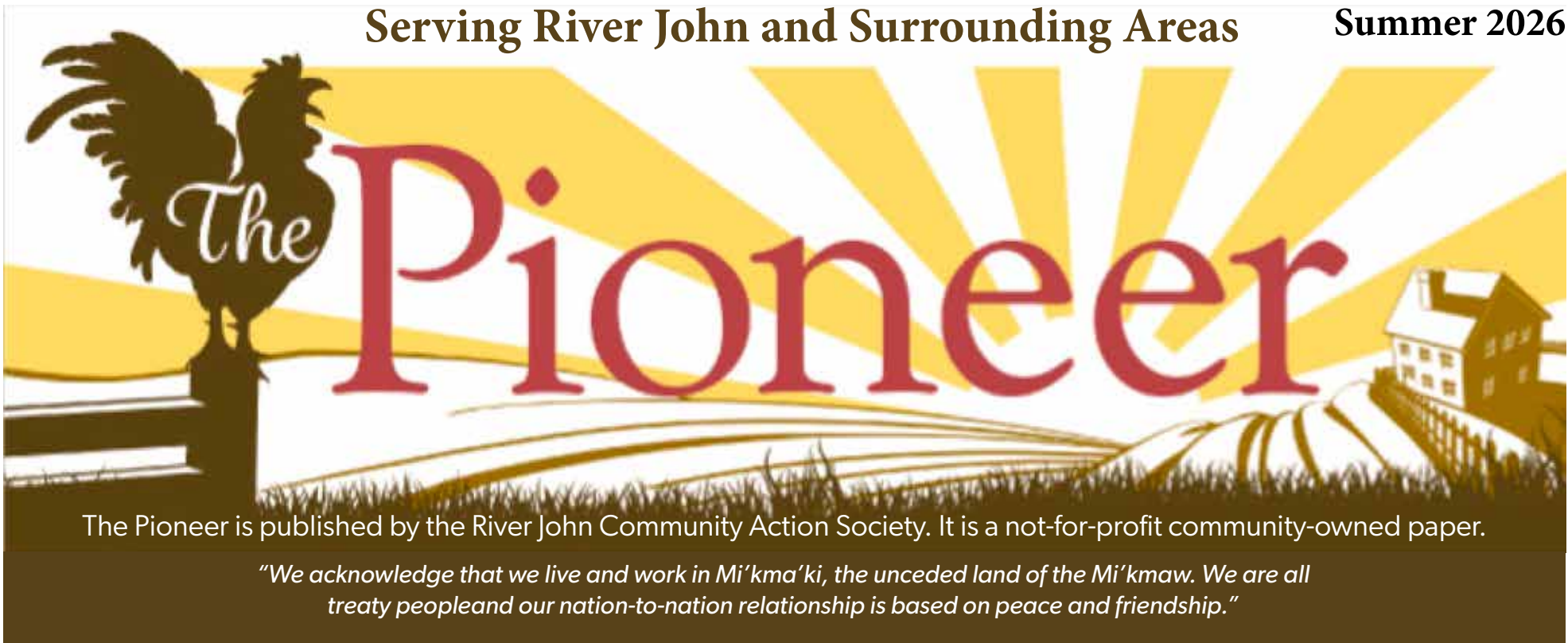




Government Cutbacks

By: Joan MacLeod

The Nova Scotia Provincial budget for 2026-2027 included a controversial \$130 Million reduction across more than 280 discretionary grants and \$250 Million in cuts to various civil society group programs and public services. Following massive public backlash, the provincial government partially reversed course by re-instating \$53.6 Million in funds for disability programs, seniors' services, and some education initiatives. Out of the 287 cuts, more than 70 were in the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage.

According to the Halifax Examiner, February 23, 2026, Nova Scotia's 1.2 billion deficit which Premier Houston uses to justify the massive cuts was partly created by reducing the HST by 1%, personal income tax changes, and taking the tolls off the Halifax bridge. These cuts deprive the province of \$472.4 Million a year. And our present government continues the colonial traditions of commoditizing natural resources (wood, water, gold etc.) and bypassing authentic engagement with the Mi'kmaq and public consultation. It is important to note that authentic engagement with the Mi'kmaq requires centring Indigenous voices, respecting the foundational Peace and Friendship Treaties, and ensuring mutual benefit.

So, how are these budget cuts affecting our local organizations? I spoke to the Legion, the Oddfellows, the Fire Department, the Library and River John Recreation Association. Some organizations are not-for-profits and rely on Provincial grants. Municipal grants, some through ratepayers, help defray some of the costs, for example, the costs of keeping the village cemeteries maintained. However, as a rule, it seems that there is less money available and everyone must make do with less and fundraise for the shortfall. It is ironic that these cuts are coming at a time when we are dealing with rising inflation. Everything costs more, yet we are expected to dig deeper to make up for the shortfall.

The River John Legion is permitted to apply to Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command every other year for funding for capital works. Central Command receives \$100,000 from the Provincial Government which is divided up

among the 100 branches. Our Legion's furnace failed over the winter and the cost to replace it with a propane furnace is \$13,000. Between Central Command and the Municipal grant, there is still a shortfall of over \$3,000, which the branch must make up with fundraising. At press time, we do not know if the Province will continue the same level of grant money next year.

The Oddfellows applied for a Municipal grant of \$1000 for building maintenance. They received \$700 and will fundraise for the remainder.

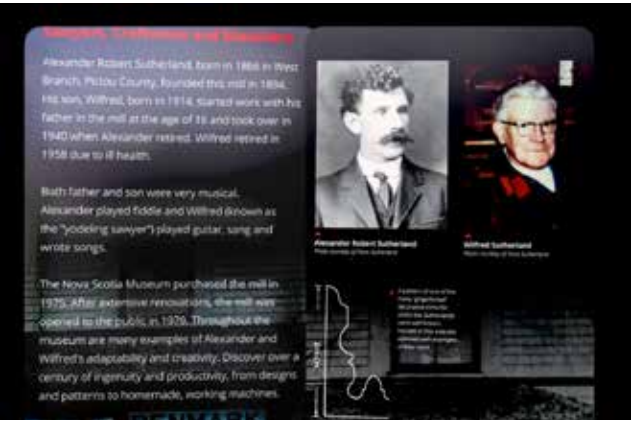
The Fire Department shared that funding levels have remained the same, yet the price of firefighting equipment has increased significantly since COVID, and while the 50/50 fundraising helps, they are feeling the pinch.

We are fortunate that unlike the Annapolis Valley, where five libraries are being closed, Pictou County's remain open. However, libraries are chronically underfunded in Nova Scotia by an outdated formula which provides only \$21.62 per person of taxpayer's money for the library service. This formula does not allow for the increases in minimum wage or inflation. Bridging loans which were given in the past exist no longer and the libraries are forced to do more fundraising.

River John Recreation seems to be the hardest hit by the cutbacks. Unlike other areas, we have one coordinator who works with the summer students, whose hours are shared by different community groups. Ashley Langille has been the coordinator for several years and usually gets a total of \$13,000 to hire students. However, this year she did not even receive the usual \$5000 provincial grant. They are hoping that community groups who use the summer students will step up to make up for the shortfall. River John will employ 10 students this year. Seven students (employed for eight weeks) are employed under federal grants which pay nearly their full hourly wage, and four employed under provincial grants which pay only \$9.00 per hour of a minimum wage of \$16.75 an hour. Student duties include running the summer daycare, keeping the lawns mown around the village, and assisting with all the community events.

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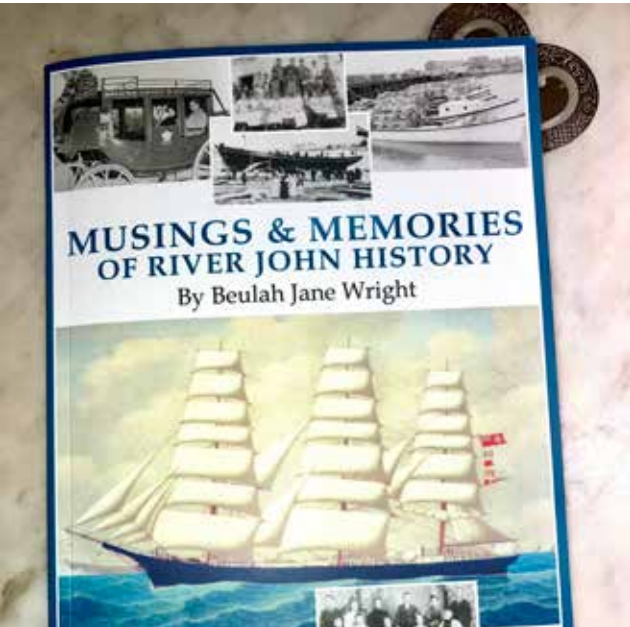
Our local museum does not receive provincial grants, so it is not badly affected. However, McCulloch House Genealogy Centre in Pictou was threatened with closure but lobbied to regain some funding and have initiated a 50/50 draw. Sadly, just over the county line in Denmark, the Sutherland Steam Mill is closed. The mill was bought by the province in 1975 and opened to the public in 1979.

So, when volunteer groups and community organizations ask for support, whether through donations, fundraising efforts, or the gift of your time, please consider helping if you can.

We also know that many people are feeling the effects of the current budget climate in different ways. If you have a story you would like to share, you are encouraged to reach out by email to pioneereditors@outlook.com or by phone at 902-899-7917. Someone from the Pioneer will follow up with you. This is an evolving story, and we are committed to continuing our coverage by listening to the experiences of the people most affected.

8.10 Stranded Whales on the Shore

By: Beulah Jane Wright



Benson Wright and Russel Maclean
Lorraine Wright, Beulah Wright and Jean MacLean

In 1918, there were dozens, maybe hundreds, of whales that met their death on the shores of River John. Through the years, there has often been a single whale beached on the shore, but this particular time there were many - maybe following schools of fish, perhaps came in with the tide and were stranded on the shore. Of course, it attracted many residents to look, and maybe have a photo taken, with the poor animals. Dead whales soon began to smell badly, so farmers hitched up their reluctant horses and began to haul them away for fertilizer. The horses were not happy with the smell! No one knows exactly why so many filled the river.

Reprinted from **Musings & Memories of River John History**, 1st Edition, 2025

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1918 Whales stranded on River John shore. 'Monsters of the Deep Cast Ashore' is written on the photo.



A WALK THROUGH TIME MUSEUM

“Explore the past to appreciate the present”

By: Diane Kennedy

At the age of 10, on a visit to an old farm with his father, Allan spotted, in the dirt, a ‘fancy’ glass bottle. It was about 1 gallon in size with a small opening at the top with a rope design all around the top edge. He kept eyeing it until the old farmer noticed and said, “Kid, if you like that bottle, you can have it.” Well, Allan thought he had the world by the tail, and that moment sparked his interest in all things old or antique, and thus his collection began.

Growing up next door to his grandparents, Allan was always involved in ‘old time farming ways’. His grandfather never had a driver’s license or an automobile, (although he did get a tractor in later years); therefore, much of the farm work was done with horses. Grandpa loved his horses and passed that love along to Allan and his brothers. Working with horses required horse-drawn farm equipment, so Allan became well acquainted with such implements and how to use and take care of them. In his collection, Allan has many items from his grandfather’s farm or items similar to the ones he grew up with. He has often been told that he was born a generation or two later than he was meant to be, as he has a genuine interest and passion in old time ‘stuff’. Allan has been collecting artifacts for close to 40 years. He has purchased many items from local families and many more have been donated, especially since people found out about his intentions to open a museum.

In 2016, we purchased the former Scotsburn Creamery building in the village of Scotsburn. In order to make it work, we relocated our A&M Small Engines business to the lower level of the building, and the top was designated for the museum. The building has about 10,000 square feet on each level, so we thought we had lots of space. As it turns out, there is a lot of space, but it has filled up very quickly.

A WALK THROUGH TIME MUSEUM opened on June 3, 2018, for the first season. It is one of the largest, if not the largest, privately owned museums in the area. We had more than 600 visitors explore our museum between June 3 and Sept 30 that first year and reviews have been incredible. You can check out some reviews on Google, our website www.awalkthroughtimemuseum.com as well as many 5-star reviews on TripAdvisor. People are surprised and delighted to see how many artifacts there are and how well they are displayed.

Some of the displays include the large horse-drawn farm machinery, as well as many hand tools used for farming, gardening, lumbering, and blacksmithing. It is amazing to see the ingenuity of the people who invented tools and machines to make work easier and the progression over the years, most dating from the late 1800s to the 1950s.

The General Store includes household items, tools, stoves, skis, hats, pipes, fabric, dishes, books, a harness room and so much more, some of which are displayed with prices as they would have been in the early 1900s. The museum features a dining room set for Sunday dinner, sleighs and buggies, including a doctor’s buggy and a popular undertaker’s wicker basket once used to transport the deceased.

There is an old-time parlour, complete with a gramophone, piano, baby cradle and so much more. A bedroom is set up featuring a spool bed, a rope bed and other items used before modern plumbing. There is also a basic old-time kitchen with a Queen Cook stove and many kitchen items used in the early days.

The library features books, documents, and articles showcasing the region’s heritage.

This season we are showcasing our newest room which is displaying many models of sewing machines, a working loom, numerous hooked mats and other interesting items.

Even the creamery building itself is in fact one of our most interesting artifacts, as it was built in 1929. We have done our best to preserve as much of its architecture as possible that was left when we bought the building. One of the most interesting rooms that we kept ‘as it was’, is what we call the Scotsburn Room. It houses hundreds of cream and milk cartons and other containers used by Scotsburn Dairy over the years, as well as some of the awards and prizes earned by Scotsburn through the years. It has been a dream and passion of Allan and I (after I got used to the idea) to open this museum to display and share the history of our community and surrounding areas with others. In 2012 when our Bethel Church in Scotsburn celebrated its 150th anniversary, we opened our yard and buildings to allow interested folks to view what we had already collected. We charged a small admission fee which was donated to Bethel Church and members provided tea, biscuits, and oatcakes as refreshments. It was a wonderful day for friends and fellowship and reinforced our dream that we should open our museum. Since our opening, generous people have donated many family items to our museum. They enjoy seeing and knowing that their items are displayed in the museum with their family name attached. We would like to give a special thank you to these folks whose generosity helps our museum to grow.

A Walk Through Time Museum opened for 2026 season on June 1. This is our ninth season. We would like to thank our wonderful team of faithful volunteers who work with us to help us realize our dreams. Without this dedicated group we would not be able to be open as much as we are. They are knowledgeable and thoroughly enjoy talking and reminiscing with visitors. This season we welcome back Kyle Thomson as our student guide and artifacts recorder for July and August.

2026 Season

Open: June 1 – September 30
Closed: Wednesdays and holidays
Hours: 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Admission: \$10 per person, \$25 per family

Location:
4119 Scotsburn Road (Hwy 256), Scotsburn, NS
Phone: 902-485-4586
Email: awalkthroughtimemuseum@gmail.com

Keep up to date on our Instagram and Facebook pages. We look forward to welcoming you to A Walk Through Time Museum.



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As Time Goes By: The Traditional Art of Rug Hooking

By: Ruby Hayman Mackenzie, West Branch

Rug hooking is a long-time tradition in the Maritimes. Once made to keep floors warm by recycling old worn-out clothes, many people hooked for a practical reason. Strips of wool were hand cut and bindings braided for lasting wear. Nothing was wasted.

Today’s traditional rug hookers use a variety of fibres. Many use only recycled materials, and it is getting increasingly difficult to find wool, as most of us don’t wear heavy wool clothes anymore. Fibres used today can be new wool dyed with numerous different methods, wool yarn, fancy fibres, and sari silks, just to name a few. Rugs or design pieces made with alternate fibres will not withstand being used on the floor as mats, as the alternate fibres are not as strong, so they are recommended to be used for decorative purposes, framed or placed on a wall.

The Rug Hooking Guild of Nova Scotia was formed 47 years ago to keep the traditional art of rug hooking alive. The craft is alive and well in the Maritimes and beyond. I personally have been hooking for about 14 years and am a member of the Guild. Each year, the Rug Hooking Guild of Nova Scotia hosts a week-long rug hooking school at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax in the first week of May.

Teachers come from all over Canada and the United States; this year was the largest group so far, with 162 attendees. All types of courses are offered. Each year the selection changes, with new courses being offered. This year’s selections were animal portraits, hooked on a memory using AI technology, geometrics, hooking landscapes, Maud Lewis, As Time Goes By, A Monochromatic Class, as well as several others. This is just a small selection of classes offered at the event. You must be a member of the Guild to participate in the Rug Hooking School. We have classes from 9 to 4 each day, with additional evening programs, and on Thursday evening there’s a display of the week’s worth of work done by the members participating. This event is open to the public and at that time the public can see the display of rugs brought to school each year. There are amazing artists who participate.

There is also a vendor or store while we are at rug school. This year the vendor was Loopy Wool from Salisbury, New Brunswick. They provide a wide variety of goods, patterns, wool and wool yarn for the participants to purchase; we always call this ‘eye candy’.

We have a delightful time seeing old friends, making new friends, learning new techniques, or brushing up our skills in this traditional art form. Some say you either love hooking or you do not. Punch needle was taught at Rug Hooking School this year. Some find this art form a little easier than traditional hooking, often with a similar looking result. So, whether you love to punch or rug hook, there is something for everyone.

I rug hook weekly, with the New Horizons rug hooking group in Pictou on Kemp Street. We meet Mondays from 9-12 from September to June. New members are always welcome to come join and learn the art of rug hooking. Any form of craft using your hands is said to be good for your brain, and the camaraderie and social aspect of simply being with a group of like-minded people is the draw for most of us. You are never too old to learn a new skill or a new craft. I hope you take the time to make and enjoy something of your own in the near future.

River John Square Knitters Update

By: Netta Heukshorst

Since the last issue of the Pioneer, we knitters have been busy getting the squares weighed and bundled up for shipment to South Africa. Weighing the squares has to be precise; the wrapped bundle can’t be a fraction over 2 kg as then the price to mail skyrockets.

In February, six bundles were mailed out and in April, 11 bundles were mailed. There are approximately 72 squares in one bundle, that adds up to over 1200 squares sent out. That will make around 34 little blankets for the poor little ones that end up at the AIDS centres. Some of the bundles have a little hat or toy included.

Last March the O’Laney family suffered a devastating house fire, losing all their belongings. The RJSKs donated a large bag of hats and mittens to help the children keep warm.

Last April, three more warm lapghans were donated to the LFMH in Tatamagouche.

Another long-time dedicated member, Ruth Phister, moved away last April to be closer to family in BC. We thank her for all the work she has done with us, and we wish her well.

Welcome back to our summer knitters who join us, we have missed you.

We welcome anyone who wants to help knit/crochet squares; needles, and yarn are provided. We meet each Friday morning at the RJ library 10 -12 noon. Don’t worry about thinking you may get into a position where you take minutes and pay dues, because there aren’t any, just a lovely group of volunteers getting together to help make the world a better place for those sweet little ones.

