



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

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

Royal Canadian Legion Centenary



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Born in the wake of the First World War with an initial focus on advocacy, the Legion is still going strong a hundred (100) years after its incorporation in 1926. Still an advocate for Veterans and their families, still the guardian of Remembrance, and still an impressive community force – with over 1,350 branches throughout the country. Queen Elizabeth II granted the Legion the word “Royal” in 1960, and Canada’s Governor General remains the vice-regal patron of The Royal Canadian Legion to this day.

Over the decades, the Legion has been a beacon of assistance through two World Wars, significant military conflicts, peacekeeping missions, and social upheavals such as the latest global pandemic. Literally millions of people have been touched by the work of the Legion and its branches, through good times and bad. Members and volunteers have been instrumental to its great success. “We are so proud of this organization and its members and thrilled at the prospect of welcoming new members from all parts of Canada to our ranks during our centenary year, many of whom we hope will be with us for a long time to come,” says Berkley Lawrence, Dominion President. “Among them, will be great volunteers, fresh ideas, and all of them will truly strengthen our dedicated and growing membership of over 270,000 people.”

Throughout the year, the Legion will hold special events at the national, provincial, and local levels, and will announce new projects that will mark its entry into the next century. As an example, free and full membership to the Royal Canadian Legion is being offered to new members who enroll in 2026.

River John’s Branch 108 members received their charter in 1946 and as such will celebrate 80 years along with this 100 Year Anniversary. The Branch’s picturesque 5-acre Remembrance Gardens will be the venue as we host a Garden Party in July which is the official anniversary month. Watch for further details on this exciting event.

Vision

Our vision for The Royal Canadian Legion’s Centenary in 2026 is to inspire all Canadians to stand with us in honouring Remembrance, supporting Veterans, and building stronger communities. Together, we will

celebrate 100 years of volunteerism, while continuing our proud legacy of honour, advocacy and service to community and country - carrying it forward for the next century. Mission Our mission for 2026 is to present a year-long, multi-faceted campaign that not only inspires Canadians to join the Legion and support our efforts but also deepens our connection to the sacrifices made by Veterans. By celebrating our 100-year legacy of service and volunteerism, strengthening relationships with Veterans and communities, and promoting Remembrance, we aim to ensure the Legion’s success and Canada’s continued support of Veterans and Remembrance for generations to come.

River John Legion Happenings

By: Mike Topley, President



**Branch 108
River John**

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

As many know, the No. 2 (Black) Construction Battalion initially formed in Pictou in 1916 was commanded by Lt. Col. Daniel Sutherland, a native of River John and great-grandfather of our own Branch Chaplain, Mary Beth Sutherland. In commemoration, the River John Legion Branch 108 will soon unveil a monument on the Legion property recognizing the work of this battalion.

At the social and recreational level, winter/spring activities are back in swing with Kids First and Line Dancing on Mondays, regular Legion breakfasts on the 2nd Saturday of each month, cribbage the 3rd Saturday and washer toss on the 4th Saturday each month.

Of course, our annual smelt fry is a spring highlight for many. Smelts (220lbs) were ordered, received, cleaned, washed, and frozen in preparation for the annual event, scheduled for Saturday, 28 February. Legion volunteers cooked and served platefuls of smelt along with biscuits, molasses, dessert, tea and coffee, until sold out. Local musicians provided complementary back-up tunes for all to enjoy.

We at the Legion Branch 108 wish everyone a safe and happy spring. Anyone wishing to join our Legion or become a Friend should call 902 351 2261. While we certainly encourage full membership, Friends are welcome and not obligated. It just means that you will receive our monthly e-newsletter.



Full house for delectable smelt fry served by (among others) our cheerful Jan Carruthers.



(l to r) Our very accomplished smelt chefs: Randy Duplessis, Robert McLeod and Alan Manning

Remembering Beulah

By: Amanda (Wright) Fulton



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

I am one of Beulah's nieces, and I'm honoured to have been asked to speak about her on behalf of our family. She was a true legend - one who deserves recognition for how beautiful a person she was and how greatly she contributed to our world and everyone around her. I hope these words express how much she meant to all of us and make her proud.

Beulah was dependable. She could be counted on for sage advice, words of encouragement, or, on rare occasions, a gentle reprimand when the need arose. She was well-known for her unbelievable memory, her never-ending knowledge and for being a calm voice of reason in any situation. She truly was an amazing woman.

She loved with every fibre of her soul and was fiercely proud of every member of her family. She doted on her parents and admired them deeply, showing this devotion by choosing to stay home to help care, not only for them, but also for her beloved brother, Leigh.

From Grammie, she learned cooking, sewing, painting, and a love of reading. She inherited Grammie's gentle spirit and patient, loving nature. From Papa, she learned many things too - most while accompanying him to the barn or woods, memories she often said were among her favourites. From a very young age, he taught her the alphabet, arithmetic, and spelling while they worked side by side.

In my opinion, the most impressive thing she learned from Papa was how to drive their team of horses. She took after him in his special way with animals and could handle the team just as well - if not better - than most men. She was a natural that not only her father was proud of, but her siblings as well.

Beulah deeply adored her siblings. To her sister Jeannie, they weren't just sisters - they were the dearest of friends. To her brothers, she was a fountain of knowledge. To them all, she was fearless, adventurous, intelligent, and their hero. They admired her greatly even allowing her to "help" with crossword puzzles, because let's be honest, she was the only one who could solve them.

She had a strong faith and loved singing along at family gatherings and attending church. Confident and independent, there was very little she wouldn't try - and succeed at.

Growing up, the family didn't have many material things, which helped Beulah truly appreciate what she did have, and understand the importance of family and love - values she passed on to all of us. She had a supportive hand in raising all of her siblings, as well as her nieces and nephews. She let us each find our own path, never letting us doubt that she was always there - ready to hold our hand when we needed courage, offering encouragement to reach our goals, and beaming with pride as she happily shared our accomplishments with anyone who would listen.

Beulah travelled all over the world - Europe, Scotland, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Northern Canada, Trinidad and Tobago, just to name a few. She loved learning and was always eager to expand her knowledge, or take on a new challenge.

Like the rest of her family, she was an extremely hard worker and wore many hats throughout her life: shucking scallops on boats, working in fish plants, serving as an office clerk and secretary, teaching young children - including Dexter and Benson - and later teaching at the School of Fisheries. She also became an instructor with St. John Ambulance and was made a Serving Sister in the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, an honour of which she was immensely proud.

And then there were her "hobbies." Beulah was an accomplished author. She wrote a book on the Hedgeville School, contributed to newspapers such as The Pioneer, wrote for magazines and most recently published Musings and Memories of River John History. True to her selfless nature, she donated all of the proceeds from that book to the museum she cherished.

Her humble heart was overwhelmed by the number of people who attended her book launch to show their love and support. Her devotion to River John and its people was obvious to anyone who visited the museum. She was immensely proud to share the strong history of her home and its community. To her family, it was no surprise - she was held in high esteem and truly loved by everyone she knew.

To all of her nieces and nephews, she was our world. Many of us spent weeks each summer with Grammie, Papa, Beulah, and Leigh - getting firewood for winter, helping Lewie with the hay, taking trips to the beach and stopping for ice cream on the way home. Visits to the fisheries pool where she proudly showed off all of her nieces and nephews. For the girls, there were fashion shows - wearing her colourful nightgowns, jewelry, and shoes while she recorded us on her video camera. The ramp was our runway; because of her, we felt beautiful. We likely ruined several nightgowns, but she never complained.

Life with Beulah was always an adventure. She took us along as children while she searched cemeteries for family gravesites, teaching us a fascination with our family tree. She loved history and could recite stories from memory that amazed everyone. Genealogy was her passion - if she couldn't trace your family upon first meeting you, give her time and she soon could.

Beulah had the biggest collection of photographs I think anyone has ever had. She was the family photographer for

most of her life, for all family gatherings, reunions and several weddings, including mine. With every visit, no matter the occasion, Beulah took pictures and captured our whole lives in every snap. I learned from her the importance of having all of those pictures, because when they're gone, the pictures and memories are all we have. Being the photographer meant she wasn't in as many of the pictures; looking through them, I will always feel her smiling there on the other side of the lens.

She was an elegant lady who could pitch hay and drive a team of horses just as easily as she could dress in heels and confidently teach a classroom full of strangers. Strangers of course who soon became friends - and then family.

Beulah was the glue that held our family together. She organized Christmas parties and reunions with the help of Jeannie, reminding us of what truly matters - that we are family. We will forever remember her warm, all-encompassing hugs, her cherished childhood stories, and her contagious laugh that always ended with an "ah dear."

We're a stubborn bunch and we love fiercely. During her time in palliative care, everyone commented on how loved Beulah was because she was never alone. There were always family members at her side, supporting her and one another. The sing-along we shared around her while Nick played guitar - that's our family, and that's what she taught us.

Dearest Beulah, thank you for blessing us with the very best sister and aunt anyone could ever ask for. We will carry you in our hearts forever and your legacy will continue to shine.

Rest easy knowing we will be okay.
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Read by the Sea Festival MC

By: Diane Kennedy



John Ashton, MC for the 2026 Read by the Sea Festival

Does the name John Ashton of Pictou County ring a bell? Until a few weeks ago, it didn't mean anything to me. After our committee of volunteers began working to bring the Read by the Sea Festival back to River John this summer, we needed to find a dynamic MC to lead our festival on July 11th – a big personality with a passion for the arts and a love of history and literature.

John Ashton is that person. From our first phone call he was not only happy to accept the role but honoured to be asked. I was touched by his enthusiasm and his love for River John. He said that he had the privilege of working with Beulah Wright and other members of the River John community to research and develop the Historical Kiosk behind the Museum. We couldn't have found a better fit for this new and innovative one-day literary festival in the heart of our village. After meeting him in the Pictou Library, John kindly gave me some of his books and clippings from his Past Times articles in *The News* – homework for me!

