



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

"We acknowledge that we live and work in Mi'kma'ki, the unceded land of the Mi'kmaq. We are all treaty people and our nation-to-nation relationship is based on peace and friendship."

The Pioneer Celebrates 10 Years of Community Journalism

by Joan MacLeod

River John's community newspaper, is proud to announce its 10th anniversary. Since its founding in 2014, The Pioneer has been dedicated to informing, engaging, and connecting the residents of River John and the surrounding areas. As the brainchild of Rob Assels and Lesley Longhorn the Pioneer was created to ensure the events in River John got their time in the spotlight. The logo, used for the last nine years, was designed by Lesley Longhorn. Marg Jones and Beulah Wright were part of the original group who started the paper and are still involved in various capacities ten years later.

The original Pioneer was first published in 1878 as a 4-page weekly newspaper in River John. Published every Thursday, a yearly subscription was 50 cents.

The current editorial board recognizes the potential for the name of the paper to be viewed as colonial in a time when we should be moving towards reconciliation. There is acknowledgment of the rich Mi'kmaq history in this area through diversification of contributors and the expression of appreciation and gratitude on our front page for living and working in the unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq. The name River John was arrived at by the settlers and is only a small section of a much larger area which was known for hundreds, if not thousands of years, as Katjipikoek, pronounced "Gadjee bigo eg" (a lonely river flowing through the wilderness).



The paper has grown steadily over the years and now boasts 32 pages in the summer edition. Three sets of teams have held editorial responsibility over the past 10 years: Founding editors: Rob Assels and Lesley Longhorn (2014–2016); then Anne Patriquin and Cheryl Frizzell (2017-2020); now Joan MacLeod (2020-present).

The Pioneer has provided a vital connection for the River John community, covering local events, highlighting local businesses, and sharing stories that resonate with residents.

In addition to print editions, The Pioneer has embraced digital platforms, expanding its reach and engaging with a broader audience. It can be found on RiverJohn.com website and on Facebook at River John, Nova Scotia.

In celebration of our 10 years, the Pioneer

- Is working to ensure all previous copies are accessible electronically.
- Is holding a writing contest for children in the area, with prize money.
- Is re-printing historical articles from past Pioneers
- Held an event with a cake cutting on October 30th to which all the past editorial teams were invited.

We are incredibly grateful to our dedicated readers, contributors, and advertisers who have supported us throughout this journey. This 10-year celebration is as much about them as it is about us.



Writing Contest

Themed: *Understanding Community Through the Eyes of our Youth.*

One of the ways we are celebrating our 10th year of publication is to hold a writing contest to encourage children's literacy. The questions we asked were: What makes up a community? What are perspectives, contributions and challenges within a community? We missed adding the poster to our summer Issue of the Pioneer, so we extended the deadline to Nov 8th. The team members responsible for the contest visited the four schools which our children attend, in person, to promote it. The lack of a school in River John seems all the more cogent.

The good news is that by the deadline we have 24 entries. Our team of judges will decide on the winners based on: Creativity and Originality, Clarity of Expression and Insightful Reflection on Community.

The cash prizes (donated by RJCAS) for Elementary, Middle and High school students will be awarded at the River John Tree Lighting Celebration on Nov 24th. Look for some of these great essays in the winter issue of the Pioneer.

Reprinting previous Stories

Our last issue had two stories on page 9 from Spring 2015 and Fall 2016 Pioneers. This issue had plans to print two more stories, but unfortunately we only had space for one. Hopefully, we will be able to have another in the Winter issue.

Numbering Past Issues and Making Them Accessible.

They can be found on the www.Riverjohn.com website and the River John, Nova Scotia Facebook page.

Grand Opening of River John Pickleball Park

**by Theresa Rath Spicer,
River John Pickleball Club**

August 30, 2024 was the perfect day to celebrate the Grand Opening of the River John Pickleball Park. The sun was shining on the new three-court facility as a crowd of supporters gathered nearby.

The event kicked off with remarks from River John Pickleball Club President, Wade Taylor, who first floated the idea for pickleball courts in our community in early 2022. In recognition of the partnership with the Royal Canadian Legion River John Branch 108, where the courts are located, President Mike Topley spoke second. Up next were the local politicians whose government funding helped make this recreation project possible: The Honourable Sean Fraser, Member of Parliament for Central Nova; Marco MacLeod, MLA for Pictou West; and Warden Robert Parker of the Municipality of Pictou County. Tara Gallant of the YMCA Pictou County then spoke as a

partner agency who will offer programming to area youth at the facility.

Finally, RJPC Treasurer John Carruthers named every level of government, organization and individual who donated to the cause. Hearing all the names of the generous sponsors and donors showed the overwhelming support the project has received. He also recognized our many volunteers - RJPC members, their families and community members - who gave tirelessly of their time and expertise.

A huge debt of gratitude is owed to our village of sponsors, donors, supporters, partners and volunteers for bringing the River John Pickleball Park to fruition. Together, we have formed and sustained a club that promotes health, friendship, fair play, and fun. We encourage others to give pickleball a try; we welcome all demographics and skill levels. See you on the court - we play in the fire hall from November to April and on the outdoor courts from May to October.



L-R: Tara Gallant, YMCA Pictou County; John Carruthers, Treasurer, RJPC; Mary Elliott, Councillor, District 4; Wade Taylor, President, RJPC; The Honourable Sean Fraser, MP for Central Nova; Warden Robert Parker, Municipality of Pictou County; Marco MacLeod, MLA, Pictou West; Mike Topley, President, Royal Canadian Legion, River John Branch 108.
Photo credit: Theresa Rath Spicer

Contact riverjohnpickleball@gmail.com or visit <https://secure.pickleballcanada.org/club/river-john-pickleball-club/32284/> and River John Pickleball Club on Facebook for more info.



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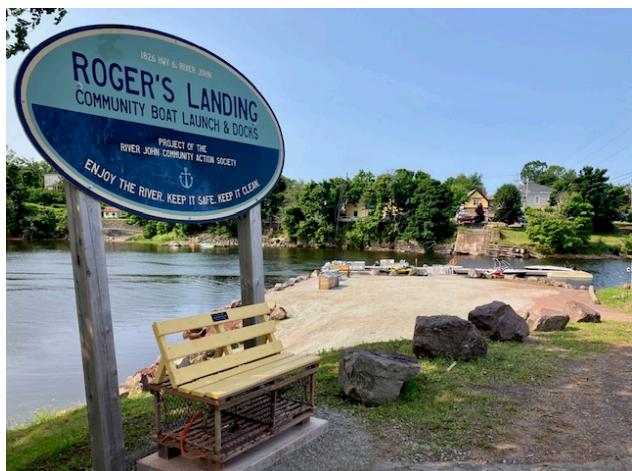
A Thank You from Rogers Landing: Celebrating a Safe Boating Season

by Gillian Joudrie

As the boating season comes to a close at Rogers Landing in River John, we want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our visitors, boaters and community members. Your commitment to safety and respect for our beautiful waters has made this season a

success. This year, we saw countless families and friends enjoying the tranquility of the river, creating memories that will last a lifetime. The safety measures and guidelines were upheld, ensuring that everyone could enjoy their time on the water without worry. Your cooperation played a vital role in

maintaining a secure and enjoyable environment for all. As we wrap up this season, we look forward to welcoming you back next year. We are excited for more adventures, scenic days on the water, and the vibrant community spirit that Rogers Landing embodies. Thank you for making this boating season a memorable one. Safe travels until we meet again in the spring.



A new lobster Trap bench placed under the Roger's Landing sign was donated in memory of Roger by Betty (MacLellan) Craig. (Photo: Christiane Gill)



Roger's Landing has undergone quite the transformation. A Kayak rack has been added (with Elaine Falconer Memorial Funds) and the area has been landscaped with the addition of gravel. (Photo: Christiane Gill)



This year's final step was the storing of the dock – everything with lots of help from Alan, Pat, Josh, Kenny, Stewart, Steve, Mike, MJ, Ryan, Jason, Mike, Bruce, and the crane operator all coordinated by Cody Joudrie. (Photo: Amy Fraser)



SPECIALIZING IN
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PICTOU COUNTIES.

Town Hall

At the Oct 29th meeting at River John Legion, between the community and the RCMP, we were urged to report all crimes, suspicious activities and related information to the non-urgent numbers below. RCMP stats show that the percentage of calls is low from the River John area, so they don't reflect the real concerns of community members. If calls have not been responded to in a reasonable amount of time, ask to speak to the Supervisor.

In case of emergency* or crimes in progress, call 911.

Non-urgent RCMP phone numbers are 902- 485- 8777 and 902- 755- 4141

*Constable Williams described an emergency as "imminent danger to a person or property."



From left to right: Constable Ralphene Williams, Constable Josh Penton, Staff Sergeant Curtis Mackinnon and Warden Robert Parker

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Pictou County Wellness Fund Celebration: Celebrating Community, Collaboration, and Wellness

by Mandy Moore

On September 23rd, the Pictou County Wellness Centre hosted the 2024 Wellness Fund Celebration, an event that highlights the importance of community-driven health and wellness projects. The event brought together a wide array of local organizations, each dedicated to improving the overall well-being of our communities.

This year, we proudly awarded over \$50,000 in funding to 21 different projects from 18 organizations across Pictou County. These funds will support initiatives that promote mental wellness, healthy active living, food security, and more. During the celebration, recipients shared details about their projects, offering insight into the creative and impactful work happening in the region.

Among the organizations recognized, was the Pictou County Forest School, which is leading innovative climate change education workshops for youth. The Pictou County Imagination Library also made waves with their efforts to bring free books to local children each month, fostering early literacy and lifelong learning. The River John & Area Recreation and Development Association described their "Meals on Wheels" initiative that also provides social connection for community members experiencing isolation. Another inspiring presentation came from St. Paul's United Church for their "Food for Focus" project. This project, in partnership with SchoolsPlus, provides meal kits to families in need - not only nourishing families but also bringing together volunteers weekly, creating a shared sense of purpose and community.

The evening was filled with inspiration, offering a glimpse into how these community-driven projects are creating meaningful change. It also provided an excellent opportunity for organizations to network and collaborate, sparking new ideas and future partnerships.

The Ed Bowden Community Wellness Award
As the celebration came to a close, one of the night's highlights was the announcement of the Ed Bowden Community Wellness Award. This award recognizes a Wellness Fund project from the previous year that exemplified community spirit, innovation, volunteerism, and overall impact on health and wellness.

This year, the award was presented to the Salem & Area Recreation Association for their "Community Greenspace Development Project." The goal of this project was to restore and maintain a local green space, creating a hub for recreational activities, events, and programs. The project successfully engaged community members through volunteer work parties, and hosted events such as community markets, music in the park, and the popular Spooky Salem Halloween event.

One of the most remarkable outcomes of this project was the way it fostered new connections and partnerships in the community. Local businesses, musicians, the fire department, municipal recreation groups, and even the local

church came together to support the greenspace, demonstrating the lasting impact of this initiative.

The Salem & Area Recreation Association's project was recognized, not only for its



Wellness Fund recipients Nancy Palmer and Alice Rushton on behalf of the River John & Area Recreation and Development Association

success in promoting health and wellness, but also for its ability to bring people together and create a space for future community-driven events. The Ed Bowden Community Wellness Award is a well-deserved acknowledgment of their efforts, and their project stands as a shining example of what can be achieved when a community rallies together around a shared goal.

Looking Ahead

The Wellness Fund Celebration is a reminder of the power of community, collaboration, and creativity in addressing health and wellness challenges. As these new projects take root, we look forward to seeing the continued positive impact they will have on the health and well-being of Pictou County. Here's to another year of innovation, inspiration, and wellness.

Get Involved!

For more information on how to volunteer with your local Community Health Board, visit: www.communityhealthboards.ns.ca or contact the Pictou County Community Health Board Coordinator, Mandy Moore:

Ph: 1-902-890-4383

Email: amandam.moore@nshealth.ca

River John Food and Health Centre

by Paul Baron

The River John Little Food Pantry got its start, thanks to the kindness and generosity of the local Lions Club, several years ago. They had the insight and compassion to recognize food insecurity in our community and the goodness of heart to do something about it. What started off in a small room became The Food Pantry on the veranda, and sparked the idea of expanding outreach to meet an ever-increasing demand. From humble beginnings and with the hard work and dedication of numerous volunteers we now have the River John Food and Health Centre. Operated by volunteers of the Community Support Society of River John, we have realized the dream of a sustainable food centre to address food insecurity in our community and surrounding areas. If not for the inspiration of the Lions we might not have this crucial service to offer.

Although the initial plan was to have just a food bank, the group working on this quickly realized the need for something more. The Food and Health Centre idea was championed by Karla MacFarlane, following the precedent being used in many other areas of our province, with the goal of integrating health services with a secure food supply. There is no doubt that food security equals better health.

For those who have not been inside, the Food and Health Centre building boasts a food centre set up to resemble the grocery store shopping experience. It was decided to utilize this model so people are able to go and make choices for their households. We also provide pre-packaged boxes for emergency situations



and our team of volunteers offers delivery if transportation is an issue. We are open Friday afternoons from 1-4 p.m. as this meets the immediate needs and doesn't unduly overload our dedicated helpers. This space is also utilized by the VON Frozen Meals on Wheels program. In addition, they share a small office space with our Food Centre Coordinator, CristyAnn Langille. We currently serve 45 households with a total of 107 people; about double what it was just a year ago. Our shelves are stocked by volunteers, with food donations received from the community, food purchases subsidized by Food Security program grants, and cash donations. CristyAnn has allocated space for gluten-free diets and usually some lactose-free products are available. The residents of River John and surrounding community have stepped up in a big way to provide for those less fortunate. Food donations have ranged from 50-240 pounds per month, in addition to cash donations. We have also had support from local groups such as the Lions, Rebekahs, Fire Department and several local businesses. For a small community, we certainly have a big heart.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

Community Garden

by Bernadette MacDonald

This is the first year there was vegetable production at the Community Garden and the volunteers would welcome interested community members to make their own "garden plot" next season. The Community Garden Volunteer Team learned a lot this past spring, summer, and fall from planting, weeding, thinning and harvesting a good variety of vegetables. The volunteers estimate a ton of food was grown and distributed.

"As we had more veggies than the Food Centre needed, we distributed them to friends, neighbours, and family," explained Camilla.

The Community Garden volunteers started by meeting in April to discuss what they could plant, getting some compost at the landfill, buying pots and potting soil so plants could be started. A lot of seeds had been donated and missing seeds were purchased.

"It wasn't easy getting seedlings started and maintained through the spring at the River John Community Food & Health Centre and we are all looking forward to having the greenhouse working next spring," said Jackie. "Maintaining and watering seedlings will be much easier in the greenhouse as we will have lots of open spaces to grow the seedlings we want to transfer to the garden."