Smile and be kind to each other.





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Editorial

The Work of Community

By: Kelly Shaw

When I sit down to write each editorial, I usually begin by looking back through the submissions and think about the themes that have emerged. It seems that every issue, regardless of the season or the stories we receive, one theme consistently rises to the surface: community.

It shows up in different ways each time, but it always shows up.

In the pages of this issue, community is visible in graduation ceremonies, volunteer recognition events, summer festivals, awards, and community gatherings. It is present in the pride we feel when young people from our communities cross a stage to receive a diploma or degree. It is reflected in the recognition of neighbours whose years of service, leadership, and contribution have made a difference in the lives of others. These moments tell us something about who we are and what we value.

The stories in this issue also illustrate the many ways community takes shape. Volunteers give their time. Organizers bring people together. Coaches, board members, and countless others strengthen local organizations. Neighbours step forward when support is needed. Every graduate's success is nurtured by families, teachers, mentors, and friends. Every festival and community celebration is the result of people who choose to invest their energy in creating opportunities for others to gather, connect, and belong.

The Pioneer is part of that work.

We may not often think about it, but this little community newspaper occupies a unique place in rural life. It records local history as it happens. It celebrates achievements, shares milestones, and tells the stories of people whose contributions might otherwise go unnoticed. While stories about people such as Jay Reid, Kay and Steve Wilson, may circulate through social media, not everyone is on Facebook or Instagram. By sharing these stories here, we help ensure that community accomplishments reach a wider audience and that the efforts of individuals are recognized for the difference they make in the daily lives of others. Perhaps most importantly, the Pioneer helps us stay connected. Every article, photograph, community announcement, and letter contributes to a larger story about who we are as a community.

At the same time, communities across Nova Scotia are facing challenges. Conversations continue about government spending, budget reductions, and the future of public services. Schools, universities, healthcare systems, and community organizations all feel the strain when resources become stretched. For some of our friends and neighbours, these decisions have very real consequences, including job loss and reduced access to services they rely upon.

Moments like these remind us that community is more than a place. It is a network of relationships and responsibilities. It is how we respond when people need support and how we continue to show up for one another during difficult times.

Community does not simply exist on its own. It is something we create and sustain together; one relationship, one contribution, and one story at a time.

Alan Carlson

By: Debby Shaw

As some of you may know, Marshville's Alan Carlson was born in Edmonton in 1932. At that time, the communities around him were made up of immigrants from many different places, much like Canada today. His biological father had come from Denmark to Saskatchewan, where he worked on threshing machines during the years when prairie farming demanded long days and strong backs.

The house Alan shared with his mother, stepfather, and siblings was in Rose Valley, Saskatchewan, and life on the farm was not easy. Their home was crowded, with three children often sharing a bed. Even as a boy, though, he showed the determination and independence that would define much of his life. At just fourteen years old, he built himself an 8-by-12-foot cottage behind the family home. He cut the trees himself, hauled them to the mill, and spent the summer living in the little cabin he had created with his own hands. It was perhaps the first clear sign that carpentry - not farming - was where his real passion lived.

School often competed with the realities of rural life on the Prairies. Each year during threshing season, he missed nearly thirty days of classes to help with farm work, leaving him older than many of his classmates by the time he graduated. Farming was never something he truly loved, but it was what was expected of him. Characteristically unwilling to follow a predetermined path, he joined the Royal Canadian Air Force, where he spent ten years as an airplane mechanic. He had no interest in flying aircraft himself; what fascinated him was understanding how things worked and how they could be built and repaired. Later in life, he reflected that many young people do not really know what they want to do for a career. While stationed in Greenwood, Nova Scotia, he met and married Jannette, the "love of his life," with whom he shared 61 years of marriage.

During his years in the Air Force, he worked first on Lancaster bombers in CFB Greenwood and later on fighter aircraft, including the Sabre F86 and the CF-100 - he only fighter jet ever designed and built in Canada. Through NATO assignments, he was stationed in France. For a man who had rarely travelled beyond his pioneer farm in Saskatchewan the experience was extraordinary.

One of the greatest adventures of his life came when he moved his wife overseas. The newlyweds travelled by train from Greenwood to Halifax, crossed the Atlantic aboard a Cunard ship to England, then continued by train through Europe to France, including a ferry crossing over the English Channel before the modern tunnel existed. It was a massive journey for a couple



75 years later, the Air Force surprised Alan Carlson with a medal for the three years he served NATO.

whose early world had once seemed no bigger than the Saskatchewan prairie or a Nova Scotia county.

Family always remained central to him. After marrying, Alan wanted to reconnect with his family and introduce his wife to his parents and brothers in Saskatchewan. One Christmas, Jannette and their 4 children boarded a train in Truro with box lunches packed for the long trip to Rose Valley, where they stayed for a month. During the journey, the conductor remarked that theirs was the best-behaved family he had ever travelled with.

Alan left the Air Force at twenty-eight, and he and his wife bought 100 acres of land and machinery from his biological father for \$10,000 and moved to Marshville, Nova Scotia. There he farmed pigs and cattle, hoping to build a successful future for his young family. But he quickly realized that farming was becoming harder to sustain economically. Deep down, he already knew where his interests really belonged.

Eventually, after recognizing that farming in Nova Scotia was not going to provide the future he hoped for, he returned to what he truly loved: carpentry. He worked for a construction company that held the contract to help build the Michelin plant in Nova Scotia. He applied to Michelin where he stayed for the next twenty years as a tire builder then to foreman.

Across farming, military service, mechanics, and carpentry, his life reflected adaptability, grit, and practicality. Yet beneath all of it was a simple lesson about passion and purpose.

At ninety-four years old, when asked what words of wisdom he would offer young people today, he laughed and said, "Since I am 94, I guess everywhere I look everyone is!"

Then he offered the advice earned through a long life of experience:

"Do what you love. I spent time farming when I really loved carpentry."



The Little Tea That Grew

By: Diane Kennedy

Tuesday tea at the library was kind of hit-or-miss for drop-ins... and honestly, my attendance was spotty. Valentine's Day was coming up this February per usual and for several years I used to invite people for tea here on the Cape. But over time, a couple of issues developed. Problem number one, I now know more people, so who do I invite? Problem number two, I want to invite all my new friends and acquaintances, but my place is too small. Solution: have it at the library. Brilliant!

So, the Special Tea idea was born. I began to flood Facebook with invites: "Dust off that special teacup your grandmother, or your Mum or aunt gave you, we all have them."

Then, the promise of delicious afternoon treats to accompany the tea set the stage for a lovely February outing. What followed was a great success. Ladies arrived with delicious baking to add to the occasion. Valentine colours - beautiful reds and pinks - and oh so pretty teacups, and 20 plus ladies and a few tea-loving children

arrived. It was such a lovely afternoon Mary Beth Sullivan suggested we repeat it for St. Patrick's Day and Easter. Well, why not? - I say! And that's how it grew.

St. Patrick's Day Tea drew even more people, with a count of 30. People spilled out into the library filling all the chairs, a sea of shamrock green. We even made coffee for the gentleman who built the incredible boat on display. I did have to adjust how we provided the tea. After tea number one I couldn't keep up with the pouring. Jocelyn Heighton stepped in with the use of her big stainless steel tea pumps (what a godsend). And more ladies got creative with the desserts.

Easter followed very quickly; a little too quickly, but you can't change the calendar. Numbers dropped to around 20 with bunny cupcakes and rice crispy bunny squares and cookies, the best tasting goodies, even gluten-free for our celiac friends. I teased the children about liking a little tea with their milk. What a delightful addition to the event!

The library is crucial to our community, and I am thankful for their support and am only too happy to return that support by offering special teas throughout the year. I hear there is a Tartan Day in November, so you have time to find yours and plan ahead.

Thank you to all who attended and contributed; it truly does take a village.

St. Patrick's Day tea: You are never too young for tea... just ask these cuties. Diane Kennedy (l), Mary Beth Sutherland (r) and in front, her four grandchildren. Bunny cupcakes for our Easter Tea... how adorable.

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This was at the East Cumberland Lodge's Winter Carnival "Western Day" where we were the featured entertainment.

There is So Much More to Line Dancing than Meets the Eye

By: Jocelyn Heighton

Have you ever heard of the Electric Slide, Alligator Smile, Precious Time, Mamma Maria, or Cut a Rug? These are just some of the dances learned by the Ultra Beginner line dance group at the River John Legion during April and May. The group met on Monday nights from 6:30 – 7:30 pm, learning a variety of basic steps and beginner level dances. They were provided with links to online step sheets and tutorials for optional at-home practice. They brought a lot of positive energy and enthusiasm to the class and made wonderful progress during the 5-week session.

Another group of more experienced dancers continued to meet on Monday afternoon, learning beginner and improver level dances. They performed some of these dances for the residents at East Cumberland Lodge in Pugwash during their Winter Carnival in March. Since it was "Western Day" our group got into the spirit of things with red cowboy hats, bandanas, and some boots. Our music included some old favourites by Anne Murray, T.G. Shepard, and Merle Haggard, as well as some lesser-known tunes. What fun we had doing The Canadian Stomp to Shania Twain's Any Man of Mine! While line dancing is often associated with country music, our classes feature a variety of genres, such as pop, rock, Celtic, and Latin, to name a few. Regardless of the type of music, dancers repeat a sequence of steps at the same time while arranged in one or more lines. The dancers usually face all in the same direction, or less commonly face each other in a contra style dance. Many dances are "four-wall", meaning the dancers repeat the sequence while facing all four walls of the room sequentially.

Numerous studies outline the benefits of line dancing:

- It is a low impact exercise that incorporates coordination and balance with a cardiovascular workout.
- It is a social activity that does not require a designated partner so anyone can join a new group and

connect with others.

- It triggers the release of endorphins (the body's natural "feel-good" chemicals) helping to reduce anxiety and relieve stress.
- It supports cognitive function, as it requires learning and memory, while rhythm, timing, and coordination also engage the brain.
- It builds community – many people find it to be highly enjoyable and seriously fun!

If you want to give line dancing a try, watch for information about classes beginning again in the fall at the River John Legion.

Here are some tips to keep in mind if you are new to line dancing:

1. Find a position where you can clearly see the instructor and don't be tempted to hide in the back.
2. Take small steps to maintain your balance.
3. Ask questions. It lets the instructor know that they haven't explained something well enough, and it's possible you're not the only one who has that question.
4. Stick with it. Your first few classes may be challenging, but that is normal. It generally takes a few weeks for your mind and feet to comfortably communicate.
5. Practice, as much or as little as you want, to refresh your memory and build your confidence.
6. Relax and have fun and accept that you will make mistakes (everyone does!)

River John Sidewalk Update

By: Mike Topley RJCAS Sidewalk Lead

We have recently learned that once again our sidewalk project has failed to make even the 5-year plan of tentative construction projects in the municipality.

To summarize the timeline to date, the need for this sidewalk was identified by the River John Community Action Society (RJCAS) in January 2021. Since then, there has been steady contact and information feed to the municipality including; site visits with councillors and municipal engineering staff, alignment selection and approval in principle by provincial transportation officials, formation and submission of a petition signed by 554 ratepayers, and a formal request to the MOPC for sidewalk consideration and approval (with no response ever received).

A recommendation will now go to the RJCAS that this item remains on the agenda for the foreseeable future, but that the project be considered to be in the municipality's hands. This Pioneer article will be the last on the topic until we hear something from the municipality.



Left to right: Pictou Town Councillor and PARL board member Robert Fry, Bonnie Allan, and Warden Robert Parker standing in front of the cake.

Bonnie Allan Retired

After 38 years of dedicated service, Bonnie Allan retired - much to the lament of the community of Pictou and beyond. Bonnie was a cherished fixture at the Pictou Library, always connecting patrons with the resources and support they needed.

It was the children, however, who benefited most from Bonnie's care and enthusiasm. From babies and toddlers to youth and eventually adulthood, she introduced generations of families to the joy of reading and the magic of libraries. Her impact will be felt for years to come in the countless lives she helped shape.

A testament to her influence was the incredible turnout of more than 100 people who gathered to celebrate her on January 17th - a heartfelt tribute to a remarkable career.

Happy Retirement, Bonnie!

The editorial team of The Pioneer would like to offer congratulations to Bonnie on this wonderful milestone and offer a sincere apology for not printing this in our Winter 2026 issue. We shared pictures but neglected to tell the whole story.

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Reporter: Linda Thompson-Reid
Advertising Sales: Julie Windebank, rjpioneerads@gmail.com
Printing: Advocate Printing & Publishing Ltd.
 An annual subscription of 3 issues per year, including postage to anywhere in Canada, is \$22.50.
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Community News



West Branch and Area Community Association

By: Reg Crewe

Hello from West Branch and area. Happy Spring and Summer!

We have finished our spring series of West Branch Wednesdays, a topical presentation and meal, which continues to be a huge success and will continue in the fall with three more sessions. We appreciate the continued support. These get-togethers are not only informative but also encourage social connection and hopefully reduce isolation for our community members.

We held our 33rd annual Maple Syrup Festival Pancake Breakfast on April 25. This being our largest fundraiser, it is our means of paying the bills for insurance, upkeep, telephone, etc., and we had great support from the community and many volunteers that make all our events

possible. This year we served 294 meals and raised just short of \$2000. Our sincere thanks to everyone.

Our Annual General Meeting was held on May 4, 7 p.m., and we had our annual reports and elected a new executive. Our long-standing Secretary, Catherine Dagleish retired after more than 15 years on the board. We would like to express our greatest appreciation for her many years of volunteer service to the community. The new board consists of:
President: Jim White
Secretary: Anne Simmonds (new)
Treasurer: Reg Crewe
Directors: Gary Johnson, David Luxton, Charlie Kennedy, Lynne Hart, Patsy Murray Chapman and Ronda MacKenzie (new)

The board, under a special committee, has taken up the banner to try and speed up the replacement of the bridge on the West Branch Road, which has been closed for some months and does not appear to be slated for replacement until 2028. This vital link to River John from West Branch is crucial for fire, police, emergency (ambulance) services, school buses and many others that depend on this road to access services in both West Branch and River John.

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.



Bring Back Our Bridge

By: Anne Simmonds,
West Branch Bring Back Our Bridge Working Group

A small working group from West Branch organized a Town Hall meeting to advocate for moving the timeline up from 2028 for the replacement of the Moore's Ford (West Branch) bridge on the paved road connecting West Branch with River John. Over 60 community members attended our meeting at the West Branch Hall on Wednesday, June 3rd, 2026. Warden Robert Parker was in attendance with Councillor Ronnie Baillie, MLA Marco MacLeod, and Chris Verge, Area Manager of Highway Maintenance & Operations Northern District, sending regrets.

Patsy Chapman opened the meeting with an email sent by Chris Verge, in response to our inquiries about the expected date of completion of the new bridge. Mr. Verge noted that the site survey was almost completed and that next steps included engineering consultants to determine bridge design, as well as "a geotechnical investigation to assess soil and foundation conditions, environmental reviews, including flora and fauna assessments, archaeological investigations, Indigenous consultation, and the completion of all required permits before the design can be finalized and construction can proceed."

We then opened the meeting up to hear from community members. Many concerns were voiced, top of which was health and safety. Representatives from Scotsburn Fire Department in attendance noted that their response time has been impacted and that they continue to coordinate response calls with River John Fire Department. Many people spoke about the poor conditions on the College Grant detour, including one resident who had to pull several vehicles out of the ditch last winter. Concern was also expressed about less access to the West Branch Hall, which is designated as a Comfort Centre.

Several people commented on personal costs of the detour on College Grant, including increased travel time to access work and other services, gas costs, wear and tear on vehicles such as replacing chipped windshields, air filters, and flat tires due to road surface. A larger issue that arose was related to the vibrancy and economy of our rural communities. People noted that because of the detour, they were travelling less to River John for library and pharmacy services, as well as gas and groceries. This includes approximately 300 seasonal residents of the Peaceful River Campground in West Branch. People were also less likely to visit their friends in River John as frequently, and it was noted that the detour has also had an impact on attendance at sessions like West Branch Wednesdays.

Also in attendance were community members from the Welsford area who have been advocating for the replacement of their bridge. They have been told that options being considered include installing a temporary panel bridge or paving the Allen Rd for easier access to

West Branch Spring Tea

By: Gina Bain

On Saturday, May 23rd, West Branch Hall was decorated in all of its finery for a Spring Tea hosted by Highlandville UCW. The hall was adorned with beautiful flower arrangements made with local plants in bloom, and potted plants supplied by Urban Roots Landscaping company.

The tables were decorated with china brought by UCW and community members. There was a sitting at 1 p.m. and one at 3 p.m. and everyone showed up in their best tea attire. The fascinators were fascinating! The menu consisted of fancy sandwiches, delicate scones with butter, jam and whipped cream, and decadent sweets. Tea was the beverage of choice, but punch was available as well. The food was delicious, conversations lively, and a time that was enjoyed by all. The event was a successful fundraiser, and a delightful gathering as well.



The West Branch Spring Tea Dream Team



Here are some of our cultivated ladies savouring sophisticated Teatime



Garden Club Members, Linda Maclean, Gizelle Mitchell, and Maureen Topley, working on the Welcome sign planter.

River John Garden Club

By: Joan MacLeod

We are a small group of avid gardeners whose mission is to help beautify the village's communal spaces. We plant flowers in the planter beneath the River John Welcome sign. We also maintain the planter at the end of Cape John. We are slowly weeding and planting flowers in the rock garden at Bissell Park.

We meet at the River John Library on the 3rd Tuesday of each month at 2 p.m. during the spring and summer months. Our next meetings are on June 16, July 21, and August 18.

All are welcome.

continued on page 8



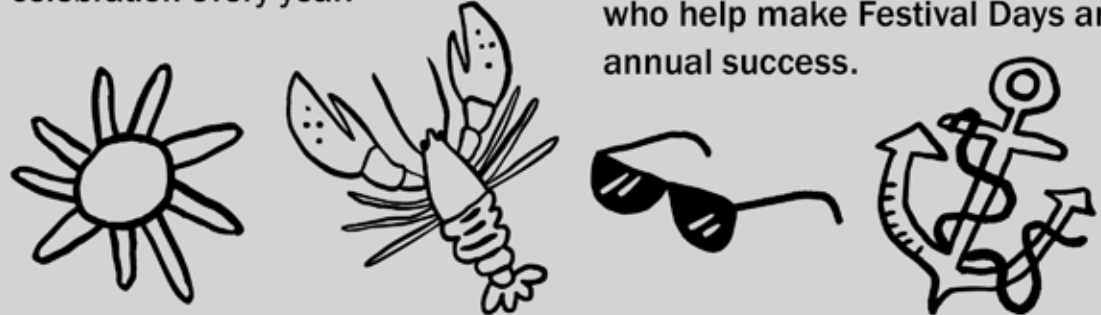
**July 17-25,
2026**

Sea, Sun & Summer Fun!

