underway. We can already hear the sound of pickleball players competing and having a good time.

Our annual spring cleanup saw several Legion members, friends and pickleball players helping with our Remembrance Gardens grounds maintenance and upkeep.

Inside our hall, we completed a re-paint job, and are proud of our new commercial dishwasher installation. This will modernize our kitchen operations and speed up dishwashing for major and minor events. Funding for the dishwasher came from a New Horizons for Seniors grant and from ACOA assistance provided through MOPC’s Comfort Centre program.

Recreation’s summer students are starting to arrive, and Ashley will co-ordinate these students who work from the Legion as their home base. These students keep all our public properties shipshape, so please give them a friendly wave or thumbs-up as you drive by. Summer students also provide program planning and daily leadership of day campers who will do arts, crafts and play out of the Legion’s lower hall and outdoors fenced area. Summer day camp will start in July and go to the end of August.

Our Legion’s involvement in Festival Days this year includes the Strawberry Tea, Bingo and Euchre evenings, Bouncy Castle, Petting Zoo, Tug of War, and our parking lot provides the forming-up area for the Saturday Parade. The Kids First and Line Dancing programs will pause for the summer so regular Legion hosted activities will include Washer Toss, Cribbage, and “Drop-In” time from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. each Thursday - all are welcome. A new initiative called Music Saturdays features local musicians once a month, such as True Grit, Mike Chapman, Route 6, and Geezer.

Anyone wishing to join our Legion or become a “Friend” should call 902 351 2261. Friends are not obliged to contribute anything. It just means that you will receive our monthly e-newsletter.

Finally, you should know that our bartenders are currently undergoing Serve-Right bartender training, to be able to recognize and know how to handle impairment or intoxication. Patrons are still responsible for their own liquor management and are expected to control alcohol intake to minimize potential for incidents and/or accidents.

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

# RIVER JOHN PICKLEBALL CLUB: MEMBERS WANTED

By Theresa Rath Spicer and Jan Langley, Membership Lead



Looking to expand your social circle? Get some exercise? Have fun? River John Pickleball Club (RJPC) offers all of this and more! Whether you're a full time resident or a cottager, RJPC has a little something for everyone.

Our outdoor courts – known as River John Pickleball Park, which is located on the Royal Canadian Legion River John Branch 108's property – are open for the season, and they're better than ever. This is our second year of welcoming players of all levels, and we're excited to share some updates:

**Facilities Upgrades:**

Our washrooms and shade shelter are fully operational, and we're adding court lighting to allow for evening play – the latter is thanks to a generous donation again this year from the New Horizons for Seniors Program through the Government of Canada.

**Skill Development Opportunities:**

- Learn to Play sessions for beginners
- Mentorship Program
- Weekly Player Development sessions in June (with possible summer extension)
- A weekend Player Development course in July
- Weekly self-directed Skills and Drills sessions, that include the use of Club balls and ball hopper.
- Variety of Play for Members:
- Rated play at all various levels, from beginner to competitive
- Member Round Robins
- Men's & Ladies' Nights

# RIVER JOHN RECREATION ANNOUNCES EXCITING SUMMER PROGRAMS

By Ashley Langille, RJ Recreation Association

River John Recreation is thrilled to announce its Day Camp program, which is set to provide a summer full of fun and activities for twenty children aged 4 to 12. Throughout the summer, you will see them enjoying the village and having fun at the Legion grounds.

We are incredibly grateful to the Legion and Lions Club for their continued support this summer. Their generosity in providing us with a space for these kids and their leaders to have fun is invaluable.

In addition to the Day Camp, the popular T-ball program is returning this summer with

- Ruler of the Court
- Partner Play sessions
- Competitive play

**River John Festival Days Involvement:**

- Free Learn to Play sessions on Friday, July 18. Come to the River John Pickleball Park next to the Legion, 10-11 a.m. or 11 a.m.-12 noon. Maximum 12 participants per session. Ages 16 and up. Sneakers free from debris, and eye protection required. RJPC will provide paddles and balls. Come and learn the game! Preregister with Elaine at [langilles@hotmail.com](mailto:langilles@hotmail.com)
- Annual Tournament: Join us for the River John Festival Days Tournament where you will need a mixed-doubles team of four (2 men, 2 women) at the same level of play:  
Friday, July 18 (4-7 p.m.): Team Pickleball (2.5–2.99)  
Saturday, July 19 (8:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m.): Team Pickleball (3.0–3.49)  
Saturday, July 19 (1:30-6:30 p.m.): Team Pickleball (3.5+)
- New in 2025: We are offering a “Book a Court” pilot program, allowing members to reserve courts for play with other members and/or guests. Perfect for family gatherings and group get-togethers.

We'd truly love to have you join RJPC. Involvement in the club has been life-changing for many of our members, improving both physical and mental health and fostering fast friendships.

To become a member, visit our website at <https://secure.pickleballcanada.org/club/river-john-pickleball-club/32284/> . You can also join River John Pickleball on Facebook to check out all the fun we have.

Questions? Need help with the registration process? Reach out to [riverjohnpickleball@gmail.com](mailto:riverjohnpickleball@gmail.com) Attention Membership. We hope to see you on the courts!

approximately 63 kids already signed up, and numbers still climbing. The T-ball program will run two days a week from July through the end of August, offering young athletes the chance to develop their skills and enjoy the sport. We are so excited to offer these programs to the community.

It's going to be a fantastic summer for the kids in River John. Stay tuned for more updates and details on River John Recreation's summer programs.

Get ready for a summer filled with fun, learning, and community spirit!

# LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

As someone who recently spent time in the Lillian Fraser Memorial Hospital, I feel compelled to share my deep appreciation for this gem in our community. When you go to Lillian Fraser Memorial Hospital you are truly looked after. The care is personal and heartfelt – not something you find everywhere these busy days.

The food is another blessing. It is not institutional fare, but real homemade meals that warm the heart. These meals are prepared by Corey Christopher and Lynda Joudrey. I was served hot porridge in the morning, and one day, delicious fish cakes – just like home.

One night, I had indigestion at 2 a.m. A nurse not only responded right away but brought me toast and warm milk. Kindness like that sticks with you. The doctors are nearby, and the nurses are local – familiar faces who care deeply about their neighbours.

We are blessed to have this hospital. In a time when so many feels rushed and impersonal, Lillian Fraser Memorial Hospital reminds us of what community care really looks like.

Sincerely  
Laura Elliott.  
River John, N.S.

# RIVER JOHN 4-H CLUB NEWS

By Christine Heighton

With the warmer weather and summer fast approaching, the River John 4-H Club is very busy preparing for Achievement Day and Exhibition. The members are working hard on their projects, doing their crafts, foods, and woodworking, working with their animals, training to walk, stand properly, getting the rabbits and ducks to pose properly on the show table and putting time in their projects to be ready to be judged. Some of our beef and dairy members are participating in the East Gen 4-H Showcase in early July at the Nova Scotia Provincial Exhibition grounds in Truro, best of luck to them all!

Along with their project work to be ready for Achievement Day on July 7th, the members are also preparing for their breakfast during the River John Festival Days. As always, the members are serving bacon, eggs, toast, and homemade baked beans. We hope to see you all there on July 22nd. The 4-H theme for 2025 is “4-H Hit Your Stride in 2025”. Members plan their displays for the Pictou-North Colchester Exhibition and the Nova Scotia Provincial Show in Bridgewater this year around this theme.

Many hours will go into the making of the display that the members come up with and put it up themselves. Everyone is invited to come to the shows to cheer on the members and see the results of their hard work.

# PICTOU COUNTY ROOTS SOCIETY (PCRS)

By Manon Potvin



You never know what you're going to find or where you're going to find it!

The Pictou County Roots Society (PCRS) is a registered non-profit organization. The society held its first monthly meeting on November 11th, 1998, for the purpose of assisting the public in genealogical research and preserving historical records so that they may be available for public use currently and in the future.

PCRS meets on the second Wednesday of every month at 2 p.m. in the Community Room of the New Glasgow Library. We have a dedicated phone line as well: 902-752- 7543. It is through the dedication of volunteers that our society has continued to flourish.

At the meetings, the minutes from the previous meeting are read and some general business is reported to the society. We then have discussions about new findings or sharing information on research and members helping each other. At times, we have guest speakers, even musicians. The meetings are open to anyone and are free to attend. If you wish to join the group a yearly membership is \$20 per person and \$25 for a family.

Our collection is contained in the Heritage Room of the New Glasgow Library. We have an amazing variety of books available, pertaining to immigration and records and histories of Pictou County. The primary immigrants to settle in Pictou County would be of Scottish, Irish, and English descent. Other settlers could include some European countries, Asia, and United Empire Loyalists arriving after the American Revolution.

Some examples of what is available at our Heritage Room:

- Obituary Collection (over 40,000 on file in a cabinet)
- Family Genealogies (donated by members and non-members)
- Ritchie Records (binders from Pictou County cemetery findings)
- •Presbyterian Witness Records (transcribed by Shirley McCormack)
- Photograph Collections (MacKenzie and Waldren)
- Newspaper Collection (on microfilm)
- Vangie Way Collection (extracted from newspapers 1875-1931) (not all years available)
- Database of over 2,489,000 names in the Master Genealogist Program
- Historical Books by local historians such as Clyde Macdonald, James Cameron, Beulah Wright, and others
- Guest Speakers – on occasions present their research (TBA)
- Church Records (some when able to obtain them)
- Scrapbooks from personal collections of various years
- Glass Cabinet Collection – Rarer books, (request assistance from a library staff person)
- Census records compiled into easy to search books

Here is an example from a PCRS member, whose great-great-grandmother is Isabel McLean, born in Baddeck, Cape Breton, to parents Hector McLean and Elizabeth Sutherland.

In browsing through a binder labelled “St. John’s Church, Belfast, P.E.I. an index to Baptisms 1823-1900” she found precise dates for Isabel McLean’s birth and baptism. How would anyone think about searching records from a church in Belfast, P.E.I. for clues? According to these records, Isabel McLean was born the 15th of August 1822 at Baddeck, Cape Breton, and baptized on the 19th of August 1824 by Rev. John McLennan, from St. John’s Presbyterian Church, Belfast, Prince Edward Island. Baptisms were done by this minister who traveled to remote parts in Cape Breton and Nova Scotia to perform baptisms when no other ministers were available. The records often went back with the minister doing the baptisms and this is why they may have ended up in a totally different place from where the people lived.

Another example is the minister Rev. Daniel Cock (1717-1805) from Truro, Nova Scotia, born in Clydesdale, Scotland. He is known to have been a traveling minister, but those records have not surfaced yet. It would be a truly great find if some of the baptisms performed by Rev. Daniel Cock would be made available to our society. At a time in history when families were large, second and third marriages common, and people moved around for many reasons, records are often scattered between different towns, cities, provinces, and countries.

As a non-profit society, we strive to help people find the sources and stories about their ancestors. We also accept donations of historical significance. It could be a ledger with marriages, or school records, or old photographs, maps, or letters to/from people living in Pictou County. All will be gratefully accepted, and without a doubt, of help to someone.

To newbies interested in genealogy, an appointment can be set up to meet one of our volunteers. Those who are lifelong gatherers of family history, new discoveries might also be made. There is always something to uncover at the Heritage Room.

Be sure to drop by to see us at Glasgow Square Green Room during the Festival of the Tartans, August 15-17, 2025. Bring your family tree brick walls if you wish.