I was astounded at the stories that John brings to life about famous Pictou County people who made significant contributions to society, our country, and the world. From Calbert Best and his Doctor mother Carrie, who were removed from the Roseland Theatre, New Glasgow, for sitting in the white section in 1942, to the famous Viola Desmond who was also removed from that theatre, jailed and fined four years later. Both Dr. Best and her son embarked on careers that would change Canadian history. Kenneth Leslie of Pictou was ostracized by the US government in 1949, along with more than 47 others, including Albert Einstein, Martin Luther King and Charlie Chaplin, who were listed as communists and threats to national security.

John recounts the stories of many Pictou County born men and women who made history. Close to home, in 1924, Tomas George MacKenzie of River John was kidnapped by rebel leader Hipolito Viltá and his bandits during the Mexican Revolution. This event triggered serious diplomacy discussion between Canada, United States and Mexico. After nine weeks of travel on horseback with poor clothing and little food, MacKenzie escaped his captors and reached his own Mexican home in Parral.

Ashton's books along with other authors' will be available for purchase. Come meet John on July 11th as he MCs the 2026 Read by the Sea Festival in River John.

On April 21st at 6:30 pm John will be sharing a presentation on his book, *Searching for Raymond-Ville*, at the River John Library. The PowerPoint presentation on the book, using photographs, graphics and text, will describe why immigrants left France and settled in Pictou County. Ashton has made this 30-minute presentation on many occasions and has received great feedback. Join us to meet this excellent speaker on Tuesday evening, April 21, 2026.

Editorial

As the Season Turns

By: Kelly Shaw

March always feels like a turning point in our part of the world, a moment in the cycle of the seasons. Winter has not quite released its hold, yet the signs of spring are beginning to appear. The light lingers a little longer in the evenings, the air softens on certain days, and conversations turn toward what lies ahead. Like the seasons, community life moves in cycles. Quiet periods followed by renewal, gathering, and growth. Across our community there is always much to celebrate. Graduations, births, anniversaries, volunteer committees, service groups, and the steady work of planning summer festivals and events all mark the ongoing rhythm of life here. These moments form part of the circle of community life, and *The Pioneer* exists because of them. Each issue reflects the contributions of people who offer their time, talent, and care to sustain the place we share.

This month we mark the 100th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Legion—an important reminder of the generations who have served and supported one another through times of challenge and change. We also look ahead to the commemoration of the No. 2 (Black) Construction Battalion, whose legacy remains an important part of the story of Nova Scotia and Canada. These moments of remembrance remind us that communities are shaped not only by the present but by the many circles of history that came before us. As spring approaches, the next turn of the seasonal circle is already visible. Community organizations are preparing for summer events such as River John Festival Days and Read by the Sea. Donald's Music Circle continues to bring people together and neighbours are beginning to think about gardens, outdoor gatherings, and the many ways we reconnect during the warmer months.

As someone who is still fairly new to this community, what stands out to me again and again is the spirit of participation. People step forward, lend a hand, share stories, and support one another. In many ways, this newspaper reflects that shared effort. Articles arrive from readers who want to celebrate achievements, remember someone important, share local knowledge, or mark a moment in the life of the community. The pages of this issue are filled with those contributions—photographs, notes of thanks, notices of events, obituaries, and news that directly affects our readers.

As this season continues to turn, we also look ahead to the coming fishing seasons, another important part of the yearly cycle along our coast. The stories in this issue offer glimpses into that enduring rhythm and the knowledge carried from one generation to the next. Before long, spring will fully arrive, bringing with it another season of activity, creativity, and connection. The circle will continue to turn, as it always does.

Until then, let's look forward together.

In case of a disruption in postal delivery, you can find *The Pioneer* for pick up at the following locations:

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

Members of the Pioneer Team Remember our Beloved Beulah Jane Wright

Linda Thompson-Reid:

Educator, researcher, writer, genealogist, church and community volunteer, and treasured family member are a few of the words which describe Beulah. She was an optimistic, forgiving individual and a friend to many - near and far. Beulah is fondly remembered and greatly missed by all who knew her.

Debby Shaw:

Five years ago, when I moved to River John, Bruce and I settled across from the Museum. I met Beulah then and she helped me find my family connection to River John. I quickly realized that anytime I needed information, Beulah had it. I also realized that whenever I needed to talk to a friend or see a friendly face, I would drop over the road and have a visit with Beulah.

Debby

Joan MacLeod:

Although Beulah's sister Jean was in my class at school, I first became aware of Beulah through her affiliation with Salem United church. One of her most endearing qualities was her deep love for her family. It was admirable and an inspiration to us all.

I got to know her better when I became editor of the *Pioneer*. Beulah was one of the original editorial board members. Her passion for history, especially the history of River John, was exemplary. In my opinion, she embodied in herself the history of River John. Every historical story or idea for a story for the *Pioneer* was researched and written by Beulah. She loved nothing better than to dig up the facts and write a story. She also had a passion for genealogy and absolutely glowed when strangers dropped into the museum asking about a long-lost ancestor. She always found the information they were looking for and also enjoyed recounting the great day she had had at the museum, finding out information for tourists.

One of my favorite times with Beulah was when she was a member of our trivia team at the annual River John Festival Days event. I remember one year her coming on her scooter, dressed jauntily with a straw hat. And we went to listen to the music on the veranda together. She was such a fountain of knowledge. All those questions which we said, "We will ask Beulah" now have to go unanswered.

Beulah's passing has left a big hole, which is impossible to fill. The *Pioneer* team, Salem Church, the Museum and Historical Society and of course her family all miss her enormously.

Mary Beth Sutherland:

Having worked closely for a number of years with Beulah Jane Wright, through the River John and Area Historical Society and Museum plus the *Pioneer* Newspaper, we found we had similar interests in history and genealogy. She became a great travelling companion to historical and genealogy events. We travelled to Halifax, Amherst, Truro, New Glasgow and Pictou. It would surprise me as to the number of connections she had and in the various ways. People would be so pleased to see her, and they had great respect for her. Then she would say on the way home, "It was so nice to see them."

Our last drive away was in mid-November, to Amherst, and a meeting of Cumberland County Genealogy Society where she proudly presented them with a copy of her book, "Musings & Memories of River John History," for their library. In early November she

was invited to a tour of the historical Muckler House in Brule. She was so pleased to be invited and make notes for another Pioneer story. I was also invited as her chauffeur and photographer. She was planning on more stories to write for future editions of the Pioneer, and another book.

An early trip we did, years ago, was to the Lismore area, I don't remember why. But we paid a surprise visit to her brothers, George and Benson, at their workplace, as they were preparing Lismore Seafood for the upcoming lobster season. Well, it wasn't just them that she said hello to, she knew many of the workers, having worked there in the early 1970s herself.

Beulah was great to travel with and had great knowledge to share. In recent years, when her health was not as good, as we would leave for a destination, I would ask if she had told her family that she was off with me, as I didn't want a search party sent out. I think once she forgot to tell them that we were off on an adventure, and there was much concern that she was missing!

It is always hard to say goodbye to loved ones and friends, but we are fortunate that we are left with memories to think about and share.

Julie Windebank:

Beulah loved the north shore and especially this village. I admired her independence, her wealth of knowledge, and the deep love and support shared within her big family. Beulah was a natural teacher: she had interest in everything and everyone, and was always so generous with her time, knowledge and her genuine warmth of personality. Ria Suidgeest, a student employed at the Museum last summer, said: "Beulah re-engaged my interest in history with all of her stories and wisdom. She inspired me to consider more academic focus on history at university. She will be missed by me and the Historical Society." Already I've heard people say: "Oh, that was something we should have asked Beulah" - I've thought it myself often, since she's been gone. So at The Pioneer we'll keep gathering the stories, sharing the photos, contributing to the village as best we can and valuing our rural way of life. Yes, we surely miss Beulah.



Christiane Gill:

"One picture says more than a thousand words"

This simple truth is what connects Beulah and me beyond the boundaries of this world.

Just a few weeks before Beulah, unbeknownst to anyone, had to leave us, she asked me to take a few pictures for both her siblings' 50th wedding anniversaries. I was thrilled to oblige, not only because of the honour, but also because I knew that she and I would be spending one absolutely fabulous day together - a day that will stay with me forever. To "warm up the camera" I took a few pictures of the cat that lives there. That one picture of that cat encapsulates everything that Beulah was and cherished (a list so long it would resemble a novel). I have had it as a screensaver on my computer to ground me, to inspire me, to remind me of everything I need reminding of, but most importantly, to remind me that "I am loved, always."

Thank you, Beulah!

Word Spotlight

Serendipity

noun

The occurrence of finding something good without looking for it.

Example:

"Starting a conversation at the café led to a serendipitous new business partnership."

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Community News

Valentine Tea at the River John Library

By: Diane Kennedy



Left to right: Linda Thompson-Reid, Gizele Mitchell, Debby Shaw, Debra Parker, Jan Hynes, Stacey Gillis, Gillian Crawford, Helga Heighton, Irene Teffer, Diane Kennedy, Jocelyn Heighton, Margaret MacLean, Margaret Minney, Lise Milou, Mary Beth Sutherland, Debbie Harder, Donald Duggan, and Christiane Gill (via cell phone).

You may know that the River John Library offers coffee/tea on Tuesday afternoons throughout the winter months. A quiet place to gather and chat. There might only be two of you or there might be more, but it is always a welcome time for connecting and sharing news.

It was at one of the livelier coffee hours that I decided to host a Valentine's tea. Why not, it's been a WINTER! The trick I have discovered is lots of social media coverage, about a week of Facebook posts with fun, different photos and texts. Promise yummy treats and get them thinking about a special teacup they might dust off and bring and, oh my, there were some stunning teacups. (You might ask Margaret Minney about her darling unique cup.) But social media won't do it on its own – you need to mention it to everyone you meet and personally reach out to friends that are not online. Nothing beats a personal invitation. And that's how the tea idea got started.