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

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

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



FRIDAY JULY 17

10-11am Learn to Play Pickleball Ages 12-16.

11am-12pm Learn to Play Pickleball Ages 16+ River John Pickleball courts. Max. 12 participants per session. Sneakers must be debris free. Eye protection required. Paddles and balls provided. Pre-register riverjohnpickleball@gmail.com.

4-7pm "MLP style Thompson Family" Pickleball Tournament 2.5-2.99 players. \$100 per team.

6pm Baseball Tournament begins at the ball field. Contact Jay Reid to register: 782-440-2110 or Facebook Messenger.

SATURDAY JULY 18

8:30am-1:30pm "MLP style Thompson Family" Pickleball Tournament 3.0-3.49 players. \$100 team.

9am Baseball Tournament cont'd.

Time TBD Bridge to bridge fun paddle. Bring your own kayak, canoe, etc. Weather permitting. Meet at Bissell park. More parking behind fire hall. Start time is dependent on the tides.

1:30-6:30pm "MLP style Thompson Family" Pickleball Tournament 3.5+ players. \$100 team.

2pm Cardboard Boat Race, at Bissell Park dock. Build your own cardboard boat and compete to cross the river! Visit our website for boat-building guidelines! **Brought to you by MOPC Network.**

SUNDAY JULY 19

9am Baseball Tournament cont'd.

10am-3pm Lismore Sheep Farm, Sheep and Wool Day. Sheep shearing, wool craft demonstrations including spinning (Sisterhood Fibres), weaving, knitting, hooking, felting. Lamb sausage BBQ, live music with North Shore Slow Pickers, market vendors with local foods and crafts. Free admission.

11am Combined congregation Church Service at Salem United Church (Anglican Led).

12-2pm Foam Party Location TBD. All Ages.

11am-3pm Market at the Old School.

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

3pm Firefighter Competition/Demo on the Old School.

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

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

8-9pm Sunset Yoga with Nicole van Zutphen and sound bowl therapy led by CristyAnn Langille. Beginner friendly and all are welcome. Held on the hill at Poplar Waters Cottages and Campground. By donation, with proceeds supporting the River John Festival Days Committee.

MONDAY JULY 20

6:45- 10am Breakfast on the Veranda by the Community Support Society of River John. Breakfast sandwich, hashbrown & fruit (\$10).

10am Historical Cemetery walk at Bellevue Cemetery. Donations are welcome in support of Bellevue and Hamilton cemeteries. Learn about interesting and influential citizens of River John's past.

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

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

7pm Cribbage Night at River John Legion. Ages 19+. \$20 a team, plus \$2/person to enter for high hand and high crib. All money returned in prizes. Cash bar.

7pm Entertainment on the Veranda: Variety Show. Please register by emailing rjfestivaldays@gmail.com.

TUESDAY JULY 21

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

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

2pm Art in the Park in Bissell Park. Call River John Library to register.

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

7pm River John Music Trivia Night at the Firehall. Hosted by Gene Mills Ages 19+. \$20. Teams of Four, winners take all. Doors open at 6pm.

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

WEDNESDAY JULY 22

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

12pm Washer Toss registration. River John Legion. Games to immediately follow registration.

1-4pm Community Picnic Skinners Cove (West), for all ages.

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

7pm Entertainment in the Lions Club Den: Donalds Music Circle.

THURSDAY JULY 23

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

11am Childrens cupcake decorating at the Lions Club Veranda. Ages 1-13. No pre-registration necessary. First come first served. **Brought to you by River John Lions Club.**

2-4pm Wardens Tea at the Fire Hall.

6pm Children's Scavenger Hunt. Register at Bissell Park. **Brought to you by Tatamagouche Home Hardware.**

7pm Bingo at River John Legion.

7pm Entertainment on the Veranda: Route 6.

FRIDAY JULY 24

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

10am-12pm Family Fun Fest: Bouncy House extravaganza, all ages welcome. Location TBD.

1pm Bake Sale and Pie Auction at the Firehall proceeds will go to the River John Festival Days Committee.

1:30pm Sea Lantern Craft. For ages 12 and under. Supplies will be provided, come and have some fun. Register ahead by calling 902-351-2898 by July 23rd. Please leave a message.

Brought to you by the River John Lions Club.

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

7pm Euchre at River John Legion. \$6/person, 19+.

8-10pm Old Time Dance at the Lions Club 19+.

7-11pm Caldera Distilling Inc. Live Music 19+.

SATURDAY JULY 25

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

10:30am-12pm River John Rippers vs First Responders. Come and cheer on the teams!

10-11am Antique Car Show Registration.

11am-2pm Antique Car Show open to public at the former school parking lot.

2pm Antique Car Show trophies & prizes.

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

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

6:30pm Street Parade. Assemble in River John Legion parking lot.

9:45/Sunset Fireworks over the River.

10:15pm-2am Festival Dance (DJ), at the Fire Hall, 19+ (\$10) **The first 20 people will receive free admission courtesy of AA Munro Insurance!**

Schedule is subject to change.

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

**[www.facebook.com/
riverjohn.festival.days](https://www.facebook.com/riverjohn.festival.days)**
www.rjfestivaldays.ca

Community News

Bring Back Our Bridge (cont'd)

the village. Traffic flow over the bridge was clocked at 140 vehicles in one day, which may make the investment in a full bridge replacement unlikely, given the costs and usage. The meeting closed with a discussion about the next steps, including follow-up with our MLAs and Councillors, media attention, and community action.

Following the meeting I met with MLA Marco MacLeod to bring the community's concerns to his attention and to ask him to advocate with the province on behalf of his constituents. Marco explained that the sudden, unannounced closing of the bridge was the outcome of a report by the Auditor General regarding the need for regular bridge inspections. On inspection, it was determined that the abutments on the West Branch bridge were collapsing, making the bridge unsafe for further use. Marco explained that a temporary Bailey bridge replacement would not provide a long-term solution and that therefore he lobbied for funds to be released to upgrade the College Grant Road for detour.

Marco noted that he had heard from many residents and understood their concerns and that he has been in contact with the Fire Department concerning response times. He had heard from residents about the increased costs being incurred, as well as travel times and access. I noted that as rural residents there is a feeling that since the removal of tolls on the Halifax bridges, our taxes are paying for repair and maintenance, with minimal direct benefit to us, while also bearing the increased costs associated with our bridge removal and repair – a double whammy. Marco explained that we need to take into account that the large tax base generated by city residents supports rural projects and infrastructure. He also explained that the Provincial Government made an intentional decision to go 'all-or-nothing' with provincial tolls, versus having some bridges and roads tolled while others were not.

He confirmed that the bridge would most definitely be replaced but that the 2028 timeline was still in place due to other projects and available resources. I shared the letter we received from Chris Verge, and Marco suggested that we follow up with Chris on any specific details regarding the process for the bridge replacement. When asked about the current replacement of the lesser used bridge to Cape John currently underway, Marco explained that this was already in the books for replacement. Similarly, the paving of Old Pictou Road up to the now closed Welsford Bridge was already underway prior to the inspection and decision to close that bridge.

I explained that the community had serious concerns about the impact on our local, rural economy with the long-term closure of the bridge and paved access between West Branch and River John. I asked for assurances that the availability of services such as the library and pharmacy would not be jeopardized by any decrease in usage that came about because of the bridge closure. Marco was unable to provide any assurance on this matter, so this will require further discussion to ensure that the economic vibrancy and access to services in our area is maintained.



What's Next?

Although it may seem that this is a local issue most pertinent to residents in the West Branch and River John areas, we see this as a larger concern, which is ensuring that the voices of people who live in rural Pictou County are heard and valued in our province. Rural infrastructure, such as bridges, are not just "nice-to-have's" but are essential to ensure vibrant, resilient communities where businesses can thrive and our families can access the services they need, to live productive, healthy lives.

Please join us in the following planned community actions:

BRING BACK OUR BRIDGE BBQ.

At the Moore's Ford (West Branch) Bridge, August 9th @ 2:00pm (rain date August 16th). Let's have some fun and make some noise! Volunteers and donations of food and your time most welcome.

TOWN HALL WITH MARCO MACLEOD, MLA.

Friday, August 28th at 7:00 p.m., West Branch Hall

WRITE TO YOUR COUNCILLOR OR MLA

For more information, please see our Bring Back Our Bridge Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61590589684544> or email us at bringbackourbridge@gmail.com

River John and District Lions Club Update

By: Lion Lizz

The River John and District Lions Club is a dedicated, local, organization, focused on helping and supporting the community of River John and area, through volunteering and fundraising.

We are ever so thankful to everyone who contributes and supports our projects and club in any way. It allows us to give back to the community in ways you may not think of, such as donating money to our fellow non-profits in River John, or letting our building be used by any non-profit organization in our community, free of charge, to be used for such things as weekly meetings, or the kids' Summer Day Camp twice a week. And there are also ways we give back that we are not able to publicize due to privacy issues, such as emergency funds for individuals or families in the community needing help, that we assist with. And we can only do all of this, because of you, our supporters. Just last month, a local community member donated a karaoke machine which we will be using for the kids to have fun with, and of course, the adults too. Every little bit helps, and we are extremely thankful for such a supportive community.

In March, we had a resin sea glass suncatcher crafting afternoon. Congratulations to our door prize winner, Erica Kelloway. Thank you to everyone who came out and had fun with us, and a huge thank you to "Shore Thing Sea Glass," (check her out on Facebook,) for coming to our community and hosting such an amazing event. There was so much interest for another one, we have her booked again for September 26th and will be hosting two classes that day. The cost will be \$45, pre-pay only; all details are on our Facebook page.



Photo Credit: Lion Lizz

Thank you to Shore Thing Sea Glass for coming to the River John and District Lions Club yesterday. Our door prize winner was Erica Kelloway. It was a lot of fun and thank you to all that came out in support of our Lions club. We really appreciate all the community and friends' support.

In May, we helped celebrate all the mothers with a Mother's Day Basket, that would not have been a success without our local donors. We want to extend an EXTRA SPECIAL THANK YOU, to C.G. Fulton Pharmacy, Caldera Distillery, Cleaning by Priority Solutions, Be Clutter Free, Lacey's Cleaning Services, Get 'er Done Detailing, Cormier Logistics, Tatamagouche Subway, Kelly's Pizza, Lynns Brook + Co., Come By Chance Collectibles, Yaps Place & Mehs/Leetiks, Amy Fraser, River John Motor Company, Charlotte at Tatamagouche Quality Cuts, Bonnie Dykstra from The Cutting Room and Lismore Sheep Farm.



Ph: (902) 305-5414
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229 Main St.
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B0K1V0



Pictou County
Councillor District 4

Ronnie Baillie

Issues/Concerns - Call 782-440-6716
Email ronald.baillie@munpict.ca



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Also, the month of May was the second anniversary of Donald's Music Circle, where 17 musicians, and a full house of music lovers came to celebrate along with Donald. Donald's Music Circle is held every Wednesday evening at the Lions Den, starting at 7 p.m., with coffee/tea and snacks, cash bar and donations welcomed at the door. It's a fun time, where you can bring your instruments and jam along, or just come to listen and have a good time.

June is here already, wow, where has the time gone? Warm weather is BBQ weather, and you can catch us handing out free hotdogs and cold drinks at the Kids' Parade, Family Fun Day at the ball field, and other various Festival Week events. There will be a wooden photo booth coming to our verandah for your enjoyment and picture keepsakes; there will be free cupcake decorating and Under Sea Lantern crafts with Lion Ann and Lise, at the club; pancake breakfast on the verandah and our famous chicken BBQ in the park. We have a fun-filled summer and can't wait to see you all around in the village. Be sure to look for the blue shirts with the yellow Lion logo.

You can check out all upcoming dates and information on events on our Facebook page or message us at River John and District Lions Club.

Thank you all again for your continued support. Without you, none of it is possible.



River John Legion Happenings

By: Mike Topley, President

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Legion and branches all across the country are preparing to celebrate. Our celebration here at Branch 108, River John will be on Sunday July 5th. All are welcome. This event will be held in conjunction with the unveiling of our new memorial to the No. 2 (Black) Construction Battalion which celebrates 110 years since its formation under the command of Lt. Colonel Daniel Sutherland, himself a lifelong resident of River John. Thanks to the Helping Hand Oddfellows Lodge for donating two Crimson Maple trees which will nicely frame the memorial.

With summer almost upon us, we welcome River John's summer students back and look forward to seeing them regularly at the Legion, preparing each day for their work assignments. With them, come the summer day campers whose laughter brightens our building and grounds.

The pickleball players are now out in full force as we hear the doink doinks followed by lots of laughter. This partnership is going as hoped with many pickleball players joining the Legion and vice-versa. An AED / CPR refresher course was held for Monday, June 15, sponsored by the pickleball club. Everyone was welcome to attend at no charge.

Saturday breakfasts have been put on hold now, but will restart in September for those who enjoy getting out with friends for a couple of hours and a good meal.

Finally, the Legion is preparing for our role in Festival Days, which includes hosting the strawberry tea, bingo, euchre, washer toss, tug of war, and parade marshalling.

We at the Legion Branch 108 wish everyone a safe and happy summer. Anyone wishing to join our Legion or become a "Friend" should call 902 351 2261. While we certainly encourage full membership, Friends are welcome.



(L-R) Daphne Mertin, Millie Langille, Chantal O'Kane, Eliz Langille, Gillian Joudrie, Tammie Heighton, Margie MacGregor, Kayla Mulholland

Community Support Fuels a Busy Season for the River John Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary

It's been a busy and rewarding season for the River John Volunteer Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary, and none of it would have been possible without the incredible support of our community.

The Ladies Auxiliary plays an important role in supporting the River John Volunteer Fire Department. Through fundraising events, volunteer efforts, and providing meals and refreshments for firefighters during emergencies and training events, our members work behind the scenes to help the department continue serving our community.

We are always welcoming new members. If you've ever thought about getting involved, we'd love to have you join us.

This year has already seen several successful fundraising events. Our Community Yard Sale brought together generous donors and bargain hunters from across the area. Thank you to everyone who donated items, volunteered their time, and came out to support the sale.

We also hosted a breakfast fundraiser that exceeded our expectations, selling out of breakfast sandwiches. We extend our sincere thanks to Sunrise Brokerage & Sales Ltd., C.G. Fulton Pharmacy, River John, and Meadowville Farm for their sponsorship and support, and a very special thank you goes to our Royal Canadian Legion Branch 108 for generously lending us their grills to cook those coveted sandwiches.

Most recently, the Fire Hall was transformed for a lively Pub Night that featured great music, food, and plenty of community spirit. Route 6 donated their performance and kept the crowd entertained all evening. Final Touch Party Rentals generously supplied drapery, lighting, and high-top tables that helped create an amazing atmosphere. Kelly's Pizza made sure no one went hungry by providing us with a fantastic deal on pizzas for the event.

We are also grateful to our generous door prize sponsors: Grohmann Knives, Caldera Distilling, Seafoam Lavender Company & Gardens, Guardian - C.G. Fulton Pharmacy, Derado's Pizzeria and Donair, Jason Langille, and Seacrest Electric.

Our fundraising efforts continue with our PEI Getaway Raffle Basket, valued at over \$1,000.

The prize package includes a PEI ferry pass, COWS gift card, gas cards, an oil change, Visa gift cards for



Dancing the night away to Route 6 transformed the Fire Hall into a lively Pub Night with great music, food, and plenty of community spirit.

accommodations and attractions, a Coleman cooler, beach essentials, a JBL wireless speaker, a bottle of Caldera whisky, Sobey's gift cards, and many additional prizes.

This incredible basket was made possible through the generosity of Cripps & Sons Woodworking, Coastline Electric, River John Motor Co., Leetiks, Tatamagouche Home Hardware, Caldera Distilling, the Sobey's Westside #652 Team, Northumberland Fish Cooperative, and The Advocate.



Tickets are \$10 each and are available at River John Motor Co. and during Festival Days events. The winning ticket will be drawn on July 30.

Tickets are \$10 each and are available at River John Motor Co. and during Festival Days events. The winning ticket will be drawn on July 30.

The Ladies Auxiliary would like to thank everyone who has attended an event, purchased a ticket, donated a prize, or volunteered their time. Every dollar raised helps us continue supporting the River John Volunteer Fire Department and the firefighters who are always ready to answer the call.

We're excited about what's ahead and may have another community event in the works this fall. Stay tuned...



River John 4-H members Kay Lee Scotland, Fraser MacDonald and Ethyn MacLellan with the toaster they purchased.

River John 4-H Update

By: Valrie Suidgeest

River John 4-H is nearing the end of their program year. The club has 11 members, including 2 Clover Buds. There are a variety of projects- clover buds, horticulture, building blocks, waterfowl, dairy, beef, rabbit, cavy, miniature horse, dog and light horse.

Members have participated in our club speech rally, with some progressing to county, regional and provincial levels.

The club purchased a toaster for St. Georges Presbyterian church as a community project and thank you for their support by use of space for the last several years.

Some members will be completing their projects for our achievement day on July 6. Due to East Gen and other commitments, others will be completed on August 12.

The 4-H club will also be doing their annual breakfast during River John Festival Days on Tuesday July 21. We will see you there.



“What’s Under the Sea” is the theme for Summer Reading Club 2026, and look who is taking a big bite of reading books this summer at the River John Library! (Submitted photo: Barb Acker)

At the River John Library

By: Trecia Schell, Community Services Librarian, Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library & Helen Chudley, Managing Branch Assistant-in-Charge, River John Library

Summer reading along on the shore, at the library!

It’s back! Our great Big Summer Book Club, returned June 1 (until August 31, 2026), for library patrons who hold an adult library card (ages 14+). Read, return, share and repeat. Share with us your thoughts on the books you’re reading over the summer, and fill out a ballot to win fun monthly prizes from book bags to cool socks and the grand prize of new adult bike to be drawn in early September.

The TD Summer Reading Club for children also launched on June 22, 2026. Drop by your local library, and pick up this year’s logbook filled with fun activities, for the whole family. Details about other summer programs are still emerging – please stay tuned. And, if you register before July 1, 2026 - participants will be entered in a draw to win a Nova Scotia Museum Family Pass. At the River John Library this July and August, kids can drop by on Friday’s at 11:00am for a fun crafty activity.

On Thursday July 9 at 1pm, the River John Library will offer a science workshop for kids, “Science Meets Art”, with the Scientists in School program. Discover what happens when science meets art. Explore perception as you use shadows, colour, motion, and light to create art from science. You’ll make a puppet, a spinning top and a kaleidoscope, as well as design your own galaxy. “The greatest scientists are always artists as well.” (Albert Einstein). This program is for children ages 4-12, seating is limited and registration is required. For more information, and to register - call the River John Library at (902) 351-2599 or email, riverjohn@parl.ns.ca.