Pictou County Roots Society  
182 Dalhousie St, New Glasgow, NS B2H 5E3  
(902) 752-9543  
roots@parl.ns.ca  
President: Kenneth Fraser  
Treasurer: Nedra (Chambers) Wilson  
Liaison person between the PCRS and the New Glasgow Library:  
Susan Parker (902) 752-8233  
ancestorsforever@gmail.com

# RIVER JOHN FIRE DEPARTMENT NEWS

By Krysta Maclellan

We would like to thank the community for their continued support of the Firefighters’ 50/50 draw. We currently have a new fire truck on order to replace our 1991 GMC Pumper. The 50/50 money is helping with the purchase of this truck. To help support the fire department and for your chance to win money, you can purchase your tickets online at Firefighters5050.com/107.

As some of you may have noticed, we have been keeping busy with calls. One of our larger calls being the fish plant in Cape John, where we had eight departments involved in fighting the fire. We are very grateful to have such amazing neighbouring departments within our Mutual Aid, who are willing to come when the call is made

We have also had some grass and woods fires in our area, as well as helping our neighbouring departments with a few of their calls. We would like to remind people that the burn ban is in effect from March 15-October 15. The fine for violating daily burn restrictions is \$25,000. To find out more information and what colour your area is, you can visit NovaScotia.ca/Burnsafe.

A huge Thank You to all those who have donated food and drinks to us while on calls. Although some say, “It’s not much,” each and every donation was greatly appreciated and helped in keeping our firefighters battling with the situation at hand.

With the warm weather here now, we would like to remind people to practise water safety, whether you are out swimming or out on the water, please stay safe and stay hydrated. Be aware of the heat and watch out for heat warnings about heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

## Dates To Mark:

This summer is going to be busy with upcoming events, such as our famous **Lobster Dinner July 19th** from noon until sold out, and our Chicken BBQ August 17th from noon until sold out.

**Our Firefighter Competition is July 21st at 7 p.m.** at the Old School. All are invited to come watch as teams compete and show off their firefighting skills.

We also have our **Lucky Duck Race July 26th** on the river at the bridge. Time will be posted at a later date. To get a Lucky Duck ticket, you can contact any member of the department. Tickets will be \$5 per duck, with prizes of 1st - \$600, 2nd-\$300, 3rd- \$150. First three ducks to cross the finish line in order are the winners.



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# DYLAN LANGILLE: A PASSION FOR DESIGN AND COMMUNITY CREATOR FOR THE RIVER JOHN PIONEER

By Debby Shaw

Dylan Langille, a talented graphic designer, has been leaving a mark on his community through his creativity and dedication, and contributes to our community in many ways, including as the graphic designer for the River John Pioneer community newspaper. A graduate of the Graphic Design program at Nova Scotia Community College in 2016, Dylan has honed his craft with passion.

Originally from River John, Dylan now resides in Truro with his family. Despite the change in location, his connection to River John remains steadfast. He is married and the proud father of a young daughter, a role that he humorously claims is one of his main hobbies alongside work. “Baby and work!” he says, reflecting his devotion to both his family and his profession. This balance of personal and professional life underscores Dylan’s deep appreciation for both.

Dylan’s company, Sonder Creative Co., specializes in creating video and print advertisements, and promotions, as well as graphic designs. His expertise is evident in the vibrant visuals he produces. One of his most notable contributions is his long-



Photo Credit: Erin Falkenham

standing involvement in designing the T-shirts for River John’s Festival Days. For the past ten years, he has infused his creative energy into this project, crafting designs that have become a cherished part of the celebration. The opportunity to contribute to Festival Days fills Dylan with immense gratitude. “I drive around and look at designs I’ve done, and I am filled with gratitude,” he shares, acknowledging the support River John has given him throughout his career.

Dylan’s philosophy for success is simple yet profound: “To be successful, one needs to never stop learning.” This ethos is reflected in his continuous growth as a designer, his eagerness to embrace new challenges, and his unwavering commitment to excellence.

Through his work, Dylan Langille embodies the spirit of creativity and community connection. He remains a source of inspiration, not only for aspiring designers but also for the residents of River John and beyond, proving that passion and dedication can transform both careers and communities.

# SEAN FRASER, MP, INTERVIEW

By Ed Kennedy



**Q: As the Member of Parliament for Central Nova, what do you think are the top three issues facing your constituents?**

A: Based on the thousands of conversations during the recent election, three topics have been very clear:  
(1) standing up to the United States in the face of the economic attacks by the Trump Administration and maintaining our sovereignty to protect the economic interests of families in our communities, (e.g., the possible risk of job losses at Michelin, which sells 75% of their tires to the US, and at small businesses that work for these big corporations,) and strengthening our trade relationships with our allies;  
(2) working on affordability of housing, food, etc., and reducing taxes;  
(3) having the federal government be a good partner with provinces on enhancing the quality of health care.

**Q: In your new position as Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, what are your priorities?**

A: There will be a focus on:  
(1) strengthening the US/CAN border to protect against drug trafficking in order to weaken the US rationale for tariffs on our economy;  
(2) helping navigate some of our internal economic challenges to ensure we adopt laws that make it easier to do business within Canada and speed up the review of nation-building projects that will drive our economy forward;  
(3) attention to legal issues centering on criminal law reform, (e.g., changes to the bail system to ensure that violent repeat offenders can’t easily get back into our communities and allow victims of crime to be better represented in the justice system, measures are planned to be introduced in the fall,) and work to continue implementing the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, including advancement of an indigenous justice strategy.

**Q: Prime Minister Carney has identified developing the best possible security and economic relationship with the US and building the strongest economy in the G7 countries as priorities. What role will you play in meeting these goals?**

A: In both of ministerial roles, there will be engagement in some of the efforts that cut across government to help grow the economy,

(e.g., major project review, internal trade barriers, strengthening the border to help deal with challenges with the US, and directly in Atlantic Canada economic development.) Prime Minister Carney has directed his Ministers to engage in all the government priorities, rather than focus only on their specific mandate, and he will be reaching out regularly to see how they are contributing to the work across government. This is a mission-based approach designed to help deal with the economic threat from the US, to build one Canadian economy, and to advance nation-building projects to solve major problems like price of housing.

**Q: As Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), how do you hope the Agency will help Nova Scotia businesses manage the effects of US tariffs and find new opportunities for growth and prosperity?**

A: Part of ACOA’s role is to respond to the threats from the US, but also to help grow the economy here in Nova Scotia that doesn’t necessarily rely so heavily on one trading partner. ACOA is helping local businesses to export their products and services into new markets so they can expand the reach of the program. Businesses are being helped to scale up by reducing the costs of purchasing new equipment that increases their productivity,

Continued on page 19

# OUR GRADUATES



**Alana MacKinnon**  
**Age:** 18  
**Parents:** Caroline and Lorne MacKinnon  
**School:** Northumberland Regional High School  
**Extracurricular:** Volleyball  
**Future Plans:** Attending Acadia University for a Bachelor of Kinesiology



**Justin Heighton**  
**Parents:** Terry and Tammie Heighton  
**School:** Commercial Safety College  
**Extracurricular:** Dirt Biking  
**Future Plans:** working with T & E Heighton Construction



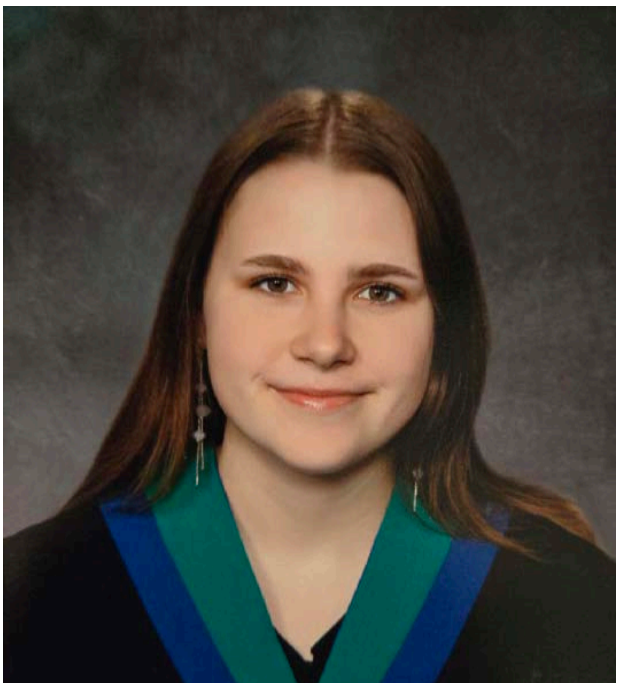
**Noah Redmond**  
**Age:** 18  
**Parents:** Ebony Moser and James Redmond  
**School:** Northumberland Regional High School  
**Extracurricular:** Hunting & Fishing  
**Future Plans:** Construction Electrician



**Christena MacLean**  
**Age:** 18  
**Parents:** Shar and Brian MacLean  
**School:** Tatamagouche Regional Academy  
**Extracurricular:** Soccer, Hockey, Volleyball, Basketball  
**Future Plans:** Acadia University



**Cohen Cameron**  
**Age:** 17  
**Parents:** Becki Langille and Chris Cameron  
**School:** Tatamagouche Regional Academy  
**Future Plans:** NSCC-Pictou Campus in the fall, taking Social Services.



**Ria Suidgeest**  
**Parents:** Valrie and David Suidgeest  
**School:** Tatamagouche Regional Academy  
**Extracurricular:** River John 4-H, TRA Sr. Girls high school hockey team  
**Future Plans:** St. FX University, BSc Psychology



**Ryan Clough**  
**Age:** 17  
**Parents:** Grace Joudrey and Trevor Clough  
**School:** NRHS  
**Future Plans:** undecided

The Editorial Team of the Pioneer wishes to extend heartfelt congratulations to our local high school graduates of 2025. Well done, everyone!

Cohen Cameron	Ria Suidgeest
Ryan Clough	Colby Nickerson
Noah Redmond	Spencer Tripp
Justin Heighton	Christena MacLean
Jordyn Peters	Alana MacKinnon
Chloe Patriquin	

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CENTRAL NOVA

# SEANFRASER,MP

#HERETOHELP

# SPRING FASHION SHOW

By Mary Beth Sutherland

It was a fun afternoon of fashion with friends on June 1st, 2025, thanks to the River John Community Action Society, the organizers of the Fashion Show at the River John Legion. The proceeds of this event help to pay for projects which RJCAS is involved with, such as our community docks.

Eleven ladies each modelled four outfits of clothing from the Ladies Consignment Shop in Tatamagouche, under the guidance of Helen George and Marj Hatherly, who run the shop. There was a wide variety of clothing, modelled by women who could rival the Parisian fashion models, and at the same time, give us lots of laughs. During the mid show break a delicious lunch was served and wonderful prizes won. When the show was over, the clothing went up for sale. Many ensembles were so coveted that there were ladies patiently waiting, just in case the desired piece didn't fit the first potential buyer, giving the one next in line a chance to snag their treasure. Some people may even have to wait days or weeks to finally sport their desired piece. This actually happened to one lady last year. She was a tad too late for a gorgeous, little bag. A couple of months after the dazzling fashion show she happened upon the then new owner, who confessed that it just didn't go with any of her outfits, so the bag changed hands one final time, and this owner is now rarely ever seen without it. As you can see many great, happy, closet additions have started at the River John Fashion Show.

Hope to see you there next year.

# RIVER JOHN NOMINEES FOR PICTOU COUNTY VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR

By Debby Shaw



Volunteer of the Year 2025, for the Municipality of Pictou County, Ed Kennedy with Warden Robert Parker.

River John residents Amy Fraser and Ed Kennedy were nominated for 2025 Volunteer of the Year in the Municipality of Pictou County (MOPC). Amy and Ed both have strong reputations for going above and beyond in volunteering time helping their community and the various organizations of which they are a part. They were nominated along with twelve others and many community groups. All were honoured during a volunteer appreciation event at the Pictou County Wellness Centre on April 29.