The crops that did very well this year were onions, tomatoes, zucchini, beans, carrots, beets, peas, greens like Swiss chard, and cucumbers. Other vegetables like squash and pumpkins did okay but were small in

numbers. A row of sunflowers was a delightful contribution. The weeds were very hard to control so some garden sections were whippersnipped to control the weeds and keep the garden open. In one section, buckwheat seeds were planted to control the weeds and add more organic compost to the soil.

We are very pleased to inform folks that the greenhouse frame has been successfully erected and the plastic sheet to enclose it will be put in place in the early spring.

Applying sustainable, organic practices are very important to us, explained Finley. "There are lots of sustainable products and practices we can use to ensure we do not need to use invasive chemicals. We look forward to learning from others about how they keep their vegetable production healthy."

Next year the Community Garden volunteers will be using the garden and greenhouse space to grow a variety of veggies that would be of interest to people using the Food Centre. We will also make the garden veggies accessible to others who would like to make a small financial donation for the produce. We are hoping that next season more crops can be stored on site.

We would like to extend an invitation to



L-R: Jackie Robertson, Camilla Wells, Patsi Cameron, Bernadette MacDonald. Photo: Finley Beaton.

anyone who may be interested in volunteering with us next year. We would also like to hear from folks who may want to have their own accessible raised bed, (approximately 10' long x 4" wide x 3 high) that will be in the greenhouse or garden, as well as anyone interested in a garden plot where they can grow their own food. Please contact Bernadette at 902-771-2685. We look forward to hearing from interested people.

We want to thank others who came at various times to help out; Eugene Mertin, Josh Cotter, and Kyle Rudolph were instrumental in getting a number of big truckloads of manure on the garden, as well as spreading it. Earl Johnson and Shawn Hayman used their tractors and rotavators to get the large garden plot churned over and ready for planting. Eleanor Baron, Paul Baron, Sally Jackson, and Terry Giles helped in the garden over the season.

Meals on Wheels

by Melanie Cote

Meals and Wheels is up and running again with a new cook this season. Brenton and Chelsie from Gloria's Market have graciously accepted the position and are working hard to come up with some nutritious meals to be delivered weekly to seniors in the River John and surrounding area.

If you know of anyone struggling to cook or in need of a meal delivered, or if you would like to volunteer with the program, please contact Melanie Cote at (902)-899-6750 or email riverjohnmealsonwheels@gmail.com to make arrangements. Volunteers usually spend approximately 1-2 hours each Tuesday delivering meals around lunch time.

Also, as the volunteer coordinator, I would like to put in my notice that this will be my last year with the program and if there is anyone who would like to take over the position as coordinator please contact me to discuss.



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"Helping You Join Your Hands and Hearts"

Food & Health Centre

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

We have a medical room with an attached washroom. This is currently used by two-footcare specialists, Connie Smith and Melony Sheehy. As well, the garden group uses the space for starting seedlings in the spring and food storage and ripening in the fall. We hope to expand services to include medical collection services (blood tests, etc.), nurse practitioner and others as they become available.

Our boardroom seats 10-12 people and is used for our board meetings, training sessions, outside group meetings, etc. as needed. In addition, we have a small office/medical practitioner room currently used by RMT Chelsey Scott on some weekends. And of course, a large fully equipped kitchen where we offer workshops, training, and make coffee or tea. We are in the process of becoming a fully certified commercial kitchen which will allow for more community usage and allow us to expand our offerings. This fall, Luba Synyuk offered two workshops: Preserving the Harvest, which 6 people attended, and Ferment your Veggies, which was cancelled due to lack of registrations.

The medical room, office, boardroom and kitchen spaces are available to community groups free of charge. For-profit groups or

individuals who are can rent these spaces for a nominal charge. For details, please request by emailing cssriverjohn@gmail.com.

A group of volunteers erected the greenhouse frame over a year ago. As none of us have had any experience with this type of construction, we ran into a few glitches along the way. We are in the process of correcting our errors and are moving forward with construction. The next stage is to secure wooden framing and put on the covering. After that, we will be putting the garden boxes together. We hope to have that completed for spring planting.

Our dedicated volunteer board consists of nine members: President, Paul Baron; Vice President, Hannah Mertin; Secretary, Eleanor Baron; Treasurer, Dave Cochrane; Garden Group Leader, Bernadette MacDonald; Food Centre Coordinator, CristyAnn Langille; Grants, Sally Jackson; Members at Large, Mike George, Alan McNutt. In addition, we have had 20-25 volunteers assist with outdoor maintenance, greenhouse construction, landscaping, and approximately 30 volunteers who rotate scheduling at the food centre on Fridays with CristyAnn. We are actively looking for volunteers to join us in a number of capacities including gardening, greenhouse construction, planter box assembly, food centre helpers, general cleaning. We thank everyone who has had a hand in helping us to help others. It really does take a village.

River John 4-H Club

by Christine Heighton

The River John 4-H Club began the 2024/25 year with registration on October 6th at St. George's Presbyterian Church Hall. They will continue registration until the end of November through an online process; please email riverjohn4h@gmail.com for further details. The club offers many projects such as beef, dairy, crafts, scrapbooking, rabbit, cavy, sheep, crafts, and light horse. The Club will meet the first Sunday of each month at 4 p.m. at St George's Church Hall in River John. New and returning members are welcome. For more information, please call Co-General Leaders Christine Heighton (902) 759-7915, Valrie Suideest (902) 351-2193 or Hailey Scotland (902) 297-4493.

River John 4-H Club at the Pictou North Colchester Exhibition

The River John 4-H Club began their competitions at the Pictou North Colchester Exhibition on Monday September 2nd with the light horse classes. Congratulations to Cally Rae, 1st Light horse Jr. Judge 1st Jr. English Light horse and 1st Jr. Western Light horse.

The week continued Wednesday September 4th, 4-H Day. We had a fabulous showing from our members who moved on to compete at the 4-H Provincial Show. Ria Suideest, Champion Sr. Crafts Judge and Champion Sr. Scrapbooking Judge, Nora Lowden, 1st Jr. Rabbit Judge, Payton Ferguson, 1st Sr. Dairy showmanship, 1st Fall Heifer calf (dairy), Cally Rae, 1st Jr Beef showmanship, 1st Sr. Charolais heifer, Alexandria Bezanson, 1st Jr. Light horse showmanship, 1st Jr. Goat showmanship, 1st doeling (Goat), Kay Lee Scotland, 1st Rabbit showmanship, 1st Jr. Buck (rabbit), 1st Sr. Buck (rabbit), Olivia Sutherland, 1st Cavy showmanship, 1st Sr.



Back row: Owen Yantzi, Garrett Yantzi, Cassie Sutherland, Olivia Sutherland, Ria Suideest
Front row: Nora Lowden, Kay Lee Scotland, Alexandria Bezanson
Missing from photo: Payton Ferguson, James Ferguson, Cally Rae, Abbie Rae

Sow (cavy), Garrett Yantzi, Champion Feeder Steer calf, James Ferguson, 1st Intermediate Purebred Other Heifer (Beef), Abbie Rae, 1st Sr Angus Heifer, Reserve Champion Beef overall.

River John Club had the Best Livestock display.

River John 4-H Club at Provincial Show in Bible Hill

The River John 4-H continued to show off their best at the 4-H Provincial show in Bible Hill, September 27-29, 2024. Abbie Rae, Champion Angus Heifer, 1st Sr. Angus Heifer, picked as a member of the Nova Scotia Royal Beef Team, Cally Rae, Reserve Champion Charolais Heifer, 1st Charolais Sr. Heifer, 5th Market Steer, Kay Lee Scotland, 1st Jr. Rabbit Showmanship, 2nd showroom 6 Sr. Doe (Rabbit), 3rd Showroom 4 Sr. Buck (rabbit), 4th Showroom Jr. Buck (Rabbit), Garrett Yantzi, 3rd feeder steer, James Ferguson, 1st

Intermediate Purebred Other, Payton Ferguson, 13th Fall Heifer, Alexandria Bezanson, 3rd goat showmanship, 2nd doeling (Goat). Congratulations to all the members who competed, your club is very proud of you all.

River John 4-H at National Show in Toronto

Congratulations to Abbie Rae of the River John 4-H Club

4-H Nova Scotia is proud to send members to the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto as part of the Mastersfeeds National Junior Beef Heifer Show.

Here is what Abbie has to say:

"My name is Abbie Rae, and I am 17 years old. I live in Scotsburn, NS, where we raise purebred black and red Angus. We currently have about 60 head of cattle on our farm. I'm in grade 12 at Northumberland Regional High School, and over the past two years, I've played high school rugby as well as on the Nova Scotia Keltics team. I've been involved with the Maritime Barrel Racing Association for several years and have worked at Home Hardware for nearly four years. I'm graduating from high school in January and will be attending NSCC in February to study Electrical Construction and Industrial Engineering. I've been a member of 4-H for eight years and been in the beef project for the last four years. I am very excited to represent my province at the Royal."

The cattle headed to Toronto on Tuesday, October 29 and members left on Wednesday, October 30th. The River John Club wishes Abbie the best of luck at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto.

Mabel Murple's Dreamery Comes Alive for August Literacy Day

by Randi Beers

Mabel Murple's Book Shoppe and Dreamery came alive August 17th with an event that served as a reunion of sorts for its owner, Sheree Fitch, but it was also a farewell.

Fitch's acreage buzzed with families exploring, reading, flying kites and picnicking in the shade as part of a literacy day organized by United for Literacy Atlantic, formerly known as Frontier College.

Among those wandering the property was Fitch herself, hugging old friends, sitting to chat with young visitors, and clearly basking in the glow of what she and her husband, Gilles Plante, built seven years ago. The pair ran the Dreamery for four summers, first from 2017 to 2019, when it shuttered for a COVID-19 pandemic hiatus. Fitch and Plante re-opened the shop in 2021 for one more season before they decided to slow down and enjoy the time they had left together. Plante, diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in 2017, died in March 2024.

Fitch, who is the author of several books for

people of all ages, said she agreed to lend her property for this summer's event after speaking at a United for Literacy gala in the spring.

It was a gesture United for Literacy community co-ordinator, Rana El-Zoheiry, said the organization is grateful for.

"Everyone was thrilled to see the Dreamery come alive again with people, conversations



Camilla Thompson puts on a presentation to a group of children Aug. 17th at Mabel Murple's Book Shoppe and Dreamery. Photo by Sandy Sutherland

and storytelling," she said in an email.

At first, Fitch said she had no plans to show up to the day at all.

"I was like, I don't want to work, and I might not even attend it, but you can have the property," she said.

"But I started thinking about, what if it rained, and that the bookshop was there, and it would be a nice place for people if they wanted to get in, out of the rain."

So, Fitch went over to open up her bookshop for the first time in almost a year. She dusted and scrubbed the shelves, vacuumed, and looked through her unsold inventory.

The exercise motivated Fitch to take part in the event, a decision she said she doesn't regret.

"It was kind of like going back in time for me, like *deja vu*," she said.

"The perfect day of what I had envisioned

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Kids and Streaming TV Access

by J. Reid

Recently, I had a conversation with some parents about our kids' access to SCREENS and STREAMING CONTENT. It made me contemplate the consequences of modern kids' ease of access to screens and children's programming. It made me wonder if we are at the zenith or the nadir of children's entertainment. Most of all it made me wonder if I was doing right by my kids, regulating and minimizing their intake of online images instead of endorsing and validating their consumption as the way of the future. I know this is a topic many parents can relate to, and I don't profess to have any solid answers, but I do feel that it is an issue that needs to be acknowledged and evaluated regularly. By mentioning aspects of it here in this space I hope it helps further the conversation.

The rise of Netflix and Disney Plus and the like into entertainment juggernauts has been welcomed predominantly positively into society. Who doesn't love infinite choice, infinite Law and Order episodes and infinite distractions for busy toddlers who crave our attention endlessly? Nowadays, as parents become increasingly burnt out, for whatever reason, the pacifying pull of Netflix as a babysitter becomes ever stronger. It's perfect. It's easy. I get it. I'm guilty of it. I also fully understand that a screen as a babysitter isn't a new concept. It's been an available resource since television's inception in the 50s. The negative impacts of which, have been debated endlessly. However, now screens have changed. They've advanced. They're omnipresent and likewise the discourse around their effects has become increasingly dominant.

They've raised a lot of questions and debates. Good versus Bad - like any technological advancement, this ease of access can be viewed as the proverbial double-edged sword. Even if you're the kind of parent who tries your best not to just stick a screen in front of your kid whenever they get loud, the temptation to is there. It's always there. The goblin-or-zombie dilemma. How weird should I feel about that? What effect does this have on youth in the streaming age? How does it compare to the experiences of previous generations. How much is too much?

There are pros and cons with pretty much anything technological. Without going on too much about kids these days or pretending that mine is the first generation who had to learn how to parent, it does seem like the specificity of things small children can demand at any given moment nowadays is unprecedented in human history. That is to say that kids nowadays can basically watch whatever they want whenever they want, on demand.

I remember being a child and understanding that watching a show was considered "appointment viewing." At least then, demanding to watch a specific show at a specific time was technologically impossible. You had to make the time to be available to watch the thing you wanted to. You had to finish your chores. Your homework. You had to settle into a central spot and focus your attention on a stationary device, a TV. In short you had to work for it. And because of that I think you appreciated it more. That's not to say watching a lot of TV doesn't have negative consequences, I just think the "classical" process had developmental benefits that often

go overlooked. Watching a Paw Patrol episode on an iPad in a moving vehicle is effortless now, and because of that it lacks the same punch "appointment viewing" had, for better or for worse.

Good parents always want their kids to be happy, healthy and excel. This is an axiom I wholeheartedly believe. A truism. Making it a reality is a struggle as old as time. Parenting in any era is never easy, and always fraught with various obstacles. Inevitably, each generation of parents faces new hurdles that the previous generation of moms and dads never had to face. Am I now the parent who a generation ago banned his kid from watching the Simpsons because Bart was a bad influence? Just with the internet replacing Bart? As a parent you're constantly being reminded of the limits of your own control. You can either panic about it and pretend you're still the sole master of their destiny and then put them in home school or be hyper-vigilant about their consumption habits, or you can come to accept that, short of extraordinary intervention, (joining a cult, or moving them all to an off-grid cabin in the woods somewhere, say), your kids are inevitably going to be a product of whatever society they're born into, whether we like it or not. It's our job to help them navigate that. Is it worse for them to assimilate just as much as everyone else, or to be ostracized for being the only well-adjusted one in a crowd full of broccoli-headed zombies saying "bet" to each other during a video game?

Something to ponder. I still haven't quite worked it out for myself, but I'll keep you posted.

Mabel Murple.....

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Mabel Murple to be - families gathered under that oak tree."

One sight under the oak tree that day was children's author, Hilary Briar, with a box filled with copies of her book, called, appropriately enough, *The Old Oak Tree*.

Briar and Fitch go way back to the late 1980s, when Briar was an elementary school student, when Fitch came to speak at her school.