Those who know me know this is right up my alley. I love to bring people together in a beautiful space that welcomes friendship and sharing. I told a friend it's

kind of like A Field of Dreams – build it and they will come. Come they did, we had more than 20 guests and that's a lot of tea. And to my surprise we had one gentleman, one virtual guest via cell phone and two very cute, well-behaved, granddaughters (thank you Mary Beth Sutherland, they were adorable).

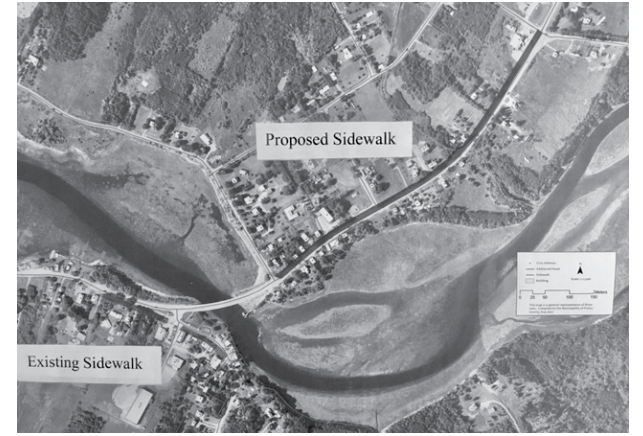
I brought a box of goodies for the occasion along with two bottomless teapots, my special teacup, and heart-decorated cookies, plus other decorations and goodies. Thanks to Margaret MacLean for coming early to help me set up the event room. Then people started coming and bringing delicious baking as well as their chosen cup. It was very exciting. The tea was poured and people spread around the tables and seating areas to talk. It was quite a sight.

Everyone agreed it was a wonderful afternoon, and we should repeat the process for St. Patrick's Day and Easter. "Well, why not?" I say, so mark your calendars and don't miss out! Oh, and a heads up - wear green for St. Paddy's Day.... See you then. 🍀

And a sincere Thank You to the library staff.

River John Sidewalk Update


By: Mike Topley, RJCAS Sidewalk Lead



Submitted by: Mike Topley

Recent discussions with County staff indicate that there has been no decision on the River John sidewalk project. Council is currently reviewing various capital works projects. If the sidewalk is given the green light then detailed design, tendering and construction could proceed.

Over 550 petitioners have confirmed the need for a sidewalk in River John. Please keep the pressure on.



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West Branch United Church 2026 Potluck Dinner & Auction

By: Ian and Linda MacLean

On January 31st, a very cold winter evening, members of West Branch United Church, along with many people from the general area, gathered to share food and to participate in a goods and services auction. The event was very well attended, with the hall filled to capacity. A great quantity and variety of food was on offer, and safety precautions were implemented by our two members who recently completed a food handling course. Suffice it to say, there was no scarcity of excellent food.

Tim Parker, a professional auctioneer living in our community, once again provided his services. Tim runs a fast-paced and well-choreographed show, which in this case lasted about one and a half hours, starting after dinner was completed. All auctioned items were donated and included:

- Firewood
- Paderno pots and pans
- Kindling
- Various photos and paintings
- Mountain Farm strawberries gift certificates
- Load of manure
- Guided hike to the site of the abandoned gold mine works on The Craig
- Locally raised chicken
- Ashton's Garden gift certificate
- Homemade dog treats
- Guided snowshoe hike followed by supper at the home of Ruth Baillie
- A wide variety of merchandise
- Many home-baked food items



The net proceeds exceeded \$2,800.00, which is a welcome boost to our church. Equally important was the opportunity to eat and converse with neighbours, friends and acquaintances on a cold evening in the dead of winter.

We want to thank everyone for their support.

Recipes

easy Sausage Rolls

Christiane Gill

For both versions: store bought puff pastry

Version A: your fav. Store-bought uncooked sausages

OR

Version B:

1x pound uncooked ground pork

(seasoning measurements are approximations – always season to taste)

6 tbsp. - breadcrumbs

1 tbsp. - dried, ground thyme

½ tsp. - salt

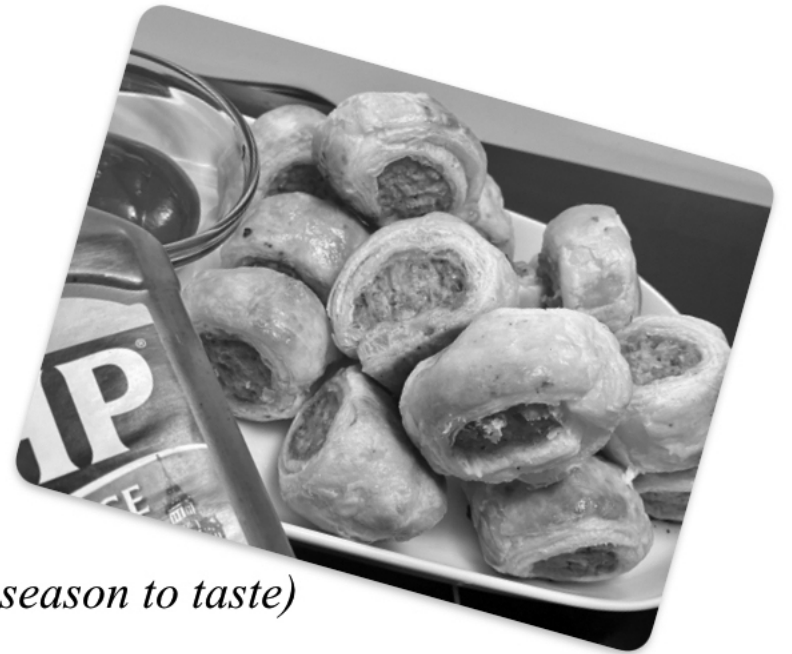
1 tsp. - mustard powder or 1 tbsp. yellow mustard

½ tsp. - dried, ground sage

½ tsp. - onion powder or 1 small sautéed, finely chopped onion

½ tsp. - ground pepper

Optional for both versions: 1 egg, beaten



Preheat oven to 400°F/200°C

Thaw the puff pastry, unfold and cut lengthwise in half.

Version A) Get the sausages out of their casings and (depending on size) cut lengthwise in half

Version B) Create “sausages” by mixing all ingredients under B) (except the egg!) and then form meat rolls to fit along the length of the puff pastry.

Line the sausages up along the long side of the dough, wet one long edge of the dough with water, roll the dough around the sausage meat, cut into desired pieces (string cuts the cleanest), place seam side down on the sheet pan, (brush with egg) and bake for at least 15 min. depending on the size until golden brown and fully cooked (min. 165°F inside).

Serve with HP Sauce, Ketchup or your whatever you prefer and
ENJOY

The Smelt

By: Leonard Bigney

“So where did all them tasty little fish go?”

I remember there was a time when every household had a pan of smelts frying at smelt season. My father told me about times when the season was so busy with twenty-eight different nets being in the river at once, everyone with oil lanterns at night; it was quite a sight to see. At tide time, everyone doing the same, would have close to the same weight, even as high as a ton in one net, at 15 cents per pound. It was a real affordable treat for most.

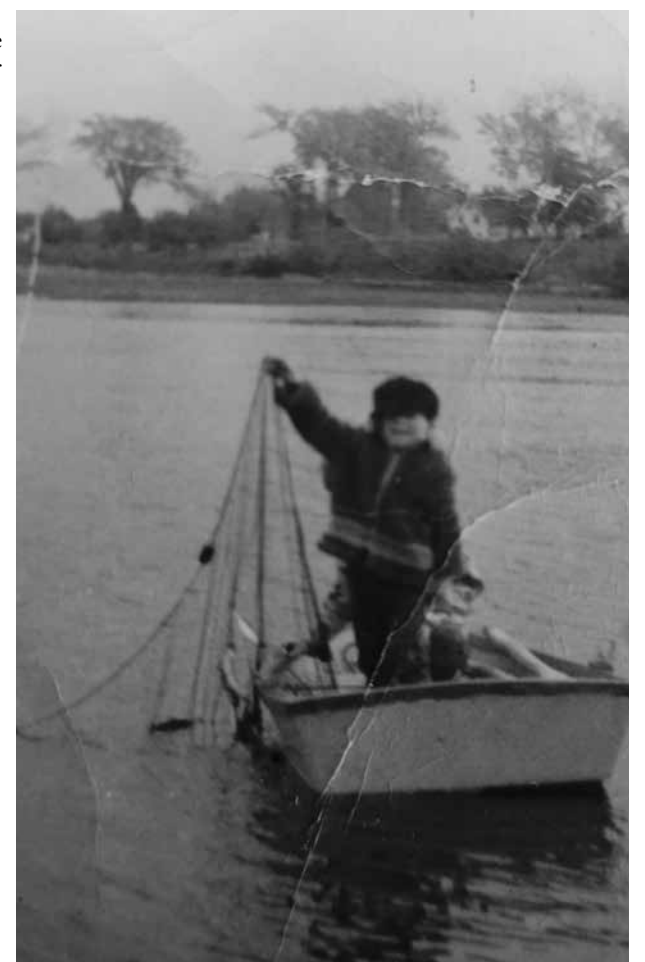
I started fishing with my dad on the ice around 1967; I was about 6 years old. We had two bag nets or two berths which mark your spot in the channel. Everyone with a license had a berth, making sure your spot was always available. A hole was cut in the ice with a crosscut saw, 33 feet long and one and a half feet wide. Ice tongs were used to pick the ice blocks out. Two large poles, each with a big steel ring at the top, held the net at the surface, and two push-down poles with a steel ring at each end were used to sink the net below the ice. As the tide runs, it spreads the net and

as the smelts follow the bank they would swim into the funnel-shaped net. Every six hours, as the tide changes, you had to be there and be ready on the ice to haul your net, or the tide would turn, and the net would also, allowing all the fish to swim free.