Amy is a member of the River John Festival Committee, River John Fire Department

Ladies Auxiliary, the Time Capsule Legacy committee, and the Royal Canadian Legion. She supports the Christmas Tree lighting at Bissell Park, and last year she led two benefits raising over \$18,000. One of these benefits was for a volunteer firefighter who lost his teenage son in a tragic car accident. This raised more than \$10,000. In December, she participated in a gift drive for local residents and other folks who are isolated. Amy is also a keen baker and donates cheesecakes for fundraising auctions throughout the county and across the calendar year.

**Ed Kennedy is the 2025 MOPC Volunteer of the Year.** "Our volunteers are the heartbeat of our community," said Warden Robert Parker. "They are what keep our fire departments, community halls and other organizations going. Everything is dependent on those volunteers." That is why he believes it is so important to recognize their efforts. "It's a real pleasure for our municipality to be able to sit down with a good group of them to show our appreciation on behalf of all our residents, for all the work they do all year," Parker said. For his part, Ed was shocked to hear his name called as the winner. "I'm just very honoured," he said.

Continued on page 17



From left to right: Marj Hatherly, Margaret Langille, Olivia O'Brien, Lynn Cox, Margaret Cripps, Ashley Langille, Helen George  
In front: Lynn MacLeod and Cecile Heighton



From left to right: Marilyn Heighton, Kathy Ives, Kelly Shaw, Nicole van Zutphen, Valarie Langille, Cecile Heighton, and Helen George

# THE LEGACY OF THE RIVER JOHN TIME CAPSULE AND THE YEAR 2000 CLUB

By Cecile Heighton

**PAST:** In 1999, there was talk that the world might come to an end due to widespread computer failure, called the Y2K Bug. Scary Stuff! As these fears became embedded in my brain, I felt a need to act. Thus, I called on River Johners to join me to prepare a community approach to welcome in the Year 2000 and to celebrate the entire Millennium Year- to overtake the Y2K fears.

**WHO:** The Year 2000 Club members included Mac Steward, Ronnie Baillie, Willis Langille, Marilyn Heighton, Laura Elliott, Linda Munro (Treasurer), Cecile Heighton (Chair) and countless volunteers.

Our Year 2000 Club was committed to raise enough money in 1999 to fund events during each month of the Millennium. Our biggest aspiration was the sealing of a River John Time Capsule with the plan to open it at the New Year's Day Levee 2025. Our Time Capsule was built by Jim MacLeod in 1999.

**PRESENT:** The Year 2000 Club reunited in 2024. Members including Willis Langille, Ronnie Baillie, Marilyn Heighton, Valarie Langille (Treasurer) and Cecile Heighton (Chair) and countless volunteers. Our shared determination was to make the opening of our Time Capsule every bit as elaborate as the 2000 closing... with a live band, awesome food, decorations to create the most thrilling atmosphere, and unforgettable fireworks. A note of gratitude goes out to all the River John businesses and organizations, Fire Hall, Library, individuals, and our Municipal Council. Your gifts and donations allowed these celebrations to be free of charge for our community to enjoy.

On New Year's Day 2025, our Time Capsule was opened, witnessed by over 250 people. It was so surreal giving individuals the treasures, that had been locked up for 25 years. It was touching - some tears, goosebumps, it felt joyful - lots of laughing and a sense of hope. For example, returning letters to three sisters that were from their heavenly dad, so heartfelt. A lady posted on Facebook, "It was a great celebration, very exciting to see what we were getting and from who."

Our celebrations of opening the Time Capsule, dancing, eating, laughing, and the fireworks concluded with a flood of young children putting their treasures in our Time Capsule. A lady noted on Facebook, "I was fortunate to put something in the Time Capsule yesterday for my kids to open in 2050. Hopefully, I will be around to see it."

**FUTURE:** To share the legacy of the Year 2000 Club, of enriching our community, as well as the excitement that our Time Capsule radiates, there will be a Heritage Display at the River John Historical Society Museum, that will feature some memorabilia from our 1999/2000 events and some treasures from our 2000 Time Capsule.

My hope is to spread the concept of a Community Time Capsule to neighboring communities. That is, for others to find someone like Jim MacLeod to build them a Time Capsule. So, to 'infect' the changing world with community spirit, love, excitement, and hope. An individual on Facebook expressed that she was "...very excited to have placed



Left to right: Alan Heighton and Willis Langille sealing the Time Capsule which is due to be opened at the New Year's Day Levee, 2050.

The Time Capsule will be clean, cozy, and warm at the Odd Fellows Hall for the next 25 years.

something in it, but in 2050 I'm curious what's in store for us?"

An 83-year-old lady of our community captured the essence of what the club strived to achieve through our 2025 celebrations and again through future celebrations; she wrote, "You as a committee should be so pleased with the job you have done. I had such an excellent afternoon, the fireworks were awesome, the food just came out constantly, and the band had people up dancing the afternoon away. Having the historic Time Capsule was a great experience for everyone."

On behalf of the Year 2000 Club, many thanks to you all for participating in the planning, preparation, and fundraising and for taking the time as a community to make our New Year's Day 2025 celebrations a magical day spent together.

Next up - our New Year's Day 2050 celebrations - which will also be fun, lots of laughter, dancing, reuniting, excitement, and a sense of hope - what we all need. I will only be 87 years young- so fingers crossed - I will be celebrating with you all once again.



## BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT

Tammy and Darren Langille are thrilled to announce the arrival of their granddaughter, Emilia Elizabeth Langille on March 20, 2025. Emmy is the daughter of Joel and Leigha Langille of Halifax, granddaughter to Dr. Phil and Wendy Acott of Halifax and great-granddaughter to Elaine Forward of River John.

# RIVER JOHN LION CUBS

By Karen Mattatall, Chair

Our River John Lion Cubs were out in the village helping our Lions set up the picnic tables for the summer at the Lions Club and at the children's playground. They had HUGE success with their annual fundraiser for the Dog Guides of Canada. They raised over \$2,000, with donations still coming in. The weather wasn't very cooperative, but it was great to see our friends and community members and dogs come out and enjoy the walk with us.

We had special guests Lion Bill Bruhm talk to us about how the Dog Guide program works and what services are offered. Lion Craig was there with his dog guide Walt and told us his story of his vision loss and how he came about getting Walt, and how positive an impact it has had on his life. We had musical entertainment from Lion Donald and Lion Diane performed a dance.

This summer you can see the cubs volunteering all around the community at different events, including River John Festival Days and Vacation Bible School.

If you or someone you know is aged 10+ and would like to join, or if you have any questions, please reach out to Karen Mattatall at 902-301-2275 or you can email at riverjohnlioncubs@hotmail.com.



From left to right: Vanessa Brown, Julien Skoke, Jayden Brown, Kaleb Henderson, Aiden MacInnis, Gareth Crouse.



From left to right: Jayden Brown, Kaleb Henderson, Gareth Crouse, Julien Skoke, Karen Mattatall, RCMP Officer R. Williams.

# WEST BRANCH AND AREA COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

By Reg Crewe

Spring greetings from West Branch!

West Branch Wednesdays have been a huge success and although we had to suspend them for the summer due to construction issues, we will continue in the fall. These provide an opportunity for speakers on a wide range of topics, a chance to get together and socialize and share a meal. These events encourage social connection and hopefully reduce isolation for our community members.

We held our Annual General Meeting on May 5, and our current board is listed below. We also passed a special resolution to adopt a complete set of bylaws because our old bylaws from 1992 had been amended and added to at various times. We prepared a complete set and sent them to the Registry of Joint Stocks for approval. Our Charity Association was renewed for the year and financials sent to all the various reporting authorities.

The Pictou County Net-Zero Community Buildings Project is moving ahead, and the “Scope of Work” has been approved. The solar panels are being installed in the next couple of weeks, the electrical panel upgrade, insulation, heat pump, baseboard heaters and window replacements are all starting in the near future. The MOPC high speed fibre Internet has been installed in the hall, and it will provide connectivity to the internet, wireless communication availability and other programs that we may now be able to provide in the future.

We held the 32nd annual West Branch Maple Syrup Festival Pancake Breakfast, April 26 and served over 300 meals, a great success that helps provide the necessary funding to support payment of the maintenance and expenses of the hall. Our thanks to all the great volunteers who helped make it a success. We were unsuccessful in our application for funding to add a new accessible ramp and entrance porch to the hall. However, we will keep our application on file and reapply again next year.

The hall is available for private events, anniversaries, birthdays, celebrations or meetings.



Please call for details, 902-351-2260, message us through our Facebook page or email westbranchcommunityhall@gmail.com

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

Our current board for 2025-2026 is:  
President: Jim White  
Secretary: Catherine Dalglish  
Treasurer: Reg Crewe  
Directors: Charlie Kennedy, Lynne Hart, David Luxton, Gary Johnson, Patsy Murray-Chapman  
Associate Members: Jolie Bezanson and Alexandria Ingemansen.

Wishing everyone a great summer.

# MEMORIES OF PAST ROYAL ENCOUNTERS

## Mary Beth Sutherland:

“If you were watching CBC television on May 26, 2025, when King Charles and Queen Camilla arrived in Canada, you might have seen Gillian Crawford, Lismore Sheep Farm in River John, being interviewed live on camera by CBC’s commentator, Adrienne Arseneault. She was asking Gillian about her memories when the then Prince of Wales and his wife, Charles and Camilla, last visited Canada in 2014. As part of that visit, they were here to launch the Canadian branch of the “Campaign for Wool,” a worldwide movement promoting wool, of which Charles is still the patron. During a portion of their visit to Nova Scotia, the Royal couple visited Pictou. Gillian and her son, Rory, were asked to take a few of their sheep onto the Hector Heritage Quay on the Pictou waterfront as part of a wool display. Gillian told Adrienne of their interaction with the couple and showed some photos of that day.



Gillian Crawford of Lismore Sheep Farm, River John, interviewed live on camera by CBC’s Commentator Adrienne Arseneault, on Monday May 26, 2025

Also featured on that memorable day in 2014 were displays of spinning and weaving. My mother, the late Joan Sutherland, interacted with both their Royal Highnesses as she demonstrated weaving to them. My daughter, Emily, and I were there too, and were impressed with the questions and knowledge which the couple showed as they toured the site and displays. Also present were Sherri Fitch and her late husband, Gilles. The late Sadie Craig and her granddaughter, Pam, were prominently pictured in the New Glasgow News newspaper of that event. We were all very pleased to have met the Royal Couple as they toured the Pictou waterfront.”



(The late) Joan Sutherland demonstrating the art of weaving to Prince Charles and his wife Camilla in 2014.



Sadie Craig and granddaughter Pam meeting the (then) Prince of Wales in Pictou in 2014

**Cathe MacLean** remembers encountering the (then) Prince Charles, exactly 50 years ago, like it was yesterday.

“His Royal Highness came for a visit to our school Attagoyuk Illisavik in Pangnirtung, Nunavut, where we were teaching at the time. Because of the limited time the Prince had available, most of us weren’t in our classrooms, so we had set up classes in the “Open Area” which was a new thing at that time. Exciting times that everyone enjoyed immensely!”



Cathe and Brian MacLean with Prince Charles in Pangnirtung on Baffin Island, Nunavut, in 1975.

Now, 50 years later, another River John couple, **John and Christiane Gill**, made their way to greet King Charles III and his wife, Queen Camilla, – this time in Ottawa, Ontario, where the King opened the new session of Parliament by delivering the speech from the throne, which his mother, the late Queen Elizabeth II, had done twice before in Canada’s history.