"I was in the very first row, sitting cross-legged with the other youngest kids, craning our necks up at this rather incredible woman dressed in colourful, possibly glittering clothes, with wild curls bouncing as she strode up and down the row of amazed children like a fairy general rallying the troops," Briar said in an email.

Almost 30 years later, Briar met Fitch again, this time at a Halifax books conference in 2017. Briar said she had heard Fitch was working to open a bookshop in River John and felt compelled to offer some help. Fitch accepted, and Briar spent a week in River

John to assist with final preparations before the shop opened.

Fitch remembers being at a loss for how to properly express her gratitude, to which she recalled Briar responding: "Sheree, you came to my class when I was five years old. I will never forget sitting there and looking at you."

She read Fitch some of her poetry, which Fitch encouraged her to publish.

"Seeing her with that book underneath the oak tree [at the event], it was just wonderful," Fitch said.

This full-circle moment brings Fitch to where she is now - off social media, working on a novel and feeling at peace with her decision to close the Dreamery chapter in her life.

"I think my job right now is recovery," Fitch said.

In the meantime, Plante's labyrinth is still maintained, and the property is available for any families who might want to find some refuge - or maybe a fairy. She just asks that visitors leave a donation for the River John Fire Department.

District 4 Municipal Election

by Mary Beth Sutherland

District 4 candidates were out campaigning in the lead up to the Oct. 19th election. They each spoke at the October meeting of the River John Community Action Society, giving presentations on what they have accomplished and thoughts for the future of District 4. Each gave a good presentation and were open to questions from those in attendance.

As electorate, we were able to vote from our electronic devices and via the telephone, a new concept for most, but some of us missed having a paper ballot.

The results were: Ronnie Baillie - 363 votes and Mary Wooldridge-Elliott - 237 votes.

Only 42.8% of voters in our district voted.

We now have a new councillor, Ronnie Baillie, our former councillor, having served from 1997-2020, including time as deputy warden and warden. We need to thank our immediate past councillor, Mary Wooldridge-Elliott, for the past four years she has given to us and the work she has done on our behalf, faithfully attending council and committee meetings during her time in office.

Habitat for Humanity's Second Pictou County Home is Underway

by Ed Kennedy

On June 26th the Pictou County Chapter and Habitat for Humanity Nova Scotia (HFHNS) broke ground for a new home on a lot donated by the Town of New Glasgow. The new owners of the home, Emily Perry, Zachary Izzard and their son Elijah, are a young family that needed a hand up to obtain a home of their own. Like other Habitat Partner Families, they did not qualify for a conventional mortgage, but have secure and steady employment and were able to commit to completing 500 hours of volunteer work with HFHNS. The major benefits that they obtained with Habitat home ownership include zero downpayment, an interest-free mortgage, and affordable monthly mortgage payments never exceeding 30% of their income.

All HFHNS home owners go through an application process to determine if they are eligible for the Habitat for Humanity program. Eligibility is based on their need for better housing, willingness to partner with Habitat, ability to pay an affordable mortgage, and gross annual household income. For many young families, home ownership is a dream. The need for affordable housing in Pictou County is exemplified by the level of interest in the Habitat home in New Glasgow. There were nearly 200 expressions of interest for this single home.

Thanks to the strong leadership of our construction supervisor, Dave Graham, the generous donation of funding, labour and



materials from partner organizations, and the hundreds of hours of volunteer help, the Pictou County Chapter can help meet the need for affordable housing. I am continually amazed at how volunteers, many of them with limited or no construction experience, are willing to pitch right in and take on tasks that they may have never tried before. Without exception, volunteers enjoy the Habitat building experience, and leave the construction site with smiles on their faces.

We are always looking for donors to help support Habitat home builds and welcome volunteers who would like to participate in the house construction. No previous construction experience is required, and Habitat provides all necessary tools and safety equipment, and provides onsite volunteer training and supervision. To donate or volunteer, go to the HFHNS website at <https://habitatns.ca>.

Ed Kennedy is the Chair of the Pictou County Chapter of Habitat for Humanity Nova Scotia

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River John Time Capsule Opening

by Cecile Heighton

Think way back twenty-five years to the Millennium 2000. River John had an enthusiastic group called the Year 2000 Club. Our club was few in numbers, but we could call on many community members to volunteer with fundraising events. A couple of examples of fundraising events were the Miss Teen Millennium Pageant, where Megan Caig was crowned Queen, and a delicious fundraising dinner featuring stuffed salmon drizzled with egg sauce, with Willis Langille as Head Chef.

The club was committed to raise enough money in 1999 to provide free monthly events and activities for the community during the Millennium Year. You might also remember some of those free events: River John's First Born Millennium Baby, Luc Daechart-Gauthier, who was presented with a few gifts; a present for a special mom on Mother's Day, given to Tammy Langille; something special for a dad on Father's Day; a magician show by David MacFarlane for all the children and adults; and the list went on - with one monthly gift or free event for the community throughout the year 2000.

The Millennium Year began with a huge New Year's Eve dance at the fire hall and a spectacular show of fireworks. And our biggest aspiration- the sealing of the River John Time Capsule, made by Jim MacLeod, which holds all the special somethings the people of River John placed in it for family or friend. The intent was to open the time capsule in twenty-five years on New Year's Day, 2025.

That time has almost arrived.

The club, now referred to as the Year 2000 Club-Rebooted, has plans underway to make the opening of our time capsule every bit as elaborate as when it was sealed.

We are fundraising to offset the cost of our planned Levee celebrations by selling T-shirts with the logo that was designed years ago by Colin Heighton. For this round of selling the T-shirts, we have altered the dates on the original logo to reflect the upcoming Opening of the Capsule Year, 2025, and when the capsule will be opened in twenty-five more years, 2050. They are available at the Overstreet Cafe and can also be found at the River John Motor Company. In addition, you can contact Cecile Heighton at 902 331 0340. The T-shirts cost \$15.00. Additionally, we are sending letters to local organizations and businesses requesting donations; any amount will be appreciated.

So, join us for the New Year's Day Levee 2025 from 12-7 p.m. at the Fire Hall. The official opening of the River John Time Capsule will be at 1 p.m. at which time individuals will receive their special something which was placed in the capsule twenty-five years ago. The band Derailed is already booked and will be playing from 2-6 p.m.

Historic videos from 1999-2000 Millennium events will be available to view. There will also be recognition of special guests that were involved in the planning, fundraising, participating and volunteering in the success of the Millennium Year of Celebrations. Finger food will be provided.

Fireworks will fill the sky at 6:30 p.m., followed by the re-sealing of the River John Time Capsule. So, bring something special for the capsule for your family or friend.

The capsule will be opened again in twenty-five years, New Year's Day, 2050. See you then to celebrate once again the opening of our River John Time Capsule.

Flu Season

by Rob Assets

We are now in the middle of cold and flu season. The Public Health Agency of Canada has a quick and efficient way of finding out what we're up against – they ask us. The program is called FluWatchers. I first heard about it from Derek Andrews. With the link below I registered. It was really fast. Since then, every Monday I get an email asking me two questions: "In the past week have you had a persistent cough?" and "In the past week have you had a fever?" That's it. It takes about 15 seconds to respond. What happens with the information provided? Public Health analyses the data and provides individuals and healthcare providers with a better understanding of respiratory health trends in their communities.

Whether you are feeling well or under the weather, your responses each week are incredibly valuable. The more community members agree to complete the 15 second survey, the better our understanding of what's out there.

To register, visit the following URL: <https://cnphi.canada.ca/fluWatcher/register> or use your browser and search for: Sign up to be a FluWatcher.

If you have any questions about being a flu watcher, you can email fluwatchers-actiongrippe@phac-aspc.gc.ca

IOOF Helping Hand Lodge #34 and Frazee Rebekah Lodge #33

by Jacob Leegwater

I am pleased to give an update on activities at our lodges.

On July 25th we hosted our annual breakfast for Festival Days with a good attendance. Breakfast consisted of ham and eggs, toast, bologna, juice and tea or coffee. We received many compliments on such a fine meal.

September saw lodges get back into the swing of things. The first item on the agenda for both lodges was the final time for nominations.

For the Oddfellows declared elected were: Noble Grand, Brother Willis Langille; Vice Grand, Sister Joanne Ferguson; Recording Secretary, Jacob Leegwater; Financial Secretary, Brother Steven Craib; Treasurer, Brother Rod Hayman.

At the installation of officers on October 21st by our District Deputy Grand Master Brother Terry Hovey, appointed officers were named: Warden, Brother Bob Dwyer; Conductor, Brother Dan Ferguson; Inside Guardian, Brother Terry Hovey; Right Supporter Noble Grand, Brother Earl Johnson; Left Supporter of Noble Grand, Brother Patrick Heighton; Right Supporter Vice Grand, Sister Sylvia Stewart; Left Supporter Vice Grand, Brian Emoff; Color Bearer, Brother Jamie Craig; Chaplain, Brother Peter Richardson.

Past District Deputy Sister Joanne Ferguson installed the officers of Frazee Rebekah Lodge: Noble Grand, Sister Annie Scott; Vice Grand, Brother Dan Ferguson; Recording Secretary, Greta Langille; Financial Secretary, Sister

Joanne Ferguson; Treasurer, Brother Peter Richardson. Appointed officers were Conductor, Sister Margaret Langille; Warden, Sister Marie Langille; Flag Bearer, Sister Chris Patterson; Inside Guardian, Sister Janet Baillie; Right Supporter of Noble Grand, Sister Sylvia Stewart; Right Supporter of Vice Grand, Brother Jacob Leegwater.

The Odd Fellows had a coat drive for gently used winter clothing from October 11th to November 16th. The Odd Fellows had an open house and an open meeting on November 18th to encourage members of the public who may feel inclined to join either organization.

Both Odd Fellows and Rebekahs provided funds for the Tatamagouche Regional Academy and Northumberland High School for their graduations.

Helping Hand Lodge also gave a gift card to one of our members for travel to and from Halifax for treatments.

Part of the Odd Fellows fellowship is to visit other lodges in the district. We attended Eastern Star Lodge #1 in Pictou on October 17th where some of our members assisted in conferring the initiatory degree on two new members. One joined Eastern Star, the other joined Scotia Lodge in Westville. On November 20th we were at Liberty #120 for our District #17 Fall district meeting. Reports on that will be noted in the next issue of the Pioneer.

We wish you all a Happy Holiday Season and look forward to opening the time capsule on New Year's Day.

The Trail Old Time Fiddlers Group

by Marjorie Fraser

We are The Trail Old Time Fiddlers and we meet on Tuesday afternoons at Toney River Community Hall.

Through the years, we have lost many of our talented members, and this year was no different.

On June 13th, we mourned the passing of Sally Jean Fiske, of Toney River, our keyboard player, who welcomed fiddlers and other players, into her home for many years. On June 21st, we lost a great banjo and fiddle player, Jim Craig.

Mona MacDonald, our organizer, keeps us up-to-date on what we should know.



Full house for the invigorating Trail Old Time Fiddlers concert July 23, 2024.

Photo: Chris Gill

River John Sidewalk

**by Mike Topley,
RJCAS Project Lead**

Our petition now stands at 554 signatures. All petitioners have confirmed the need for a sidewalk. We are a village divided by a highway with traffic that frequently pays little attention to much else except getting from one end to the other as quickly as possible. Traffic is essentially uncontrolled, with drivers operating large commercial fuel, salt, gravel, lumber, and construction vehicles often paying little attention to the posted speed limits.

Our bridge has walkways on both sides of it that go nowhere except to ragged shoulders unfit for safe walking. Pedestrians, cyclists, joggers, seniors, mothers with strollers, disabled persons on motorized wheelchairs, all take their life in their hands attempting to reach a church, the museum, the Lions' children's playground, a seniors' residence, or simply go for a walk. In summer, folks land their kayaks, pontoon boats, paddle boards and canoes at Roger's Landing, look up and down the road and wonder how to get a coffee or ice cream cone.

Planning for the current proposed alignment (from the bridge to Meh's store) began in 2021 with an invitation for Municipality of Pictou County (MOPC) Engineer and our (then) Area 4 Councillor, Mary Elliott, to visit for an inspection and needs assessment. Best alignment (on the churches side) was determined, and preliminary costs were estimated. A submission was made to Nova Scotia Department of Public Works and approval in principle was received in December, 2021.

Then it went to MOPC Council... and there it remains.

In November, 2023, representatives from MOPC were invited to update the River John Community Action Society (RJCAS) on a number of matters, including the proposed sidewalk. It was then we learned that the sidewalk hadn't even reached the list of possible projects, and in order to get on the list we should raise a petition to verify community interest.

So, we started a petition in January, 2024, and within only a few weeks we obtained over 280 signatures. The petition was then paused until July and then reinitiated to see if cottagers and summer residents were onside. They sure were. After another two months we have an additional 274 signatures, bringing our total signatures to 554.

At a recent RJCAS meeting we were told that the sidewalk had finally made the 5-year plan, only to then to learn that it could stay there forever or be dropped at any time. So, when chatting with your Councillor (now Ronnie Baillie), Warden, MLA, or MP, please remind them of the need for a sidewalk in River John.

Marjorie Johnson-Fraser's 90th Birthday

Many Thanks to all, including the children, who attended my 90th Birthday Celebrations at Toney River Community Hall, on Sat. June 15, 2024, from 1:30-4 pm. My official birth date is June 14th.

Guests attended from Prince George, B.C., Calgary, Sarnia, Halifax, Truro, Antigonish and local places.

Son Walter thanked everyone for coming and introduced musicians "River Run" including Myrna, Lynda, Harley, and Pam LeBlanc.

Daughter Heather, along with friends, attended to the food. Grandson Evan and Kourtnie took pictures through the afternoon. Sister Irene looked after the guest book.

Congratulatory messages were received from the following; Councillor Mary Elliott for District 4; Robert Parker, Warden of the Municipality of Pictou County; MLA Marco MacLeod; Tim Houston, Premier of N.S.; The Honourable Arthur J. LeBlanc, Lieutenant Governor of N.S.; The Honourable Sean Fraser M.P. Central Nova; The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada

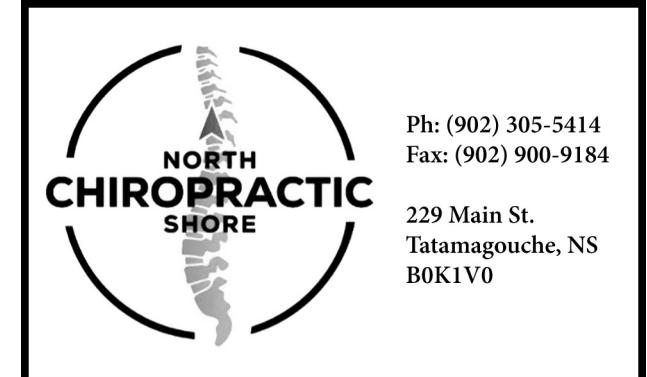


Mary surrounded by her daughter, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

and The Right Honourable Mary Simon, Governor General of Canada.