Read by the Sea returns to the village on Saturday July 11, 2026 – and the River John Library is pleased to participate with the RBTS festival in its new location at Bissell Park, and the Library. Festivities begin that morning with a Heritage Walk at 9:30 a.m., followed by a day of events from Open Mics, writing workshops, children’s author readings, author readings and panel discussions – and a Book Fair at the Fire Hall. For full details, please visit the Read by the Sea website (or drop by and pick up a brochure at the library).

For RJ Festival Days, we also have a special treat of sharing the TD StoryWalk with everyone, around the library grounds from July 17 until July 25, 2026, during regular library open hours. We invite you to go on adventure. This year the story is “Colette, the Solitary Bee” by Jean-Francois Senechal. Enjoy reading a story outside as you stroll along from one page to the next.

Anyone can make it on their own - just ask Colette! She’s a solitary bee who enjoys her own company more than anyone else’s and thrives on her independence. Colette can do just about anything by herself: day-to-day tasks, cleverly navigating the elements, and even setting out on solo adventures. But sometimes, even the most solitary bees need other insects around - like when things don’t go as planned, or when they’ve simply got a good story to tell. Colette: The Solitary Bee is an adorable, heartwarming tale that shows us we can be proud to do things by ourselves, but it’s also pretty great to share our lived experiences with those around us.

About the Author & the Illustrator:

As the son of two teachers, Jean-François Sénéchal grew up around books. After studying anthropology, Jean ultimately gravitated back to his first love, literature. His stories explore societal issues such as exclusion and inequality and are aimed at audiences of children and adolescent. He has garnered various honors, including the 2017 Joseph S. Stauffer Prize from the Canada Council for the Arts, and a Governor General’s Award for children’s literature.

Pascale Bonenfant uses drawing, collage, watercolor, and screen printing to bring her playful works of art to life. After studying design and visual arts at Laval University, she deepened her love for illustration by becoming a professor of graphic design. In recent years, her work has appeared in a wide range of exhibitions and publications, including more than a dozen books. She lives in Québec City, Canada.

In other news, it has been another busy spring at the River John Library. In May, we held our second (very well attended) meeting of the The Library Club (TLC) program, co-ordinated by Melissa Marshall, our Virtual Care Navigator at the library. In May, members planted sunflower seeds and participated in a gardening Q & A with Patsy Chapman-Taylor. The Pictou County Women’s Centre was also on hand and shared some resources with the TLC. At the June meeting, the Northern Zone Mobile Health Unit visited the TLC, and Richard Murphy shared his photography, “Echoes of Nature.” For the July TLC meeting, Tammy from Fulmore’s Pharmasave will be by to talk about Sun Safety, and Aya and Tak (both students from Holly Bent’s School of Highland Dancing), will be by to entertain. This program is made possible through the generous support of the Aberdeen Health Foundation.

In May, we held a Mother’s Day card making craft and in June, a Father’s Day card making craft. To celebrate all those special moms & dads, with a one-of-a-kind specially made, handcrafted, thoughtful card to let them know how important they are to us. Both were drop-in all day, on Saturdays from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. Our monthly painting classes with Lise continue to be a huge success. Many thanks to the Aberdeen Health Foundation for their support of community library programming.

The Friends of the River John Library held a library gardens clean-up in late May and early June, with many thanks to all the volunteers who joined in and shared their Green Thumb expertise. This spring, the Friends of the RJ Library also began consultations with Fathom Architects, to explore renovations to the library building and grounds as a result of the community consultations held in the fall of 2025. We will share exciting details soon!

Due to the shortfall in the provincial government financial support of public libraries in the most recent budget, the library has trimmed costs where possible (discontinuing some online subscription services and limiting others – such as hoopla). We no longer offer Sunday open hours at our branch libraries in New Glasgow and Antigonish. In June, the Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library launched its Fundraising Campaign, and Donation Stations were installed at each of PARL’s seven library locations to assist with fundraising efforts. For more information, please visit your local library, or the library’s website at www.parl.ns.ca.

Please note, the Regional Library will be closed on Wednesday, July 1st for the Canada Day holiday and Monday, August 3rd for Natal Day. We apologize for the inconvenience, and invite you to visit the Virtual Library services online at www.parl.ns.ca. For more information on all our upcoming library programs and services, please call or drop by your local library, follow us on Bluesky, Instagram, and Facebook, or visit us online at www.parl.ns.ca.



Aging Well

By: Lynn Langille

The Pictou County Community Health Centre (PCCHC) helps people access the health and social support they need at 25B Front Street in Pictou and in various outreach locations across the county. PCCHC is also working with partners in communities across the county to provide information and inspiration for aging well. Aging well is about maintaining physical, mental, and social wellness as we grow older. Working with Nova Scotia Health’s Northern Zone Mobile Health & Wellness Team, we have held Seniors Health and Wellness Programs in Churchville, Little Harbour, New Glasgow, River John and Garden of Eden.

The Seniors Health and Wellness Program provides information on activities that can support healthy aging, such as regular exercise, a balanced diet, getting enough sleep, preventing falls, reviewing your medications, keeping your mind stimulated, and staying socially engaged. In addition to the Seniors Health and Wellness Program, we have hosted sessions on “Healthy Eating for One or Two” that have provided lots of great ideas for nutritious meals that are tasty and easy to prepare.

PCCHC has recently received funding for two projects on mental health and aging well. These projects include workshops to engage older adults who live in rural communities in thinking about ways to maintain their mental health and support the mental health of others. Stay tuned for more information about these projects in the coming months.

The first project is based on a course developed by the Mental Health Foundation of Canada, called Mental Health First Aid for Older Adults. This is a two-day workshop that focuses on recognizing and responding to mental health issues that may arise for older adults. The goals of the course are to teach community members how to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health concerns, to provide strategies and resources to support both seniors and their caregivers, and to guide seniors and caregivers towards appropriate resources if professional help is needed.

The second project is a series of three workshops based on the Pictou County Mental Wellness and Resilience Toolkit. This toolkit is being updated to reflect the mental health concerns of older adults, including loss and grief. The project will train facilitators to lead conversations about mental health with older adults in rural communities.

As part of The Library Club (Pictou Antigonish Regional Library), PCCHC staff have carried out presentations on insights for aging well that are found in the natural world. From gardens and trees, we can learn lessons about weathering the seasons of life, cultivating resilience, constantly learning, accepting change, and the importance of rest and rejuvenation.

Being outdoors has benefits for physical health (increased physical activity, decreased blood pressure, better sleep, strengthened immune system) and mental health (improved mental clarity and mood, reduced stress). Research shows that how people think about aging impacts the actual process of aging and the natural world has much to teach us about aging well.

For information about PCCHC or the Seniors Health and Wellness Program, visit us online at pictoucountyhcc.ca or call us at 902-616-2142. For more information about The Library Club (TLC), call Melissa at 902-759-5227 or contact your local library.



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Helping Hand Lodge #34 conferred the Initiatory degree on a new member at our lodge meeting last night. We are pleased to welcome Teresa Feallock as a member of the lodge. Congratulations to the degree team for a great job.

IOOF Helping Hand Lodge & Frazee Rebekah Lodge Update

By: Jacob Leegwater, Secretary

Welcome to Pioneer readers from the Helping Hand and Frazee Rebekah Lodges.

Since our last column, several events have taken place, including social card parties, new members, district meetings, graduation prizes, and Grand Lodge sessions. Frazee Rebekah Lodge hosted card parties in March, April and May. Respective winners for each are: 50/50 Janet Baillie, Marie Langille and Linda Munro. Top score: Elsie Langille, Marie Langille and Elsie Langille. Door prize: Ruth Baillie, Annie Scott and Marjorie Falconer. Congratulations to all the winners!

Both lodges made contributions to various causes. A Gold Sponsorship for Read by the Sea, graduation prizes for Tatamagouche Regional Academy and Northumberland Regional High School grads, gas cards for a Lodge member, Royal Canadian Legion Branch #108, River John and Area Historical Society, in memory of Beulah Wright and a \$250 donation to the Tatamagouche Regional Academy Breakfast Program, as part of the Grand Master’s project.

April 2 was the date for our District #7 spring meeting, which was held in Pictou with D.D.G.M. Brother Peter Richardson presiding. New officers for the coming term were elected. Our new D.D.G.M. will be Vincent Zayas

of Atlantic #107 in Halifax. A degree rally was held at Atlantic #107 on April 11, which saw two members initiated, and eight members taking the first, second and third degrees; a total of thirty-six members from six different lodges. Still in the meeting mode, Grand Lodge and the Rebekah Assembly meetings were held at Summer Street Industries, in New Glasgow on May 8 and 9. Officers for the next term were elected for each: Grand Master for the Odd Fellows will be Brother Charles Ameroso, Deputy Grand Master - Brother Mark Rose and Grand Warden - Brother Alan Hayman. For the Rebekah Assembly: President - Sister Joan Heighton, Vice-President - Sister Debra Robichaud and Warden – Sister Angela Kendrick. During sessions, a memorial service, led by Grand Lodge Chaplain Brother Jacob Leegwater, was held to honour departed sisters and brothers

Helping Hand was pleased to welcome a new member by initiation on March 30. Sister Teresa Feallock is our newest member. Welcome to our great fraternity!

On May 14, several of our members met at the Overstreet Cafe to show our appreciation for the cafe, as it was closing the following Saturday. Over the years, the cafe owner was a great supporter of the River John Odd Fellows.

Lobster ticket sales have been going well. Our final date for ticket sales will be June 19 at Foodland in Tatamagouche, and the draw will be held on June 20, just in time for Father’s Day. The Odd Fellows will be hosting the Rebekahs for a lobster meal on Saturday, June 6 at the IOOF hall.



Congratulations to Brother Jacob Leegwater on receiving the Special Recognition Award from Sovereign Deputy Grand Master Ron Hanson at the Grand Lodge Sessions in New Glasgow.

A District #17 memorial service, to honour departed sisters and brothers will be held at the First Presbyterian Church in Pictou, on June 14 at 2 p.m. We will be lighting three candles this year, in memory of Sisters Marguerite MacCarthy and Alice Langille, and Brother George MacKay.

Nominations for officers of Frazee Rebekah Lodge were held at our last meeting. Nominated for the various positions are: Noble Grand – Sister Joanne Ferguson, Vice-Grand – Brother Peter Richardson, Secretary – Brother Jacob Leegwater, Financial Secretary – Sister Chris Patterson and Treasurer – Sister Marie Langille. Other officers will be appointed by the incoming Noble Grand. Nominations for Odd Fellows will be held later in June.

Well, hope this finds everyone enjoying the upcoming summer. We look forward to seeing all of you at our Festival Days breakfast on July 23.



Helping Hand Lodge #34 and Frazee Rebekah Lodge #33 of the IOOF are proud to sponsor the return to River John of Read by the Sea. Shown in the photo is Dan Ferguson, representing the Odd Fellows and Rebekahs, presenting a cheque to Diane and Ed Kennedy of the Read by the Sea Committee.

Check out their website readbythesea.ca



Two members received their service jewel. District Deputy Grand Master Peter Richardson presented Jamie Craig with his 35-year jewel, and Grand Chaplain Jacob Leegwater presented Bob Dwyer with his 25-year jewel. Congratulations to both of you for your service to the Odd Fellows and the community.



That Doughnut Place

By: Debbie Shaw

After years of building a successful business in Alberta, Lance and Glenda Wotherspoon never imagined they would one day find themselves making doughnuts in rural Nova Scotia, in the middle of the night.

The couple lived in Crossfield, just outside Calgary, where they had built both a home and a thriving business. Their dealership for heavy haul trailers employed ten people and grew steadily year after year.

Then COVID changed everything.

“When COVID hit Alberta, it really made us rethink our lives,” Lance said.

The Wotherspoons sold their house and business and began looking for something entirely different. During that period of transition, friends who owned a doughnut business were moving into Calgary’s old CIBC building and Lance helped with renovations. Before long, he was also helping, and “playing,” as he puts it, with doughnut making itself.

Their friends eventually shared their recipe, and Lance and Glenda began gathering equipment through auctions while considering a major move to the east coast and Nova Scotia quickly captured their attention. They looked at nearly ten properties before settling on one in Welsford. In October 2025, they took possession of their new home. Outbuildings, chickens, and cats were included. And one of the outbuildings on the property became something unexpected: a doughnut shop.

For newcomers arriving from Alberta, it was a dramatic lifestyle change. “When we got here, we bought one of Beulah Wright’s history books right away because we wanted to learn about the area and the people,” Glenda explained.

The couple moved into the house in January and converted the woodworking shop into their baking space. But success did not happen overnight.

“The humidity and sea level here completely changed

the baking,” Lance said. “Coming from the dry Alberta air, nothing worked the same.” There were many failed batches and plenty of frustration along the way.

Help came from local friends Cindy and Gowan McGregor, who worked alongside the Wotherspoons to completely revamp and rebuild much of the equipment. The changes helped perfect the frying process and reduced the amount of time the doughnuts spent in the oil. Slowly, things began to click.

Today, “That Doughnut Place” has developed a loyal following at the New Glasgow and Tatamagouche farmers’ markets, where they regularly sell out. Customers seem drawn to the fact that their doughnuts are a little different from the usual offerings. They are handcrafted, creative, and unmistakably homemade.

Their baking has also expanded into other products. Recently, the Tata Brew Pub ordered pretzel buns from the Wotherspoons for a whiskey tasting event. And word continues to spread. The couple have been invited to cater and attend a growing number of community venues and events.

The business itself runs on teamwork - and unusual hours.

Lance handles the first shift, preparing the doughnuts, while Glenda gets up in the middle of the night to ice

Community News



River John Community Action Society Welcomes Boaters for Another Season

By: Gillian Joudrie

The River John Community Action Society (RJCAS) is pleased to announce that the docks at Roger’s Landing and Bissell Park are open and ready for another boating season.

As residents and visitors return to the water this summer, we encourage everyone to enjoy these valuable community assets safely and responsibly. Whether you’re launching a boat, heading out for a day on the water, paddling a kayak, or simply enjoying the waterfront, we hope you’ll take advantage of these beautiful spaces.

Roger’s Landing continues to be one of River John’s most popular waterfront destinations, and we’d like to thank everyone who visits and enjoys the facility throughout the season.

Many people may not realize that Roger’s Landing is maintained entirely by volunteers. RJCAS works year-round to maintain the property, docks, grounds, and amenities, so they remain safe, accessible, and welcoming for everyone.

As we begin another boating season, we’d also like to extend our sincere thanks to the volunteers who install and maintain the channel markers each year. Their efforts help ensure boaters can safely navigate the river and channel as they make their way to and from the Northumberland Strait. This important work often happens behind the scenes, but it plays a vital role in keeping everyone safe on the water.

As a reminder, there is no fee required to launch a boat, use the slipway, or tie up at the docks at Roger’s Landing. However, donations are strongly encouraged and greatly appreciated. The ongoing maintenance, repairs, and improvements at Roger’s Landing depend

on the generosity of those who use and enjoy the facility.

It is important for users to understand that while access is free, maintaining the docks is not. Materials, repairs, equipment, and ongoing upkeep all come at a cost. Without donations from the community and visitors, maintaining the docks and waterfront infrastructure becomes increasingly difficult and, ultimately, impossible.

If you value having access to Roger’s Landing, we encourage you to consider making a donation. Every contribution, large or small, helps ensure this important community asset remains available for everyone to enjoy.

Donations can be sent by e-transfer to rogerslanding@outlook.com. Your support directly helps fund dock maintenance, repairs, and improvements to the facility.

We are also proud to offer a kayak launcher and kayak storage rack for public use. These amenities provide easy access to the water for paddlers and kayakers. We ask that everyone use these facilities respectfully and help keep the area clean and enjoyable for all users.

As a reminder, **there is no parking permitted at Roger’s Landing.** Vehicles parked near the slipway create significant challenges for boaters attempting to launch and retrieve their boats safely. Please park across the bridge on the Bissell Park side of the village and always keep the launch area clear.

Safety is everyone’s responsibility. We encourage all boaters and paddlers to wear appropriate safety equipment, follow safe boating practices, and be respectful of others using the waterfront and waterways.

The River John Community Action Society is always looking for new members and volunteers. New ideas, new energy, and helping hands are essential to maintaining and improving community assets like Roger’s Landing. If you’re interested in helping make a difference in the community, we’d love to welcome you to the Society.

To stay informed about community projects, upcoming initiatives, and Society news, visit our website at www.rjcas.ca. Over the years, RJCAS has continued to invest in projects that make a real difference in our community,



and we look forward to continuing that work with your support.

Thank you to everyone who visits, enjoys, supports, and helps care for Roger’s Landing. We wish all boaters, paddlers, and waterfront visitors a safe and enjoyable season on the water.



Ria Suidgeest.

River John and Area Historical Society: Museum Update

My name is Ria Suidgeest, and I am a 19-year-old StFX student. As most of you know, our dear curator, Beulah Wright, is no longer with us, but I was lucky enough to spend my first summer working at the museum with her, learning the ropes and absorbing as much information as I could. As we come closer to opening, my goal is to help make Beulah’s goals for the museum come true. We have added a fresh coat of paint to the walls, rearranged some displays, and recycled items that were no longer of use to us. I think she would be happy with the progress that I, and the members of the Historical Society, have made. Beulah’s book can still be bought at the museum for \$25. I look forward to seeing both new and returning faces this summer.



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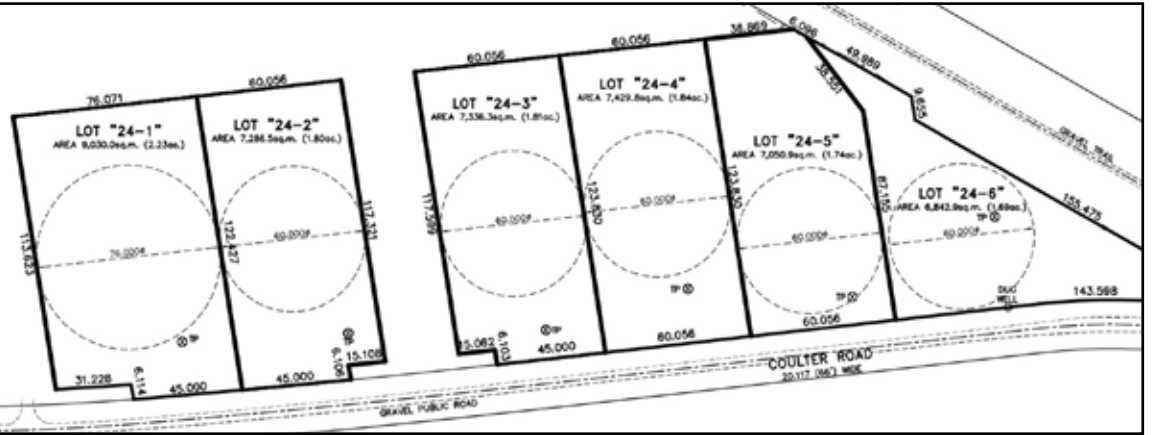
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Fashion Show Fun

By: Mary Beth Sutherland

It was an afternoon of fun and fashion at the River John Legion on Sunday, May 24th. The fabulous fashions from the Ladies Consignment shop in Tatamagouche were modelled by our local women in great style. Items for sports, casual, and fancier occasions were there along with the accessories of jewelry, shoes, purses, and hats. The models were having fun, while the audience were checking out the sizes and prices on the outfits that they especially liked, with the fashions for sale following the show.