Christiane says: “The excitement amidst the crowd was almost tangible. When the landau with the Royal Couple and Canada’s Governor General, Mary Simon, and her husband, Whit Fraser, (who was born in Pictou County,) drove past us, the shouts of joy turned into a roar of admiration and jubilation. Never in my whole life will I ever forget that.”



John and Christiane Gill standing proudly in front of the Centre Block of Parliament with the Royal Standard for Members of the Canadian Royal Family being flown for the first time over the Peace Tower, while King Charles III spoke in the Senate only yards away.

By Margaret Jones

Following on the presentation of the Order of Canada to author Sheree Fitch last year, we are proud and delighted to learn that summer resident of Cape John, Professor Allan Marble, is a recipient of the 2024 Order of Nova Scotia. Professor Marble, along with his wife Sharon, resides in Halifax, and spend the summers at their Cape John cottage, which they bought in 1988. Allan's first experience of Cape John was around 1950, when he was 11 years old, and a member of Marjorie Townsend's cub pack. Sharon and Allan were married in 1963, and the couple have three daughters and three grandsons.

“With an extensive multidisciplinary career, including leading the development of a province-wide genealogical network, conducting innovative research in cardiovascular surgery, contributing to academia in the discipline of bioengineering and Nova Scotia’s medical history, Professor Marble’s work in a diverse array of fields has been of national significance.

A photograph of two men standing side-by-side in formal attire. The man on the left is older, with glasses, wearing a dark suit, a blue and white striped tie, and a blue sash with red and white stripes. He has a single medal on his left chest. The man on the right is younger, wearing a dark suit, a patterned tie, and a gold sash with a floral pattern. He has several medals on his left chest. They are standing in front of a backdrop featuring the flags of the United Kingdom, Canada, and the Province of Ontario.

(GANS), he has been central to building an organization focussed on encouraging and assisting family history and research in the province. Marble served on the Board of Trustees of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia, with the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society, and the Federation of Nova Scotian Heritage. Throughout, he has tirelessly demonstrated great vision and commitment to enhancing our understanding of the province's rich history and the many families who have played a role in its development.

Pestilence and the Poor: A History of Medicine and Social Conditions in Nova Scotia, 1800-1867.

His collaborative research, concurrently in the Faculties of Engineering and Medicine at Dalhousie University, formed the basis of pioneering work in cardiovascular surgery, working to clarify the reason for failure following surgical vascular grafting, which ultimately improved patient outcomes. The holder of three patents and role in the founding of the School of Biomedical Engineering at Dalhousie University, highlights the diversity and breadth of Professor Marble's lifetime of contributions."

Congratulations, Professor Marble!

The image is a full-page real estate advertisement set against a white brick wall background. On the right side, a woman with long, wavy blonde hair, wearing a black sleeveless dress and a gold necklace, stands with one hand on her hip, smiling at the camera. In the top left corner, the 'KW SELECT REALTY' logo is prominently displayed in large, bold letters, with 'KELLER WILLIAMS' written below it in a smaller font. To the left of the woman, there are two circular seals. The first is a gold-colored seal containing the text 'Mary Brown & Associates' around three stylized house icons. The second is a red seal with the text 'FREE HOME EVALUATION' at the top, 'FREE' in the center, and 'WHAT'S YOUR HOME WORTH?' at the bottom. At the bottom of the image, the name 'Marci Heighton' is written in a large, elegant cursive script, followed by the phone number '902-986-2557' in a large, bold, sans-serif font.

# THE STORY OF THE ORDER OF NOVA SCOTIA



**What is the Order of Nova Scotia?**  
The Order of Nova Scotia is the highest honour of the Province of Nova Scotia. Established in 2001, it encourages excellence by recognizing Nova Scotians for outstanding contributions or achievements. Members of the Order of Nova Scotia have distinguished themselves in many fields of endeavour and have brought honour and prestige to themselves and to Nova Scotia

**Who is eligible for the Order?**  
Any Canadian citizen who is a present or former long-term resident of Nova Scotia is eligible for nomination to the Order. The only exceptions are public officials, (such as members of the Senate, MPs, MLAs, municipal councillors, or judges,) who may not be nominated while they are in office. The Order may be awarded posthumously, if the person is nominated within one year of their death. Only individuals may be nominated, not couples, groups, or organizations.

**ONS insignia**  
At a formal ceremony, the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, in the name of the Crown, presents each recipient with a medal in the form of a stylized mayflower, the provincial floral emblem, bearing the shield of arms of Nova Scotia surmounted by the crown. The medal is worn with a blue, white, red, and gold ribbon - the colours of our provincial flag. There is also a semi-formal medal and ribbon and a lapel pin. Members of the Order are entitled to use the initials O.N.S. after their names.

More about ONS at: <https://novascotia.ca/iga/order.asp>

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OUR TEAM OF SEWERS WILL MAKE  
NEEDED REPAIRS FOR A SMALL FEE.



Nominees for the Municipality of Pictou County's 2025 Volunteer of the Year Award with Warden Robert Parker.

Ed spent much of his life volunteering with various groups but has been particularly busy since retiring. He has been a dedicated volunteer with the MOPC's Climate Change Advisory Committee since it was first formed five years ago, and is now Vice-Chair. He leads the Climate Action Planning Sub-Committee and is helping set goals for the MOPC to reduce its carbon footprint. He has recruited others to be part of the committee, organized tree plantings and giveaways, and took part in public meetings for the MOPC to get public feedback on climate initiatives. In addition to all that, Ed also served as chair of the Steering Committee for the Pictou County Chapter of Habitat for Humanity, is on the board of directors for the River John Pickleball Club, and

the Editorial Team of the River John Pioneer, a community newspaper.

Parker specifically expressed gratitude for how Ed helped with climate change initiatives at the MOPC. "He moved it from just sitting there talking in Advisory Committee meetings to actually doing something. He is a doer, and he causes things to happen." Ed said the climate initiatives were particularly meaningful for him, because he wants to help protect the environment for his grandchildren.

Heartfelt congratulations go to Amy and Ed for this well-deserved recognition from the River John Pioneer Editorial Team.

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# AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT: BEULAH WRIGHT, RIVER JOHN’S HISTORIAN OF THE HEART

By Debby Shaw

Beulah Wright has been preserving River John’s history with a storyteller’s soul and a teacher’s dedication for most of her life. Her writing, rich with memory, community spirit, and local detail, has become a cornerstone of how River John remembers itself.

Born during wartime in Elmsdale, Beulah’s earliest memories were shaped by ration books, aircraft, and her father’s daily habit of recording world events in the back of a dictionary.

“As talk turned to peace,” she recalls, “I remember asking, ‘Daddy, what’s it like without a war?’” That early awareness of history as something living and recordable would one day become her life’s work.

Her family moved to River John in 1950 when she was about ten. After attending several one-room schools, Beulah found a lasting connection at Hedgeville School. It was there she first discovered the joy of storytelling, creating verses and tales that entertained classmates during noon hour. A formative moment came when her teacher asked the students to choose a picture and write a story. Beulah selected a Norman Rockwell illustration showing a story passing from caller to caller on the telephone. Her tale so captivated the teacher that it was read aloud to the entire school. “You’ll have to be a writer,” the teacher told her. And so, she became one.

As a young girl, Beulah began submitting historical articles to publications such as *The Maritime Farmer*, *The Free Press Weekly*, *The Family Herald*, and *The Farmers Advocate*. Her mother often accompanied her on walks to interview neighbours and elders. “One of those stories is in my recent book,” she says, referencing *The Upper Mill*, a glimpse into River John’s past that resonates with local readers.

A tragic house fire in 1964 destroyed a completed historical novel she had written about the River John shipyards in the time of LaTour and Charnisay, early French settlers in Acadia. “There were no backup computers

or emails in those days,” she says, though she never rewrote it. Even that loss became part of her writing journey.

Beulah’s career took her far beyond River John. She taught business management, bookkeeping, first aid, and marine safety for 30 years at the Fisheries School, travelling throughout Nova Scotia and even teaching in Hay River, NWT, and Trinidad. These diverse experiences added depth to her worldview and brought new cultural textures to her writing. “I would be asked to write articles or speeches that needed to be done,” she reflects, “and it gave me a different lens.”

Despite those travels, River John has remained her home and her muse. “I write to preserve our community’s history and share it. People should know whence they came.” Her research is ongoing, and the River John Pioneer has long been a cherished venue for her work. “The community has provided all the information I write about,” she says gratefully, “and the Museum has given so much.”

She remembers a time when River John was self-sufficient, with shops and services meeting every need from cattle feed to toys. “Even with all the changes and losses, people are what make it. River John looks after its own.” She believes in the power of remembering, and of passing those stories forward.

Beulah’s recent book stands as a testament to that communal memory. It wouldn’t exist, she says, without the shared stories of neighbours and the pride of place that runs deep in the village’s veins. “We have a rich history,” she reminds us, “and we were known all over the world because of the ships built here. Back in the day, River John built more ships (after New Glasgow) than any other North Shore shipyard.”

When asked what advice she would give to a young writer, Beulah answers simply, “Write what you know.” And what she knows - what she continues to share with us - is the living, breathing story of River John.

# COMMUNITY NEWS

By Ashley Langille, RJ  
Community Coordinator

I am excited to announce the hiring of ten summer students across various community groups. This achievement highlights the collaborative spirit and dedication of local organizations, including the Action Society, Lions Club, Recreation Association, Legion, Friends of the Library, Historical Society, and Community Support Society. Without these community groups approving the applications for grants, we wouldn’t be able to supply these ten jobs to the young people in our community.

We are incredibly thankful as a community to have this opportunity. It is wonderful to see our local organizations step up and invest in the future of our youth. This year’s cohort includes both returning students and new faces, bringing a mix of experience and fresh perspectives.

To the students who worked last year with me and are not returning, your hard work and dedication to our community has been very appreciated. We will be missing you, but we know you are moving onto improved endeavours, and we are happy you gained valuable work experience here in River John.

This year’s summer students will start on July 7th and work until the end of August. You will see them around the village whippersnipping, mowing grass, and gardening. They will also work with the Day Camp kids through the recreation program and share their knowledge with visitors at the Historical Society.

We have a very eager group full of confidence and hard work, and I am very excited to start this endeavour this summer alongside these ten students.

Don’t forget to say hello to them and show your appreciation throughout the summer as they help make our community shine.

Have a wonderful summer everyone.



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*The Minneys*



# AN INTERVIEW WITH MARCO MACLEOD, MLA, PICTOU WEST

By Debby Shaw



Marco MacLeod, MLA for Pictou West since May, 2024

**Q: What made you decide to run for public service?**

A: I never planned to run for office, but an opportunity to represent my community arose and I felt that I offered a rural and younger perspective. Many of my school friends left this province for economic reasons, so I hope to change that for upcoming generations. Our biggest export is our people and making Pictou West a vibrant place to live and work is key to solving that problem.

**Q: What do you wish more people knew about your work as an MLA?**

A: Most of the work done at the constituency office is social work. We try our best to help folks who need support navigating our healthcare system or our social programs.

**Q: What does a typical day look like for you?**

A: In Pictou West, I spend my time at the constituency office, returning emails, phone calls, and meeting with constituents. I may also take some time to do road inspections and touch base with provincial departments in the area. In the evening, I try to attend AGMs or community events. I usually spend about 2-3 days per week in Halifax. At the Department of Energy we review policy, visit projects, and hold meetings with stakeholders. I spend Wednesday mornings as vice-chairperson for the Public Accounts Committee and Wednesday afternoons I attend our caucus meetings.