Others taking part - Mona MacDonald led in the singing of "Tribute to Marjorie, June 15, 2024" to the tune of "Song of the Mira". Leslie Searle sang "Red Is The Rose" which related to Marjorie. At this time, Marjorie told about her years in Elmfield, and attending Pictou Academy. St. David's Church choir with organist Myrna sang "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms." Rev. Enjei Archam spoke and ended with prayer.

Many thanks for the many, many cards and also pictures drawn by children.



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John Crichton

by Debby Shaw

During Festival Days 2024, I enjoyed The Lion's Club open mic at Bissell Park, and I listened to John Crichton for the first time. He didn't sing, because he told us he can't sing and play the way he used to, but John read us a song he had written. It was about River John, my new home, and it was just how I felt. John's talent and lyrical voice is seasoned from years of living in Scotland, British Columbia, Labrador City, and Nova Scotia; more specifically West Branch and now River John.

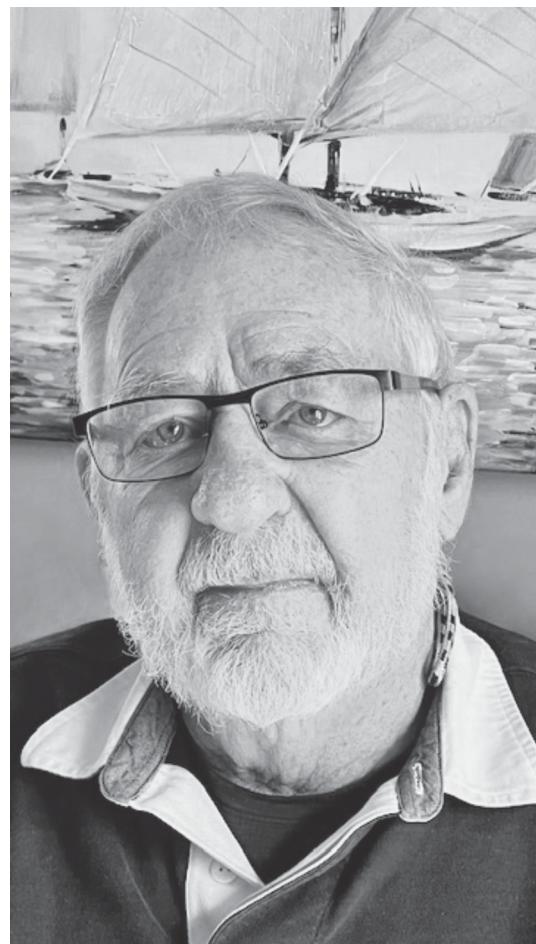
John was born in Douglas, Scotland, and came to Vancouver by sea with his father in 1957. He was 16. They lived there in a boarding house full of Scotsmen.

In his early years, John spent time in the Navy from 1958-64. He married and had three children. He worked in the iron ore mines while living in Labrador City; his children in fact, still live there. He and his wife, Fran, and the children, enjoyed the out-of-doors. As a family they cross-country skied. His only son downhill skied and was a technical coach for five of our Olympic teams.

John played guitar and when he had to give that up, took up the ukulele. He attended ukulele camp in Shelburne and has written about 100 or more songs. But he said only ten were good enough to be called songs. He has written five songs about River John.

I asked him if he had any stories he wanted to share. He told me he remembered when he was about four years old and out with his mother. They were walking near an aerodrome

when sirens went off and a German plane started firing on fake wooden planes that were there to confuse the enemy of the time. He also shared that he had written a song called "The Old Chalk Man." It is about a shell of a man who had PTSD from World War II. The man drew on the sidewalk and John and his friends would drag their feet through his coloured chalk drawings. These were a metaphor for the Chalk Man's despair. John's song was an apology to this veteran for the mistreatment he and his childhood friends had caused.



Separation Thoughts By John Crichton

I enjoy memories that make me smile
Vignettes that make life worthwhile
They are mere illusions I know
But I will never let them go
Whenever a situation is starting to unravel
All I have to do is exit from that battle
Focus on an image from the past
They're illusions I know, but I don't want them to go
I might see you strolling along the sand
Holding sea glass in your hand
Waving to me to show me what you found.

So many images like this,
The taste of your kiss
I smell your hair brushing my face
Feel the tremble in your embrace
They're only memories but they're all that I have
You were drifting away I could see that every day
We are now worlds apart,
And although it broke my heart,
I had to make this choice, even though you had no voice
We still have each other in a new reality
So the memories know, but I don't want to let it go

Bicentennial Church Services

by Mary Tothill

It has been 39 years since we held our first River John Festival Days church service (July 21, 1985) and River John's Bicentennial, two hundred years of Christian witness.

The church was filled to overflowing. Held at Salem United, host clergy, Reverend Doug Cameron, offered the Call to Worship and prayers. Representatives from all the village churches led in scripture: Mabel Langille, Eileen (Gratto) Langille, Reverend Don Sutherland and Sharleen Patriquin. A community choir under the direction of organist Marion Haliburton of Salem United sang "God guard our Canada" and "Answering Faithfulness."

Linda Thompson-Reid introduced the guest speaker, Reverend Donald Sutherland, and his message was based on "A good foundation builds for the Future."

The River John Junior Choir, led by Elizabeth Craig, sang the Bicentennial Song which was especially written by Margaret Cameron.

Other clergy who took part in the service were: Sister Julia Campbell (Stella Maris Church), Reverend David Garrett (St. John's Anglican Church) and Reverend Kenneth Stright (St. George's Presbyterian Church). The readers were representatives of the four founding families of River John.

Prayers were then led by members of each church, (Edith Roberts, Mary Monk, Tammy Forward and Charles Haliburton). Since then, some have passed away (Mabel, Eileen and Reverend Don). May their souls rest in peace.

Next year, 2025, will be the 40th anniversary of our Festival Days celebrations, starting as usual with the church service and ending with fireworks.

Saint George's Presbyterian Church

by Rev. Eniei Roni

Greetings to everyone in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving has come and gone, and I am grateful to be a member of this wonderful community. Here are the various dates and times for the activities for the rest of the year. May God's blessings and peace be with us all.

Bible Study:

The Book of Romans at St. David's Presbyterian Church, Toney River.
Every Wednesday at 2pm.

Church Services:

St David's Presbyterian Church, Toney River.
Every Sunday at 9.30 a.m.

St. George's Presbyterian Church, River John.
Every Sunday at 11 a.m.

Morning Coffee Hour:

Every Wednesday from 9.30 a.m. led by Earl Johnson at St. George's Church Hall.

Remembrance:

November 10 – Remembrance Sunday led by St. John's Anglican Church
November 11 – Remembrance Day

Advent Luncheon at St. George's Church Hall at 12 noon:

December 4: St. George's, Presbyterian Church leading worship.
December 11: Salem United Church leading worship
December 18: St. John's Anglican Church leading worship

December 24: Christmas Eve Services

St. George's Presbyterian Church – 5pm
St. David's Presbyterian Church – 6.30pm

Jim White (also a church warden) and Carol Smith continue to sing a few numbers before Sunday church services, and help organize the church's gospel singalongs, a service of music and Bible readings called "The Gospel According to Johnny Cash," and other musical events.

Many thanks go to Mary Tothill for arranging the Sunday Scripture reading roster, to Johanna Langille for taking care of the altar hangings, and to Faye Jefferson for her steadfast service as organist - she started at age 15!

St. John's people look forward to an ecumenical book study similar to that of last year; the announcement of a new priest-in-charge, and the November 10 visit to the parish from The Rt. Rev Sandra Fyfe, bishop of the Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.



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Church warden Dana Jefferson, with help from the church's good neighbour Donald MacGregor and others, have worked hard to clear the overgrown trees and shrubs along the edges of the churchyard - particularly at the brook - and to repair the cemetery.



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River John Thanks our First Responders

by Monica Graham

The sun shone brightly, the trees offered friendly shade, children scampered, elders chatted, and everyone cheered for the emergency workers who turned out Sunday, July 14, at Bissell Park for an outdoor service of gratitude and appreciation.

"This is a great idea," said River John Volunteer Fire Department Chief, Terry Heighton. It was the first time he'd participated in such an event and couldn't recall it ever happening before.

The brainchild of Rev. Enjei Achai, pastor of St. George's and St. David's Presbyterian churches in River John and Toney River, the event's purpose was to provide the community with an opportunity to give thanks for the work of the often-unsung heroes who help citizens in danger. Rev. Enjei also involved Salem United, St John the Baptist Anglican and St. Michael's Roman Catholic churches, all represented at the event.

As well as a strong showing from the volunteer Fire Department, representatives attended from NS Health emergency services, in the person of local paramedic Erica Heighton; Pictou County Volunteer Ground Search and Rescue members Charlie Strickland and Peggy Simpkin; RCMP Constable Ralpene Williams; and Canadian Coast Guard (Maritime) Auxiliary volunteers Sterling Heighton, his daughter Elizabeth Heighton, and Zone Director Allan Elliott.

Some of the honourees are employees of government agencies and others are volunteers, notably Rev. Connie MacNamara of Salem United Church, but all of them put



Sterling Heighton, Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary; Terry Heighton, River John Volunteer Fire Department; Erica Heighton, EHS Paramedic; Charles Strickland, Pictou County Volunteer Ground Search & Rescue; RCMP Constable Ralpene Williams
Photo: Rev. Connie McNamara.

their personal safety at risk to serve the people of their community.

A representative from each agency was invited to speak briefly about their work, each touching on the common themes of co-operation among the various services, and strong community support.

Several local residents also spoke, relaying moving stories about how their family members' lives had been saved, their property had been protected, and they had been treated with dignity and compassion – even in cases where one might be expected to be chastised for carelessness.

Each organization received a certificate that read, in part, "Thank you for your stellar

service to the village of River John and surrounding areas; your unwavering attention to the needs of our people following emergencies of all kinds; your contributions to the life and fabric of the community; and for being there when we need you. May God grant you strength, skill, perseverance and safety in your work. We keep you in our prayers."

The ceremony ended with a prayer, followed by cake and other refreshments served from the Lions Clubhouse, music by Carol Smith and Jim White (AKA The Church Mice), information handouts from participating agencies, tours of the fire truck and the Coast Guard rescue raft and gear; enthusiastic conversation throughout, and - not least - RCMP Const. Williams' instructions to children for making balloon animals.

Thanks go to Foodland in Tatamagouche, Tim Hortons in Pictou, the River John Lions Club, The River John Community Action Society, the Recreation Department summer students, and all who participated.



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Developing A Wildflower Meadow

by Barbara Young

Gardens and meadows are sculpted by their surroundings, and within them, nature is shaped by the hands and hearts of gardeners. Japanese gardens grow from aesthetic and spiritual principles, for instance, while early cottage gardens were practical places where food, herbs, pigs, and chickens outnumbered flowers.

When we built our small home on Cape John, the half-acre down to the road formed a blank gardening slate. Right away, I imagined a haphazard meadow of grasses and wildflowers, swaying fragrantly in the Westerly breezes.

Knowing that clover was good for the soil, I sowed red clover and wildflower mix the very first year. The clover grew waist-high but there was no trace of a wildflower. I forgot my breezy dream for a few years, and the meadow filled up with dense goldenrod, Queen Ann's lace, vetch, sow-thistle, ground ivy, buttercups, bindweed, lupins and of course the ubiquitous dandelion.

Seen through children's eyes, these plants are beautiful. I have fond memories of hours spent making dandelion crowns with friends and gathering bouquets of goldenrod and Queen Anne's lace for the dinner table. Seen through adult eyes, imagining a wildflower meadow, they were invasive and weedy, choking out diversity. Tossing wildflower mix blithely into the thicket of meadow bullies was clearly not an option, so what to do? Occultate!

Occultation is a process of covering patches of land with a tarp or landscape fabric, for long enough to stifle underlying root systems and seeds.

We started by scything three dense patches of intractable goldenrod and Queen Anne's lace. Tarps were laid and weighted in late summer and left until spring, so the root systems beneath would weaken, and seeds would sprout and wither. That first year we had no idea how much weight the tarps would need to keep them down over the winter, and if it hadn't been for a kind relative who went out in the freezing cold to add more logs when we were away, they would have blown to Skinner's Cove.

We lifted the tarps in late May that first year, dug out anything that had survived, applied a thin layer of compost, and seeded with an Atlantic wildflower mix from Halifax Seed.

The result was a breathtaking burst of colour and texture, with poppies, coreopsis, bachelor's buttons, baby's breath and black-

eyed Susans abounding.

The second year, perennials and biennials joined the vibrant array - daisies, foxgloves, mallow, wallflowers, coneflowers and sweet William, blossoming and fading in waves.

Now in its third year, the tougher perennials have begun to dominate, so they will be transplanted and thinned. The spaces thus created will receive the gathered seeds and seedlings of other favourite plants.

The meadow has become a living, evolving canvas, alive with bees, spiders, butterflies (including monarchs) and countless other creatures. We pull the weeds, but never get them all. We clear around plants that need air and light, but only when there's time. We spread seed from the beauties we want to encourage, knowing that much will be eaten by birds and mice.

We just tarped another patch in an area clogged with bindweed, so let's see what springtime reveals. The haphazard meadow adventure continues.



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

I hope you all enjoy the months ahead.

#HERETOHELP



The West Branch Singers led by Heather Mulholland spreading light and joy at Salem United Church on October 27th
Photo Credit: Rev. Connie McNamara

River John & District Lions Club

by Cheryl Frizzell

What a great time the Lions Club has had since the last issue. Musicians from Halifax, Truro, Durham, West Branch and River John join for a jam session that rocks the club house every Wednesday night, entertaining music lovers. Donald Duggan never dreamt that he could bring this many musicians together each week for such a time.

The River John & District Lions Club handed out 3 bursaries to Northumberland Regional High, Tatamagouche Regional Academy and Pictou Academy High School to students residing in River John area.

Anyone visiting the Lions Children's Park would have noticed the fence has been repaired, a new swing has been added and new pea gravel has been spread around. You may even have been fortunate enough to have received a free hot dog & beverage during Festival Days.

The Annual Chicken BBQ was another success, as was the Pancake & Sausage Breakfast during Festival Days. Lions Club members were very happy to open up our building to other non-profit organizations for breakfast and other events during the summer. Lion Anne and Lion Cheryl held the annual tie-dyeing on the Lions' deck festival week.

The River John & District Lions Club would like to thank the various organizations that



All hands on deck for the again very successful Lions Club chicken dinner.

used our building during the summer for showing respect for our club and members by leaving it clean and tidy after each event.

Lion Cheryl with the help of fellow Lions members started a monthly breakfast which will be held the last Sunday of each month. There will be a draw for a free breakfast each month, last month's winner was William Cripps.

Lion Cheryl invited Gillian Crawford, of Lismore Sheep Farm, to teach a beginner felting course, which went over very well.

In November, Lions members will help the River John Legion with the selling of poppies at Walmart in New Glasgow.