There were door prizes drawn throughout the show. Special thanks to the local merchants who donated the prizes: Ashton Blooms, Bonnie Blooms, Come by Chance Collectibles, Karla MacFarlane, Lismore Sheep Farm and MOPC Network, Mountain Farm Strawberries, Seafoam Lavender Company, Village Christmas Store and Yap's Place Restaurant. Thank you to each of these merchants for your support.

The purpose of this Fashion Show was to raise money for the River John Community Action Society and all it supports such as Roger's Landing, Bissell Park, and student workers. Also, it is a fun way to spend time with friends, enjoying fashions and an afternoon sweet treat. Thank you to those who provided food for the tables. Thank you to all who came, enjoyed the afternoon while helping us raise funds for River John Community Action Society projects.

Special thanks go to Helen George and Marj Hatherly, business partners of the Ladies Consignment Shop, who made this possible with their clothing and fashion style.

Photo at top, L to R: Marj Hatherly, Margaret Cripps, Joan Redmond, Janice Thompson, Marilyn Heighton, Chris Innes and Helen George.



L to R: Joyce Lewis, Margaret Langille, Cassie Langille, Maria Langille and Elaine Langille

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Heritage Story Walk

9:30-10:45am • Bissell Park

Open Mic for New Authors

10:00-11:00am • River John Library

Official Opening Ceremony

11:00am • Main Stage Tent at Bissell Park

Children's Event with Camilla Thompson

11:00am-12:30pm • River John Library

Book Fair

11:00am-2:00pm • River John Firehall

Author: Harry Thurston
11:15am • Main Stage Tent at Bissell Park

Author: Dian Day
11:50am • Main Stage Tent at Bissell Park

Lunch

12:30-1:30pm

Author: Jennifer Hatt
1:30pm • Main Stage Tent at Bissell Park

Introduction to Editing

1:30-2:30pm • River John Library

Author Panel & Discussion with John Ashton

2:05-3:00pm • Main Stage Tent at Bissell Park

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Main Stage Tent at Bissell Park

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Can you feel the beat and hear the music?

Donald’s Music Circle

By: an enthusiast

Have you been to Donald’s Music Circle yet? Bring your instruments and voice or just bring yourself to enjoy live music. It’s held every Wednesday, at the River John Lions Den, starting at 7 p.m. Donations at the door are welcome.

Donald’s Music Circle started a little over two years ago, when the West Branch Music Circle ended, and it didn’t seem like it would start back up again. Lion Donald Duggan expressed to Lion Cheryl Frizzell just how much he had enjoyed going there, and not just because of playing guitar, but also being able to socialize, meet other musicians, singers and fellow people that enjoyed the live music too. After a lot of discussion between the two, they decided it might be fun to start a Music Circle in River John and arranged to use the Lions Club, every Wednesday to host “Donalds Music Circle.”

Word travelled quickly, and it wasn’t long before musicians were coming from not just River John, but Pictou, New Glasgow, Tatamagouche, Truro, Halifax and other surrounding areas in Nova Scotia and Canada to join in the music circle; not only musicians came to be part of the circle, but the audience that enjoyed the live jams grew too. The Circle has grown very quickly, and Lion Donald has become quite a local celebrity. You can catch him smiling from ear to ear when he’s out and around and gets recognized for his musical talent.

On Wednesdays, everyone is welcome, both musicians & music lovers. Donations are accepted at the door, and Donald donates them to various organizations and needs in the community, such as the Lillian Fraser Memorial Hospital, and the River John Community Food & Health Centre.

On May 27, we celebrated a 2-year anniversary of the music circle, where 17 musicians and singers showed up and entertained a FULL HOUSE of music lovers, who were all there to help Lion Donald celebrate two years of the Music Circle being in existence. Over the last couple of years, many Lions and community volunteers have come together to help make the Music Circle a great night, and a well-attended and talked about event in River John and surrounding communities. The River John Lions Club and Lion Donald would like to thank everyone for making our Music Circle such a successful weekly event. We look forward to seeing everyone on any given Wednesday night, at 7 p.m. at the Lions’ Den!



Lions Lise and Donald



Read by the Sea Literary Festival, July 11, 2026

By: Diane Kennedy

It’s our 26th year and we are ready to greet readers, writers, and literary lovers from near and far.

Things look a little different this year with the addition of a large tent in Bissell Park for the main stage events. Pictou County’s own John Ashton will bring his passion and wit to the stage as MC. The festival is dedicated to River John’s much loved and dearly missed, Beulah Wright, who brought her love of people, history, and writing to our community. Sheree Fitch, another of our well known and loved authors, will deliver the land acknowledgement... and this is only the beginning.

The chosen authors who will present their writing on stage in the tent include Harry Thurston, just featured in Saltscapes magazine, followed by Diane Day and

Jennifer Hatt. Other events will be running in the library, beginning with the Writers’ Federation of Nova Scotia giving a brief Open Mic session for budding writers, followed by our children’s writer and wish worker, Camilla Thompson, who will have an entertaining presentation for the children. Editors Atlantic will also present an introduction to editing with helpful suggestions. At the same time, the Book Fair, featuring Nova Scotian authors wishing to expand their readership, will be in the Firehall. Festival authors’ books and swag will be available for purchase. This is a unique opportunity to meet talented authors and to support the literary arts in Nova Scotia.

The Overstreet Cafe will be open with delicious coffee, treats, and great take-out lunch choices. Off the Grill will be offering burgers, sausages, hot dogs, and drinks, and Kelly’s Pizza will also be offering one slice of pizza choices and drinks. Both food vendors will be at the River John Old School. The tent will protect us from the sun or rain and will have seating for 90 people but also feel free to sit in the park around the tent if that’s your preference. Traffic will be directed to the Old School and Firehall for parking. The festival will end with closing remarks around 3 p.m.

We look forward to seeing you... let’s fill the tent!

Check us out at our website readbythesea.ca, and see us on Facebook and Instagram. Thanking you in advance for your support of the festival and the arts in our community.



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River John Fire Department

The River John Fire Department would like to send many thanks to the community for the continued support through the Nova Scotia Firefighters 50/50 Draw. Due to this, as well as support through our other fundraisers throughout the year, we were able to purchase a new truck to replace our 1991 GMC Topkick Truck.

We would like to say Congratulations to the Winner of our NHL Package draw, Paul Baillie, back over the winter. We would also like to mention we have another Package draw. This package is MLB Package. It includes: 2 return flights from Halifax to Toronto, 2 tickets to Boston Red Sox vs Toronto Blue Jays (August 13th), 2 tickets to New York Yankees vs Toronto Blue Jays (August 14th), 2 Toronto Day Pass tickets, and 3-night stay at a hotel. We will also have our annual Lucky Duck Race tickets for sale.

Both draws will take place on July 25th, during River John Festival Days. All tickets can be purchased through one of our members, online at rvfd.square.site or at River John Motor Co. Also, during Festival Days, we will be hosting our annual Firefighter Competition on Sunday July 19th, 3 p.m. at the Old River John School. Come out and enjoy some friendly Competition between Fire Departments and watch some of the skills we require to do our jobs.

This Year is a special year for us as it is our 75th Anniversary. We will be hosting an Open House on September 19th from 1-4 p.m., which will be open to the public to come help us celebrate. Please follow us for more details and events in the upcoming months.

Mark your Calendars, August 16th, 2026 for our annual Chicken BBQ. Doors open at noon, until Sold Out, so make sure to arrive early!

Municipality Of Pictou County Hosted a Level 1 Firefighters Course, in which we had one of our own members participate and complete. Congratulations to Spencer Tripp on your Level 1 Training!

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By: Jessie Craig

We excitedly, (and maybe a bit apprehensively too,) discussed as a family and decided that we would submit an application and just see what happens. We quickly got word that we were selected to audition, and a few short weeks later, at the end of March, we hopped on a Zoom call with one of the producers of the show. The audition included a brief introduction of each family member, a breakdown of the game, and a mock game of Family Feud. Fast forward to the third weekend of August, and we were en route to Toronto to play for the chance to win \$10,000!

Janie and I were the fast money players. I was first up, and even though I was so nervous, I felt the calmest I've felt in my whole life. Between Janie and me, we got all the top answers, and (SPOILER ALERT!) - won the fast money round and won our family \$10,000!

You can watch both of our episodes (episodes 50 and 51) for free on CBC Gem.

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Pictou County Climate Summit

By: Ed Kennedy

On May 29th and 30th, the Pictou County Climate Summit brought together a total of approximately 450 municipal representatives, organizations, businesses and community members to strengthen collaboration and accelerate collective climate action across the County.

On May 29th, 2026, a facilitated one-day work session around 10 tables focused on sustainable development, exploring how the environment, community, and the local economy intersect, and where collective effort can drive progress. On my table, I worked with the mayor of one of our towns, an agriculture expert, an MOPC emergency manager, a town communications coordinator, an environmental engineering student, and two other citizen volunteers. This session was designed to face shared challenges and shared opportunities and to:

- Strengthen relationships and activate cross-sector networks
- Identify what is already working on climate change action
- Unlock collaboration opportunities to move work forward
- Find shared priorities for coordinated action
- Build momentum for practical solutions

May 30th, the day of the event, featured an Exhibitor Showcase of organizations and businesses that provide climate change and environmental products and services, and speakers on River Cleanup of Untreated Sewage, Community Food Forest, Hydroponic Farming, Growing Flax Fibre to Produce Fabric, Net Zero Community Buildings, and Resilient Infrastructure Planning.

For further information on the Climate Summit, the lead organizer of the event, Pictou County Partnership, will be publishing a report on the event results later this year.

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River John Community Food and Health Centre Update

What a busy time at the River John Community Food and Health Centre! With your help, our group of dedicated volunteers at the Community Support Society of River John continues to expand our community outreach and impact. The Community Garden is gearing up for another fantastic growing season; the Food Centre is experiencing a shift in clientele and is now supporting over 160 individuals experiencing food insecurity; our Health Centre component is working to expand offerings in our community. The River John Community Support Society offers many opportunities to volunteer in the garden and/or the Food Centre. Come out for a few hours, or you can join up as a regular volunteer. The Food Centre is open every Friday from 1-4 p.m. The Garden Group is busy with the new season. We would love to see more volunteers enjoy this great space. Watch our FB page for upcoming events: fundraisers, workshops, and other special events.

River John Community Garden:
Bernadette Mac Donald, Garden Group Lead

Greetings from the Community Support Society of River John, located beside the River John Legion.

Our garden, planted by a small group of dedicated volunteers, produces lots of fresh veggies from the early summer to late into the fall. We will be getting the soil ready very soon with a plough and then a rototiller. Once that is done the volunteers can put in the electric fence which helps to keep the critters, especially the deer, out of the garden.

Last spring several volunteers came together to get plastic on the huge greenhouse. The greenhouse was a terrific success, and we were looking for another season this spring. Unfortunately, the strong winds through the

winter made the plastic blow and made it difficult to save it. We are seeking other vegetable growers to buy the greenhouse at a reasonable price, and we want a smaller garden size that would more closely match our needs.

With or without a greenhouse, we will be planting from seeds and seedlings to get the garden in. There will be garden space and boxes available for community use. Contact us by email at cssriverjohn@gmail.com If you are interested in volunteering to help grow our garden and to help distribute from it early in the summer to late in the fall, please contact us via the Community Support Society of River John e-mail: cssriverjohn@gmail.com

Happy Growing!

River John Community Food Centre:
CristyAnn Langille, Centre Coordinator

The Food Centre plays an important role in supporting individuals and families throughout our community by providing access to nutritious food, essential resources, and a welcoming environment built on compassion and care. More than just a place for food support, the centre strives to create connection, dignity, and hope for those facing challenges, ensuring no one feels alone during difficult times.

We chose the name “Food Centre” because it better reflects the heart of what we do as a community space focused on support, inclusion, and care, not simply a food bank, but a place where people can feel welcomed, respected, and connected.

Through community partnerships, volunteer efforts, and local support, the Food Centre continues to grow as a safe and inclusive space where people can access assistance, build relationships, and find encouragement. From food distribution programs to community initiatives and outreach, the centre remains dedicated to strengthening our community and helping people feel supported, valued, and cared for.

We are also proud to support a child-led initiative called Mighty Minds for Kids, created by brothers Johnathan Murray and Isaac Langille. This thoughtful program helps provide breakfast items, school snacks, and dinners for children and families in need, while encouraging kindness, leadership, and community care among youth.

We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who supports this cause through donations, volunteering, and community involvement. Your kindness and generosity make a meaningful difference in the lives of so many people, and your continued support helps ensure the Food Centre can keep serving our community with compassion and care.

Health Centre and Kitchen:
Eleanor Baron, Secretary

During last fall and winter, we had some great food workshops with Mandy Sandbach making soup, home-made salsa and many more. The people that attended these workshops could take home what was made and also supplied the Food Centre with the homemade preserves too.

We have many groups offering a variety of services such as: VON frozen meals; Tearmann House are on site alternate Fridays; Beth Kiestead and Connie Smith provide foot care; Chelsey Scott RMT provides massage therapy. In our newly certified commercial kitchen Locally Loved offers prepaid prepared meals to take out, and Kelloway Krafted is now producing their gourmet sauces and preserves. If you are looking to rent space, contact us by email at cssriverjohn@gmail.com

The Northern Zone Pictou County Community Health Centre hosted a Health and Wellness Program Event in April at our location. Medical professionals including a pharmacist, a dietitian, an occupational therapist, and a family nurse were on site. This was a great program with lots of important information. They did leave information books at the Centre for anyone interested. Unfortunately, this event was not well attended enough to bring in their Mobile Unit at this time. We had hoped to have a nurse practitioner and/or a blood clinic at our location and possibly the Mobile Unit, but the parameters for these services have changed, and this is no longer an option. If anyone has any ideas on how to get a medical mobile unit here on certain days, your input would be most welcome.

We encourage anyone with questions to contact us, and we welcome the opportunity to answer them.

Let’s Work Together.

Sports



Ed K., Stacy G., and John M. making the courts sparkle.

What’s New at the River John Pickleball Courts?

By: Rhonda Calcott – RJPC Communications Lead

What’s New at the River John Pickleball Courts? Lots! The official season opening of the outdoor pickleball courts was April 18th. As these pictures show, a group of members rolled up their sleeves to prepare the outdoor courts with sweeping, net set up, and windscreen installations, as well as spring cleaning the washroom and storage building. Although many members were then ready to play with paddles in hand, there was something missing in April – consistent sunshine and warm days! It will not be long now, when there will be no need to wear long pants and sleeves on the court. To improve the physical environment, access to programs, safety and enjoyment of pickleball playing, the following club enhancements have taken place:

Improved Facilities: New sensor LED lights on the shelter, pot lights over the washroom doors, new safety locks for the washroom, and storage doors have been installed.

Internet Access: Wi-Fi is now available at the courts from May through October.

Automated Pickleball Machine: Expected to arrive in June, the ball machine has the capability of expelling up to 200 balls at varying speeds and directions. This will help players practice drives, drops, fast hands, dinks, resets, volleys etc. Yes... pickleball has its own language.

Youth Program: With the help of volunteers from the membership committee, the offering of a Friday evening youth program is being explored, with the goal of attracting those under 18 years of age to learn and enjoy the game.

Charity Skills Clinics: Talented and well-respected club members, Cate and Tully, have again graciously offered their time to provide 4-week “skills and drills” sessions to two separate groups of 12 members. Due to popularity, the registration for these sessions filled up in less than 24 hours! In true community spirit, these sisters will be donating the proceeds of the registration to the RJ Legion to help in the purchase of a new furnace.

River John Festival Days 2026: RJPC will be offering a free “Learn to Play” clinic and the “Thompson Family Pickleball Fun Tournament” as part of the festivities on July 17th &18th. Come to play or cheer on the players that come from near and afar.

Automated External Defibrillation (AED) Training: A free, 1-hour instructional demonstration by a local paramedic will take place at the RJ Legion Monday June 15 from 6:15-7:15 p.m. Members from the community are welcome to attend. Recognizing that public places

such as rinks, libraries, fire halls and courts often have these machines on site, having more people learn how and when to use the AED will help save lives when minutes count.

First Aid Training: Arranged by RJPC, this course will be offered in early summer at the RJ Legion and invites members from the community to attend, at a cost of \$85 (HST included) per person. A minimum of 10 participants is needed so for those interested, please email the RJPC without delay.

The RJPC welcomes members of the public, of all ages, who are curious and wish to learn more about the game of pickleball, to reach out or drop by the courts to have a chat with any member. However, be warned - the enthusiasm for this sport is contagious so be prepared to get hooked! For more information, please email: riverjohnpickleball@gmail.com.

Summer in River John: Exciting Opportunities and Community Spirit

By: Ashley Langille, River John Community Coordinator

As summer approaches, I am thrilled to share some exciting updates from our community.

This year, we have been fortunate to secure funding to hire seven federal and three provincial summer students. These opportunities allow local youth to gain valuable work experience right here in our community without having to travel far from home. It is wonderful to see these programs continue to support our young people while also benefiting River John as a whole.

I would also like to extend a heartfelt thank you to last year’s summer students. Their hard work, dedication, and pride in our community helped make River John a beautiful place to live and visit. Their efforts did not go unnoticed, and we are grateful for everything they accomplished.

A special thank you goes out to Ria Suidgeest, Tena MacLean, and Cohen Cameron, who are already hard at work supporting the Historical Society, helping with day camp planning, and contributing to projects that keep our village looking spectacular. Interviews are currently underway, and I am excited that seven more students will soon be joining our summer team.

This year, we received approximately 15 applications for our summer positions - an amazing number that reflects the enthusiasm and talent of our local youth. Unfortunately, I am only able to hire seven students through the grant funding available. To those who were not selected this year, please do not feel discouraged. I truly appreciate every application submitted and encourage everyone to apply again next year. I wish I could hire every applicant, and I hope to see many familiar names return in future years.

We are also excited to be offering a new approach to our Summer Day Camp program. For the first time, families will have the option to register their children on a weekly basis, rather than committing to the entire summer. We hope this added flexibility makes the program more accessible for local families. If you have any questions or would like more information about registration, please feel free to reach out to me.

Our T-Ball program is also returning this summer. Children ages 3 to 6 will participate in skills and drills, while children ages 7 to 11 will enjoy game play and further skill development. We look forward to seeing the kids on the field, building confidence, making friends, and having fun.