As you may have noticed, the shacks are very scarce these days, next to none; even spearing with hook and line is a waste of time. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans just passed a law in New Brunswick that only pop-up shacks or tents are to be used, as shacks were left out until the ice melted and they'd sink down under, left for the community to retrieve them.

So, with all the changes, from our channel closing in, to cormorants, seals, and striped bass going strong, the smelts seem to be disappearing. Or who knows - maybe it's a cycle, one can only hope and guess.

Right: Leonard, as youngster on the River, with a gill net for open-water smelt fishing



Community News

West Branch Singers 16th Christmas Concert

By: Heather Smith, Director

It is hard for any of us to imagine that sixteen years have passed since we had our first Christmas Concert in the hall at West Branch where we expected 30-40 people and over 80 showed up!

We have since grown to be between 40-50 singers and 2-4 musicians.

This past Christmas concert was a huge success with funds raised going to the local churches and food banks.

Our wonderful musicians, Jim White, Dave Palmer and harmonica-carrying Mike Topley, led us through old favourites, and Denise White sang a new one called: "Noel". Five children played elves and helped pass out the goody bags to the audience (one per couple) so over 125 bags of homemade cookies/tea and treats, made by Amy Butts. We then did a children's skit about how the Grinch stole Christmas.

It was just about a full house and the weather was perfect. Everything was wonderfully organized by Elizabeth Bezanson, with the assistance of Darlene Pierce and the singers, who produced such magnificent food for all to be enjoyed after the enchanting show. The joy of these indulgences was underlined by that enveloping feeling of fellowship and the beauty of the church. This event was such a pleasant interlude in the hustle and bustle of Christmas.

This year we were honoured to have Reverend Glenn Matheson sit in with our 15 men and 28 women. Everyone in the group worked hard to make this evening come together so magically. We had several baskets, a beautiful candelabra, and many more interesting items that we sold tickets on.

We thank all who came out to hear us and invite anyone who enjoys singing to join us when we start up again in March after our winter break. Our singers are between the ages of 45 and 92 (yes, you read correctly) and since most of us don't read music, we harmonize and make it up as we go along and lean on each other to learn new things. We are also very fortunate to have the musicians we have; so if you like to sing all kinds of music from classic old rock and roll to gospel to country, and just about everything in between, do come out and join us.

To find out when we start again, please call me (902-305-1759) or Jim White (902-351-2260). We practice at the River John Legion at 6 p.m. every second Sunday until our summer break.

So be there - or be square!

West Branch and Area Community Association News

By: Reg. Crewe



Hello from West Branch and area.

The West Branch Wednesdays, a topical presentation and meal, continue to be a huge success and we have obtained funding for the upcoming year from the Seniors Outreach Program and the Municipality of Pictou County. We appreciate the continued support.

In February, we had a presentation from local internet guru, Michael Jensen, about Artificial Intelligence and its impact. Our March 4th presentation was Michelle Langille, Dental Hygienist, who shared some very interesting oral health tips. On April 1, Emily Hodgson, Environmental Specialist for MOPC and the Town of Pictou will speak on Climate Action in the county. These get-togethers are not only informative but also encourage social connection and, hopefully, reduce isolation for our community members.

We are holding our 33rd Annual Maple Syrup Festival Pancake Breakfast on April 25, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. This is our largest fundraiser, and we have such great support from the community and many volunteers that make all our events possible. If interested in helping out, please contact Elizabeth Bezanson or send a message through our Facebook page. Our thanks to everyone.

Our Annual General Meeting will be held on May 4, at 7 p.m., and we encourage all community members to attend. We have openings on the board and if anyone is willing to give up an hour per month for a board meeting to help manage the affairs of the Association, it would be greatly appreciated. At the AGM we will approve the annual budget, elect officers and adopt a new Policy Manual which will guide future boards in the operation of the hall. The current board consists of: Jim White - President, Catherine Dagleish - Secretary, Reg Crewe - Treasurer, Gary Johnson, David Luxton, Charlie Kennedy, Lynne Hart and Patsy Murray Chapman - Directors.

Terri Clark and her aunt Margaret presented the West Branch Hall with an award given posthumously to John Alexander Murray, a past resident of West Branch. He is a descendant of Billy "Sheep" Murray. Many of the Murrays in the area are descended from him, as are the McCulloughs and others. The award and family history are displayed in the hall.



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

Wishing everyone a good end of winter and early spring.

River John and District Lions Club

By: Lion Lizz Langille

We are a dedicated, local, volunteer organization, where we focus on helping and supporting our local community of River John, and its members, through volunteering and fundraising.

The last few months, as always, have been busy for us. The club brought in three new members, Karen, Pam, and Elizabeth. Elizabeth being a third generation Lion, following her grandfather's and father's, footsteps. We are always looking for new members, and if you've ever thought about joining, or are wanting to help, we would love to have you. Going back to October, Halloween night, we opened the club doors and encouraged other community members to dress up and come pass out treats with us to the kids. We helped the Legion with their poppy sales, participated in laying a wreath on Remembrance Day, held a community family movie night and had a successful, very first paint night fundraiser at the club. December saw us in New Glasgow helping man the Salvation Army Christmas Kettles, and at our village's Tree Lighting, where you might have seen us handing out hot dogs and our new yearly calendars, which is also another successful fundraiser we do. We also take part in weekly bingo, and we collect refundables that you can drop off at the club anytime if you're looking to help support our cause. And, if you haven't heard of, or attended, Donald's Music Circle, you're missing out. Donald Duggan holds his weekly Live Music Circle, every Wednesday evening, at 7 p.m. at our Club. Monetary donations are accepted at the door, everyone is welcome, and it's a great time to just get out of the house, socialize, enjoy live music with evening lunch, tea or coffee, and just have a fun time mingling with everyone.



New members Lions: Pam, Karen, and Elizabeth

Upcoming April 11th, we have a fundraiser happening at the club, where you can come make resin glass sun-catchers to take home, and we are looking into having an open house/membership fun day this spring, so keep an eye on our River John Lions Club Facebook page for details or to sign up for the Suncatcher Fundraiser.

Of course, our fundraisers are only so successful because of the ongoing support of our community members, that we are so thankful for. They allow us



 11 Harris Rd.
 Pictou
902-485-4362
 or
 223 Foord St.
 Stellarton
902-755-2277
 Benjamin Moore Authorized Dealer

to give back to the community in the many ways it's needed. This last Christmas we were able to cook, dish, and deliver almost 100 full turkey dinners, to our community members, right to their home on Christmas morning, and we fulfilled the whole list of people needing a Christmas meal. We've been able to help a student with a bursary last October, make a donation to the River John Community Food Centre in December, and again in January, and also twice to the Lillian Fraser Memorial Palliative Care Unit. We came together with the other two clubs in our district, Pictou and Stellarton, to make a donation to the Long Lake Fire Fund in Annapolis Valley, as well.



Lions Karen and Pam, King Lions Brian and Donald, presenting a cheque to Lillian Fraser Memorial Hospital

Alongside the community support, of course we need our volunteer members of the club as well, and we are very welcoming of new members, fresh ideas and fundraising efforts. If you've ever thought about making a difference in your community, and giving back, whether it be by joining or sharing in fundraising efforts, we'd love to have you, and or hear from you. Communication can be done through our Facebook Page, or by email at riverjohnanddistrictlionsclub@gmail.com

We really want to thank the community for their continued support of our many events, gatherings, fundraisers, and efforts to make our community better for all.

IOOF Helping Hand and Frazee Rebekah Lodges

By: Jacob Leegwater

Winter storms and holidays have played havoc with meetings; however, there are a few highlights.

The draws for the hope chest and gift card were held on November 10. The winner of the hope chest was Peter Fraser of Pictou, and Clifford Battist of Lyons Brook won the Overstreet gift card. Congratulations to the winners and thank you to everyone who bought tickets. On December 16, the Odd Fellows treated our Rebekah sisters to a Christmas dinner at Yap's Restaurant. It was held on Tuesday instead of our regular Monday meeting, due to a winter storm. At that time, we made a \$200 donation to the River John Lions Club to help with the Christmas dinners for those less fortunate. Also, Raymond MacKenzie was presented with an Honorary Membership from Helping Hand Lodge, in appreciation for all the items he has created and donated to the Lodge, including picture frames and cabinets.



Noble Grand Jo-Anne Ferguson presents Raymond MacKenzie with an honorary membership to Helping Hand Lodge.

On October 30, members from Eastern Star #1, Helping Hand #34, Atlantic #107 and Liberty #120 met in Pictou for the fall district meeting of Lodges in District #17 conducted by District Deputy Grand Master Brother

Peter Richardson. At that time, there was a motion to donate \$100.00 to the provincial Christmas Daddies, run by the Salvation Army. Also requested was that each Lodge pay dues to the district.

Due to the holidays, the Rebekahs met only once in December. A donation was made to the Lions Club for their Christmas dinner event. It was decided to hold a social card party in January 20, when we had three and a half tables in play. Top score winner was Marie Langille; the door prize was won by Jacob Leegwater and the 50/50 was won by Margaret MacLean. A second card party was held on February 17. Jacob Leegwater had the top score, the door prize was won by Ruth Baillie and the 50/50 was won by Linda Munro. Plans are to have another card party on March 17, hopefully with four tables. Everyone is welcome.

Helping Hand was pleased to welcome Raymond LeFresne to membership in Lodge. He was initiated on February 9, with the team led by Brother Dan Ferguson, and assistance from Eastern Star and Liberty Lodges. We welcomed Brother LeFresne to our great order.