**Q: Are there any upcoming policy changes or projects that will directly affect our area?**

A: The spring legislative session saw bans on exploration and extraction of natural resources removed, and last week the Fisheries Minister announced that the moratorium on seafood buying and processing licenses will be lifted. Some healthcare projects under development include the new dialysis unit in Pictou and the Health Home which will be in the old Future Shop building. The Gravel Road Program is continuing this summer so Public Works will be able to give a facelift to some of the roads that need it the most.

Seniors will be able to receive the shingles

vaccine free of charge beginning at the end of this month and this fall the school lunch program will expand to include middle-schoolers.

**Q: What is the best way for people in our area to share concerns with you?**

A: Please feel free to visit the office at 37 Water Street, Pictou (behind the pharmacy). We can be reached by phone at 902-485-8958 or email at [info@marcomacleod.com](mailto:info@marcomacleod.com)

**Q: Do you have advice for young people in our community who might think about a career in politics?**

A: Don't be absorbed by politics. Live life. Be friends with folks who have different views from you. Be kind and learn to be a good listener. Politics is a people business, and you should genuinely care about your community because politics takes a lot of energy.

**Q: Is there something you would like to share about you that might surprise people?**

A: Hmmm... I don't own a television.

**Q: Do you have any hobbies or favourite places to go locally; how do you unwind?**

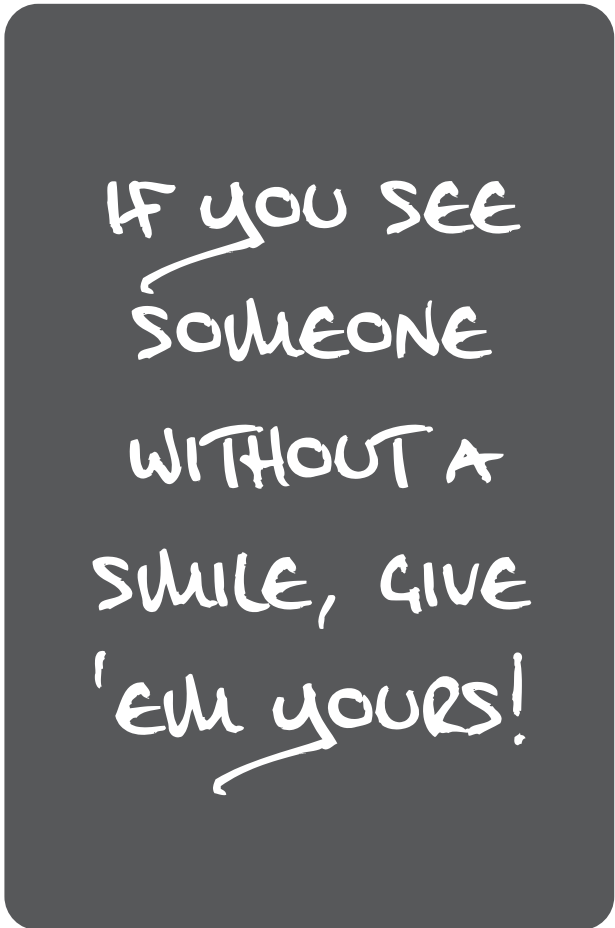
A: I enjoy jogging along the old railbed, history podcasts, and a cold local beer after a hard day's work.

**Q: What keeps you motivated?**

A: My friends. Folks who give me a thumbs-up. When I'm able to help someone out, or we pass legislation that improves people's lives - that's the motivation.

**Q: Is there anything you would like to say to the people of our area?**

A: I hope that everyone has a wonderful and safe summer with family and friends!



participating in trade shows to enter new markets, hiring key personnel that will help them scale up and add more good paying jobs. Also seeking new international market opportunities, breaking down internal trade barriers to allow Nova Scotia businesses to more easily sell products in Canada. We must support businesses with growth potential in strategic industries like fisheries, forestry, and farming as well as new industries like clean technology and AI.

**Q: What do you see as the strengths of small rural communities like River John, what are the biggest challenges facing such communities, and how are you working to address them?**

A: Rural communities are the best places to live in the world and this strength is an enormous opportunity if we can demonstrate to those who have skills we need (e.g., doctors,) to have the opportunity to work in growth-oriented businesses that allow them to work remotely. We have some natural strengths based on the quality of life and we can use that to attract people we need to drive our economy and provide essential services. An historical challenge has been the loss of talented Nova Scotians to large cities and growth sectors in other parts of Canada and globally. We can demonstrate through both the business case and government policy that there is opportunity here and we need to make sure we create a policy landscape that incentivises people to stay here, (e.g., the recent federal government's student loan forgiveness program.) We also need to demonstrate that you can find a good paying job with a major employer in Pictou County and encourage business growth and entrepreneurship to grow the local economy. That will require incentives, including through ACOA, advisory services and infrastructure, (e.g., transportation, expanded port facilities, etc.,) that allow us to take part in national and global economies. As Minister responsible for ACOA, I am working on implementation of a program designed to achieve these outcomes. As an MP, there is advocacy for new kinds of policies that come from our community, (e.g., the student loan forgiveness idea,) to ensure that the government is grounding itself in the experience of people who are living in communities because the best policies come from conversations in community, rather than behind closed doors on Parliament Hill.

**Q: What advice do you have for young people in our community who might be thinking about a career in politics or public service?**

A: Number one is to focus on the problems you want to help solve, not the position that you want to hold. There are people who get into politics to be somebody or to do something. Politicians oriented around a desire to do something are by far the most successful and happy. When you are inspired every day to pursue a mission because you care about it and you can see the impact you are having in solving a problem you believe is important to address, you will have a rewarding career. Second advice is to be ambitious - don't think that you cannot have an impact. If you come to understand that change is driven by people who get up every day and work their tail off to achieve something important, you realize that you can become one of them. You don't have to assume that there is some other person in the world that you must count on to achieve the outcomes that you think our communities could benefit from. You have an opportunity to become that person if you get up every morning with the attitude that you are going to make it happen or be part of the team that will make it happen.

# LITERACY BEGINS WITH CARING

By Rana El-Zoheiry



When we picture someone learning to read, it is easy to imagine the mechanics - breaking apart syllables, sounding out words, making sense of sentences. But what we often miss is that learning to read, especially for those who struggle, isn't just a technical process. It's just as much an emotional one that shapes how we see ourselves and what we believe we are capable of.

That is why at United for Literacy, we believe literacy is not something anyone should have to figure out on their own. It is something that grows best alongside a patient, encouraging person who is there not just to correct learners' mistakes, but to build on their strengths, celebrate progress, listen, laugh, and help them grow in confidence.

This belief is not new; it has been at the heart of our work for more than a century. United for Literacy (formerly Frontier College) was founded in 1899 by Alfred Fitzpatrick - a graduate of Pictou Academy - who began teaching workers out of a log cabin in northern Ontario. That is how the idea of the Labourer-Teacher was born; someone who worked alongside the workers during the day and taught them by lantern light at night. His vision was built on care, trust, and the power of human connection.

Our roots are in Nova Scotia, and today we are proud to be back in Pictou County where our founder's story began. After decades of working in Halifax, we expanded into Kings County, Truro, and Pictou County in 2023, thanks to the support of the Joyce Family Foundation and J&W Murphy Foundation.

Over the past year, we have launched a fun Reading Circle at McCulloch Education Centre and Pictou Academy, where high school volunteers read aloud to Primary students. In the summer, we brought stories and games to local parks and day camps through our reading tents, hosted a family literacy day at Mabel Murple's in River John, and gave away more than 100 brand-new children's books.

But beyond the numbers and events, what truly defines our work are the volunteers; the caring individuals who walk alongside learners through the emotional ups and downs of growing their skills, confidence, and self-belief.

One of our volunteers meets her 9-year-old learner at the library every week, no matter the weather. He gets easily frustrated with reading and has some hearing loss that makes it harder

to process letter sounds. One winter day, they showed up and found the library closed. Still, he pointed to a bench in the snow and asked, "Can we read?" Her care and encouragement made him want to read and enjoy it, even when it was hard.

Another volunteer brings storybooks to life each week for a group of children. Before every session, he goes to the library to pick out books he knows the kids will love - stories that are fun yet also have something meaningful to say. He doesn't just read them; he performs them, using his voice and energy to make the kids laugh, wonder, and connect to the story. You can see how much he cares and how much joy he brings to the room.

Even online, the care still shines through. One volunteer lives an hour away from his 8-year-old learner, but he logs on to Zoom every week, always prepared and full of energy. He is always thinking of ways to keep her engaged, which can be harder to do online. Her mom told us how proud she is to see her daughter's reading improve and how she now chooses to read about things she loves - without being asked - instead of just watching them on a screen.

These are just a few of the incredible people behind our work. They aren't just tutors - they are mentors, role models, and cheerleaders. They remind us that learning takes time and happens best when it is shared. And if you keep showing up, you get to witness something truly special.

Looking ahead to summer and fall 2025, we are working to launch a children's one-on-one reading support program in Pictou County and to grow our volunteer team. We are especially excited to create more intergenerational spaces where children and older mentors can come together to share the joy of reading. One of our longtime supporters is none other than Sheree Fitch, who began as a volunteer herself. Her continued encouragement reminds us of the lasting impact these connections can have.

If you live in Pictou County and want to get involved - whether as a volunteer, partner, or by enrolling a young reader - we would love to hear from you. No experience is needed to volunteer, just a passion for supporting others and a love of learning. Get in touch by emailing us at [relzoheiry@unitedforliteracy.ca](mailto:relzoheiry@unitedforliteracy.ca).



# EMBRACING NEW BEGINNINGS

By Rev. Enjei Roni

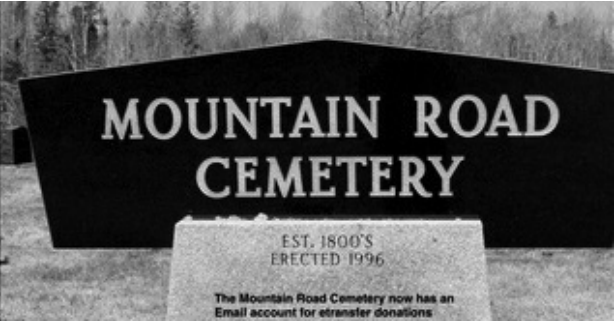


Easter has come and gone, and we had a wonderful time of ecumenical fellowship with the other churches. Our ecumenical services are one of my highlights of this wonderful community. Acts 1:3 tells us that after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, "He presented himself alive to his followers after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God." Jesus spent forty days with his followers preparing them for new beginnings. Easter, which marks the death and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is a beautiful reminder of hope and renewal.

Stepping away from the celebration permits us to move on with the spirit of new beginnings in the new season we are in. For some it might be the experience of fresh perspectives, new goals or just having the courage to keep moving forward in life. As we move forward into Spring, let this be a chance for us to bloom into something even better. We can take time to reflect, reset, and remember that every new day is an opportunity from God to grow. Growing might come with its ups and downs, yet, like the blossoms, it always finds a way to bloom again, especially when we are walking with the Risen Christ. In this spring season, may we embrace wholeheartedly the beauty of growth no matter where we find ourselves in life's journey.

May the blessings of our Lord Jesus be with us all. Amen.

# MOUNTAIN ROAD CEMETERY



Mountain Road Cemetery is located at 1121 Mountain Road, River John, and was established during the 1800s. It was expanded during the 1900s, with the donation of land from the Sutherland family.

The cemetery is operated by a board of directors/volunteers. New officers were elected in April, 2025, and to-date, two meetings have been held.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 28, 2025, at the River John library at 6:30 pm. All are welcome.