I am currently working closely with local organizations to create a fun, engaging, and memorable summer for everyone in our community. There will be plenty of opportunities to get involved, stay active, and connect with one another.

As we head into the summer months, I would like to wish everyone a safe, fun, and adventurous season. I encourage all residents to get outside, try something new, spend time with family and friends, and take advantage of the wonderful opportunities our community has to offer. Whether it’s attending an event, volunteering, joining a program, or simply enjoying the outdoors, let’s make this a summer to remember.

I look forward to seeing you around River John this summer!



Linda Thompson-Reid with Raiden Langille

Larry Reid Top Scorer Award

By Kelly Tucker

The recent Minor Hockey Association awards included the presentation of the Larry Reid Top Scorer Award, shared each year in memory of Larry Reid.

Larry Reid was a natural athlete who excelled in hockey, soccer, and tug-of-war. Hockey was the sport he loved most, and he was known as a true team player. Larry played with the River John Lions hockey team (bantam/midget), the Stellarton Spitfires, and the Pictou Maripacs, both Junior B teams. He was also a proud and valued member of the River John Trail Blazers of the North Shore Hockey League, where he played wing opposite his twin brother, Terry.

Larry tragically lost his life in a car accident in September 1981 at the age of 26. In tribute to him, the members



Coach of the Year award being presented to Jay Reid (left) by Kelly Tucker (right).

Coach of the Year

Printed with permission of TAMHA Executive

This is the speech that led into a very deserving award at the Tatamagouche Minor Hockey Awards Night 2025/6 season:

Tonight, we are proud to recognize an individual who is well deserving as the recipient of this year’s Coach’s Award. This person’s dedication to the game and his unwavering commitment to our young athletes makes him an invaluable part of our hockey community.

You’ll often see this person around the rink as a player, spectator or as a coach.



Reprinted with permission
Julia Reid-Howard being presented with the award by Michel Robichaud.
Credit: Run NB / Course N.-B.

Female Runner Award for New Brunswick - 2025

Congratulations to Julia Reid-Howell, who is the recipient of the Female Runner of the Year Award for New Brunswick. Julia competed in 14 RunNB events over the course of the year, consistently delivering top performances. She finished this past year, ranking first in both the 5 Mile and Half Marathon and in top position in the 10K. Julia ranks third overall in the 5K for 2025, underscoring her versatility and dominance across different race distances.

Julia is a member of the V MAXX Running Club of Fredericton and is coached by Greg Allan.

The editorial board of *The Pioneer* extends its sincere congratulations on this (and every) remarkable running achievement, Julia. We also apologize for missing this last issue when the congrats were more timely.

of the River John Trail Blazers placed his number 6 on their jerseys encircled in black. Larry’s optimism, sportsmanship, and dedication as a team player continue to be remembered within the hockey community.

This year’s recipient of the Larry Reid Top Scorer Award is Raiden Langille.

The recent Minor Hockey Association awards included an award presented in memory of Larry Reid, which Linda Thompson-Reid graciously shares each year. We would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank Linda for her continued support of our association and our youth athletes. Matt Kenny and Jay Reid have organized the Ray Thompson Memorial Hockey Tournament, assisted by Linda.

The proceeds of that tournament are donated to TAMHA. The contributions help fund important needs within our program - including equipment purchases, jerseys and player development opportunities for our athletes. Linda’s dedication and generosity have made a meaningful impact on our hockey community, and we are grateful for everything she continues to do to support local youth and the growth of TAMHA.

His impact goes beyond skill development. Parents and fellow coaches have shared how great this person is with the kids—always encouraging, always supporting, and always prioritizing their safety. This coach oversees a unique level of player and is often asked questions like “Are we done yet?”, “I need to go pee,” “Can I have French fries after this?” “Can you fix my hair?” “Can you wipe my nose?”, “When can we play sharks and minnows”, “When can we start to body check?” “When do we get to play games?”

This coach is often tasked with redirecting focus from making snow angels or trying to find family members in the stands, to teaching skating drills. This coach is noted for offering words of motivation and encouragement after the ice time. This coach deals with a full range of challenges at every practice. However, if you know this coach, you will know he takes it all in stride, as he is really just a big kid himself.

For his dedication and passion, and commitment to our players, we are truly grateful.

Please join us in congratulating Jay Reid on this well-deserved honour!

The editorial board of the Pioneer would like to add our heartfelt congratulations to you as well, Jay. It is clear you are a man of many talents. Coach of the year for hockey and at our table you are the community scribe.



Melanie and Shawn with their dog Penny. Penny is 10 and while she intends to walk with Shawn and Melanie she has warned them she might not keep up.

Photo submitted by Melanie Cote

Local Couple Turns Lymphoma Journey into 700-Kilometre Fundraiser for Lymphoma Canada

By: Melanie Cote

When my husband and I received our lymphoma diagnoses decades apart, neither could have imagined that one day we would be preparing to walk 700 kilometres around Prince Edward Island to raise awareness and funds for others facing the same disease.

Last year, Shawn was diagnosed with Hodgkin lymphoma, a life-changing moment that brought new challenges and uncertainties. For me, the diagnosis struck especially close to home. I am a Hodgkin lymphoma survivor, having been diagnosed 32 years ago.

We admit we do not understand why both of us were handed the same diagnosis. Rather than dwelling on that question, however, we chose to focus on something positive.

“We can’t change what happened to us, but we can use our experience to help others.”

This led us to take on the Island Walk, a remarkable 700-kilometre journey that completely circumnavigates Prince Edward Island. The route spans 32 sections and takes walkers along scenic coastlines, the Confederation Trail, red dirt roads, beaches, and quiet country roads. Known for its breathtaking beauty and accessible terrain, the Island Walk is one of Canada’s unique long-distance walking adventures.

As we make our way around the Island in the fall of 2026, which will take us approximately 32 days, we will be raising funds for Lymphoma Canada, the country’s only organization dedicated exclusively to supporting Canadians affected by lymphoma and chronic lymphocytic leukemia (CLL).

Lymphoma Canada connects patients, families, friends,

Church News

Move Into Deeper Water

By Rev. Connie MacNamara
Salem United Church

I attended the Annual Meeting of Bermuda Nova Scotia Region at Acadia University in Wolfville from May 27th to 31st, which utilized the theme, “Into the Deep”. It was a call for the church, and for all the people, to leave the shallows near the shore where everything safely stays the same, and to move into deeper water where the unknown can transform us and lead us forward in faith to a better future. And in the midst of worship, theme presenters, reports, proposals, photography, and table talk, there was learning - and I brought some home with me.

I learned that Brene Brown wrote, “Connection is why we’re here, we are hardwired to connect with others, it’s what gives purpose and meaning to our lives,” - and if you haven’t read any of her books yet, I encourage you to do so because they are life changing! I learned that what people want is not to buy more stuff, but rather to seek meaning through creative leisure, connecting with family and friends, committing to advocacy and social projects, and taking the time to reflect. And I learned that ‘what matters’ according to the minister of a UC in Calgary that was down to an attendance of 12 and now has over 200 people attending worship each Sunday, and a strong online ministry which includes hundreds more, is support for leadership, shared values, engaging worship, online connections, contemplative time, public community sharing, eating and playing together, putting money to good use, and nurturing the soul.



Irma LeGrow with John and Florence Craib during the time of fellowship honouring Irma and Murray’s many years of active participation at Salem UC.



Salem UC past treasurer, Murray LeGrow, who has moved to Truro, with the new Salem UC treasurer, Leona Baillie.



Linda Thompson-Reid presenting Murray and Irma LeGrow with a gift in appreciation of their many years of faithful participation at Salem UC.

I share these things I learned as an encouragement that we might all consider moving ‘into the deep’ - to appreciate the world around us, to try something new, to think outside the box, to grow and change, and to find a better way forward into the future. Salem UC is, in fact, already taking a first step forward into an uncertain future by holding a congregational meeting on Sunday July 5th, as part of worship, to discuss finances, attendance, and the possibility of selling the church building while remaining a viable congregation in a new way.

In the present, I will highlight for you that Salem UC hosted a “Musical Afternoon” on April 26th with wonderful local talent and a very receptive audience. On May 22nd, Salem UC held a very successful “Take Out Meatloaf Supper,” with thanks to St. George’s PC for use of their church hall. Upcoming will be a Take-Out Ham and Potato Salad Supper on June 26th; a Musical Afternoon and BBQ on August 16th; a Take-Out Lasagna Supper on September 18th; a Take-Out Roast Pork Dinner on October 23rd; and finally, a Take-Out Turkey



Supper on November 20th. Last month, West Branch UC hosted a fabulous Old-Fashioned Tea, complete with many fancy fascinators, on May 23rd. This month, on Sunday June 7th, Salem UC celebrated the many years of support and participation that have been willingly shared by Murray and Irma LeGrow, who now live in Truro, offering them much gratitude for their presence and their service, and sharing in fellowship following worship.

Next up, Salem UC will host the River John Festival Days opening worship service on Sunday, July 19th at 11:00 am.

May the summer months be a time of fun and festivities for all; and may we constantly learn something new and put it to good use in our faithful living.

Blessings, Connie

St. John’s Anglican Church

Planned Events in the
Second Half of 2026

July 19, 2026: Festival Days at Salem under Anglican Leadership. Heritage and History with a yet-to-be-determined guest speaker.

Aug. 16, 2026: Gospel according to Charlie Pride which will Include readings from the Gospels interspersed with CP music.

In August we will also celebrate the first baptism in several years. The child’s family has its roots in River John, and Archdeacon Glenn Eason will celebrate that day.

Sept 20, 2026: There will be a celebration of fall equinox and/or women in religion

Oct 18, 2026: Thanksgiving

Nov 22, 2026: Invitation of choirs/youth singers to perform/details TBA

DEC. 20, 2026: Our seasonal evening concert will be held/details TBA

As we go forward, we continue to discover saints and/or observances and hope that you will join us in widening our horizons.

A sea of red for Pentecost Sunday, May 24, surrounded Mary Tohill as she extinguished the Paschal candle to mark the end of the Easter season. The congregation announced that Mary is the parish’s inaugural recipient of the Faithful Servant Award from the Dioceses of Nova Scotia & Prince Edward Island, presented on June 14.

Gerry Bowles, left, and Helga Heighton raise pots of newly-planted sunflowers to offer a toast for a productive future for St. John the Baptist Anglican Church on Trinity Sunday, May 31, the church’s “Seed Sunday.”



St. Michael’s Catholic Church Update

By Netta Heukshorst

Regularly scheduled Mass is on Saturdays at 4 p.m. New to the schedule is that on every third Sunday of the month, Mass will be at 9 a.m. On that weekend there will be no Saturday Mass.

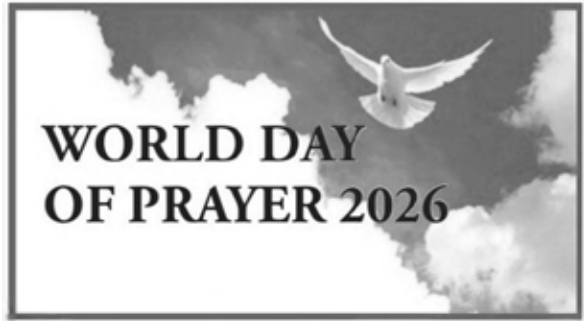
Last March 31st several of our parishioners joined with Immaculate Conception Church in Truro to attend the Holy Chrism Mass at St. Mary’s Basilica in Halifax, where all the oils that are used in the various Sacraments during the year are blessed. The blessed oils for our little mission church in Brule were proudly brought back by Ben Isoner-Reade of our parish.

A beautiful evening of gospel music and quiet reflection called Eventide (when day meets evening) was held on April 23rd. It was very well-attended and open to the community. A lovely reception was held afterwards in the hall with much laughter and fellowship.

Everyone is welcome at St. Michael’s
Smile and be kind always.



Photo Caption:
Ben from our Youth Group



By Netta Heukshorst

This year World Day of Prayer 2026 was hosted by Sedgwick Presbyterian Church in Tatamagouche on Friday, March 6th, and coordinated by Linda Reese and Audrey Tucker. It was a very well-arranged service with several local churches participating.

The 2026 program was written by the women of Nigeria with the theme being,

“I will give you rest, come”.

The guest speaker was Reverend Enjei Achah from St.George’s Presbyterian Church in River John with a heartwarming talk on Nigeria and how important peace in the world is, as is prayer.

St. Michael’s Catholic Church also participated with the readings as well as Bethel Presbyterian Church in Scotsburn. Donations totaled a very generous \$520 to go towards assisting many international programs for worthy causes. A lovely reception was held afterwards to give everyone an opportunity to chat and mingle.

Next year, 2027, will be a very special year for WDP as it is the 100th anniversary of its inception. Since it is a global event, the international committee decided not to have a single country hosting. The program will be written by the World Day of Prayer Women’s International Committee and the theme will be, “United in Prayer for Justice and Peace”.

In 2027, on Friday, March 5th at 3 p.m., WDP will be hosted by St.Michael’s Catholic Church in Brule.

A little poem written by Sri Chinmoy, a spiritual master from Bangladesh,
“Peace is not the absence of power
Peace is the presence of love.”

St. George's Presbyterian Church

By Rev. Enjei Roni

The Lost Coin
The Bible tells us a story in Luke 15:8-10 saying:
8 “Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins [each one equal to a day’s wages] and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it?
9 And when she has found it, she calls together her [women] friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, because I found the lost coin!’
10 In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents [that is, changes his inner self - his old way of thinking, regrets past sins, lives his life in a way that proves repentance; and seeks God’s purpose for his life].”

Jesus told the story about this woman who had lost her coin and couldn’t rest until she found it. She did everything to search for the coin – lit a lamp and swept her entire house until she found it.

I’m sure we all can relate to having lost something valuable and very dear to us. Like the woman in this story, we didn’t rest until we searched everywhere for it until we found it.

In telling this story, Jesus was demonstrating how much God loves each and every one of us. And for anyone who is feeling lost, alone and unloved, know that you are precious to God. And he sent His son Jesus to come and seek and save the lost. God loved you and sent Jesus to die on the cross for you and there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents. All you need to do is to talk to Him and ask Him to come into your heart. If you are not sure how to make that decision, you can contact our churches through the following information: rev. enjeironi@yahoo.com or 782-440-3772.

We also hold worship services as follows:
St. David’s Presbyterian Church, Toney River – Every Sunday at 9.30 a.m.
St. George’s Presbyterian Church, River John – Every Sunday at 11.00 a.m.
All are welcome.

Programs for July:
Vacation Bible School for kids 5-12
and if they are younger, they will need an adult with them.
St. David’s Presbyterian Church, Toney River – July 14-16 from 9.30 – 11.30 a.m.
St. George’s Presbyterian Church, River John – July 6-10 from 9.30 – 11.30 a.m.



Pictures, generously provided by Cindy Langille, are from May 31. We had our service at the Log Church in LochBroom. It’s a replica of the original one built in 1787 by Scottish Immigrants.

That Doughnut Place (cont’d)

and decorate them before market mornings.
Their creations and weekly offerings are posted on Facebook through “That Doughnut Place”. Orders can also be made through Facebook Messenger.

But for Lance and Glenda, the biggest surprise has not been the business success. It has been the people. The couple say they have been deeply touched by the acceptance, kindness, and willingness of neighbours to lend a hand since arriving in Welsford. “We’ve been humbled by how welcoming everyone has been,” Glenda said.

For two people who traded Alberta industry for rural Nova Scotia doughnuts, it seems they may have found exactly what they were looking for.



Top pictures by Mary Beth Sutherland
In the left picture are Isabel Cripps and her great-grandmother Frances Sutherland. Bottom picture is by Linda Thompson-Reid

Local Couple Turns Lymphoma Journey into 700-Kilometre Fundraiser for Lymphoma Canada (cont’d)

healthcare professionals, researchers, volunteers, and donors to create a strong and supportive community. Through education, advocacy, patient support programs, and research initiatives, the organization helps ensure that Canadians facing lymphoma do not have to face the disease alone.

Lymphoma—including Hodgkin lymphoma, non-Hodgkin lymphoma, and CLL—is the fifth most common cancer in Canada, affecting thousands of individuals and families every year. Funds raised through this effort will help support research into the causes of lymphoma,

the development of better treatments, and the search for a cure.

For us , every kilometre walked will carry special meaning. Their journey is about more than completing a physical challenge; it is about giving back, raising awareness, and offering hope to others who are facing a lymphoma diagnosis.

What began as a difficult chapter in our lives has become an opportunity to make a difference.

If you would like to support our fundraising efforts please scan the QR code or go to <https://secure.e2rm.com/p2p/fundraising/302313/team/1046548/en-CA>

Together, we hope to show that even in the face of adversity, something meaningful and positive can emerge.

One journey. Thirty-two sections. Seven hundred kilometres. Countless reasons to keep moving forward.





MOUNTAIN FARM

U-Pick Strawberries

OPEN Mon-Sat 9am-7pm

Crop & Weather Permitting

Mountain Rd., River John

Please call 902-351-2821 to order ready picked berries.

See you in the field!

The Minneys



Obituaries



Loretta Margaret Letcher
February 10, 1932 – March 15, 2026

Loretta Letcher passed away peacefully on March 15, 2026. Born on February 10, 1932, in Welsford, the daughter of the late Ralph Fraser and Jessie Fraser (Baillie).

She was predeceased by her parents, brothers and sisters-in-law, Allister (Betty) and Ronald (Ruth); husband, Kelly Letcher; nephews, Wayne Weatherbie, Keith Weatherbie and Michael Dwyer.

She is survived by sisters, Muriel Sutherland, Shirley Bain, Elsie Dwyer, Diane Whyte; cousin, Elizabeth Devries, and numerous nieces, nephews and great nieces and nephews.

Loretta was a secretary at the Department of Agriculture in Truro for 45 years and retired in Welsford. She enjoyed working outdoors and travelling.

A graveside service was held in spring at Mountain Road Cemetery.



Robert “Murdoch” Sutherland
June 22, 1947 – April 12, 2026

Robert “Murdoch” Sutherland, 78, of West Branch, Pictou County, passed away April 12, 2026, in the Palliative Care Unit of the Aberdeen Hospital in New Glasgow.

Born in West Branch, he was the son of the late Harold and Ellen (MacKay) Sutherland.

Murdoch was a devoted father and enjoyed playing old time music with his family. He played at many dances with his father over the years and was a member of several men’s choirs. One of his favourite pastimes was making maple syrup at his farm in West Branch. He is survived by his wife, Linda (Townsend); daughter, Maggie (Mark), Eastern Passage; son, Matthew (Ariadne), Vancouver, BC. Along with his parents, Murdoch was predeceased by his brother, Donald.

Murdoch’s final resting place is in the West Branch Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Children’s Wish Foundation, 202 Brownlow Ave #125, Dartmouth, NS B3B 1T5.