Noble Grand Jo-Anne Ferguson welcomes our new member Ray Lefresne to the Lodge.

We approved a gas gift card for a member of our Lodge, for travel to Halifax for medical appointments and a donation to a member of another Lodge, who was facing some challenges.

Plans are in the works for our spring district meeting on April 2 at Eastern Star #1, at which time we will be electing a new District Deputy Grand Master. Grand Lodge sessions are planned for May 8 & 9. Reports will be presented in the next edition of the Pioneer. Until then, enjoy the rest of the winter.

Learning How to Recognize and Respond to Intimate Partner Violence

By: Kelly Shaw

In late November, members of our community gathered at the Legion for an important and timely conversation about intimate partner violence (IPV). The afternoon was co-hosted by the Pictou West Community Health Board and Tearmann Society. Outreach counsellors, and the RCMP facilitated programming offered through the Neighbours, Friends and Families (NFF) public education program. The timing of the learning session was aligned with 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, an international initiative designed to increase awareness about gender-based violence.

NFF program was developed by the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children (CREVAWC) at Western University and

is considered best practice for prevention education surrounding IPV. This program is designed to help everyday people recognize warning signs of abuse and respond in ways that are safe, supportive, and informed, rather than positioning IPV as something that happens "somewhere else," the program invites communities to see prevention and support as a shared community responsibility.

During the Legion session, participants of all ages learned the common warning signs of IPV. These include patterns of control, isolation, intimidation, and escalating behaviour. The facilitators emphasized that abuse can be physical, emotional, financial, psychological, and technological. All forms of control.

The session focused on what to do, and what not to do, when someone may be experiencing abuse. Participants explored how to recognize concerning behaviours and warning signs, how to respond with empathy rather than judgment, how to ask open and supportive questions, how to avoid escalating risk, and how to refer individuals to appropriate local resources. It has been shown that when people have the right knowledge and support, they can intervene in caring and safe ways. A neighbour checking in. A friend offering information. A family member listening without pressure. These small acts reduce isolation and can help someone consider their options.

Sessions like this remind us that intimate partner violence is not a private issue. It is a community issue, and community education is one way we can help create safer environments for everyone.

For those who may need support or would like more information, Tearmann House offers confidential services and can connect individuals to resources across Nova Scotia.

Tearmann House can be reached 24h a day by calling 902-752-0132 or 1-888-831-0330. Their community outreach program can be accessed by emailing communityoutreach@tearmann.ca. Contact information is kept confidential.

Brain Teaser

I have cities but no houses,
rivers but no water,
and roads but no cars.
What am I?

(Answer at the bottom of the page:)

At the River John Library, (Winter/Spring 2026)

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

A budget update - as a result of the recent provincial budget, PARL was informed by Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage that library funding will remain at the same level as the last 6 years. Unfortunately, bridge funding provided by the province for the last two years, meant to help with minimum wage increases and inflation, was not included. To be absolutely clear, this means less funding for libraries from the province. The Library Board will need to meet and discuss what options it has as it goes forward into April. We want to thank the community for their ongoing support for library services. We are here to serve you and make our communities healthier, happier, and great places to live and work.

Many thanks to the Aberdeen Health Foundation's support of our local libraries, we are able to offer the following special programs at our libraries. Tuesday Afternoon Coffee & Tea Socials, drop-in everyone on Tuesdays from 2pm to 4pm for a cuppa and conversation. We had a great turnout for our Valentine's Tea.

Beginner Painting with Lise, at the River John Library on Thursday March 19 at 3pm (seating is limited, please call to register, (902) 351-2599). These programs are both very popular and well attended!

And we have Children's Felting workshops with Gillian from the Lismore Sheep Farm, coming up the week of March Break at our libraries in New Glasgow, Stellarton, Westville, Pictou and River John. These workshops are also sponsored by the Healthy Libraries; Healthy Communities grant from the Aberdeen Health Foundation. This program is for children ages 8+, as felting needles are sharp! Younger children may need parental/caregiver assistance. Seating is limited, and pre-registration is required. The River John Library

workshop is Friday, March 20 at 2:30pm. *To register, please call the River John Library.*

We also have a Children's "Paint Bubble Wrap" art session on Wednesday, March 18 at 3pm. Come and have some bubbly fun and let your imagination pop! We'll use bubble wrap and acrylic paint to make amazing textured art. Seating is limited, and registration is required. *To register, please call the River John Library at (902) 351-2599 or email, riverjohn@parl.ns.ca.*

We have a new Chess Club at the River John Library too, led by a local volunteer. The Chess Club meets monthly on the 2nd Saturday from 10am to 12pm, and the 4th Thursday from 6pm to 8pm. All are welcome to 'make your move' and drop by to join us! For the full list and more details of all library programs, please visit our PARLevents calendar online, and call or drop by your local library.



The Dares Family, the very happy winners of our Family Literacy Day week challenge in January. The prizes were provided by the Adopt-a-Library Literacy Program.

The Dares family were the very happy and lucky winners of our Family Literacy Day week challenge in January. Annabelle Cameron, RHN of "Living Well with Bella" offered a very helpful, and well-attended presentation in January on ways to explore eating better to support our immunity, especially during the Winter months. In February, our Valentine's Day card making session was popular with kids. Karen MacDonald, from Service Canada was by to set up an information booth to answer anyone's questions regarding the different services and programs that Service Canada supports.

We are excited to share that there's a new Reading Challenge in Town! The SamePage Library network in Nova Scotia has just launched a Read Coast 2 Coast Reading Challenge, for all ages. You can pick up a reading map at your local library (or download and print a copy from the website online), and each time you complete reading a book from one of the 5 regions across Canada, you can pick up a travel sticker and fill out a ballot to win a prize. We have some helpful reading lists available at the library to start you on your reading journey, and feel free to share a reading suggestion if we don't happen to have it on our lists! This reading challenge lasts until 30 April 2026.

And some more good news, additional shows have been added to the Moments for Everyone Arts Pass program with the Glasgow Square Theatre. In addition, the deCoste Centre for Performing Arts now has some Arts for All Arts Passes available through the library for selected upcoming performances. The Arts Passes are borrowed from the library, just like any other library item (book, movie, magazine, etc.) with your library card. *For more information and full details, please call or drop by your local library, and visit www.parl.ns.ca/services/artspass.*

Coming up in April, for National Canadian Film Day on Wednesday April 15, 2026, the River John Library will host a free screening of the film "Goin' Down the Road" at 3:00pm.

Also in April, on Thursday, April 9 from 1:30pm to 3:30pm please drop by and join Kelly Delorey with Adult Community Outreach, Mental Health for some crafts and chat about some mental wellness resources that are available to you in our community.

The Friends of the River John Library Society continues to look for new members. If you love your local library and would like to help support the River John Library - please call or drop by and let us know.

Please note that the Regional Library will be closed over the Easter holidays for Good Friday (Friday April 3, 2026), Easter Sunday (April 5), and Easter Monday (April 6, 2026). 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.

New to River John?

Over the past year several new people have joined our community. We'd love to meet you and introduce you to all the community has to offer. You might be feeling a bit lonely and in need of meeting some new people - we can help with that. Or perhaps you are feeling a bit bored just sitting at home and would like to contribute some of your time and energy to a worthy cause.

River John has many volunteer opportunities, and we can introduce you to those.

River John's Welcome Committee would like to invite you to join us at the library on Tuesday, April 14th from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. We will provide light refreshments, and you will meet friendly people who will introduce you to the many things our community offers. There will also be some handouts with more details.

Come out and join us. We are excited to meet you!

The River John Welcome Committee team: Lynn MacLeod, Maureen Topley, & Diane Kennedy



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Playing in the Snow

By: Diane MacLeod Shink



Philip Shink aged 1 (1976) - Diane's son

As I look at the two feet of snow that has accumulated outside our Newfoundland door by mid-February, I recall winters of my childhood spent in the Nova Scotia village of River John. Our village is located in a valley where the River John flows into the sea. It is situated on the northern coast of Nova Scotia across the Northumberland Strait from Prince Edward Island. There are numerous hills, not always the safest places to play but during the years we slid down many of them. When we were younger, most of the sliding time was spent on the back pasture, behind the current post office. We called the place "Frenchy's Hill". As Frenchy's Hill was a hay field, you had to be careful not to snag your woolen pants on the barbed wire at the bottom. In later years, many times were spent behind the location of Colonel Dan Sutherland's home on Station Road. It was a bit of a trek to get there, but we had a few good trips down the hill, with views of the river. The other location was Mac Donald's hill (Bill and Grace MacDonald's) at the western entrance to the village. My sister Joan preferred that location as Grace would invite them into the house for hot chocolate and cookies afterwards. It was a coasting party.

Generally, we used a toboggan for sliding, as two or more people could fit on it. Sometimes others would join us using wooden sleds, generally with metal runners. And later, my sister owned a "flying saucer" which was a round aluminum disc which was great when there was a crust on the snow.

This was a time when synthetics were just being invented, so winter clothing, snow pants, and jackets were made of wool. I remember afterwards watching the tiny snowballs or pills melt when the pants were placed on our home's cast iron radiators to dry. Our heads and hands were protected by hand-knit woolen hats and mittens, sometimes double layers. As a university student in 1962, March break was spent in River John, long before the days when students could afford to go south for the break. We found the old toboggan and decided to try it out. A location behind our house on the bank of the river was selected, (which was in fact a steep cliff which had drifted in). I am not sure how many of us were on the toboggan, but when we went over the bank my friend's body went one way and her leg the other. She was carried back to the house and the doctor was called. In those days, doctors still made house calls. Dr. Lewis, a big strong Irishman, looked at her leg and proceeded to pull the femur back into place, no anesthetic used. My mother's comment: "When you were young, I used to pay attention to where you were playing but I thought as a university student you would be more sensible."