Our club will be starting to organize the Annual Free Christmas Dinner soon. Early morning on December 25th you will find the Lions cooking and preparing a hot turkey dinner, to be delivered to homes by club members; these are free of charge and the only pay is a "Merry Christmas" to the delivery drivers. We served approximately 100 dinners last year; the numbers seem to be growing each year. There are no qualifications for the dinner, just a wish for a great dinner delivered to you by someone who cares.

Our members give their time freely to serve the community of the River John area, helping out anyone in need.



Busy hands crafted this delightful, felted squirrel.

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River John & District Lions Cubs

By Lion Cheryl Frizzell

Lions International in Chicago has started a new program where the youth of our community can join the Lions Organization. Our club has had a few young people who have helped us out in the past with small tasks (moving picnic tables, roadside clean-up, etc.). Now we can let these young members of our community get more involved with the Lions Club, learning how the Lions Organization started and what role we play in the community. The Lions Organization is a non-political, non-religious organization welcoming youth under the guidance of its members, giving them an opportunity to volunteer in their community. Members involved with the Lions Cub program have undergone the RCMP Vulnerable Check. Since this is new to our club, we are inviting youth 8 years and up to join. We are not babysitters.

In May, the River John & District Lions Club welcomed our first Lion Cubs, Vanessa Brown, Jaden Brown, and Braden Babin. These Lion Cubs worked alongside our members on various events and projects. In November, they hope to do their first fundraiser with proceeds going to a charity of their choice. There will always be a Lions Club member working along side these youths when they are representing the River John & District Lions Club. Their main focus is



The very first Lion Cubs Jaden Brown, Vanessa Brown and Braden Babin.

volunteering in our community. Meetings are the 1st Monday of each month 6:30 - 7:30 pm. We do not tolerate disrespectful behaviour.

Contact Cheryl Frizzell 902-324-2695, Brian Charette 204-299-5778

Why I Joined the Lions Club

by Lion Cheryl Frizzell

I joined the River John & District Lions Club to meet other people in the community. I very quickly learned that the Lions do a lot for the community and have been active for 55 years in the area. They quite often work behind the scenes, filling requests for help or assistance from the community. Members work together raising funds in various ways for so many causes, doing all this because they care.

All monies raised go back to the community in so many different ways. I have been involved in numerous other organizations but never have I been involved in one that gives 100% back to the community.

For all that the members do, they may not receive a pay cheque, but they get the feeling of helping out. That is the biggest pay cheque ever.

The Lions Club does not judge on political or religious beliefs; each member is treated equally, and we all play a role in the club's daily business.

We all try to do a Random Act of Kindness each day.



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What's up at the River John Library?

by Trecia Schell and Helen Chudley

Summertime 2024 was a busy year, with lots of participation in our Children's Summer Reading Program. Every Friday morning, a space-themed craft was created, and the grand prize winner was 5-year-old Maverick Falconer from River John. The Big Summer Book Club for adults was also very popular again this year, with many great book reading suggestions shared.

Abby Falconer, our Technology Intern for the summer, hosted many creative workshops weekly through June, July, and August, exploring all the technology offered in River John library's Makerspace, including a scavenger hunt for metal detectorists. Yes, that's true - we now have a metal detector available for borrowing from the library (with your PARL library card), along with 3 ukuleles, an audio recorder, a telescope, and more.

This fall, we began the season in September with three workshops for adults with Mandy Sandbach, of SOULfully Soil, on sauerkraut fermenting, how to make your own kombucha,

and how to extend the growing season.

In January, we hope to offer a few more homesteading-related workshops. Stay tuned for more details, coming soon. Our recurring programs also returned, the weekly stitching circle on Friday mornings at 10 a.m. with the River John Square Knitters and the monthly book clubs that meet on the 1st Thursday at 6 p.m. (Young Readers), and 3rd Tuesday at 4 p.m. (Book Club). The weekly drop-in Children's Play Time on Wednesday mornings from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and LEGO Time on Friday afternoons from 2-5 p.m. also resumed.

In October, we celebrated National Library Month, and Mi'kmaq History Month, with book displays filled with interesting titles, Thanksgiving crafts, and painted pumpkins for Halloween. Children were invited to visit the library, (in costume if they wished), to drop by during Halloween week and pick up a new book and Halloween treat, courtesy of the Adopt-a-Library Literacy Program.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20



5-year-old Maverick Falconer from River John was this year's grand prize winner of the River John Library's Children's Summer Reading Program.

The Demise of the Santa Lawn Decoration

by Joan MacLeod

My father, a local merchant, purchased a large paper poster of Santa Claus sometime in the 60s. It was from the Douglas Fir Company, to promote plywood. It was not from Coca Cola, as I initially thought. Dad pasted this poster on a thin sheet of plywood and used a jigsaw to cut it out. It was also varnished to make it weatherproof. It was then erected to stand in the front lawn of our house every Christmas season from the 60s onwards. But, over the years it fell into disuse because after my father passed, my mother began spending winters in Florida.

When I returned home from the UK in 1993, I found Santa Claus tucked into a corner of the

basement. I touched up his boots with tole paint and put another coat of varnish on him. Sandy Murphy, a local handyman, attached him to a big thick stake which could be driven into the ground before it froze. This ensured Santa remained upright and did not fall over. We then shone a spotlight in him. Thereafter, on the first Saturday of December, Sandy would turn up at my house to put up "Santy." He enjoyed the task.

However, in December 2003, Sandy put him up but the very next day he was gone. He had been stolen out of our yard. I have never seen Sandy so angry. He was fuming mad. He even put up a notice in the post office.

We later found Santa in the woods next to the

Pioneer Cemetery, but he had been decapitated and his head burned off. Do you think there may have been some disaffected youth who did not get what they wanted for Christmas and took it out on poor Santa? What an irony that a person who had so little would take such pride in the Christmas ritual, while (possibly) privileged youth destroyed the symbol. There must still be people in the village who know who was behind this prank. And there are also those who knew Sandy Murphy, a local character.

Sadly, for several years, each December, people would telephone to ask if they could buy him. He must have been somewhat of a symbol of the upcoming Christmas for several generations of people.



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Fiddlers of River John and Area

by Jim MacLeod

This account was researched and presented to Let's Talk at the Heritage Museum by Jack and Jim MacLeod, on July 25, 2018.

Music was always an important part of life, but especially in the early days, before television and modern technology took over.

Dances were held on a regular basis in all the old halls, and house parties were frequent and lots of fun. Every household had at least one aspiring musician, usually self-taught, for family entertainment, and the fiddle was king.

One of the first bands of whom we know was Jack and Bessie Sillers, with Fred Brown on



Fiddlers 1960, Wallace MacNabb with his guitar, Donnie Craig with his banjo and Sidney MacLeod with his fiddle certainly knew how to have fun and entertain everyone within earshot.

the autoharp. Heckie MacKay, along with David and other family members and friends, played many dances. Sidney MacLeod played with Donnie Craig and Wallace MacNabb, accompanied by various pianists.

Gordie Douglas and wife Annie played at West Branch, MacBains Corner and a good many house parties in Denmark and River John.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18



Florence Sellers Killam accompanied by two unknown young musicians.

Local Women Rugby Stars

by Linda Thompson-Reid

Congratulations to Brooke and Sam Reid, members of the Acadia Women's Rugby Team! The Axewomen's Rugby Team captured the AUS Women's Rugby Championship, defeating the StFX University women's team 29-25.

Close to 1000 fans attended the championship game at the StFX stadium. The scoring was opened by Acadia with an unconverted try. The X-Women scored a try at the 21-minute mark. Acadia turned on and scored three tries to end the first half. Brooke Reid, who plays the 8 man position, scored a try for Acadia to increase their lead to 17-5. X-Women's Katie Murphy kicked a penalty goal to take a 25-24 lead. Brooke took a pass from her sister, Sam, who also plays the flanker position and made the final score for Acadia on the final possession of the game. Brooke's try clinched a 29-25 victory for the Axewomen. The Acadia Axewomen secured a spot for the 2024 Cavendish Farms USPORTS National Women's Rugby Championship at UPEI.



Sam (on the left) is in her first year at Acadia University and Brooke is in her third year. They are the daughters of Kevin and Sherry Reid of River John. Congratulations to both girls on a hard-fought and exciting AUS championship game.

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W.A. Gunn

by Beulah Wright

William Alexander Gunn, commonly known as Willie, was born on January 11, 1895, on a farm on the Gunn Road. His father, Hugh Alexander Gunn, had been born in West River, Pictou County, of Scottish parents, Donald and Catherine (Macdonald) Gunn, but sometime before the 1871 census the family had settled on a farm in Welsford. No doubt the road was named for them. Willie was still living there with his parents in the 1911 census and later, inherited the property.

When war broke out in 1914, Willie enlisted. He was meticulous in keeping records and logbooks, and during the war, that was his area of expertise - keeping records for the forces. He was one of the lucky ones who survived and returned to his parents and to the farm. He married Elsie Langille, and they had three children, Donald William, Irving, and Nita.

Perhaps, in appreciation of the fact that he returned safely, Willie set out to "give back" to his community and his first thought was for the veterans of two wars. He was instrumental in establishing a Royal Canadian Legion in River John, and when it was founded, he became the first president. This Legion Hall was built in 1954. In those days, the number of veterans on Remembrance Day was great, and when they marched from the Legion Hall to the village churches, it was a mighty crowd. For years, the service was led by Willie Gunn, and he performed his duty well, reading off the roll. Somehow, his voice was suited to the task, strong, sombre, and proud.



The soldiers: W.A. Gunn, standing on the left, with unknown comrades.

It was not only the Legion that benefitted from his dedication. He became a councilor for the west side of River John and once he was elected, no one else ran against him in succeeding elections. He was a "people person" and worked to help everyone who needed assistance, and he was well liked in the community. He was either a Commissioner of Oaths, or a Justice of the Peace, so whenever

there were legal papers to be signed or witnessed, Willie was the man. He was a good negotiator and solved many problems for the folks who called upon him. He helped to get street lights for River John, and secured garbage pickup for the community; whenever a village or town meeting was called, he was sure to be in the forefront. He was intensely interested in politics.

After suffering some personal reverses, Willie had to leave the farm, from where he had brought up his family and moved to what had been the Loyal Orange Lodge Hall, in Welsford. The building required some renovations to make it into a residence. After he retired from farming, he developed his talent for woodworking, turning out many handcrafted items, made to order for his customers.

In retirement, he enjoyed a bit of traveling, mainly visiting relatives in California and western Canada. He toured Scotland, finding where his ancestors had lived and visiting the site of the Gunn Castle in Caithness. In 1968, his wife Elsie passed away. He later remarried Bernice Elderkin. His grandson Bob, who owned the Orange Hall, now lives in that house, and after his grandfather passed away, he donated all the Lodge regalia which was left there to the head Orange Lodge, for preservation.

William A. Gunn passed away in 1977 and is buried in Bellevue Cemetery, near where his parents and grandparents are resting. His was a life well-lived.

Fiddlers

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

Many fiddlers played more than one instrument and were most willing to fill in on stage to give the band a break at dances.

Sandy MacKenzie played at dances and house parties in Melville and the Back Shore area and he also played the bagpipes.

Norman Johnson owned a dance hall just outside the village. Dances were held in the Town Hall, which was near Salem United Church. The Odd Fellows Hall was another popular spot for many dances.

At the house parties, someone was always available to move the furniture out of the parlour or the living room, to clear the floor for the dancers. The children were sent off to bed but often were able to creep down for an upstairs view of their family having fun. Jim MacLeod used the register in the floor to watch what was going on and hear the music, which would continue into the early morning hours. Many of the youngsters started playing early and would perform on stage at a young age.

And there were the instruments themselves, lovingly played for years and passed down to future generations. There was a black man

from the Caribbean who jumped ship in River John and hid in the hills, apparently preferring dry land to the rolling sea. He built himself a crude shack up the Mountain Road, which was dubbed Fiddler's Hill. He not only played the fiddle but built many fine fiddles. His name was Fred Crawley and he lived out his life in River John until the age of 82. He was buried in Bellevue cemetery.

He was not the only local player who made fiddles. Sandy MacKenzie's nephew, John MacKenzie of Skinners Cove, made 27 fiddles, one viola and one bass fiddle. Jim Craig owns one of his fiddles and Jim and his wife Nancy bought his stand-up bass. Alvin Heighton of Cape John made six fiddles, (four of which he gave away,) also two guitars and two mandolins.

Raymond MacDonald and his wife Marlene have been a part of the fiddling scene for many years. They play for fundraising and old-time dances at Toney River, and at jam sessions and wherever they are called. Raymond leads a group called the Toney River Fiddlers, which has included: Johnnie Henderson, Jackie MacLeod, Alvin Heighton, Murray MacKenzie, Nancy Langille, Jim and Nancy Craig, Gerald Sutherland and many others from River John. Raymond also organized a fiddle contest in River John for Festival Days. It attracted fiddlers and fans from all over Canada, went on for years and is now greatly

missed. Another group from the Toney River Area is the Thursday Night Fiddlers, who play on Festival Days, at Seniors Homes, and for their own enjoyment.

Here are names of some of the River John and area people who would play the fiddle and other instruments, many of them self-taught: Hector MacKay, Sidney MacLeod (self-taught on the fiddle and other instruments), Jackie MacLeod, David MacKay, Johnnie Gratto, Johnnie Langille, Aubrey Langille, Sandy MacKenzie, Edna Wilson, Bill Brown, Alvin Heighton, Florence Sellers Killam (played fiddle and piano, accompanied many famous fiddlers and also wrote music), Harry Bigney, Jim MacDonald, Percy Langille, Frenchy Haliburton (played piano in his ice cream parlour and later played for dances in the Hall), Geoff Hunter (trained in classical violin, also wrote music and taught violin), Raymond and Marlene MacDonald (Toney River Fiddlers, Fiddle Contest and also wrote fiddle music), Johnnie Henderson, Seafoam and Toney River, Jim and Nancy Craig, Edgar Craig, Donnie Craig, Murray "Two Fingers" Harris, Major Sandy Baillie, James Isaac Langille, Robert Mitchell, Bruce MacNabb, Wallace MacNabb, John MacKenzie, Blaine Brown, Myron Mingo, and Gerald Sutherland, with whom Jim MacLeod played for many years.

Royal Canadian Legion's Gathering Event: A Remembrance of Fallen Soldiers from the Afghanistan War

**by M. B. Sutherland,
Branch Chaplain**

The Afghanistan war was the most significant operation for the Canadian Armed Forces in two generations. Along with our NATO allies, we conducted combat operations in Kandahar, and air and naval patrols in the Persian Gulf region.

Unusual in Canadian history, the governing and opposition parties were working in unison to support the war, and equipping our soldiers in theatre, as effectively as possible. For 5 years, Canada alone was responsible for security in Afghanistan's most volatile region, punching far above our weight. Our efforts, second only to the USA, gained us an immeasurable amount of respect from our fellow NATO nations. Canada was the only country with tanks in the field, our pilots were the most daring, our snipers the best in the world, our infantry incredibly courageous. Besides having been very well prepared, (some even read the Koran,) all our soldiers brought their uniquely Canadian values into the field. They were intuitively sensitive to the needs of the Afghan people, often making lifelong friends.