Arrangements were entrusted to Coulter’s Funeral Home in Tatamagouche, 48 Riverside Dr., Tatamagouche.



William Charles “Billie” Hatch
July 27, 1937 – March 31, 2026

William Charles “Billie” Hatch, 88, Cedarstone Enhanced Care, Truro, formerly of River John, passed away peacefully, Tuesday, March 31, 2026.

Born in River John on July 27, 1937, he was a son of the late Edith (Hatch) Perry and the grandson of the late John and Laura Hatch. Billie was raised by his grandparents, John and Laura Hatch, and resided in River John until his health required him to move to Cedarstone three years ago. In his younger years, he was employed with the Nova Scotia Department of Highways where he drove gravel and salt trucks for many years. Affectionately known as Bill or Billie by family and friends, he will be dearly missed by his half-brothers and sisters in Shelburne and many other family members.

Surviving are siblings, Elizabeth, Ruth, John, Bonnie and David, Shelburne; numerous nieces, nephews and cousins.

Besides his mother, Edith, and grandparents, John and Laura, he was predeceased by his partner of 40 years, Susan Robinson.

A graveside service held 3 p.m. Monday, June 22 in Mountain Road Cemetery, River John, with Rev. Dr. Glen Matheson officiating.

Billie’s family wishes to thank the wonderful Cedarstone Enhanced Care staff for their excellent care, compassion and for making him feel loved.



Margaret Rose Henderson

Margaret Rose Henderson (née Parker) died on March 17th, 2026, at the Lillian Fraser Memorial Hospital in Tatamagouche at the age of 95. She was the daughter of Kenneth York Parker and Margaret Ellen Sharpe. Margaret is survived by three children, Dale (Cindy), Carol Ann and Sheila (Richard); eight grandchildren; ten great-grandchildren and one great-great grandchild. She was predeceased by her husband, John; her siblings, Charlie, Kenny, Donny and Anna; and her son, Kenneth.

At first glance, she may have seemed to live a quiet, unassuming life, but those who knew her well understand that she was a woman of determination with a zest for life. She approached the world with courage and a willingness to try new things. She was, in her own quiet way, a true non-conformist.

In her early years, she taught in a one-room schoolhouse. Later with her husband, she moved to Alberta to earn

enough money to buy a farm in River John with the goal of becoming self-sufficient. Not every dream unfolded exactly as imagined, but this did not deter her from moving forward boldly. When one of her children could not digest cow milk, she turned to full-scale goat farming.

In her prime, she raised all manner of animals, grew all manner of crops, knitted countless mittens and socks, made cheese and yogurt and many holiday feasts, hosted neighbourhood Christmas parties and even designed a logo for her beloved community of River John.

In later years, she found pleasure in the simple beauty of home, especially sitting beneath the massive oak tree in front of her house, watching the birds and taking in life around her. It was a fitting place for reflection on a life well-lived.

Hers was not a loud life, but it was a rich one, full of honest work, integrity, love and quiet boldness.

She will be sadly missed and fondly remembered.

Funeral service took place at 2 p.m., Saturday, April 25th at McLaren Funeral Home, Pictou with Rev. Dr. Glen Matheson officiating. Reception followed at the River John Legion Br. 108. Burial took place at Mountain Road Cemetery, River John.

The family of the late Glen Foance would like to extend our deepest gratitude for the support we've received from the close knit community of River John. Thank you to: Tracy and Annie for organizing and contributing; Ann and the Lion's Club for the venue; Elizabeth and the Overstreet Cafe for food and refreshments; Blaine Sutherland and Jared for allowing Glen to take his last ride in the truck; Taya, for crafting a unique and special urn on such short notice; to the community for the monetary donations, refreshments, and cards. We appreciate your generosity and kindness while we navigate these challenging times. Sandra, Chantal, and Hazen

Legion

100

1926 • 2026

INVITATION TO

THE UNVEILING OF THE
MONUMENT TO THE NO 2 CONSTRUCTION BATTALION

THE RIVER JOHN ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION BRANCH 108
INVITES YOU TO JOIN OUR MEMBERS FOR THE UNVEILING CEREMONY OF A
MONUMENT TO WORLD WAR ONE'S HISTORIC CEF NO 2 CONSTRUCTION
BATTALION, ALSO KNOWN AS THE "BLACK BATTALION".

IN CONJUNCTION WITH THIS OCCASION WE WILL
ALSO BE CELEBRATING
THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION.

LOCATION, DATE, AND TIME:
ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION BRANCH 108
2506 RIVER JOHN STATION ROAD,
RIVER JOHN, NS
SUNDAY, JULY 5, 2026 AT 2 PM

A RECEPTION WILL FOLLOW

Births

Jasper Rain Rocky-Reid
Born: March 5th, 2026
Son of Jack Reid and Chloe Rocky

Grads



Christoph Lohse
Proud Parents: Christiane & John Gill, River John
Beloved Grandparents: late Janice & Christopher Gill of River John
Achievement: BS in Computer Engineering
University: Paderborn, Germany
Presently: pursuing Master in CE while working in research
Hobbies: badminton, games/gaming nights and cooking with friends



Chelsey MacLean
Chelsey MacLean graduated from Mount Saint Vincent University on May 14 with a Child and Youth Care degree, a minor in Gerontology, and distinction standing.

This degree was a long time coming. After completing the NSCC Child and Youth Care diploma program at the Truro Campus in 2014, Chelsey took advantage of the 2+2 program, which allows diploma graduates to transfer their credits toward a university degree. She returned to school at MSVU in 2020 and completed her degree this spring.

Chelsey would like to thank all of her family, friends, and colleagues who supported and encouraged her throughout the past five years and beyond. A special shoutout goes to her husband, Lee, who was the most supportive husband a gal could ask for.

Chelsey is currently working at a daycare in Cole Harbour, where she enjoys helping children learn and grow every day.



Anna Côté
Anna Côté celebrated her graduation from Northumberland High School in June 2026 and is preparing for an exciting new chapter in her education. Known for her creativity and artistic skills in her Nail Art and passion for skin care and beauty, she is eager to take the next step toward her career goals.

This fall, she will attend Elevate Beauty Institute of Cosmetology, where she will enroll in the Esthetics program.

Her parents, Melanie and Shawn Côté, as well as her grandparents, Doddie and Lillian Mackenzie are very proud of her accomplishments and wish her continued success as she begins this new journey toward her professional goals.



Peyton Chace
Mother and Stepfather: Clara MacGee & John Clarke
Father and Stepmother: John Chace & Tashia Moser
Graduated from: Northumberland Regional High School
What's Next: NSCC Truro Campus - Medical Office Administration



Rochelle Heighton & Nole Chapman
Huge congratulations to my sister, Rochelle Heighton, and nephew, Nole Chapman, on their graduation from St. FX.

Proud Brother / Uncle (Robert Heighton) moment.
Nole graduated with his Bachelor of Education this year and, in 2024, with a Bachelor of Science in Human Kinetics.

Rochelle is proud to graduate with him in the same convocation with a Master of Adult Education (Concentration in Health).



Carson Langille
Age: 18
Parents: Tanya and Ian Langille
Grandparents: Wayne and the late Sharon Langille; Robert and Shirley Langille
School: Tatamagouche Regional Academy
Future Plans: attending Dalhousie University, Taking Bachelor of Science



Cohen White
Cohen White is graduating from Northumberland Regional High School.

He is the son of Joseph and Caralei White of Seafoam, and the grandson of Doug and the late Sharon of Seafoam, and Carolyn and the late Bill Elliott of Toney River. Cohen plans on pursuing a career as a lineman.



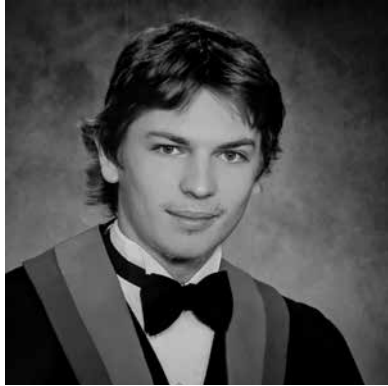
Gracie Rae
Age: 17
School: Tatamagouche Regional Academy
Family: Stacey McInnis & Jonathan Rae
Future: Esthetician or Pharmacy Tech
Hobbies: Being artistic



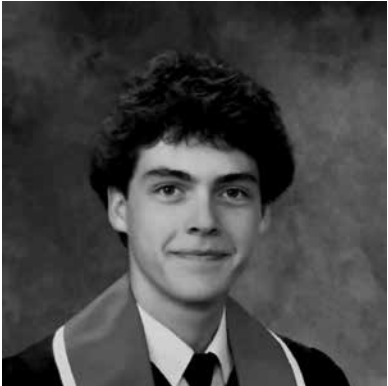
Hunter Tuttle Lepper
Age: 17; graduate of Tatamagouche Regional Academy
Parents: Lindsay Lepper and Aaron Tuttle
Grandparents: Ross and Phyllis Lepper and Percy and Shelley Tuttle
Hunter was an early graduate and completed grade 12 in January, 2026. He is currently attending NSCC Lawrencetown in the Valley and attending Mechanized Forestry Operator Program. Hunter plans to complete college and start working in the forestry industry.



Serena Thompson
Age 17
Parents: Matthew and Jessica Thompson
Sisters: Chloe and Summer Rose Thompson
Brother: Christopher Davis
Grandparents: Debra Jennings, Angus Macneil, Robert Bennett, Belinda Bennett
Great-Grandparents: Gloria Thompson, Marion MacNeil, Jack Cook
Great-Great-Grandparents: Steward and Edith Thompson
Serena is graduating from Tatamagouche Regional Academy and will be going to NSCC Truro to study social services.



Hayden Lepper
Age 18
Tatamagouche Regional Academy
Parents : Randi Munro & Jamie Lepper
Grandparents: Linda Munro & the late Charles Munro, River John and Ross and Phyllis Lepper, Tatamagouche
Future plans: to become Pipe Fitter/ Sprinkler Fitter



Ira Adams-Falconer
Parents: Rachel Adams & Chester Falconer
Grandparents: Robert & Marjorie Falconer
Sister: Jordis Adams-Falconer
School: Northumberland Regional
Next: NSCC Lunenburg Campus Diesel Repair Industrial



Riley Allan
Abby Faulkner proudly presents Riley Allan, who graduated from NSCC Truro Campus with his certificate for Electrical Construction and Industrial.

Announcements

Meadowville Book Event

By Nicole Landry

Calling all book lovers!

Please join us for a community used-book event on Saturday, June 27th from 10 a.m to 12 noon at the Meadowville-Poplar Hill Community Hall (2019 Black River Rd).

This event is in support of a wonderful cause, The Resiliency Through Education Chipper’s Legacy Bursary Fund.

There is a suggested donation of \$15 at the door. Bring a book and leave with a book.

There will be coffee, tea, other refreshments, sweet treats, and great door prizes to be drawn.

The Resiliency Through Education Chipper’s Legacy Bursary Fund is a \$1000 bursary awarded annually to a graduating student from Northumberland Regional High School.

Adrianna MacKenzie, a school counsellor at NRHS, started this fund in memory of her mother, Sylvia (Chipper) MacKenzie, who overcame significant obstacles in life but always maintained the belief that education was a pathway to empowerment.

Last year was the first time a \$1000 bursary was awarded. The nomination process for this year, 2026, has begun and the recipient will be announced soon. Donations to this fund can be made by cheque or via email money transfer to chipperslegacy@gmail.com If you have questions or would like to learn more about this fund, please email our administrator at resiliencyth-rougheducation@gmail.com



Marine Animal Response Society

Reprinted from FaceBook with permission

Though this young Minke whale could not be saved, every response helps us better understand and protect marine life in our waters.

On May 4, MARS responded to a report of a dead young female minke whale in Cape John, Nova Scotia. In collaboration with Dr. Laura Bourque with the Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative at the Atlantic Veterinary College (AVC), we conducted a necropsy on site to help determine the cause of death and gather information that will contribute to ongoing marine mammal research and conservation efforts. Initial findings showed no obvious signs of injury or illness, though further laboratory testing will be completed to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the animal’s condition. Every response helps us learn more about the health of marine animals and the challenges they face in our waters. We’d like to thank everyone who reported the incident and assisted our team during the response, particularly the Municipality of Pictou County and Department of Natural Resources.

If you encounter a stranded, injured, entangled, or deceased marine animal in the Maritimes, please report it immediately to the Marine Animal Response Society (MARS) hotline at 1-866-567-6277. Quick reporting helps ensure trained responders can assess the situation safely and collect valuable information that supports marine conservation efforts.

Interested volunteers can contact MARS via their website: marineanimals.ca/volunteer.

Local Prosperity 2026: Local People, Local Solutions

Community members from across Atlantic Canada will gather in Tatamagouche from August 6–9 for Local Prosperity 2026: Local People, Local Solutions.

The four-day festival and conference will feature more than 30 workshops, keynote speakers, and live music.

The event will focus on practical approaches to building stronger local economies, including creating quality local jobs, community ownership of land and assets, local food systems, and worker-led businesses.

The event is co-hosted by the Centre for Local Prosperity, North Shore Community Connections Society, and the Rural Communities Foundation of Nova Scotia.

For more information or to register, visit localprosperity.ca.



Maria Langille
Photo kindly provided by Robin Dalton

Maria Langille; A Lifetime of Dedication is Being Celebrated

By: Robin Dalton

Local resident Maria Langille has been awarded an Honorary Membership to the Nova Scotia Nurses’ Union (NSNU). This prestigious lifetime honour, presented this past April, is reserved strictly for individuals who have rendered distinguished service and extraordinary assistance to the province’s nursing community.

Maria’s remarkable career began in 1978. Over nearly five decades, she brought clinical skills and deep compassion to a wide variety of healthcare settings, working on hospital float teams, rehabilitation units, and in long-term care.

Beyond her daily nursing duties, Maria became a powerhouse within the NSNU after joining in 1982. In 2007, she was elected Vice-President of the Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) component, a vital leadership role she held until her retirement in 2023. During her tenure, she was a tireless advocate for her peers, regularly speaking at lunch caucuses, participating in rallies, and taking the fight for fair working conditions directly to Province House.

Her advocacy work also extended onto the national stage. Maria worked closely with the Canadian Labour Congress and the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour, where she championed women’s advancement, equity, and inclusion across the workforce. Her efforts were instrumental in expanding the professional scope of practice for LPNs, shifting the role from task-focused work to a practice rooted in leadership and critical thinking.

In her acceptance speech, Maria reflected on the evolution of healthcare and the power of unity. “Together, we have improved working conditions, strengthened our voices, and most importantly, protected the quality of care for our patients,” she stated, praising the resilience of today’s front-line nurses.

The community of River John celebrates Maria’s incredible legacy of leadership, mentorship, and unwavering dedication to the nursing profession.



Image provided by Michael Clough - photo credit: LensFlare Photography

Jacob Clough Earns Selection to Prestigious U.S. Hockey Academy

By Michael Clough

It is with great pride and admiration that we recognize the outstanding achievements of Jacob Clough, a dedicated young athlete from River John, who has been selected to attend the highly respected New Hampshire Mountain Kings Hockey Academy Prep School. This elite program, which accepts 15-year-old players, will run from August through June and represents a significant milestone in Jacob’s developing hockey career.

At just 14 years old, standing 6 feet tall and weighing 162 pounds, Jacob has already demonstrated an exceptional level of commitment, discipline, and maturity both on and off the ice. His passion for the game began at an early age. By the age of two, he was already skating on outdoor rinks built by his father, spending countless hours in challenging winter conditions refining his skills and developing a deep love for the sport.

Jacob’s talent and work ethic quickly set him apart. He earned early recognition through his selection to the Pictou County Crushers Novice Advanced teams and has consistently progressed through elite levels of competition year after year. Most recently, he completed his second season in the highly competitive U15 Major League, where he continued to distinguish himself as a player of significant potential.

Over the past year, Jacob has drawn considerable attention from top hockey programs across both Canada and the United States. He has been invited to skate with a range of elite teams, from U15 to U18 levels, resulting in multiple highly competitive offers. These opportunities reflect not only his ability on the ice, but also his strong academic performance, as he maintains an impressive average between 85% and 90%.

Despite his accomplishments, Jacob remains grounded and humble. He is quick to credit his success to the unwavering support of his parents and grandparents, whose encouragement and dedication have played an essential role in his journey. His family takes immense pride in his achievements and continues to support him wholeheartedly. Jacob also acknowledges the invaluable guidance of his coaches, including those from Hubletes Hockey, Dana Fraser, Simon Nevin, and Dave MacIntyre, who have all contributed greatly to his development.

Looking ahead, Jacob is focused on continued growth - becoming stronger, faster, and more skilled as he prepares for the next level of competition. His spring and summer schedule is filled with high-level tournaments across Canada and the United States, as well as elite identification camps. In addition, he maintains a rigorous training routine at home, utilizing a full commercial-grade gym, an indoor shooting area, and an outdoor rollerblade training surface, where he consistently shoots 400 to 500 pucks daily.

Jacob Clough exemplifies the qualities of a high-performance athlete: dedication, resilience, humility, and an unwavering passion for the game. As he continues to develop, his future in hockey appears exceptionally bright, and his family has every reason to be proud of all he has accomplished - and all that lies ahead.



Lady in red jacket: Holly Du, Top left - bottom right: Top: Judy MacKenzie (l) and Betty MacKay (r) Alistair Campbell (l) and Rev. Glen Matheson (r) Bottom right: Ruth Roddick

Hanoi and Scotsburn Intertwined for Almost 5 decades!

By Eric M. Wilson BSc BEd

I had the honour of hosting an old friend of mine, Holly Du, here in Scotsburn from 4th to 9th June 2026. During that time, she presented her new book (By the Riverside of Kampuchea; Memoirs of Sieu Van Tran - Return from the Killing Fields - A Love Story - available on Amazon Books) and a PowerPoint presentation in the Antigonish, Pictou and New Glasgow libraries. She also visited all of her old friends here and in Shiretown Rest Home and attended church at Bethel. Holly Du’s story when she arrived here in Scotsburn in 1980 is as follows.

In 1979 Kay and Steve Wilson and many other folks from Scotsburn, including Rev. Dr. Paul Brown, decided that we needed to do something to relieve the obvious and severe suffering that the so-called “Boat People” were enduring. Cast aloft into the South China Sea (as they were) by China, Vietnam and Cambodia (now Kampuchea) they suffered for years prior to that event before finding refuge in UN based refugee camps in Thailand and Hong Kong. It was all over the news for weeks here in the west, and people were empathizing with their desperate plight all over the western world. Anyone who was conscious of world events in the late 70s and early 80s knew well of the “Boat People”.