Crafter Profile Florence Keatley

By: Joan MacLeod

Florence Keatley has been making goat's milk soap for 28 years. Florence grew up on the Mountain Road in River John. She and Jim, who have a son Ricky, moved back home to River John from St Catherine's Ontario in 1971. They returned because Florence's mother had just had surgery, and they were not sure of what the outcome would be for their mother. Her mother and father had sold the family farm and moved the home to the West Branch Road in Welsford. Wanting to be near her parents, they built a house next door.

Florence is a nurse. When she first returned from Ontario, she worked at the Lillian Fraser Memorial Hospital. She took early retirement because of health issues, but then worked casual hours at the Veterans wing in Pictou. Meanwhile, she and Jim started raising four grandchildren, which they thoroughly enjoyed. Because of the children, they decided that the family needed more income, so she took a position at East Cumberland Lodge in Pugwash. Her last nursing was as a casual at Willow Lodge. She has now been retired for 16-18 years. Florence looks back at this time as a happy time because she likes to be busy. Her husband Jim passed away in 2025.

Soap making is based on saponification, a chemical reaction between triglycerides (fats/oils) and an alkali (lye usually sodium hydroxide). The process breaks down the fat, breaking it into soap (fatty acid salts) and glycerol.

There is a wealth of health benefits to goat's milk soap. Firstly, it is nutrient rich, containing Vitamins A, C, D and E as well as selenium. Vitamin A has anti-aging properties; C, D & E offer antioxidant properties, protecting the skin from free radical damage. The mineral selenium supports the skin's protective membrane.

Goat's milk soap does not contain harsh detergents. The natural fats and caprylic acid gently remove dirt and debris without stripping the skin of its natural oils. The fatty acids in the soap repair the skin's natural moisture barrier and lock in hydration. It is a natural exfoliant, gently removing dead skin cells to reveal brighter skin. With a pH level close to that of the human skin, it has anti-inflammatory properties which can help calm redness, itching, and irritation. It is very beneficial for sensitive skin and helps prevent acne breakouts.

When Florence first started making the soap, she and Jim kept goats. For the last 10 years, she has bought the milk from a local goat keeper. She then freezes the goat's milk in ice cube containers in preparation for the soap making.

A Tribute to Beulah Wright

By: Jane Morrigan

By a coincidence of events, Beulah and I struck upon the goal of compiling a volume of articles that she had written over the years about River John's history, a subject true and dear to her heart since she moved to River John with her family at the age of ten.

One day, I dropped by the Museum to have a look around and have a chat. Beulah, the knowledgeable and intelligent curator, expressed to me her long-held desire to put a favourite collection of her stories into one book. I realized, being retired and having some of the skills needed, that I could help her make it happen. So, I offered and she accepted.

We thus began in earnest to search out the articles she had saved, and to form a structure of chapters.



To make the soap, first she weighs out her oils and solid fats. She uses lard, coconut oil, olive oil, and castor oil, which she puts on low heat to warm up. Then she weighs up the frozen milk and adds the lye. This mixture must be constantly stirred while the lye melts down the frozen milk. Meanwhile, the oils need to reach a temperature of 118 degrees F. Then, the milk and lye solution is slowly added to the hot oils. This is mixed with a handheld blender. There is an art to know how much to mix; too much or too little can ruin the soap. The fragrance (1oz to 1 1/2 oz) and any colouring are added at this stage. Testing to see if it is done is like testing jelly. When the soap reaches this jell-like stage (which is called tracing), the soap is put in a mould lined with heavy waxed paper. If it overheats when the fragrance is added, she may need to put it in the freezer for a few hours; then the soap sits for a day or two. The final step is removing the soap from the mould and cutting it into about bars. The bars are wrapped with paper labels, all of which are made by Florence. She has 11 different varieties: 3 essential oils and 8 fragrances. She buys her fragrances from different companies in Calgary and BC.

Florence's main retailer for her soap is Lismore Sheep Farm. They sell a whopping 50-60 bars a month at the height of the summer. She is interested in how far her soap has travelled. She knows that some have gone to Pennsylvania and I can attest to taking it to Mexico. I love this soap.

We are very fortunate to have such a skilled crafter in our midst.

We set about sourcing appropriate photos and other artifacts in the museum, in keeping with the themes of the evolving book. I scanned and labeled hundreds of photos during this stage. We explored various options for publishing the book, ending up choosing to use Amazon's Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) product. We met frequently and enjoyed getting to know each other, becoming friends in the process. Beulah's writing required next to no editing, allowing me to focus on the formatting and layout of the book. My niece, Ellie Moss, a graphic designer in Quebec, readily agreed to help us out in designing the book's cover jacket, which both Beulah and I were thrilled with.

Over the course of five months, with dire health issues nipping at her heels, Beulah and I raced to complete the project and get the book published and in good supply for the much-anticipated launch of the book on April 5th, 2025, in River John. Beulah looked wonderful, basking in her family's and her community's love, pride and appreciation, and so happy and fulfilled that she had succeeded in completing her goal.

Community News

River John 4-H Club

By: Christine Heighton

The River John 4-H Club is in full swing for the year with 16 members doing a variety of projects. Members have taken part in several county events such as swimming at the Pictou Fisheries pool and bowling at the Heather bowling lanes in New Glasgow. In the coming months, they will be taking part in the public speaking rallies to earn their communications award at the Club Achievement Day on July 6th, 2026. The members will compete at different levels starting at Club, County and Regional to hopefully qualify to compete against the top members from each region across Nova Scotia in May at the Provincial level. The Club rally will take place on March 7 at St. George's Presbyterian Church Hall at 9 a.m. The County rally will take place on April 11 at Bethel Presbyterian Church and the Scotsburn United Church, both in Scotsburn. The Eastern regional rally will be April 19, at the Bethel Church in Scotsburn.

Clubs are also preparing to compete at the County Lumber sports competition which will be held on April 4th at the Caribou Fire Hall starting at 9 a.m. This is open to the public and everyone is welcome to come and cheer on the members. Many hours of practicing events such as pulp saw- single and double, double crosscut saw, water boil, back tank relay and pulp toss. A team consists of 7 members including 2 spares. This is a busy, fun packed couple of hours that the members do their best, and we are proud of them all. Members will compete to qualify for the County team that will move to the Provincial competition in Truro in May.

Many members are busy starting their projects, learning new skills that go along with what they need to know to complete that project in July. We wish the members all the best with their projects and remember our motto "Learn to do by doing."



The Craig family (sisters, Jessie Peralbo, Janie Baillie, and Jean Craig, alongside parents Jamie - who is a lobster fisher fishing out of Toney River - and Liz Craig) not only put our area on the map for all of Canada to see and appreciate, but also won all our hearts not only by being so darling Nova Scotian, but also with their beachwear-themed clothing the first day and lobster-themed attire the next. With the beachwear they showcased their and our maritime location and life and with the lobster-themed attire they highlighted the lobster fishery that the family (and many of us) are deeply rooted in.

Dear Craig Family: you did us proud!

Chris Gill

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River John Garden Club

By: Maureen Topley



Photo: Submitted by Maureen Topley

Formed in 2022, the River John Garden Club brings together local gardening enthusiasts in a welcoming, informal setting. The club meets monthly from April to October at the River John Library. There are no membership dues or fundraising obligations - just a shared interest in gardening and community beautification.

Members contribute to several local projects, including maintaining the raised bed at the River John sign in the village centre, tending the garden bed at the end of Cape John Road by the wharf, and assisting with the village rock garden. As with all gardens, each year is different, and we continue to try different perennials and annuals to get the best results. The club encourages anyone interested in gardening, whether experienced or just starting out, to join, and share ideas, plants, or techniques. We enjoy welcoming new members and invite you to come share the love of gardening with us.

Meetings are held on the 3rd Tuesday of each month at 2 p.m. at the River John Library. The first meeting in 2026 will be Tuesday, April 21, 2026.

Pictou County Community Health Centre Supports Access to Health Services and Programs

By: Lynn Langille

The Pictou County Community Health Centre (PC-CHC) has now been open on Front Street in Pictou for one year. During this time, PCCHC provided access to primary health care to over 300 clients at the CHC and in outreach locations. PCCHC works closely with the Nova Scotia Health and Wellness Mobile Clinic to bring health services to local communities. Practitioners with the Mobile Unit include a nurse practitioner, family practice nurse, occupational therapist, pharmacist, dietitian, and mental wellness navigator.

The Community Health Worker at PCCHC works with people to access the health and social services they need. Very often, these people do not have a primary health care provider or cannot get timely access to their primary health care provider. The Community Health Worker provides information on community-based services such as virtual health care and pharmacy clinics and supports people to access these services. She also provides help with finding social services and supporting access to services such as housing, fuel, and dental care.

Feedback from clients at PCCHC over the past year indicate that people have received supports to access financial support for basic needs such as housing, transportation and food, to navigate and access primary health care supports such as booking appointments, testing and visits with care providers (in person and

online), to access mental health, and to help family and friends navigate the services and supports they need.

PCCHC also provides community programming to improve health and wellness. In the past year, we have led community programs for 200+ people on optimal aging and grief in the African Nova Scotian community. We have also provided mental health counselling and support, working in partnership with social workers from Nova Scotia Health.

PCCHC is currently offering a Seniors Wellness Program in partnership with the Nova Scotia Health and Wellness Mobile Clinic. When this program was recently held in Churchville, a pharmacist and occupational therapist provided information on a range of health topics relevant to older adults including falls prevention, healthy eating, medicine/prescription reviews, and the importance of exercise and restful sleep. The Seniors Wellness Program will be offered in River John in April (tentative date is April 14th). Stay tuned for more information about this program.

For information about the Seniors Wellness Program or the Pictou County Community Health Centre, call 902-616-2142.