Canada lost 159 soldiers and 4 civilians in Afghanistan. Three times that number returned with physical wounds and countless more with psychological trauma. Over 200 Canadian veterans have committed suicide since their return home from the war.

On Sunday, June 16, 2024, the Royal Canadian Legion (RCL) Branch 108, River John, NS, hosted a Gathering for families of fallen Nova Scotia soldiers from Canada's involvement in the war.

RCL member Mike McIntyre reached out to all the affected Nova Scotia families. Of the 19 families invited, families or representatives of 15 soldiers attended.

The program commenced at noon with greetings from Branch 108 President Mike Topley, followed by RCL NS Nunavut Command Don McCumber and Zone Commander Lorne MacDonald. NS-Nunavut Zone Commander Charles MacIsaac also attended.

The guest speaker was the Hon. Peter MacKay, former Minister of National Defence during the Afghan conflict, who had personally connected with these families' suffering through these terrible times. He had travelled numerous times to Afghanistan, meeting soldiers, working to somehow improve their lives. He reminded us of the successes of our soldiers by building and protecting schools to ensure that girls could attend school. Canadians brought stability to Afghanistan by enforcing peace, that sadly dwindled, once our soldiers left.

David McIntyre composed the music and played the guitar, while singing "One Thousand Men are Walking," written by 14-

year-old Joshua Dyer of the U.K. Piper Harley White then played Amazing Grace on the bagpipes. Our Legion members prepared a meal served by 596 Phoenix Squadron Cadets from Tatamagouche.

After the meal, Mike McIntyre presented a slide show of photos of these veterans to the background music "Hometown Battlefield" by JP Cormier.

More than 40,000 Canadians served in Afghanistan in the over 12 years of Canadian presence. To this day, family members convey how difficult is the loss of a child to war and how hurtful it is to then have people comment casually "Why were they there, what good did it do?"

The appreciation of the mutual support, the understanding of the pain and grief, provided by the other afflicted families was clearly voiced. One family noted that the Afghan Conflict should be known as war, as that is what it was.

Many of the mothers present wore their Silver Cross Medals and several fathers had their Cross pins on. We are familiar with seeing one, but to see a dozen plus at once was a stark reminder of the sacrifices of those in the room.

Closing remarks were given by Mike McIntyre, followed by singing "God Save the King." The afternoon gave full meaning to the sacrifices made by the service members and their families, when they chose to serve their country. What an honour it was to spend time with these families and learn more about their "children" and the ultimate price that they paid. We must always remember those who return sound in body, but suffer from PTSD and how it affects their families. Many need more help than they have been receiving.

So, remember to thank a veteran and their family.

News from River John Legion, Branch 108

by Mike Topley, President

This year marks 75 years since Branch 108 received its charter. This was recognized at our Remembrance Day ceremonies which will have come and gone by the time the Pioneer reaches you. Many thanks go out to Norma Fox and her committee for all their Remembrance Day work and to all who made donations for wreaths, crosses, and poppies. Also, thanks to Anne Patriquin, Marilyn Heighton, and their committee for the remembrance banners you see along the main roads in River John.

Other than Remembrance Day, the two most substantial recent Legion events of note are well reported elsewhere in this Pioneer. The first being our Gathering event which honoured the parents and families of Nova Scotia soldiers who died during Canada's involvement in the war in Afghanistan, and the second being the grand opening of the new pickleball courts, a joint venture of the River John Pickleball Club and the River John Legion.

Fortunately, hurricane season has passed and we didn't require comfort centre services, but we remind everyone that the Legion is fully registered with MOPC Department of Emergency Services as a comfort centre, and our new generator is ready and waiting. Our community is lucky to have three registered comfort centres and plans are underway to coordinate the services of the Legion, the Fire Hall, and the Food Bank.

The Recreation Committee's Meals on Wheels program has re-started and will operate out of our kitchen. Community volunteers deliver some 40 hot meals every Tuesday under the care and control of Melanie Cote and her team.

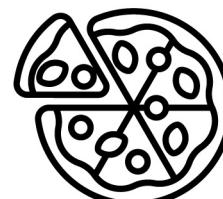
Other regular activities at the Legion through the week include the Kids First program every Monday morning at 10 a.m.; Line dancing lessons every Monday afternoon at 1:30 p.m.; Washer toss starting at 1 p.m. on the 2nd Saturday of every month; and Cribbage starting at 1 p.m. on the 3rd Saturday of every month.

New regular Legion drop-in hours include every Thursday evening from 6-8 p.m. Come out for cards, music or maybe just a drink with friends.

And don't forget our Karaoke every Saturday night starting at 8 p.m. Doors are open at 7 p.m. and singers have a selection of over 1500 songs to choose from.

Our Legion hall can be booked for community events by calling Maureen at 902 351 2261.

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The Gammon Brothers Stagecoach

Originally printed in the
Winter 2014 issue of the Pioneer

by Chris Giles

*A true story,
told as a fictional conversation,
with the fictional Joshua Miller,
age 90, in 1964.*

"I remember when I was ten years old, sitting on the old wooden bridge across the River John most Saturday nights in the summer of 1884. I liked this spot because I could wave to all the people I knew as they came into River John on horses, wagons, and walking. Saturday night everything was open; barbershops, blacksmiths, Burke House hotel, Kitchin's hardware store. Everyone wanted to meet their friends, get a few chores done and get home before dark. What I loved best was to listen for the thunder of the Gammons' stagecoach as it rolled into River John and pulled up to Burke House. Four horses made quite a noise, especially harnessed to that loaded stagecoach. It was called a Concord Coach, windows covered with tarnished moose or deer hide, with three benches for eight passengers inside and space for four, counting the driver and postboy, on top. As passengers were allowed up to twenty pounds, there was a lot of luggage tied to the outside and filling up all the spaces inside. I would run to the hotel to see the strangers as they unloaded to rest for the night. Women in fancy hats, their wide skirts, with a bustle up the back, short waistline and all curvy like. The men were just as interesting, in their tight, coloured suits, bow ties, wingtip collars and all manner of hats. I usually followed the horses to Burke's Barn, where they were stabled. If I was lucky, I might get a penny for



currying and feeding the horses. Candy! The six o'clock stage from Truro had taken ten hours to get here. I heard the driver, Chester Gammon, say that it was a good run, except for a tree that had fallen across the trail. All the men had to work together to move it. But a ten-hour trip was fast!

"Coaching" was never a happy experience. Sometimes the stagecoach went right through a forest fire, scorching the men's whiskers and terrifying all. In winter, passengers had to help shovel snow, and in the spring and fall, help push the stagecoach through the mud. Although stops were frequent, the halfway stop was Earltown, where the horses were changed, and passengers got off for a stretch and maybe a meal at the Post House. The stable there had about twenty horses, due to the fact that the stagecoach to Tatamagouche also went through Earltown. Our newspaper,

The Pioneer, started in 1879, would print the twice-weekly stagecoach schedule for the summer. Arrive: Saturday evening and spend Sunday here; Monday round trip to Pictou; Tuesday back to Truro, then out from

Truro again on Wednesdays and Saturdays. I got to see the stagecoach four times a week. Will Gammon owned our stagecoach and made his money from moving goods and mail, as well as passengers. The cost of a trip from Truro to River John was about three dollars. That was two days' pay for my grandpa, who was a sailmaker. That much money would feed and clothe me for a month. It was only the rich people that travelled far in those days. The only other ways to travel were to buy a horse and buggy that might cost half-a-year's wages or to walk to Truro and take days. Work had already started here on another way to travel... the railroad, but that's another story."

River John Library

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

The Regional Library has partnered with the folks with the Pictou County Christmas Fund; registration forms for assistance from the Christmas Fund may be picked up at, and returned to, the library up until November 29, 2024.

For November, we will be making a Remembrance Day suncatcher craft on Saturday, November 8, at 3 p.m., and we will offer a special drop-in crafts day for a school in-service day for elementary school students on Friday, November 22. The annual Write to Santa campaign begins in late November, (and he will write back!). We will collect the letters at the library until December 6, and mail them for you. The library also has several letter templates, if you wish to write your letter with one of the templates provided.

The library's annual Gift-a-Book campaign launches November 12. More details coming soon to the library's website; drop on by the library to see the displays. November is also

National Novel Writing Month, NaNoWriMo, and we invite all writers to Come Write In, to work on their 50,000-word projects. We have comfy chairs, tables, free Wi-Fi, public computers, a printer, and lots of great research resources too.

In December, to start the festive holiday season, Gillian Crawford, from the Lismore Sheep Farm, will be doing a Christmas ornament felting workshop for adults on Tuesday, December 3rd at 6 p.m. Registration is required, as seating is limited, and supplies are provided. We will have drop-in Christmas crafts for children on Saturdays at 11 a.m. on December 7, 14 and 21. Please note, the library will close early at 12 p.m. on Christmas Eve, December 24 and New Year's Eve, December 31. The library will be closed on Christmas Day, December 25, Boxing Day, December 26, and New Year's Day, January 1.

Library programming and services suggestions are welcome; please let us know if you have something to share. For more information on all our upcoming library programs and services, please call (902) 351-2599, email riverjohn@parl.ns.ca, or drop by the River

River Raft

by Mary Beth Sutherland

Jim MacDonald grew up in the house in which Harold and Shirley Winmill now live, on River Road. Living next door were Sidney and Ruth MacLeod and family. Their son Jackie was a great friend of Jim's and the boys spent a lot of time together growing up.

As was common practice for the youth back then, they made their own entertainment. Some of this enjoyment came from tinkering with things. One outcome was a raft that Jim MacDonald built under the knowledgeable guidance of his father, a River John ship builder. Jim crafted this raft in winter to use in spring and summer right here on the John River.

He used his feet to paddle the wheel to give it momentum. It was so well-thought-out that it even had bushings on the shaft of the paddle wheel to reduce the wear on it. The hand paddles were used as a rudder to steer. For all the carefree time Jim spent on the river he had to be careful when the tide was changing and going out as there wasn't much control - but Jim was always in control. When other duties called for his attention, Jim's raft would be tied up in front of his parents' house, and not at the village wharf, so that no-one might "borrow" it without his consent.

In the picture, you can see the spring ice float by. It must have still been quite chilly.

Jim MacLeod noted that American tourists driving through the village would see Jim on the river on his raft and stop to take photos of the unusual mode of transportation. It was a sight to see for sure.

Information and photo supplied by Jim MacLeod (Jackie MacLeod's brother)



John library - we are open Tuesdays through to Saturdays. You can also follow us on Twitter, find us on Facebook, and visit us online at www.parl.ns.ca.

River John Public Library Open Hours:

Tuesdays: 12 - 8 p.m.
Wednesdays: 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. & 2 - 5 p.m.
Thursdays: 12 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Fridays: 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. & 2 - 5 p.m.
Saturdays: 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Trecia Schell, is the Community Services Librarian for Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library and Helen Chudley is the Managing Branch Assistant, River John Library

West Branch and Area Community Association

by Reg Crewe

Hi from West Branch as we transition from a beautiful summer and fall to winter. We will soon complete our first series of West Branch Wednesdays with funds received from Seniors' Support and Connect Fund and these have been a huge success. The feedback from attendees has been very positive. It provided an opportunity for speakers on a wide range of topics, a chance to get together and socialize and share a meal. Topics included gardening, internet fraud, pharmacy, foot-care, bird/wildlife habitat, fermentation, local history and more. These helped provide social connection and hopefully reduce isolation for our community members. We hope to continue the WB Wednesdays in the new year. Our Fall Supper was held on October 26th and was a great success.

We are part of the Pictou County Net-Zero Community Buildings Project for 21 community halls in the county. The project has been approved and funds have been received to upgrade hall infrastructure, insulation, electrical and heating systems to replace fossil fueled systems and install solar panels which should eliminate the hall's electrical expenses. The funding is through the provincial Efficiency NS Green Energy plan. We are currently upgrading/replacing the roofing nails to screws so the roof will be tight under the solar panels, when installed. Electrical upgrades and insulation should start by the year's end or early next year with panel installation shortly after.

We are currently applying for funding to add a new accessible ramp, front door, and entrance porch to the hall. This will make the entrance up-to-code with an accessible ramp and entrance door in a new room, providing a roof overhead for people entering the hall,



Jim White and Elizabeth Bezanson (among many others) worked hard behind the scenes to serve 116 dinners to just as many community members who went home very happy and satisfied from the Fall Supper on October 26th.

especially when there is a line-up for functions in inclement or cold weather. It will also provide a barrier from the cold weather.

The residents of West Branch held a reunion for all current and past residents of the community this summer. The event was well-attended, and future reunions are planned.

The hall is fully accessible and available to any interested community member and/or groups. We seat 60 people and have a fully equipped kitchen. We would like to extend a warm welcome to all newcomers to the area and encourage anyone that would like to participate or contribute to the West Branch and Area Community Association to contact one of the board members. We appreciate any help anyone has for the betterment of our community.

The hall is available for private events, anniversaries, birthdays, celebrations, or meetings. Please call for details, 902-351-2260 or simply message us through our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/groups/623698718509101/ or email: westbranchcommunityhall@gmail.com.

River John Square Knitters

by Netta Heukshorst

Our knitting needles and crochet hooks have been busy as usual.

As mentioned in previous articles, postage is now very expensive, therefore, not as many knitted squares are being mailed out, so we sew some squares together ourselves into lapghans to be donated locally.

In May, eight lovely lapghans were donated to the Pictou Dialysis Unit for the clients' comfort and warmth as they receive their treatment.

In October, four were given to the Truro Hospice Society, and as they become available more will be given to our local palliative care unit at the Lillian Fraser Memorial Hospital in Tatamagouche.

In April, eight bundles of sixty squares each were mailed to South Africa where they are sewn together for AIDS orphans and other vulnerable little children. Five were mailed in June, three in September and two bundles were sent in October.

The knitters attended several local markets this past summer, selling boutique items to raise postage money, including the Seafoam/Melville market and Caribou; we were also knitting at the Lismore Sheep Farm and the Country Bread Basket on June 8th as part of Worldwide Knit in Public Day.

During River John Festival Week we were invited to Lismore Farm to demonstrate knitting and crochet, and to sell some items. That week we also attended the Night Market at the Old River John School.

As always, we have pretty dishcloths, also aprons, for sale at Overstreet Cafe, the River John Library, the Post Office and the Country Bread Basket in Brule. All monies raised are greatly appreciated.

You can find us each Friday morning at the River John library from 10 a.m. until 12 noon. Drop in for a visit, enjoy a coffee and treat and learn about what we do.

Smile, knit and always be kind to one another.

Letter to the Editor

by Wilma van der Veen

In response to Letter to the Editor by Jack Reid in the Spring 2024 issue of the Pioneer, who in turn referenced an article written by the editor in the fall 2023 Issue.