Donations are accepted by cheque, cash or e-transfer. E-transfer to: [mountainroadcem@gmail.com](mailto:mountainroadcem@gmail.com)

Checks can be mailed to: Mountain Road Cemetery, Box 8, River John B0K 1N0

For burial information contact Norma Baillie, 902-890-1007 or email [n.baillie568@gmail.com](mailto:n.baillie568@gmail.com)

# URANIUM: A RISK NOVA SCOTIANS SHOULD NOT BE FORCED TO TAKE

By Barb Harris

River John residents were shocked recently to learn they live in one of three communities in Nova Scotia where the provincial government is actively encouraging companies to apply for licenses to explore for uranium. The 80-hectare site in Louisville included in the government's Request for Proposals (RFP) lies within the River John watershed. Yes, River John has a watershed – sometimes known as a catchment area. Waters flow from the proposed exploration area through more than 100 properties, before emptying into the River John as it flows into the Northumberland Strait. Like 46% of Nova Scotians, and all River Johnners, people in the area depend entirely on their wells for water. Exploration for uranium may not be limited to these three areas.

In March of this year, the provincial government unexpectedly repealed the prohibition on uranium exploration which has been in place for 44 years. Although a moratorium, and later a full ban came into effect after broad public consultation, the government repealed the ban with no discussion or consultation with the public or First Nations and no evaluation of potential risks. The ban on fracking in shale was repealed in the same bill – also with no consultation or discussion.

Uranium exploration and mining have significant risks. Nova Scotia was not the only province to decide it was not worth those risks. Uranium exploration is banned or largely restricted in Quebec and British Columbia. It is also banned in the State of Virginia, which has the largest unmined uranium deposit in the US. Exploration for uranium is unlike exploration for other minerals. Uranium is a radioactive mineral that becomes hazardous when it is disturbed. Disturbed uranium is highly soluble and mobile – it dissolves easily in water and radioactive elements can be carried long distances in water and in air. The Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE) wrote to Premier Houston in March 2025 urging him to keep the ban. In a statement later that month the group explained:

“Uranium mining and exploration ... pose grave risks. They release radon and radioactive toxic particles that can contaminate soil, water, crops, and wildlife. These contaminants can enter the food chain and jeopardize our drinking water supplies. Nova Scotia is the second most densely populated province in Canada. No matter where you live in the province, your health could be at risk.”

In 1984-85, the McCleave Commission examined whether Nova Scotia's moratorium on uranium exploration, proclaimed in 1981, should be extended. In a brief to the commission, Environment Canada stated:

Continued on page 22

# RIVER JOHN SIDEWALK – AN UPDATE

By Mike Topley, RJCAS Sidewalk Lead

MOPC committees and Council are currently reviewing various capital works projects. This should result in our sidewalk making the next 5-year plan. Funding will be required from all 3 levels of government. Discussions with the county engineer indicate that when the River John sidewalk project is selected by Council, design will proceed, with construction to begin the next year.

The Province has approved a variance in the sidewalk configuration at locations where buildings are close to the road. This means that the grassed boulevard width can be reduced, and the sidewalk will be closer to the curb, thus minimizing disruption to property owners.

So, it is moving in the right direction.

# MOPC CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION

By Ed Kennedy

In 2021 the Municipality of Pictou County (MOPC) Council established a Climate Change Advisory Committee. The committee's focus has been on the impact of climate change on the County's residents and future generations, and activities that make a small contribution to climate change action. For the past four years, the committee has been active in tree planting in the MOPC as a means of carbon capture, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere. But it was also concerned that much more climate action was required.

In early 2024, the Advisory Committee decided to proceed with the development of a five-year climate change action plan for the County. Starting in February 2024, a Climate Change Action Planning Sub-Committee was formed, which has been working since then on climate change research, identifying major climate change impacts on Pictou County, developing proposed climate change actions, and receiving input from County residents. An online survey in March 2024 sought feedback on proposed action items, and in October 2024, education media about climate change impacts on the County were distributed through posters and social media. Community Engagement meetings in eight locations around the County throughout January 2025 provided feedback from some 175 residents.

The action planning team tabled the plan, “Municipality Climate Change Action Plan 2025-2029” with the Climate Change Advisory Committee on April 23rd, which agreed to forward the Action Plan to County Council for review. On May 20th, the Council discussed and accepted the plan. For more information about MOPC climate change action and access to the Action Plan, see Climate Action on the MOPC website at <https://munpict.ca/council/climate-change/>.

# ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST NEWS

By Monica Graham

The congregation of St. John the Baptist are back in their church building after lengthy repairs to the roof and the electrical system. The work, and the insurers' requirement that the building not be used until it was ship-shape, kept people out of the building over the winter.

Church members spent the first Sunday in April cleaning. With the sister church of Holy Trinity re-opening after its usual winter closure, St. John's people attended there for a lay-led Palm Sunday service; and again, on Easter for Holy Communion led by Rev. Michael Tutton – enjoyed by all. The first Sunday back at St. John the Baptist was April 27 for Morning Prayer – well -attended.

The congregation is thankful for the warm welcome from Salem United to share worship leadership with them over the winter. In past years, the two churches had taken turns hosting and leading winter worship, but 2025 was a step beyond, and greatly appreciated.

St. John's held Seed Sunday on May 4, with Scripture and music related to planting crops and the Word of God, and everyone going home with at least one little pot of mud and seeds.

Spring and summer plans are in the making.



Jocelyn Highton, left, and Gerry Bowles were among those who participated in Seed Sunday on May 4. The theme of the service was planting - spiritually and agriculturally - and care for the earth.



Seed Sunday... not coffee cups, but plant pots! New meaning for the after-church cuppa at St. John the Baptist.

“The release of radioactive matter into the environment presents a special class of environmental protection problem because radiation cannot, in any known practical way, be neutralized or altered from its natural decay sequence, and it can cause permanent cumulative or delayed but irreversible harmful effects in all living organisms. Therefore, radioactive materials would require containment during their hazardous lifetime to allay health and environmental concerns. ... In Nova Scotia, the wet climate, generally high water table and generally acidic waters may pose special problems for radioactive waste management.” (McCleave Final Report, January 30, 1985 (p 142)

When the NS Voluntary Planning Commission re-evaluated the ban in 2008, Dr. David Maxwell wrote:

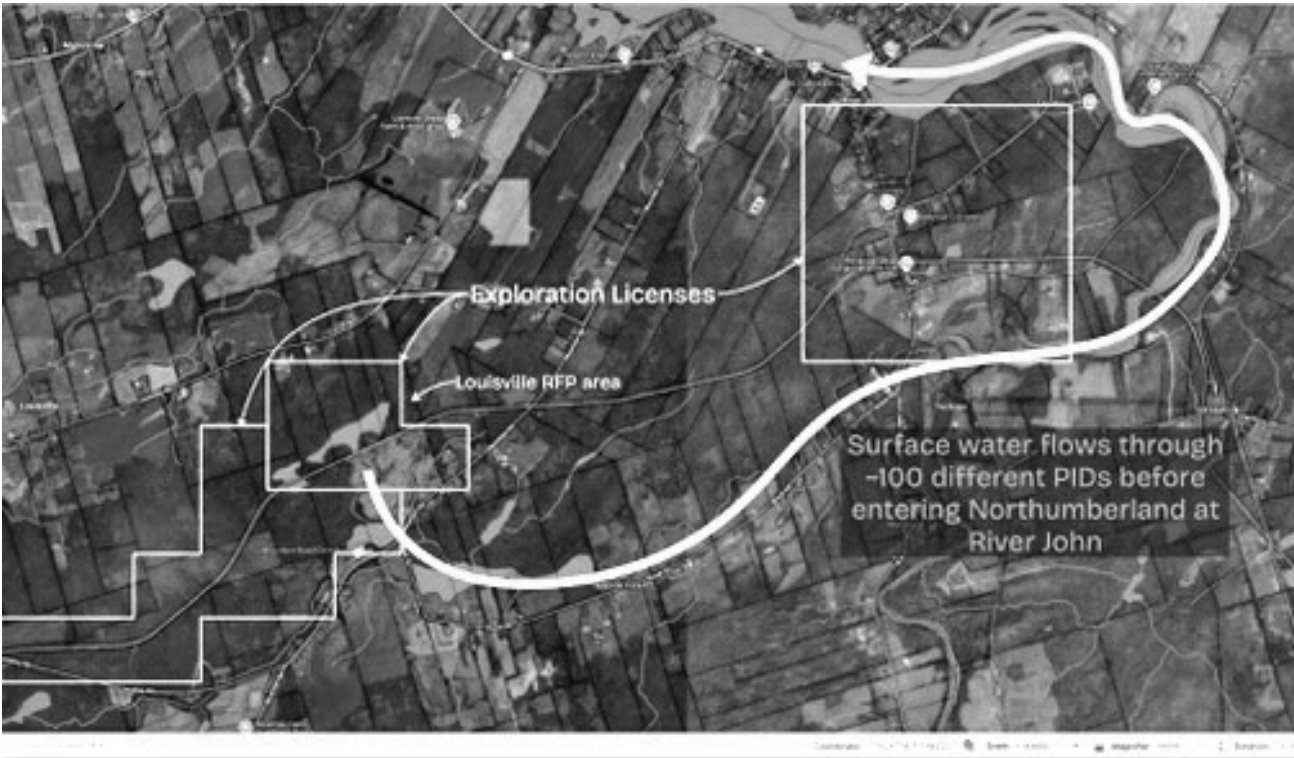
“Uranium mining, however, is qualitatively different [from other mining] in two respects, 1) it imposes hazards not only on the miners, but on the population surrounding the mine, (up to a distance of 400 km. according to Küppers and Schmidt) 2) these hazards persist in the environment for tens of thousands of years, long after the brief benefits accruing from the original mining, forming a legacy which will affect generations for as long into the future as the whole of human civilisation to date.”

There is a lot of misleading information floating around and a lot to understand. There are some who believe that if uranium mining is allowed in Saskatchewan, it should be allowed in Nova Scotia. That is like comparing apples to elephants. Northern Saskatchewan mines are located 600 km from the closest large communities. The proposed sites for uranium mining in Nova Scotia are within 60 km of major centres, in some areas even less. High rainfall, extreme weather and acidic waters all increase the risks of uranium exploration and mining. Nova Scotia experiences all three. Nova Scotia’s rainfall of 1300 mm of rain per year is more than three times Northern Saskatchewan’s 400 mm annual rainfall.

The risks involved in uranium exploration and mining are serious and long term. They are also irreversible and could affect everyone in the province. The present provincial government seems stubbornly determined to impose uranium exploration on Nova Scotia without evaluating the risks and without weighing the costs and dangers to individuals, existing industries, and to our fresh water - the most critical resource we need to survive and thrive now and in the future.

On the other hand, we know Nova Scotians can be stubborn too, especially rural Nova Scotians. People in other directly affected communities have already come together to say no to uranium exploration. They are calling for an immediate halt -- before any uranium exploration licenses are awarded. Informed, determined people have succeeded in derailing harmful government plans in the past – and can do it again.

Note: This is a complex subject, with much to learn. By the time this article is printed, there will be more information to share, and maybe a group to connect with if you are interested. If you would like to learn more, you can reach the author on Facebook through Facebook message.



# SALEM UNITED CHURCH: CONNIE’S COMMENTS

I have been sharing a quote and a photo on my Facebook profile each day since January 1st, 2025 - an opportunity of sorts to do some deep thinking and visioning about life and ministry and the world. Each quote has been inspirational - sometimes funny, sometimes poignant, sometimes wise - and each photo has enabled me to connect the quote to my own life. One of the quotes I have already shared on Facebook says, “*What you plant now, you will harvest later,*” words which are certainly an inspiration for the people and the place that is Salem United Church.

New seeds continue to be planted through our “Take Out Supper” fundraising efforts as we work toward a harvest that will help us to be more financially stable.