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Sunday May 17th
10am to 4pm

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A Growing Place of Abundance

Welcome to the Scotsburn Community Food Forest

By: Mandy Sandbach



On the gentle hills of Scotsburn, something quietly powerful has been taking root. Fruit trees stretch their branches a little wider each year, perennial herbs return with familiar persistence, and neighbours arrive with gloves, seeds, stories, and curiosity. The Scotsburn Community Food Forest (SCFF) is not just a garden - it is a living expression of what can happen when people come together with care, patience, and a shared love of the land. We are located at 4114 Scotsburn Road in the village of Scotsburn, between the elementary school and Papa D's Automotive, at the base of the Fitzpatrick Trail.

The Food Forest is a grassroots, volunteer-led project dedicated to nurturing an edible, medicinal, seed saving, pollinator sanctuary and educational ecosystem for present and future generations. Located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people, SCFF acknowledges with gratitude that permaculture and food forest practices are rooted in Indigenous knowledge systems - ways of living that emphasize reciprocity, respect, and relationship with the land. These principles guide the work of the Food Forest, shaping how decisions are made, how people are welcomed, and how abundance is shared.

Modeled after a natural woodland ecosystem, the Scotsburn Community Food Forest is designed around layers: towering nut and fruit trees, berry shrubs, herbs, groundcovers, vines, roots, and soil life, all working together in mutually supportive "guilds." This layered approach creates a resilient system that produces food while also regenerating soil, supporting pollinators, improving water retention, and offering habitat to birds and beneficial insects. It is a place where human nourishment and ecological care are not separate goals but deeply intertwined.

Yet the heart of the Food Forest has always been the people. From the beginning, SCFF has been envisioned as a shared community space - a place to learn, gather, and reconnect with food, land, and one another. Volunteers of all ages help plant, mulch, prune, seed, and harvest. Children learn where food comes from by getting their hands in the soil. Elders share knowledge earned over a lifetime of growing. Newcomers arrive unsure what to expect and leave feeling part of something meaningful.

As spring approaches, the Food Forest is once again opening its gates wide, offering a full season of workshops, gatherings, and hands-on learning opportunities. Whether you are an experienced gardener, a curious beginner, or someone simply looking for connection, there is a place for you here.

One of the most beloved offerings is the **Sunday Snack and Skill Share series**, held monthly and offered by donation. These relaxed Sunday mornings combine practical food skills with shared nourishment and conversation. On **Sunday, February 15th from 10:00-11:30 a.m.**, participants will learn how to make ginger beer and soda, alongside gluten-free, dairy-free, grain-free sweet potato brownies made with local ingredients. On **Sunday, March 15th from 10:00-11:30 a.m.**, the focus shifts to DIY yogurt and pressure canning - skills that support food security, self-reliance, and confidence in the kitchen. These gatherings are intentionally low-cost and welcoming, making them a perfect entry point for anyone new to the Food Forest.

For those seeking deeper, hands-on learning, SCFF is offering a rich lineup of workshops, classes, tours, and events throughout the spring. These sessions are designed to build practical skills, while also strengthening community resilience and ecological understanding. Workshops are offered at **\$30 per person for non-members or \$20 for SCFF members**, with locations ranging from the Food Forest itself, to the Scotsburn Firehall and nearby partner sites. Registration for these workshops can be done via our Eventbrite page or by e-mailing scotsburnfoodforest@gmail.com. Other information can be found on our website www.scotsburnfoodforest.ca



The season begins on **Saturday, March 7th (1:00-3:00 p.m.)** with a **Hands-On Pruning Workshop** held at the Food Forest. Participants will learn how thoughtful pruning supports tree health, productivity, and long-term resilience. On **Saturday, March 14th (10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.)**, a **Propagation and Tool Care workshop** at the Scotsburn Firehall will focus on starting plants successfully and caring for the tools that support our work.

Community-wide participation is at the centre of the Food Forest Community Seeding Day, happening Sunday, April 2nd from 6:00-7:30 p.m. at the Scotsburn Firehall. This free event invites people to come together to sow seeds for the coming season and the annual plant sale - an act that is both practical and deeply symbolic. Seeds started together carry a shared story into the soil.



Creative and structural elements of permaculture come alive during the **Hands-On Willow, Wattle, and Living Structures workshop** on **Saturday, April 12th (9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.)** at 100 Folk Farm. Participants will learn how living materials can be shaped into fences, supports, and structures that grow more resilient over time. On **Sunday, April 19th (10:00-11:30 a.m.)**, gardeners can extend their growing season during a **Season Extension Gardening Workshop** led by Raina McDonald of Back Road Farm and Forge.

Soil - the quiet foundation beneath everything - takes centre stage on **Thursday, April 23rd (6:00-7:30 p.m.)** with a workshop on **No Dig and Regenerative Soil Practices** at the Scotsburn Firehall. This is followed by **Outdoor Composting** on **Thursday, May 7th (6:00-7:30 p.m.)**, held at both the Firehall and the Food Forest, offering practical ways to turn waste into nourishment.

Several **free, family-friendly events** round out the spring calendar. **Sunday, May 24th (11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.)** with a **Spring Opening and Permablitz**, where community members work together to prepare the site for the growing season. The season culminates in the much-loved **Annual Plant Sale and Tool Swap** on **Sunday, May 31st (10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.)**, a lively gathering that brings gardeners from across the region together to share plants, tools, and knowledge.

The Scotsburn Community Food Forest warmly invites neighbours from River John, Pictou County, and surrounding communities to join in these offerings. Whether you come once or return again and again, your presence matters. The Food Forest thrives on diversity - not just of plants and pollinators, but of people, perspectives, and lived experiences.

More than a garden, SCFF is a living classroom, a community commons, and a hopeful response to the challenges of our time. In a world that often feels rushed and disconnected, the Food Forest offers something different: a place to slow down, learn together, and remember that abundance grows when it is shared.

As spring unfolds, the invitation is simple and sincere: come walk the paths, plant a seed, learn a skill, share a snack, and be part of a growing community rooted in care - for the land, for one another, and for generations yet to come.

Pictou County Community Health Centre invites you to a **Seniors Wellness Session** with **Nova Scotia Health's Northern Zone Mobile Health and Wellness Team**

Join us for a **presentation on seniors' wellness**, followed by optional one-on-one meetings with the health and wellness team for:

- medication reviews
- diet reviews
- blood pressure checks
- blood sugar checks

Date: April 14th, 2026

Time: 10:30AM - 1:30PM

Location: River John Community Food & Health Centre 2456 Station Road, River John

Please register by April 10th by calling 902-616-2142

Light lunch will be provided.

Healthcare Team includes:

- **Dietitian:** Nutrition counselling, planning, and lifestyle guidance
- **Pharmacist:** Medication reviews, renewals, chronic disease management, and diabetes education
- **Occupational Therapist:** Falls prevention, mobility, and daily living support

If you need transportation support, please register by April 2nd by calling 902-616-2142

In case of cancellation due to weather, notice will be on Facebook and radio stations 94.1 and 97.9, or you can call 902-616-2142.




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Where Not to Park



April

By Debby Shaw

Winter has decided to stay
Her departure one more day.
As she knelt to kiss the grass,
She clings like a lover to the trees;
And as the sun burns through,
She weeps her goodbye again
As snow melts silently to rain.
It is hard for her to leave.
She looks around but no one grieves.
The robin sits impatiently,
We wish she'd bow out graciously.
By April we've had enough!
Abruptly she turns, and in a huff,
She's gone!
Spring is here;
Summer lingers;
Fall stumbles;
We enjoy it all.
Just when we think Winter won't be back...
She puckers up her clouds
and whistles the North Wind
Across our land again!



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Line Dancing

By: Jocelyn Heighton



What does a grapevine, rocking chair, scissors, lindy, weave, and jazz box have in common? They're all steps used in line dancing of course! Each week, on Monday afternoon from 1-3 p.m. a group of dancers meet at the River John Legion to learn dances using these steps and more.

So, what is line dancing, you may ask. A line dance is a choreographed dance where participants 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.

The roots of line dancing can be traced back to traditional folk dances from various cultures around the world. These traditional dances merged with other dance forms such as step dancing and square dancing. African American social dances and even 1970s disco have influenced line dancing. Indeed, the popular line dance "Electric Slide", choreographed in 1976, continues to be taught in beginner classes today.

But mainstream popularity is widely attributed to the 1980s and 1990s. The 1980 film "Urban Cowboy" created a trend toward country and western music, dance, and clothing. Choreographed dances emerged to accompany popular country music songs. For example, a line dance for the 1990 Asleep At The Wheel single "Boot Scootin' Boogie" became hugely popular. And we can't forget Billy Ray Cyrus's 1992 hit "Achy Breaky Heart" which shone a spotlight on line dancing. Additionally, the 1990s also saw line dances move beyond country, as demonstrated by the pop

song "Macarena" that sparked a global dance craze. Modern line dancing is not limited to country music. It features a variety of genres, such as pop, rock, Celtic, and Latin, to name a few.

In recent years line dancing has enjoyed a resurgence in popularity, due in part to social media, but also because it is accessible, with an emphasis on fun. It is a social, non-partner dance suitable for varying ages and fitness levels. It requires no special equipment and is generally performed in casual clothing with comfortable footwear.

Line dancing offers physical, mental, and social benefits. It improves cardiovascular fitness, balance and coordination, strengthens muscles and boosts stamina. Line dancing promotes camaraderie and can have positive effects on mood and mental health. Research also shows that line dancing provides many cognitive benefits. It requires learning and memory, while rhythm, timing, and coordination also engages the brain, further supporting cognitive function.

So how about giving line dancing a try?

5-week Ultra Beginner session at River John Legion 6:30 -7:30pm, Monday evenings: Apr. 13th - May 11th. Cost \$10.00 or \$2.00 per class.