I want to commend the person who attended what appeared to be their first march in support of a social issue. Most people simply talk and complain, rarely actually taking action. If you believe strongly enough in something, talking about it isn't going to bring about social change; taking action is required. Prior to taking action, undertaking a deep dive into the various perspectives surrounding the issue is key. Now I don't agree with the cause of the march this person attended but I do support this person expressing their beliefs via a march. I simply question the foundation of the information they used to make their belief choice.

We are seeing once again a call for parental rights. Parental rights are not being revoked. What about the rights of the child? Amongst others, they have a right to privacy and to free expression. The child has a right to the parent's guidance and support, and the parent has a duty to offer that guidance and support. This is entrenched in international law through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Parents are supposed to have the 'talk' with their children about 'the birds and the bees'; that would be fine if all parents actually did this. There is research to show that the 'don't tell' mentality doesn't work, and can actually realize harm. The obligation of a parent is to provide their offspring with as much knowledge as possible so that they can make informed decisions about their bodies, and to provide them with a safe space to explore and express their sexuality & gender.

Sexual health education has been a part of provincial curricula for decades, and parents continue to be informed about when and what sexual health education will be provided to their children. The Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) program - one of the stated targets of the protests - is a) not sexual health education, and b) not a mandatory educational program or curriculum in any Canadian province. Rather, SOGI is a resource for school districts and educators providing policies, procedures, and teaching materials to ensure that students of all genders and sexual orientations have a safe learning environment. These resources provide age-appropriate ways to answer questions that children might have about gender expression, sexual orientation and changing vocabulary to be inclusive and respectful. They can provide lessons around gender stereotypes, bullying, and the harm that people can face when they challenge gender expectations. Importantly, parents can choose to remove their children from class when sexual health education is being provided.

So why is there a controversy? The parent's right to information about their child, specifically their child's gender, and their right to determine whether and how their child

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Are All Those Kids Local?

by Chris Gill

"Are all those kids local? D'ye know any of them?" an elderly gentleman asked me after the Children's Parade on Festival Days.

Hmm, well yes, I do know quite a few by sight, some by name and some I am even related to. But what got me thinking more was the implied question of "do we really have that many children living in our community?"

Now, of course I don't have any hard numbers regarding that, but yes, we do have an ever-increasing number of young families with deep River John roots living here. And, as well, young families have moved here deliberately. We even have young families visiting here year after year and coming regularly to our Monday playgroup at the Legion. This way all the youngsters can form lasting, strong, friendships, while nurturing this sense of belonging. They can make River John their true home and those "come from aways" can enjoy River John as their home away from home.

But what is it like to be a mother, father, grandparent, or caregiver of a very young child or two or more, in this rural area? For a while it was very lonely, it seems. Two mothers were so isolated that they didn't even realize for a year that they were both young moms of babies about the same age, even though they lived on adjacent properties.

Another young mom didn't want to just suffer through this isolation, so, while chatting with acquaintances and friends on their walks, she decided to start a playgroup in River John. To enhance her and her daughter's experience, Grace ventured over to the Kids First Association group in Pictou, where she connected so well with the group that they now host a Kids First Association group at our Legion every Monday morning from 10:00-11:30 a.m. There is lots of space for the kids to run around, yell, play by themselves or with other kiddos, snuggle and eat and drink a delicious lunch prepared by loving staff (often under the expert guidance of Renée).



Literally a 3-second snapshot of a situation that does not happen by itself at the KidsFirst Monday playgroup at the River John Legion from 10:00 – 11:30 a.m. Thank you, moms and your offsprings for playing along with me.

Meanwhile the (mostly) moms enjoy being able to chat away, discuss questions that come up inevitably, or just savour the moments they are not the centre of attention.

Each time that I, an outsider to the group, walk in to talk with the people, I get this instant feeling of warmth and welcome. As winter is fast approaching and the yard is becoming less of a choice playground, why not come and see for yourself with your youngster(s) and enjoy some wonderful socializing? I am sure you and your littl'uns will have tons of fun. River John Legion, Monday mornings 10:00-11:30. Come in and find out just how great it is.

By the way, yes, we definitely do have many, absolutely darling, youngsters in our River John community; just look at the turnouts at the Children's Parade, all the Festival Days activities, Halloween, Christmas Tree lighting, Santa coming to town, the Easter Bunny and so many more activities - we have kids galore lighting up all our lives.

Have a wonderfully lit winter season.

www.sunsetbeachcottages.com



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Reid

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Letter to the Editor

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

expresses that gender, is being enshrined and privileged by politicians in a way that overrides the child's right to privacy and the right to explore and express that gender on their own terms. According to research by the Canadian Anti-Hate Network, parental rights mobilizations have coincided with the rise in anti-2SLGBTQIA+ policies and platforms of the federal Conservative Party, and provincial Conservative parties in Saskatchewan & New Brunswick. In Canada we have Action4Canada, FamilyFreedom, and Hands Off Our Kids. (Check out www.antihate.ca/1_million_march_4_children.) They are seeking an end to inclusive curriculum and restricting the use of chosen names and pronouns in schools. These groups and politicians are,

spreading misinformation, disinformation and fearmongering.

Social movements calling for rights for particular population groups are not new. There is ample evidence of the ongoing epidemic of violence against women and children and violence against 2SLGBTQIA+. Are we to return to the time when we turned a blind eye to violence that was happening in the home? For too many, the home is not a safe space. For example, too many still consider being gay or lesbian or trans an abomination, and we know 2SLGBTQIA+ youth are at a significantly higher risk of suicide than their peers. Parental rights policies put children in danger of being outed to parents before they're ready. These children need protection from their parents and other non-accepting family members.

Book Review: LaHave Bakery

by Beulah Wright

There is a new Nova Scotian book on the shelves which is a delight to read.

West Branch authors, Jane Morrigan and Susan Ivany have recently written the book, "LaHave Bakery, the Building, the Baker and the Recipes that Revitalized a Community," published by Nimbus Publishing Ltd.

It is the story, first of a deteriorating building, in danger of falling into the river, and then of its rescue and renovation by Jane's sister, Gael Watson, who had a vision of how the building could be restored and made a spot for the production and the presentation of the delicious bread that her customers quickly learned to appreciate.

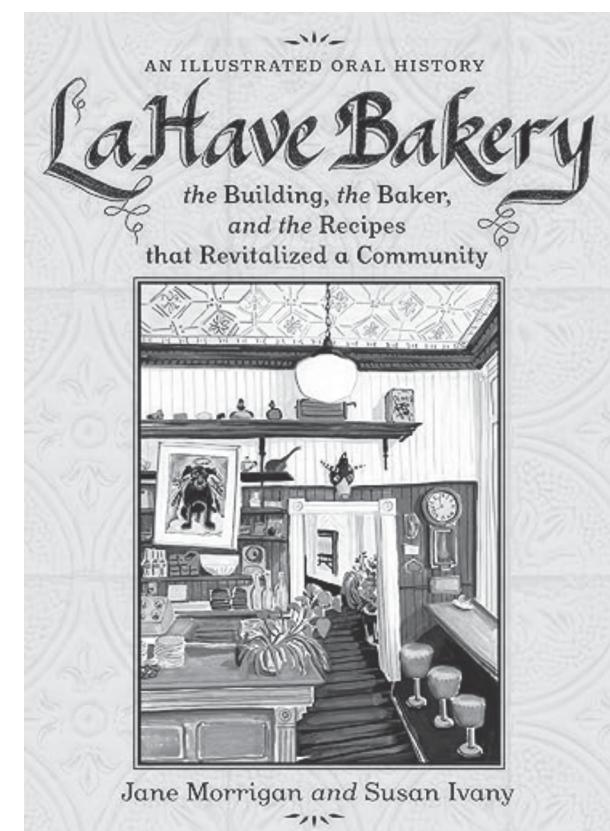
The building, which changed hands through the years, was mainly known as the LaHave Outfitting Company and was vital to the many LaHave fishermen for salt and other supplies, for over 80 years, and there is so much history of that period and that way of life. Gael Watson was a baker and sold her bread from her house, and when the building came up for sale, she bought it and began the needed repairs to make it into what she knew it could be, a bakery and so much more.

The story is told by Gael and friends who worked with her and contributed to the bakery's success; it is riveting, and shows what one person can accomplish with hard work and determination. Not only is it a success story for Gael herself, but for the community as well.

Besides the many photos, there are also a few of the recipes for breads and sweets that have been best-sellers at the LaHave Bakery.

The amazing number of people attending the launching of the book, is a testament to the fame of the LaHave Bakery.

LaHave Bakery: Jane Morrigan & Susan Ivany. Nimbus Publishing Ltd.





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River John Community Action Society

P.O. Box 161, River John, NS B0K 1N0

The Pioneer is published three times a year, and is produced by volunteers. It is distributed throughout the River John area, including West Branch.

Mission Statement: The Pioneer community newspaper's mission is to be a voice for River John and area. We report on current and historic events and news, while being mindful of the fact that River John is situated on the unceded land of the Mi'kmaw people.

We reserve the right to edit letters and articles for clarity and brevity. We reserve the right to refuse to print letters. Profanity will not be tolerated.

Please follow the guidelines below when submitting items for publication:

- Maximum of 1200 words per article and 450 words per obituary.
- Articles and photos should be submitted together at the same time.
- Articles in plain text, MSWord format (.doc, .docx, or .odt) and photos in .jpg format.
- Author's name should be included below the title of the article.
- Captions for photos should be added below the article.
- Do not embed photos and images into the text document.
- We usually limit the number of photos to 1 or 2 per article, so please do not be offended if you send more and they are not published.
- Please check for accuracy and spelling, particularly names.
- All content should be emailed to: rjpioneer.story@gmail.com.

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Editorial - The Inside Story

by Joan MacLeod

The production of every issue of the Pioneer is different and they all present challenges.

A year ago, we decided to change printing companies because the local printers had increased the cost of the previous issue by 40% without notice. We researched and found that Saltwire Printing would print the paper for us, in St. John's NL, for about half the cost, including shipping. So naturally we chose them. They printed fall 2023, and spring and summer 2024 issues. However, we soon found out that cheaper is not always better. Firstly, two of the shipments arrived unfolded, so we had folding and bundling parties. This was kind of fun and went quickly with all of us working together. Shipping was an issue as well, and the summer issue was about two weeks late because Saltwire had difficulties with shipping. This had repercussions for ads and events which were time-sensitive. And they just did not seem able to deliver the paper to the correct address.

Since then, Saltwire has been purchased by Postmedia and now contracts out its printing.

In our search for a new printing company, we discovered that Advocate is the only printer of community papers on newsprint in the Maritimes.

It is a sad commentary on the situation, in the province that brought you freedom of the press courtesy of Joseph Howe, that our largest paper, the Chronicle Herald, is managed from Postmedia in Toronto. Postmedia is a much larger conglomerate, with headquarters in New Jersey. Even one of its award-winning cartoonists, Michael de Adder, lost his job recently, as did the popular columnist Ralph Surette.

Having said all this, we are returning to Advocate printing for this issue and we are very glad that they still provide this service, despite the increased cost.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Pioneer and the 14th issue that I have edited. I took the reins in 2020 and I do feel proud of the team we have built to create this small community paper which celebrates the people and events of River John. This is also my last as I have resigned from this position. Other people will be able to take the Pioneer further and better. I am grateful for this opportunity to take on the job for which there was a steep learning curve.

I wish to thank Rob Assets and Lesley Longhorn who had the original inspiration; River John Community Action Society who supported us financially; all the people who have worked on the Pioneer throughout the past ten years; our advertisers; our contributors and our readers. Thank you everyone from the bottom of my heart.

DID YOU KNOW...

...that we will send The Pioneer to your friends and family anywhere in Canada when you purchase a year's subscription for only \$22.50. What a great gift!

That's 3 issues, and that includes postage.

For more information, contact Melanie at pioneerpayments2000@gmail.com

Obituaries

Nicholas Alexander Gunn 1975-2024

It is with overwhelming sadness that the family of Nick Gunn shares the devastating news of his unexpected passing, at home, on August 1st, 2024. Born in Manchester, England, on April 20th, 1975, Nick was the beloved and only son of Pam and Dave Gunn and for over twenty years, the soul mate and best friend of Michelle Foster. There are not enough words to describe this kind, hardworking, loving and amazing man. A true gentleman in every sense, Nick had a love for computers and technology from an early age. This led him to Edinburgh University where he studied and excelled in computer science. He met Michelle, the love of his life, in 2004. After working in the UK for 14 years, Nick and Michelle moved to Nova Scotia in 2011, beginning a new chapter in their lives. Nick started Scotia



Systems and soon became the “go-to” IT guy. Committed to learning, he developed his skills constantly, keeping up with the rapid and ever-changing technology in his field. This ensured his clients (personal and business), received only the very best from him. Ever accommodating, his generosity in sharing his expertise with his clients included a regular, informative column in the Tatamagouche Light. He answered questions patiently and his workload was busy. He was called upon days, and often nights, for computer “emergencies”. A well-respected professional, his reliability and calm demeanour helped alleviate the stress of many a distraught client who knew his persistence would save the day. There were very few problems

he couldn't solve. Nick's artistic skills were evident in his photography, the many websites and graphics he designed over the years, and in his passion for Lego.

When not on call, Nick enjoyed working on his beautiful property, especially happy on his tractor. He loved cooking on the BBQ, no matter what the weather. In the winter he curled at the rink, and in the summer, he enjoyed being in the garden with Michelle, building and expanding their vegetable and flower gardens. He loved his family, including the fur babies, fiercely, and would do anything for them.

Nick leaves behind the love of his life, Michelle Foster; his loving parents, Dave and Pam Gunn; mother-in-law, Rosemary Foster, and brother-in-law Richard Foster, as well as many other family members and close friends, who will also miss him terribly. Nick's death is a great loss that will be deeply felt by the entire community he served so well.

A Celebration of Life was held at the North Shore Recreation Centre in Tatamagouche on Saturday, August 10th. Many came and remembered Nick and shared stories they have of him. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the North Shore Recreation Centre, Tatamagouche Fire Department or to the Colchester Branch SPCA. Arrangements for Nick were entrusted to the care of Coulter's Funeral Home, 48 Riverside Drive, Tatamagouche.

It is with profound sadness and broken hearts that we announce the sudden passing of Chase Heighton, River John, on September 12, 2024.

Chase was born on July 7, 2009, to Travis Heighton and Amanda Rushton. In Chase's younger years he loved playing hockey with the Pictou County Crushers. He started fishing at a young age and grew to love the water, and sailing around with his Dad and Grampie.

Chase had a beautiful, charismatic smile that made it hard to stay mad at him for very long. He was an avid gamer, a terrible barterer and couldn't hold onto a phone for more than a few days without breaking or losing it. Chase was feisty, strong headed and loved to have fun. He was known by his friends as “Boom Boom”.