After much red tape, we at Bethel Presbyterian Church successfully sponsored our three young (18- 19 years of age) Chinese Vietnamese women - Mai, Yo (Yvon) and Hua (aka Holly) Du. A month later, in 1980 the oldest brother Ping arrived with his wife Che and their baby girl Phuong (Victoria). These truly warm and thankful people were quickly accepted, housed, fed and absorbed into the fabric of rural Nova Scotian life, lovingly. After all our work and their suffering, we were finally united. During the two years they stayed here they got to know very well dozens of helpful people who grew potatoes and vegetables for them, helped them traverse federal government red tape and most valuably taught them English, often with hilarious results! Thank God for body language and patience. “Knife, fork, spoon, say Grace, now we eat” (one of many of Lilla Elliot’s lessons,) “One cat two legs...four cat(s) four legs”. Many heartwarming memories were made in Scotsburn.

In 1982 they moved away to urban Canada for greater opportunities in ESL and education (Hua has a Master’s degree and became a social worker - mental health expert). Mai, Yo and Hua (Holly) moved to Toronto, and Ping, Che and Victoria to Edmonton - and made good lives for themselves, becoming truly great citizens (and ambassadors) of Canada. Over the years my mother Kay Wilson and Rev. Paul Brown and others kept in close touch, tracking their lives and praying for their success. And they all succeeded.

Holly, being of a scholastic and literary turn (she has written 14 books) has recently written an inspiring story in English for a North American audience. I can personally attest (as one of two editors) that the story of Sieu Van Tran is truly amazing. Holly came to know the Sieu Van story through a Christian TV station in Ontario and was entranced by her and her truly harrowing experiences in the (literally) Killing Fields of Cambodia (at the Dangrek Mountains on the border of Kampuchea and Thailand) after years in several primitive work camps set up by the brutal Khmer Rouge regime of Pol Pot. Sie Van and her family (and tens of thousands besides) were the unwitting victims of the massive ideological and political changes that were occurring. Complete uncertainty as to where their future lay, (let alone their next meal,) was a constant characteristic of their daily existence. There were many times and incidents where their lives were in jeopardy from guns, disease and famine. The family subsisted by hook

and by crook largely because of the strong character and quick thinking of Sieu Van and her mother...but the story, as related by Sieu Van Tran to Holly, has all the hallmarks of a Hollywood Blockbuster.



1980 - L-R: Holly, Yo, Mai, Victoria, Che and Ping

The book is titled “By the Riverside of Kampuchea: Memoirs of Sieu Van Tran - Return from the Killing Fields; A Love Story”. I hope and pray that people here will take the time to read this book which is a testament to those who managed to survive and to the healing Grace of God. Holly can be reached by email at duholly@gmail.com

Thank You

Et lux in tenebris lucet - John 1:5
And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.



Piktuk Mawio’mi: A Gathering of Friends and Family, Pictou Landing First Nation School

By Melinda MacKenzie

If you drove past the Pictou Landing First Nation School on June 6th and 7th, you couldn’t miss the bursts of colour, the aroma of BBQ, the traffic and the deep, steady thumping of a drum that you could feel right in your chest!

For outside visitors, it might have looked like a fun festival or an outdoor market, but for us - the students and community members of Pictou Landing First Nation (Piktuk) - these two days mean something much bigger.

Ceremonies hold great importance in Mi’kmaw culture, and they’re commonplace for more than just traditional occasions like one might think. In the last edition of The Pioneer, we shared about ‘Feeding Apuknajit’ which is a ceremony in itself, and this time we’ll share about the Mawio’mi – which translates to “gathering/meeting”.

Each year, most communities around Mi’kmaki host a Mawio’mi as an opportunity to gather friends and family and celebrate; there’s also usually a fundraising component for a group within the community. Piktuk hosted our 34th annual Mawio’mi on June 6th and 7th.

Whether you grew up practicing these traditions or you are completely new to them, understanding why ceremonies exist can help us all appreciate the rich culture of our province a whole lot more

What Happens at a Mawio’mi?

If you have never been to one before, think of a Mawio’mi as a massive family reunion, a spiritual church service, a historical playground, and a birthday party all rolled into one weekend. The main focal point of the whole weekend is a giant circle called the arbor, with the equally pivotal Sacred Fire nearby; it burns for 4 days and is lit on the Thursday prior to the big weekend. Before anyone is allowed to step inside, the area is blessed with a cleansing ritual using smoke from sacred plants/medicines like sweetgrass and sage. This isn’t just for show; it is a serious tradition meant to clear away bad thoughts

and negative energy so everyone can get along and enjoy the weekend together.

Once the circle is ready, the “Grand Entry” begins. This is like the opening ceremonies of the Olympic Games. A parade of community leaders, firefighters, Elders, veterans, women, children, men and dancers, steps into the ring, moving to the rhythm of huge drums from different community drumming groups, which mimics the heartbeat of Mother Earth. It’s a truly powerful experience. The ceremony continues for a few hours with different groups dancing, drumming and singing in competition, before ending with a “Grand Exit” at the end of the day. In the evening, there will be a “Grand Feast” for everyone in attendance - often lobster (jake’j) in our community. The next day, the order is repeated.

The clothes the dancers wear are not called “costumes” - they are called regalia. Each outfit is custom-made by hand, often by a family member or folks themselves, and can take months or even years to finish. Ribbon shirts, ribbon skirts, jingle dresses, shawls, peaked caps and headdresses are some of the regalia you’ll see on display at any Mawio’mi. Every design tells a personal story about the person wearing it, their family history, or their deep connection to nature and their community; or they are sentimental and meaningful pieces.

Why Secrets Used to Be Necessary

To truly understand why people are so happy, loud, and proud at a Mawio’mi today, you have to consider our (not so distant) history. For a very long time in Canada, Indigenous people were legally banned from holding public ceremonies, speaking our native languages, or practicing our traditions out in the open.

One of our school chefs and community member, Sylvia Francis, explains that for her parents and grandparents, even simple household items and traditional pastimes had to be hidden, or they would be destroyed by government workers.

“Mawio’mi shows that we value history and culture, and we get to see old friends and practice our Mi’kmaw traditions,” Sylvia says. “Back in the day, Waltes boards (a traditional game) even had holes put in them so we couldn’t play! Indian Officers would break Ji’kmaqns (instruments made from Black Ash/Wisqoq trees) which is why they look how they do, so they could be burned quickly. We (her parents’ generation and earlier) weren’t allowed to speak our language or sing our songs. At Mawio’mis now, we celebrate the things we couldn’t before.”

Because of that difficult history, the Mawio’mi is not just a party; it is a triumphant celebration of survival. Every time someone speaks the Mi’kmaw language or hits the drum in plain sight, they are honouring the parents and grandparents who had to keep those traditions alive in secret - or not at all.

Finding Peace in the Drumbeats

For our school community Elder Ralph Francis, the annual weekend gathering is less about the noise and more about the incredible sense of peace it brings to the mind and body. “To me, it clears my head - puts me in a calm spot - seeing everyone singing and dancing makes worries go away,” Elder Ralph shares. “I think it exists to give relief; back in the day there were no ceremonies - we gave thanks to Creator in private but we were not allowed to practice ceremony in public during childhood like we can today with Mawio’mi—which also makes it so important.”

Elder Ralph also notes that the very beginning of the event is what sticks with him the most. “The opening ceremony is my favourite part because it brings out art and language and culture and it is beautiful.”

Mawio’mi Faves

While the adults focus on the deep history and spiritual meaning of the ceremony, we students are busy making memories, enjoying the sunshine (on Saturday), eating, shopping and having fun being Mi’kmaw Proud. When asked what they love most about the weekend, you get a beautiful picture of what makes a Mawio’mi so special to us.

- “What’s your favourite thing about Mawio’mi?”
- Colin Paul: “I like to play and hear the songs.”
 - Izzy Carrigan: “I like to dance and sing.”
 - Emmett Phillips: “You can wear your regalia.”
 - Bell Francis: “The snacks and food.”
 - Joshua Brooks: “Toys you can buy.”
 - Zach Carrigan: “Dancing and shops and get to meet up with friends.”
 - Bella Francis: “Freeze-dried candy.”
 - Landen Denny: “Dancing to the Kojua.”

Seeing kids like Emmett proud to wear their regalia, or children like Colin, Izzy, Zach and Landen falling in love with traditional songs, hopefully signals that the culture is in safe hands. We aren’t learning about Mi’kmaw history from an old school textbook - we are living it out loud with our friends!

Piktuk Mawio'mi (cont'd)

Nm'ultes - 'I will see you'

As the 34th annual Mawio'mi wrapped up and families packed up their trucks to head home, the grounds fell quiet again. But the good energy from the weekend doesn't disappear. For us, the songs, the laughter, and the shared history will keep us connected until the Sacred Fire is lit again next June, or when we head to Mawio'mis in communities across Mi'kmaki this summer.

If you are thinking about dropping by a community gathering in the future but feel a little nervous because you don't know the rules, don't worry! These events are open to everyone, and the community loves sharing their culture with our neighbours. Come and watch us celebrate, eat some food (maybe a traditional bread called 'luskinikn'), check out some art and things like beadwork in the vendor area, or get some freeze-dried candy like Bella.

Pjilitaq - which means 'come in and sit down' in Mi'kmaw.



A Summer of Art Camps for All Ages with Creative Pictou County

By Sarah Maharaj

Creative Pictou County is inviting residents of all ages to explore their creativity and connect with the region's growing creative community this summer through a diverse lineup of camps, workshops, and studio experiences hosted at 99 Water Street in Pictou.

Kicking off the season is the Creative Camp Connection, a two-day retreat for adults taking place July 2 and 3 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Described as a "grown-up summer camp for your creative side," the program encourages participants to step away from their daily routines and reconnect with creativity in a collaborative studio environment. The retreat will feature instruction and mentorship from a range of local creatives, including Jennifer Coveyduc, Jenny Eldridge, Mansi Mehta, and Quinn Randle.

For younger artists, the Creative Sampler Camp will run July 20-24 for children ages 7 to 11. The week-long day camp will be led by local artist Jennifer Coveyduc. Campers will have the chance to explore tactile materials, learn hands-on artistic techniques, and develop new creative skills in a fun and supportive atmosphere. All supplies are included, making the program accessible for families seeking enriching summer activities focused on creative expression and confidence-building.

Creative Pictou County is also introducing a Studio to Showcase summer camp designed specifically for youth ages 11 to 17. The program will focus on artistic growth, experimentation, and presentation, encouraging participants to create original artwork while strengthening existing skills and exploring new artistic styles and techniques. Guided by local creatives Elisa Rutledge, Ashley Farrell, Jennifer Coveyduc and Kate English, students will work toward developing their own artistic voice in an encouraging environment. The experience will culminate in a special gallery opening where participants will professionally showcase their work for family, friends, and members of the community. In addition to the featured camps, the organization will host weekly studio drop-in sessions throughout the summer. Open to participants of all skill levels, the

sessions are intended to foster community connection while providing space for personal projects, creative experimentation, and collaboration in a shared studio setting.

Creative Pictou County says the programming reflects its ongoing commitment to strengthening arts and culture in the region through accessible and inclusive opportunities for creative participation.

Registration for all summer programming is now open, with organizers encouraging community members to register early as space is limited for select camps and workshops.

Creative Pictou County is a not-for-profit organization founded in 2013 with a bold vision: to champion arts and culture across the region and strengthen the creative fabric of the community. Their mission is to foster meaningful connections between artists, organizations, and the public, nurturing a thriving and sustainable creative sector in Pictou County.

Find us online at www.creativepictoucounty.com or on Facebook and Instagram.

Easter Colouring Contest



Jett Dares is this year's proud winner of the Post Office's Easter Colouring Contest.



There were many colourful entries submitted to the Easter Colouring Contest.

CENTRAL NOVA

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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

Mary Beth Sutherland



Mary Elizabeth Sutherland (’81) helped correct a historic wrong in Canada’s national story through her leadership in preserving the legacy of the No. 2 Construction Battalion. The granddaughter of Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Sutherland, who commanded Canada’s only all-Black battalion during the First World War, she has devoted years to ensuring that the service and sacrifice of these men are properly recognized.

As a member of the No. 2 Construction Battalion Apology Committee, Mary Elizabeth played an important role in the national effort that led to the Government of Canada’s historic apology in 2022. Through research, public engagement, and collaboration with community partners, she helped bring long-overdue recognition to soldiers who served their country while facing racial discrimination at home.

Mary Elizabeth’s commitment extends beyond national recognition. In her community of River John and across Nova Scotia, she has participated in heritage initiatives, historical presentations, Remembrance Day events, and storytelling that bring the history of the battalion to new audiences and future generations.

In recognition of her leadership and community service, she was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Medal.

Through her work to restore recognition, preserve memory, and honour those who served, Mary Elizabeth Sutherland embodies the leadership, integrity, and commitment to justice recognized by the Grace Annie Lockhart Sesquicentennial Pin.



Mary Beth



L to R front row: Charlotte, George, Isabel and William Cripps
Back row: David and Mary Beth Sutherland, Margaret Cripps and Emily Sutherland



Terry Lynne and Malcolm Reid

Easter Egg Hunt 2026
This family event was planned by the River John and Area Recreation committee.



Grace Annie Lockhart Sesquicentennial Pin

GAL 150

The Grace Annie Lockhart Sesquicentennial Pin was created by the Mount Allison Federated Alumni Board to mark the 150th anniversary of Grace Annie Lockhart’s historic achievement as the first woman in the British Empire to earn a university degree in 1875.

This special recognition celebrates alumnae whose lives and work reflect that legacy -women who have made meaningful contributions through leadership, service, innovation, and community impact.

The recipients represent generations of Mount Allison women who have carried forward a tradition of determination, curiosity, and public purpose, continuing Mount Allison’s enduring legacy of advancing women’s education throughout Canada and beyond.



SANDY L. STEWART:
A renowned artist in our midst

An expressive art educator with an enthusiasm for rich colour and traditional images, Sandy’s subjects vary from commonplace to the eclectic. Although “landlocked” in upper Canada for years, she has recently moved back to Nova Scotia and her work is reflective of her love of the sea, maritime people and their traditions.

Sandy’s earlier formal education was at Mount Allison University where she obtained her B.F.A, and Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, where she received a B.Ed. specializing in art education and art therapy.

After initial teaching in the Nova Scotia school system, she accepted a position at the Toronto French School in Toronto, Ontario. There she started the Art Program at the school and introduced the International Baccalaureate (IB). Today she is one of the IB examiners and workshop leaders for Canada in the area of visual art and has been running and teaching at the art department at King’s Edgehill School, in Windsor, Nova Scotia.

Sandy has been influenced by Monet, Matisse, pioneer woman artists such as Emily Carr and Georgia O’Keeffe, and the Post Impressionists. Her intensive use of colour has been influenced by travel and her love of culture and also a regular pilgrim to many “temples” of contemporary art in New York, Italy, England, Paris and Chicago.

Many of her students have gone on to pursue successful careers of their own in architecture, film, and the arts.

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Forest Schools

By: Kelly Shaw



Maverick Falconer, Everett Mat-tausch, Isabel Cripps, George Cripps, Weston Lothead-Mingo, Georgina Manning, William Cripps, and Emma Hines all enjoyed their time at Forest School.

Photos submitted by Mary Beth Sutherland

There is something quietly happening in fields, forests, and muddy clearings across Nova Scotia. Children are building forts from fallen branches, identifying animal tracks in the snow, stirring soup over camp stoves, and learning to assess risk by climbing trees instead of avoiding them altogether. This is the world of Forest Schools. Forest School is an educational approach grounded in relationship with the natural world; and it is trending. Yet, for many families and educators, Forest School feels less like a new educational trend and more like a return to something children may have lost along the way.

While the term Forest School originated in Denmark in the 1950s, the philosophy behind it is far older. Indigenous communities have long understood learning as something embedded in land, relationship, observation, and participation in community life. In many ways, the growing interest in Forest Schools reflects a wider recognition that children learn deeply through direct experience, movement, curiosity, and connection to place.

At its core, Forest School is more than outdoor education. It is a pedagogical approach which means it is a way of understanding how children learn and grow. Programs are typically child-led, emergent, and relational. Rather than rigid lesson plans, educators follow the interests and questions of children themselves. A puddle becomes a science experiment. A stick becomes a fishing rod, a wand, or a bridge. A fallen tree becomes both a challenge and a classroom.

To adults, it can look like play. But play is the language of children, and educators, Child and Youth Care practitioners, and often parents recognize that something much deeper is happening there. Children are developing confidence, learning emotional regulation, implementing problem-solving abilities, practicing communication

skills, building resilience, and social connection, and they might not even know that that's what is happening.

There is something remarkable about watching a child who struggles to sit still in a traditional classroom spend an hour fully absorbed in building a bridge across a stream. Outdoors, many children seem to settle differently into themselves. The forest lessens some of the pressures they carry. There are no rigid expectations, and fewer opportunities for comparison. At Forest School, movement is expected not managed, and learning feels embodied, and linked to life.

Research increasingly supports what many educators and families have observed intuitively for years. Time spent in nature is linked to reduced stress and anxiety, improved concentration, increased physical activity, stronger emotional wellbeing, and greater creativity. Forest Schools support environmental awareness while creating opportunities for children to become capable through experience itself.

I think it is interesting that one of the defining features of Forest Schools is the idea of risky play. That phrase can sound alarming at first; however, there is an important distinction between danger and risk. Danger is something a child cannot reasonably anticipate or assess. Risk involves learning limits, making judgments, and developing confidence. Climbing a tree, balancing on a log, using simple tools safely, or helping to build a fire, all become opportunities for children to develop competence and self-trust.

Forest Schools also challenge adults.

Forest Schools ask us to reconsider what learning looks like. In a culture that often measures children by productivity, outcomes, grades, and standardized expectations, Forest School gives opportunity for us to

ponder what matters. Curiosity matters. Relationship matters. This evokes the question about whether children always need to be hurried from one structured activity to another, or whether there is value in slowing down enough to notice the world around them.

All of this is not to suggest that Forest Schools are not without critique. Questions around accessibility offer us to think about barriers to access. Outdoor programs might require transportation, specialized clothing, trained facilitators, and flexible schedules that are not equally available to all families. It is also important to be sure we are not romanticizing relationships with nature without acknowledging colonial histories connected to land access and stewardship.

Here in rural Nova Scotia, where woods, shorelines, and fields remain woven into community life, the philosophy behind Forest Schools feels both innovative and oddly familiar. Many of us can recall how our childhood was spent outdoors from morning until dusk. We built, explored, and learned.

As conversations about children's wellbeing, mental health, and education continue to evolve, Forest Schools invite us to reconsider some fundamental assumptions about learning. They remind us that growth is not always measured by how many worksheets got completed or what grade you got on a test. Growth is found in muddy boots, scraped knees, shared discoveries, and the confidence that comes from exploring the world first-hand. Whether Forest Schools represent a new direction or simply a rediscovery of something many communities once knew, they challenge us to imagine an education rooted not only in knowledge, but also in relationship, wonder, and belonging.

The collage of pictures was taken when the Pictou Forest School ran a session in Tatamagouche this spring.