In May we put on a sold-out meatloaf supper, and on June 6th we held a successful lobster supper - many thanks to St. George’s Presbyterian Church for the continued use of their hall for preparation and pick up. There will be more “Take Out Suppers” held in August, September, October, and November - dates and menus to be determined. Please let us cook for you once a month - you deserve a break!

The harvest for seeds that were planted 100 years ago when the Methodist Church, the Congregationalist Church, and 60 percent of the Presbyterian Church, became “The United Church of Canada” through an act of Parliament, was celebrated at Sharon United Church in Tatamagouche on Sunday June 8th. The congregations of West Branch UC, Salem UC, Brule Union, Sharon UC, Bayhead Union, Malagash UC, St. John’s UC, and St. Andrew’s UC attended a worship service led by Rev. Linton Worrell and me, as we honoured who we have been and where we are going as a United Church in the future.

We regularly plant seeds of hospitality, ecumenism, and community, and will once again as we host the opening worship service

for the River John Festival Days on Sunday July 20th at 11:00 a.m. at Salem UC, with a guest speaker invited by St. George’s PC. It is always a wonderful kick-off to a week of festivities and fun, so please make plans to attend.

In the warmer summer months we often curtail our new planting as we recognize that what has already been planted needs an opportunity for rest and renewal and rejuvenation to truly come to a fruitful harvest; yet while meetings and events are limited, and the Minister takes some much needed holiday time in August, the doors of Salem UC remain open for all to find both solace and encouragement.

September and October will then enable us to more fully appreciate the harvest which follows the planting. I was privileged to take part in two weeks of study leave - one from May 12-15 at the Tatamagouche Centre, and the second from June 24-27 as a reading week. Both study sessions were based on “An Eco-Conversation: Kinship, Creation, Connection, and Community,” and those seeds will be ready to harvest as both creative and courageous worship. Indeed, the “Time of Creation” from September 8-28, will be filled with opportunities to experience ‘show & tell’, ‘reverence as a spiritual practice’, and ‘eight kinds of AWE’, in worship and beyond. “World Communion” on Sunday October 5th will then bring together all five congregations for a worship service that will include Holy Communion as we consider our place in the wider church and world.

Indeed, “what you plant now, you will harvest later” is an inspiration for all at Salem UC, in River John, and beyond. May our seeds, our planting, our growth, and our harvest, be enough for all to live in wonder and witness.

Blessings, Connie

# OBITUARIES

*In Loving Memory*



*Donald Allison Brown*  
November 1, 1961 - April 19, 2025

**Donald Allison Brown**

November 1, 1961-April 19, 2025

Donald Allison Brown of Stellarton passed away in Palliative Care at the Aberdeen Hospital after a valiant battle with cancer. Born in Moncton, and raised in Riverview, NB, he was the youngest child of the late Allison and Joyce (MacCallum) Brown. He married Evelyn Dwyer of River John on November 10, 1990. They added Kevin in 1993 and Lisa in 1996 and made many wonderful memories as a family. Donald introduced them to the joys of camping, drove his “girls” to concerts in Bangor, held the bags while they shopped, and accompanied Kevin on the Thrill Rides during the Family vacations in Florida. When Kevin and Lisa bought their homes, Dad never hesitated to help with renovation. He was everything to us. We miss him dearly.

Besides Evelyn, Kevin and Lisa, Donald is survived by two brothers in NB: Bill (Kim) and their children Nick and Jessica, Jim (Vicky) and their children Heidi and J.C. Also, mother-in-law Mattie Dwyer, brother-in-law Robert Dwyer, sister-in-law Marie Langille, Evelyn’s nephew Mark (Cathy) Langille and niece Nicole Nash (Todd O’Reilly), local cousins Ethel Langill, Margaret MacLean, and Audrey Weatherbie, great-nephews and his furry pals Kayce and Banjo.

Besides his parents, Donald is predeceased by sister Carol, father-in-law William Dwyer, brother-in-law Wayne Langille and family friend Debbie.

Visitation took place at H. C. MacQuarrie Funeral Home, Stellarton on Thursday, April 24 with service held by Rev. Lori Crocker, followed by burial at Hamilton Cemetery, River John on Friday, April 25, 2025.



**Tatttrie, Margaret “Eileen”**

February 22, 1936 - April 20, 2025

Margaret “Eileen” Tatttrie, 89, passed away peacefully, April 20, 2025, at the Magnolia Continuing Care Home in Enfield, surrounded by her loving family.

Born on February 22, 1936, she was the daughter of the late Sam and Bessie (Henderson) Falconer; she lived her early years in Caribou River, then moved to River John and became a farmer’s wife. Eileen, affectionately known as Momma Bear, enjoyed discussing world news/politics, (Go Carney go,) puzzles, bingo, reading, road trips and watching Sid, the Kid. She also cherished her memories of adventures with the Christmas Club. Most of all, she loved listening to stories when family and friends would stop for a visit. She worked at various jobs throughout her life, but first and foremost she was mom, a Grammy and a Great-Grammy.

She is survived by sons Peter (Linda) Rousseau, Ontario; Alan (Jo-Ann), Beaverbank; daughter Bev (Neil), Enfield; and sister Harriet (Denzil) Caribou. Grandchildren Amy, Will, Ben, Emily T., Leon, Bro, Jessie, Matt, Lauren, Cody; step grandchildren Nadia and Emily D. Along with eight great-grandchildren and numerous nieces and nephews.

Cremation has taken place. Visitation was held. Donations in Eileen’s memory may be made to Salem United Church, River John or to the River John Food Bank.



**WATT, Ella May,**

February 24, 1924–February 19, 2025

It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of Ella May Watt (née Cameron) in Toronto on February 19, 2025. She was an amazing woman who lived a long and fulfilling life.

Born on February 24, 1924, and raised with her siblings in River John, Nova Scotia, May was known for her commitment to the church, her love of River John, gardening, and her lovely smile.

She was predeceased by her husband, Sydney Earle Watt, her sister, Dorothy Kingman, and her brother, John Cameron.

She is survived by two sisters, Mabel Zinck and Marie Langille; her children Peter Watt, Shelley Vickers (Patrick Vickers), Marial Stirling (Rev. Andrew Stirling); her grandson, Ian Vickers (Nina Popovic); great-granddaughter Emilia Vickers; and great-grandson Jack Vickers. May greatly appreciated the wonderful friends she made in Toronto who provided much support in her later years. Throughout her life, despite living in other parts of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, she always maintained a very close relationship with her place of birth. There will be a private family remembrance, followed by a committal in Pictou, Nova Scotia at a later date.

Donations may be made to the Canadian Bible Society (<https://biblesociety.ca/ways-to-give>) or a charity of your choice.

Condolences may be forwarded through [www.humphreymiles.com](http://www.humphreymiles.com). Humphrey Funeral Home A.W. Miles – Newbigging Chapel

[www.sunsetbeachcottages.com](http://www.sunsetbeachcottages.com)



Proprietors:  
Terry & Linda  
Reid

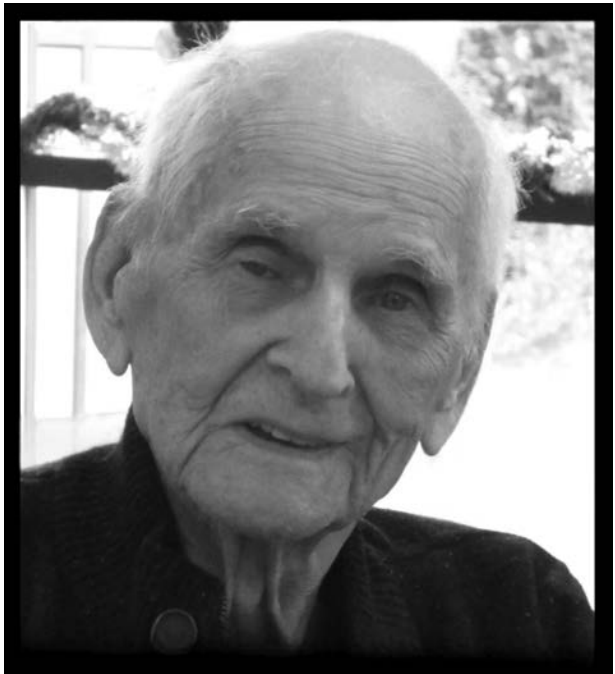
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902-351-2079  
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**John Hawkins**  
COMPUTER SERVICE & REPAIR



4175 Hwy 6, Toney River  
**902-616-5968**  
[thehawk360@gmail.com](mailto:thehawk360@gmail.com)

# OBITUARIES



**SILLERS, Roy D.**  
1928–2025

Roy Douglas Sillers, 96 years old, of River John, passed away peacefully Wednesday, March 5, 2025, in the Sutherland Harris Memorial hospital, Pictou.

Born in Bigney, NS, on November 10, 1928, he was the son of the late Gordon and Florence Sillers. Roy was one of the first bus drivers at West Pictou District High and then went on to be head mechanic, until he retired in 1993. He resided in his home in River John, where he took great pride in his property while waiting for his beautiful rose bushes to bloom. He also enjoyed his travels to Scotland and Australia, among other destinations.

He is survived by his nephew, Doug; nieces, Greta, Helen; brother-in-law, Alvin and sister-in-law, Murriel (Heighton). He was predeceased by his wife, Mildred (Heighton); son, Wayne; brothers, Warren, Gerald and Vernon. A graveside service was held at Hamilton Cemetery May 3rd at 1 p.m., with Rev. Dr. Glen Matheson officiating. Donations in Roy's memory may be made to the Canadian Cancer Society, Hamilton Cemetery, or a charity of choice.

## Thank You to everyone



**Harry Smith and Heather Smith**

# ST. GEORGE'S AMS SPRING SERVICE OF PRAISE

On Sunday March 25th, The Atlantic Mission Society auxiliary from St. George's Presbyterian Church, River John, hosted a Spring Service of Praise. The largely-attended gathering was welcomed by Rev. Enjei Achah, Church Minister and AMS member, who then introduced special musical guests for the afternoon, The New Glasgow Mixed Chorus, under the direction of, and accompanied by Brenda Bowden, Organist.

The Chorus enthusiastically offered several joyful praise pieces throughout the service and duets were sung by Berkley and Monique DeCoste, and Brian and Brenda Bowden. All joined together in singing congregational hymns as well.

Members of the AMS taking part in the service were Elizabeth Alexander, Marie Langille, and Jo-Ann Ferguson.

Brenda Bowden was presented with a hanging floral basket in appreciation for her leadership of the Chorus.

The AMS is very grateful to everyone who came out for the service, and who generously contributed to the offering, which was forwarded to our Pictou Presbyterial, to be used for AMS Mission Projects.

A time of fellowship was enjoyed by everyone in the hall after the Service. The AMS is very grateful to everyone who contributed to the lovely lunch enjoyed by all.

We were very blessed by this very uplifting Service of Praise to Almighty God,

# THE MOST IMPORTANT THANK YOU

Jay Reid

When I was younger, a youth we'll say, I aspired to move away from River John. I never contemplated staying. At the time I presumptively thought the confines of a "small town" seemed to limit my potential. The life I wanted didn't seem possible with a population that low. Or so I thought. I think that's a common perception for anyone coming of age in a small town or village. I'm not unique in that way. I know a bird has to leave its nest or whatever your favourite animal analogy is. In retrospect I realize how naïve that viewpoint was. However, like a lot of things, it took a few decades of life experiences and significant emotional upheaval to realize how special it is to be part of a small town. I first came to understand this when I lost my girlfriend in a car accident in 2007. Raella. Jack's mom. I was living in Halifax at the time. My family and the people in my city circle were supportive and sympathetic, but it was when I came home to River John after the funeral that I got to experience the warm existential hug that only River John could provide for me. When Mom died, I couldn't have been surrounded by a better community. That comforting feeling was this time compounded by the fact that Mom was known by everyone here. It was a collective loss. I lost my mom, but River John lost Janet. Maybe because of that I think River John and its people were there for me and my family in the most profound way. Food, letters, cards, visits. It all meant so much. So, to River John as a community, the Reid's are forever grateful for the love, respect, empathy, and sympathy shown to us. To Her. THANK YOU.