Chase is survived by his parents, Travis, River

Chase Heighton 2009-2024



John; Amanda, New Glasgow; sisters, Jorja and Ella; paternal grandparents, Marilyn and Keith Heighton, River John; maternal grandparents, Robert Rushton (Wanda), Fox Brook; aunts, Erica Heighton, River John; Morgan Rondelet, Truro; uncle, Rob Rushton, New Glasgow; best friend, Konner Gower (Big Bro) and many cousins and friends.

He was predeceased by maternal grandmother, Lynn Marcott (Rondelet).

Funeral was held on Wednesday, September 18, 2024, at 3p.m. at St. George's Presbyterian Church, River John. Reception followed at the River John Fire Hall.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Chase's name can be made to the IWK, River John Fire Department or a charity of your choice.

Card of Thanks for Chase Heighton

There really are no words to express our thanks for the outpouring of love and support shown to us during the most heartbreak and difficult time of our lives.

A mere thank you seems inadequate, but we would like to extend our sincere appreciation to all our family and friends who sent cards, brought food, gave donations, messaged and prayed for us. Your kindness and caring will be cherished and remembered forever and a day.

To Amy Fraser, James Brown, the River John Fire Department, Tabatha Keating (DJ) and all the people and businesses who donated and anyone else behind the scenes. Thank you so much for putting on an overwhelming successful fundraising benefit. Also thank you to everyone who came out to the auction and dance, to those who couldn't come but sent support and anyone we may have missed. Please accept our deepest gratitude.

The generosity and kindness from this community and beyond will have a place in our hearts forever, right beside Chase.

The Heighton/Rushton Family

Annual Christmas Tree Lighting in the Village

Mark your calendars for November 24th for the annual Christmas tree lighting, hosted by the River John Community Action Society. This festive event will take place in Bissell Park, and everyone is welcome to join in the celebration. Enjoy hot chocolate and cookies to warm you up, while the Lions Den generously provides free hot dogs for all attendees. To add to the festive spirit, there will be entertainment on the veranda, promising an evening filled with joy and cheer. Don't miss this wonderful opportunity to connect with your neighbours and kick off the holiday season together. We look forward to seeing you there.



Obituaries

James MacGregor "Jim" Craig 1939-2024

James MacGregor Craig – 84 of Pictou, passed away in Tatamagouche Hospital on June 30, 2024. Born at home in Cape John December 9, 1939, he was the eldest son of the late Donald and Sadie Craig. On the Cape he spent the first five years of his life, surrounded by family, including his two sets of grandparents.

Memories of this time remained with him throughout his life. From Cape John he moved into "the village" where life-long friendships were made. He attended school in River John and Tatamagouche and later went on to trade school in Springhill. Then, as a sheet metal worker, he did his apprenticeship in Toronto before returning to River John to start his own business, which he operated into his eighties. In his



youth, Jim enjoyed hockey on "the river" and became a member of the River John Trail Blazers Hockey Team. He loved the game and, over the years, has remained a loyal Toronto Maple Leafs fan. Any free time he had was dedicated to his passion for music. Jim played several instruments, but his heart and soul

belonged to the banjo. He was known by some as "Banjo Jim." This love of music led him into various bluegrass bands, as well as fiddle groups. His wife, Nancy, was also part of these groups as their stand-up bass player. Bluegrass festivals around the Maritimes became a regular summertime event. However, their favourite gig was performing for the residents of local nursing homes. Over the years, Jim has belonged to several organizations, including Lions, Masons and Shriners. He just

recently received his 25-year jewel from the IOOF.

Family ties were important to Jim and those ties were many. At various times throughout his life, he has appeared in a photograph containing five generations of his family members. Jim is survived by his wife Nancy (Giberson); his daughter Pamela (Darrell) Snow, his son Paul (Janet), stepdaughter Karen Tait-Wight; grandchildren Liam (Jane), Brad, Jenna (Steve) and Aaron; step grandchildren Lucas (Bri) and Baillie (Zach); great granddaughters Perrie and Audrey; special aunt Kathleen Baillie; brothers Brian (Maurita) and Sandy (Alice); sisters Irma (Murray) LeGrow, Liz Murray, and Heather (Sandy) Peddie; sister-in-law Betty Craig and Nancy's brothers Perley, Michael and Greg. Besides his parents, Jim was predeceased by his brother Douglas, brother-in-law David Murray and nephew Trevor Murray.

Funeral service was held Thursday, July 4 at Salem United Church, River John with Reverend Connie McNamara officiating. Following interment in Hamilton Cemetery, a reception was held in the River John Fire Hall.

Helen Ann (MacDonald) Dolan June 15, 1942 - August 26, 2024

It is with great sadness that we announce the sudden and peaceful, unexpected passing of our mother, Helen Ann Dolan, in her little house by the sea on Skinner's Cove, Nova Scotia. Predeceased by her husband, Gerald Thomas Dolan; her brother, Fred MacDonald; and nephew, Ian; she leaves behind to mourn her children, Martin, Helena (Dave Copp), William (Libby Hopkinson), and Katherine (Matt Schram); She also leaves behind her beautiful grandchildren, Victoria, Elizabeth, Charlotte and Henry; and her special friend and neighbour, Ed Smith. Born on June 15, 1942 in Halifax, NS, Ann was the eldest child born to the late Dora Helena (Legere) and the late Dr. Joseph Baxter MacDonald. Ann was one of seven children and leaves behind her siblings, Paul (Brenda), Chris (Regan), Marion, Jim (Sandra) and Bill (Charlotte); sister-in-law, Evelyn; along with many cousins, nieces and nephews. Ann spent her childhood in River Hebert and Stellarton, before heading to St. FX where she

studied social work. She then moved to Ontario to achieve her MSW, and it was here that she met her husband, Gerry, and settled for over 30 years in Caledon Village to raise their four children. Ann started her career with the Children's Aid Society of both Peel and Wellington before settling in at the University of Guelph as a Therapist with Student and Counselling Services. Ann absolutely adored everything about her job, especially her co-workers. After retirement, Ann and Gerry returned to Pictou County, where they spent their final years exactly where they wanted to be - surrounded by the warmth and comfort of the Maritimes, especially the kind people of the community of River John.

A service to honour the life of Ann took place on Friday, August 30 at McLaren Funeral Home Chapel, 246 Faulkland Street, Pictou. A reception followed at St. George's Presbyterian Church in River John. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to TASK (Tatamagouche and Area Service Klub), or the University of Guelph Alumni Association.

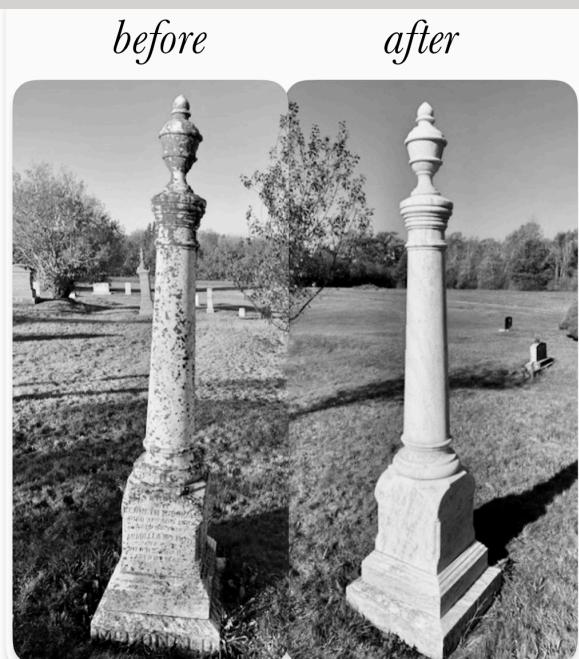


*Those we love don't go away
They walk beside us everyday
Unseen, unheard, but always near;
Still loved, still missed, and held so dear*

Bellevue and Hamilton Cemeteries

by Mary Beth Sutherland

Members of the Board of Directors of the Bellevue and Hamilton Cemeteries have arranged for some professional cleaning and restoration work on memorial stones. Some stones have fallen over and broken, and a few are becoming embedded in the lawn. We have already had a few cleaned professionally by Grant Fraser. If you have family members buried in either cemetery and would like to have extra attention to your family plots, contact Earl Johnson (902-351-2684) or Mary Beth Sutherland (902-351-3355). There is a cost to this, and estimates will be provided for those interested. Remember when you make a donation to these cemeteries you do receive a tax receipt.



The Little Harvesters

Guess what? A new group is in town, and they started Thursday, November 7th. 2024

When? Thursday 10 a.m. -12 p.m.

Where? St. George's Presbyterian Church Hall

Who? Potty-trained Pre-schoolers ages 3-5

Who not? Anyone older than pre-schoolers

But: The Little Harvester must be signed up for his/her regular meeting because space is limited.

Birth Announcement - Langille

Name: Toni Rain Shannon-Jay Langille

Born: March 25, 2024

Weight: 6 lbs

Mother: Elizabeth Langille, River John

Grandparents: Cynthia Bigney & Kenny Langille, River John

Great Grandparents: Barbara and Arnold Langille, River John

Toni is an extremely happy little boy, who was welcomed home by his loving big sister, Layla.



Birth Announcement - Howell

Name: Wynogene "Winnie" Mayola Margaret Howell

Born: September 23, 2024

Weight: 8lbs 12oz

Length: 21 inches

Parents: Julia Reid & Patrick Howell

Grandparents: Terry & Linda Reid, River John; Randy & Margaret Howell, Waterloo



Birth Announcement – Langille

Name: Serenity Aurora Dawn Langille

Born: June 26, 2024

Parents: Dustin and Sara Dawn Langille, River John

Grandparents: Kenny Langille and Cynthia Bigney, River John; Jimmy and Tammy Langille, Tatamagouche

Great-Grandparents: Arnie and Barb Langille, River John; Ownie and Mary Langille, River John. Dustin and Sara Dawn are very excited to be first time parents.



Graduation - O'Brien

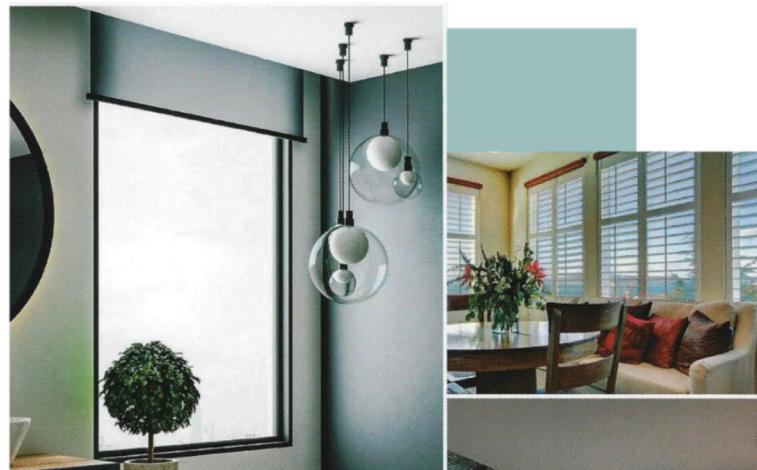
Congratulations to Demetria O'Brien, of West Branch on her recent graduation from the University of Prince Edward Island, with a Bachelor of Education degree. She also received the Eric Stanley Hollis Memorial Award. Demetria graduated, in 2023, from the University of PEI, with a Bachelor of Arts degree, Major in Sociology with First Class Standing. She currently holds a term position at Tatamagouche Regional Academy. Demetria is the daughter of Rose Bezanson and Kevin O'Brien, both of West Branch.



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Attention Woodlot Owners

Was your woodlot significantly impacted by Hurricane Fiona?

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Paul Gilbert 902-899-5066 or Ed MacLean 902-890-1939



Recipe: Suet Cakes for Birds

This recipe is one of many from the third and last edition of the RJ's Ladies Group cookbook, "River John, Nova Scotia, Favourite Recipes," compiled in 2007 as a fundraiser for the group. The recipe was submitted by Mary Tothill.

2 cups	chunky peanut butter	500 mL
2 cups	lard	500 mL
3/4 cup	sugar	175 mL
4 cups	cornmeal	1L
4 cups	quick oats	1L
2 cups	flour	500 mL
	raisins, cranberries	

- In a large pan, melt the peanut butter and lard together over medium heat.
- Add remaining ingredients. Stir well. Pour mixture into pan.
- Refrigerate.
- Cut into squares
- To hang up, poke a hole in each square and thread a piece of string through, or, when cool enough, form into balls and put them into netting from oranges or lemons, and hang them up.



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River John Festival Days

by Chelsey MacLean,
Co-Coordinator, RJ Festival Days

Come to Explore in 2024 was a real adventure. We are out-of-this-world excited to have had such a great week with all of you. We would like to take a moment to first thank all our volunteers and organizations who take part in planning and facilitating events each year. Your hard work and enthusiasm do not go unnoticed, and we appreciate you all. Without you, there would be nothing to attend.

Which brings me to all of you - our attendees. Each year, you show up eager to participate and take it all in. You are who we do it for.

Last, but certainly not least by any means - our sponsors. Wow! Our community businesses continue to blow us away with their financial contributions to our festival, allowing us to grow and offer more and more each year. Which segues me into the excitement of Festival Days 2025.



We are celebrating 240 years of River John this coming summer. We are hoping to bring back some of the old activities and events, and embrace some new ones, while also keeping the events that have been staples in the week-long line-up. With that in mind, we would love to hear from you. E-mail us, send a Facebook message or post on a Facebook post, some events you would like to see brought back, events you would like to see that you haven't before, and events you would be sad to see go. Also, while we know committee life isn't for everyone, if you would like to host or run an activity or event, let us know. While we are a small but mighty committee, we cannot do it all. Having people plan and facilitate events with the support of the committee is highly encouraged. No time like a 40th anniversary to get involved.

Thanks again from the bottom of my heart for all the support and enthusiasm you all bring to River John each year.



Margaret Barry – Pickleball Nova Scotia's Volunteer of the Year

RJPC's Margaret Barry was selected as Pickleball Nova Scotia's Volunteer of the Year for her hard work in bringing the great game of pickleball to River John and surrounding communities. After receiving that prestigious award, Margaret's name went forward to Sport Nova Scotia's annual award program and Margaret then received a Support4Sport Volunteer of the Year Award, for pickleball.

"I'm truly honoured to have been named the Volunteer of the Year for both Pickleball Nova Scotia and Support4Sport in the pickleball category, but I'd be remiss if I didn't acknowledge that this was far more than the

work of one person. The River John Pickleball Park wouldn't have come to fruition without RJPC President, Wade Taylor, in particular, as well as the hard work of our past and present Board of Directors, and many other volunteers, as well as our funders, sponsors and donors. So many people in the community have contributed to this project, and I wish to share these awards with all of them," Margaret says humbly.

Margaret is pictured here receiving her award from Pickleball Nova Scotia representatives Wayne Uhlman, Chair of the Volunteer of the Year Committee, and Donald Johnston, President. Donald is also an RJPC member.