She hasn't been gone long. Typing the letters 'M-o-m d-i-e-d' still shakes me to my core because I don't feel enough time has passed for me to truly accept the loss. It might be because I haven't gone through a summer without my mom yet. Summer was her time. If you knew her, then you know. I once heard or read someone describe another person as "Summer's little girl," and I immediately thought of my Mom. Being Summer's little girl in River John was one of mom's favorite things. 80% of the kilometres she put on her car in the summertime was to The Cape and back, I am sure of it. So, this summer is going to be tough for Dad because he doesn't have anyone to ride on the back of the Honda anymore. It is going to be tough for Johnny because as he moves home for the summer, mom won't be at the top of the hill to welcome him and the girls on beautiful sunny days. It will be hard, but I know it will be just a little bit easier because we are grieving in River John, with all of mom's flowers, and friends and memories.

## Kelly's Pizza



We have take-out pizza, hot out of the oven. We also have donairs, subs, and garlic fingers. The best you've ever eaten! Order ahead for fast service and pick up. I guarantee you'll be back for more!

**SUMMER HOURS:**  
**Thursday - Sunday 4-9pm**  
*Closed Monday - Wednesday*

**RIVER JOHN OLD SCHOOL, 2 SCHOOL STREET**  
**902-351-2929**

# ST. MICHAEL'S CATHOLIC CHURCH NEWS

By Netta Heukshorst



Regularly scheduled Mass is on Saturdays at 4 pm.

A delicious pancake brunch was held on March 2nd which was well-attended and enjoyed by all. Hopefully, this will become an annual event. There was even live music provided by The Brave Boys.

March 7th was World Day of Prayer, hosted this year by St George's Presbyterian Church; all the local churches participated, as well St. Michael's. Next year WDP will be hosted by St. Michael's.

Also, in March, a Praise and Worship gospel sing was held with many local musicians taking part. A reception was enjoyed afterwards. April was another busy and wonderful month. Many of the parishioners went on a pilgrimage to St. Mary's Basilica Church in Halifax, to celebrate Holy Chrism Mass by Archbishop Dunn, joining with parishioners from Immaculate Conception Church in Truro. To accommodate us all and to save on parking a bus was hired to take us. That was a fun ride. During Easter Sunday morning Mass, three of our youth members received their First Holy Communion, Benjamin, Cassidy, and Joshua Isnor-Reade. May the Lord bless these children always as they journey in their faith.

In the month of May and October the Holy Rosary is prayed before Mass at 3:30 p.m. On Easter Monday, the world received the sad news that Pope Francis had passed away. The peoples were much saddened by this news. Then on May 8th, the joyful news was declared that a new pope had been elected. We welcomed Pope Leo XIV on May 8th with great joy.

Everyone is welcome at St. Michael's. Remember to smile and be kind to one another.



Ph: (902) 305-5414  
Fax: (902) 900-9184

229 Main St.  
Tatamagouche, NS  
B0K1V0

# HELPING HAND LODGE AND FRAZEE REBEKAH LODGE

By Jacob Leegwater, Recording Secretary of the Helping Hand Lodge

Time has rolled around once again to write the notes for the Pioneer, with news from the Helping Hand Lodge and Frazee Rebekah Lodge.

Since our last column, the Rebekahs hosted two social card parties on March 11 and April 15. Door prize winners in March were Chris Patterson and Linda Munro. On April 15, Elsie Langille was the lucky winner. On April 11, at our regular meeting, we welcomed Sister Angela Kendrick, Rebekah Assembly Warden, making her official visit. After the meeting, lunch and fellowship were enjoyed. Due to Assembly sessions in Truro on May 9 and 10, we did not have a meeting, as many of our members were in attendance. The Rebekahs enjoyed a lobster dinner, together with the Odd Fellows on June 7. As I was unable to attend Assembly sessions and a District 9 and 10 meeting in Sunnybrae, there isn't anything I can add.



As Odd Fellows, we meet each Monday night, so there should be lots to report. We will start with a donation to Evangelina O'Brien to further her studies at the University of Prince Edward Island, for which she was very grateful. Some of our members went to Eastern Star #1 in Pictou on February 6, where they conferred the first degree on two members. We have received donations of various items for loan to invalids. A list of items is available from Sister Joanne Ferguson, who will be keeping track of this program. She can be reached at 902-305-7278.

Plans were made to have fish cakes and beans in March, to be followed by a weigh-in for the Arthritis Society. This was very successful with \$38.75 raised and topped up to \$100.00 by the Lodge. Many thanks to Brother Gary Johnson's wife, Sharon for the wonderful meal.

On March 22, we hosted a Food Handling Course with twenty-six people in attendance. It was well received, and all attendees obtained their certificates, which are valid for five years.



On April 16, the district meeting for District #17 was held at Liberty Lodge, Tatamagouche, with a total of thirty members from Eastern Star, Helping Hand, and Liberty Lodges. Collection for the evening was voted to go to the "Lodge that Gives." Being the spring meeting, elections were held for District Deputy Grand Master. Brother Peter Richardson of Eastern Star #1 was elected. Deputy Secretary-Treasurer is Brother Jacob Leegwater.

Brother Don MacKenzie of Eastern Star #1 has been a visitor on several occasions and since he moved to this area, he has been accepted as a member by transfer of certificate. Welcome Brother MacKenzie.

Sales of lobster tickets will go until June 11, with the draw taking place at the IOOF Hall on June 14, just in time for Father's Day. There are three draws, each for ten pounds of market lobsters.

Following is a report on Grand Lodge sessions, which took place at the Inn on Prince, Truro on May 9 and 10. Meetings began at 8:30 a.m. with a memorial service at 1:30 p.m., conducted by Grand Lodge Chaplain, Brother Jacob Leegwater.

A banquet was held at 6 p.m., followed by a sessional auction. Meetings resumed at 8:30 a.m. on Saturday, with the election of officers for the next term. Brother Dan Ferguson as retiring Grand Master, called for nominations. Elected were Brother Jeff Dewtie of Moore Lodge #17 as Grand Master; Brother Charles Amoroso of Atlantic #107 as Deputy Grand Master; Brother Mark Rose of Atlantic #107 as Grand Warden and Brother Jim Wilson of Union #30 as Grand Secretary. Other officers were appointed by the Grand Master. Brother Jacob Leegwater was named Grand Chaplain, entering his tenth term in this capacity.

On June 7, we served our lobster dinner and on June 15 we held the District Odd Fellows and Rebekah's Memorial Service at the Sharon United Church in Tatamagouche, where we also lit candles for six departed brothers and sisters.

Well, that is all for this time. We will be looking forward to serving you breakfast on July 24, during River John Festival Days. Until then, stay safe and enjoy the summer.



**ELSIE LANGILLE TURNS 90**

Everyone was excited to celebrate Elsie’s 90th birthday, especially Elsie herself. Friends and family came from far and wide for the open house at St. George’s Hall on April 3, 2025. Despite the heavy snowfall that afternoon, the celebration was joyful and lively - truly a grand occasion befitting the milestone!

**AN EDITORIAL:  
THE PEN IS  
MIGHTIER THAN  
THE SWORD**  
By Kelly Shaw

As the editor of a newspaper – even one that serves a small community it is essential to be thoughtful about the power of the word. Language has so much influence. The written and spoken word have shaped the world we live in. Language holds the ability to pass on stories, build community, and affirm identity. Words can also silence, erase, and control.

As we reflect on our shared history to identify truth, we move towards reconciliation. This process helps us see more clearly how language has been both a tool of communication and a weapon. Colonial authorities used written words to draft laws that removed children from their families. Treaties were written and then broken. Books published give inaccurate illustration of Indigenous people.

The spoken word was also regulated. Indigenous languages were forbidden in residential schools. Stories passed through generations were interrupted and sometimes forgotten.

This legacy still echoes. Intergenerational trauma is not always visible, but it lives in the silences we inherit, in the stories that were never told. Perhaps because they were too painful or maybe there was no one left to tell them.

Yet, even as the word has wounded, it is also what heals. Truth is spoken in courtrooms, in commissions and inquiries, in classrooms, in community halls. A story shared on a front porch, in a healing circle or around a campfire is a living force. It can connect or divide. It can damage or restore.

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Let us write and talk in ways that honour the complexity of our histories, the variation in our worldviews, the depth, and the breadth of our community. This focus will help ensure that the power of the word serves not to erase or silence, but to bridge, build belonging, and support healing.

I believe we must always ask: What stories do we hold? Whose words are we amplifying? Whose are we forgetting?

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# RIVER JOHN FESTIVAL DAYS CELEBRATES 40 YEARS

By Joan MacLeod

One of the unique fixtures of the village of River John is our annual week-long festival on the last full week of July. Many River Johners who live away plan their vacation to coincide with this fun-filled event. In my opinion, it makes us all feel proud to showcase our village with a myriad of delightful activities for people of all ages. The Pioneer Editorial Team wishes to congratulate the River John Festival Days Committee for reaching this 40-year milestone.



## 50<sup>TH</sup> WEDDING ANNIVERSARY Jane and David Mackenzie

My brother, Todd, (Kathy), and I, (Cindy), would love to congratulate our parents, Jane and David Mackenzie of Skinner’s Cove Road East, on their 50th wedding anniversary.

In the mid 60s, our dad, David, moved from River John, NS, to the big city of Toronto, where he met his one true love, Jane Greenhalgh, of Trent River, ON. Life has always been an adventure for these two! They decided to move out west to Alberta for many years, raised a family, and eventually moved back to Ontario to retire.

While in Ontario, both our parents were stricken with medical issues. Our mom survived lung cancer, but she had several life-threatening complications from chemotherapy and radiation. Our dad has overcome many strokes and now lives with Parkinson’s disease. It has been a rough few years, but they are still together, still strong, and still supporting each other through life’s ups and downs.

We are so grateful to have these two compassionate, loving people as our parents. They are adored by their four granddaughters and their partners, four great-grandsons and one great-granddaughter. We cannot wait to celebrate such an admirable milestone in the family.

Thank you, and love you both to bits!

Festival Days was begun in 1985, by an active group of local people, including Janice Murray Gill, Reverend Donald Sutherland, Sadie Craig, Elsie Langille, Florence Craib, and others who realized that it would be 200 years since 1785. That was the year settlers arrived in Caijebouguac and called it River John.

These organizers initiated a whole year of fundraising events to support the week-long festival. They boasted a beauty contest of local young women. Margaret Henderson designed a logo which is still used today, depicting a fish and a ship’s wheel. They had an eight-page newspaper-style printed festival schedule, a copy of which is in our local museum. Over the past 40 years, many different events have been held in association with Festival Days. Some of us will remember the fish chowder contest and the old-time fiddling contest. New events have been added, such as the lobster crate run which attracts upwards of 1000 people to our waterfront. The week starts with a church service and a ball tournament, and ends with a street parade, a dance and a fireworks display over the river.



Janice Murray Gill’s original button for the very first River John Days

The week is filled with numerous events, such as morning breakfasts, strawberry teas, trivia night, and the Warden’s afternoon tea. None of these events happen by themselves. It takes a dedicated team of volunteers to schedule, organize and run this wonderful event. River John is truly blessed to have so many people willing to step up to be volunteers.



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