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The North Shore Nuggets Reaches 1,000 Email Subscribers

By: Angus

Talk about a New Year's Eve miracle - The North Shore Nuggets hit 1,000 email subscribers before the clock struck midnight. Launched in April, the bi-weekly newsletter delivers a calendar of local events and news "nuggets" to readers along the North Shore and beyond.

The response has been encouraging; email open rates are running above 70%, and readers regularly reply with contest entries, event tips, and community news. Rather than chasing clicks on social media platforms, I've focused on local partnerships and prize draws from area merchants - a deliberate choice to keep support and attention inside our communities.

As the first anniversary approaches, I'm wondering how to grow the printed edition, which currently appears six times a year and is mailed to 4,500 addresses along the North Shore. Possible next steps include expanding the print run from four to eight pages and/or extending distribution beyond Port Howe to Westchester, River John to Earlton, and the communities in-between.

For your free subscription, please visit www.thenorthshorenuggets.com. To share a local non-profit event, news 'nugget' or discuss advertising options, please email me. Thanks to everyone who read, advertised, shared and contributed - here's to another year of local stories.

Talk soon, Angus
angus@thenorthshorenuggets.com







Helping Hands Pantry A Community Mission That Keeps Growing

By: Danielle Fraser

Helping Hands Pantry started as a personal mission for both Danielle Fraser and Samantha Acorn. They began providing food and essential supplies to individuals experiencing homelessness. Today, that effort has evolved into a registered non-profit organization and a vital community network working to ensure that no one goes hungry.

The organization now operates five barrier-free community food pantries under a simple and powerful philosophy: "Take what you need, leave what you can." Locations include the Pictou Library, Westville Library, Westville Legion, Stellarton Library and Knox Church in Brookfield. These accessible sites allow community members to both give and receive with dignity, reducing barriers and strengthening local care networks.

Helping Hands Pantry is also taking meaningful steps toward long-term sustainability. The organization is currently working to secure access to the Second Harvest Food Rescue App, which will allow them to rescue surplus food from local businesses and redirect it to those who need it most. In addition, their work has recently been recognized by County Mazda through its "Mazda Legends" program, which is helping to fund ongoing pantry restock.

This work is sustained by neighbours helping neighbours. Every can of soup, warm blanket, or tent donated represents someone choosing to show up for their

community. Helping Hands Pantry extends heartfelt thanks to its local supporters, including Global Pet Foods, Proudfoot Home Hardware (Stellarton), and Westville Recreation, whose contributions help keep the shelves stocked and the mission moving forward.

Donations of non-perishable food and essential supplies are always needed. Current priority items include:

- Canned meats
- Peanut butter
- Quick or pre-made meals such as hearty soups, boxed pasta dinners, macaroni and cheese, and microwaveable meals
- Hygiene essentials including soap, toilet paper, toothpaste, and deodorant
- Child-friendly items, which are especially in demand, such as baby food pouches, snacks, and diapers

Items can be dropped off at any pantry location, or community members can message Helping Hands Pantry on Facebook to arrange a pickup.

Beyond physical donations, there are additional ways to support this important work. Bottle donations can be made at three designated locations, with proceeds going directly toward the purchase of fresh items for pantry shelves. Local businesses are also invited to collaborate on joint fundraising initiatives to further strengthen support for individuals experiencing housing insecurity.

For urgent needs and restock updates, community members are encouraged to follow the Helping Hands Pantry Facebook page.

At its heart, Helping Hands Pantry is about community care in action. What started with one person's commitment has become a shared effort. An effort that reminds us that even small acts, multiplied, can make a lasting difference.

Creative Pictou County Connecting Community Through Art Sharing the Stories of Newcomers and Elders

In the fall of 2024, Creative Pictou County Executive Director, Carissa Ainslie, observed the hateful rhetoric around newcomers in small communities. The overarching theme was negative: these newcomers were "taking jobs" and other racist beliefs.

Working for a community arts organization, Carissa wondered how the arts could alleviate some of the pressure building in this powder keg. This is how Stories Across Generations was born. This project paired five local artists with five newcomers, alongside five newcomer artists who worked with five local elders from the Black and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. Through this project, the artists created a multifaceted collection of artworks based on the unique stories and perspectives of their partners.

The results were incredible.

Artwork mediums ranged from photography to painting, writing to textiles, and were presented during two showcases in the fall of 2025.

Newcomers from around the world and elders had their stories shared, and artists were able to connect to the broader community - whether they grew up here or had just arrived. For many of the artists, this was

the first time they had taken on a project of this scope. Excited by the challenge, everyone was thrilled to be able to share the work during the two showcase events.

Working with the Pictou County Partnership and their Immigration and Community Integration Program, newcomers involved in the project also gained access to being connected with that organization. The Partnership also produced a special podcast episode about the project available on Spotify and Apple Podcasts. The episode includes interviews with artists and their partners and how they felt about the experience.

Projects like Stories Across Generations do more than pay artists to create work. They foster meaningful connections by highlighting a shared goal: every community member wants a safe, thriving place to call home for themselves and their families. Our collaboration with newcomer artists has shaped the project's next phase - establishing mentorships between local and newcomer artists and connecting them with local and regional resources to support their continued growth.

Stories Across Generations was funded by the Arts Nova Scotia Artists in Communities grant. One of the funds that unfortunately has been cut by the province. At the time of writing this article, this decision has been made final. There is hope, however, that with enough support from the community, this will be reversed, and projects like this can continue to change lives and shape the stories being told in our rural communities.

(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. Its 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)

Sports

The Ray Thompson Memorial Hockey Tournament

By: Linda Thompson-Reid

A successful hockey tournament was held at the North Shore Recreation Centre on January 30, 31 and February 1 – three days, ten teams, two divisions and nineteen games.

Jay Reid organized the Over 35 Division, made up of players who were drafted into four teams. Matt Kenny organized the Open Division, consisting of six teams. Jay's and Matt's commitment to organizing a successful tournament did not go unnoticed. Following the final division games, they were presented with a framed certificate, in appreciation of their time and talents, by the Reid and Thompson families.

Thank you, as well to Sara Forbes, who contacted the timekeepers and created their schedule and to Thomas Patriquin, who contacted the referees and arranged their schedule. Deb's Cozy Kitchen staff were presented with a bouquet created by Jennifer Langille, owner of Bonnie Blooms, by the organizers of the tournament as a token of appreciation for their support.

The winning team for the Over 35 Division was Jay Reid's squad, and the winner of the Open Division was Tata Brew. Thank you to Jennifer Langille and Caldera Distilling, as well as Eric MacKeen of Tri-County Ford, for their generous donations toward the MVP awards, which were presented to Blair Falconer and Paul Chiasson - Over 35 Division; Thomas Kennaley and Jeremy Briggs - Open Division. The winners of the finals each received a hat and a beer cozy, compliments of Tata Brew.

There were three 50/50 draws, with the proceeds going to the Tatamagouche and Area Minor Hockey Association. Winners of the draws were Darci Cameron, Vanessa Snell and Mary Kennedy Carmichael.



Julia Reid-Howard being presented the award by Michel Robichaud. Credit: RunNB

The Mike McMaster Game

By: Jay Reid

I understand that most of the nation is still collectively reeling from the result of our Men's Olympic Gold Medal game. And rightly so. We are a nation that leans heavily on our superior hockey identity. Falling to the Americans, in a final where we thoroughly outplayed them in every facet of the game, stings in a way that is hard to put into words. But that's hockey, and sometimes a game shakes out that way. Our boys were flying, but silver was their reward. A nationwide disappointment compounded by the fact our women's team suffered a similar fate only days before. We have four years to regroup and avenge this Olympic loss. However, I'm not writing to dwell on past defeats. I'm here to distract you from that catastrophic athletic downfall and shed some light on something a little more local. It's still a hockey story. But it's a feel-good story where a local boy makes good and solidifies a championship for his team. It is the story of Mike McMaster, and how he won the Ray Thompson Memorial Tournament in Tatamagouche, basically all by himself.

The Ray Thompson Memorial Tournament is an annual event that is held for adult hockey teams in Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia. It is held in the memory of Mr. Thompson, who was a commanding presence in the region's minor hockey programs over multiple decades. The tournament acts as a fundraiser for our present-day minor hockey organization and as a boost to the local economy, most notably for the NSLC and TataBrew. It is quite definitely not a dry affair. The weekend competition is usually comprised of multiple divisions. This past year there were two. The Open division and the Over 35. The Open division is more highly skilled, faster paced and boasts a stronger pedigree of hockey player. The Over-35 portion of the tournament sports a more diversified array of talent ranging from new-to-the-game beginners to superstars from days gone by. It is within this eclectic mix of pseudo athletes that Mr. McMaster's story takes place.

The Over-35 division consisted of four teams. These teams were constructed based on a roster of names. Approximately 55 people signed up to participate, and these individuals were assigned teams based on skill level, age, and athletic prowess. The intent was parity, but also to match people up with other players they may have never met or played with before. It was to some degree a social experiment, with a competitive edge. And it worked.

For the sake of time and space I'll fast forward to the Championship game. If you're interested in all the tomfoolery and shenanigans that took place during Round Robin action, you'll have to wait for the documentary. It's still in production.

The Sunday morning final pitted McMaster's older team - we'll call them Big Mike and the Boyz (BMB for short) - against a collection of semi-youthful locals led by everyone's second favourite Pat, Patrick Mulholland. We'll call them Falcon Plumbing and Heating (FPH). The game sheets got soaked in beer, so who scored when, penalties and other statistical accuracies will not be present in this article. What follows here is based on the writer's hazy, biased (I played on Mike's team) memories.

The game started fast, but defensive. Both teams were feeling each other out. FPH were the younger, faster team, rushing the puck through the neutral zone with reckless abandon. BMB took a more reserved approach with tight checking and frequent line changes due to their senior stature. I honestly can't remember who scored first, but I do recall Mike McMaster's first goal. As a player, Mike is both physically imposing and tenacious. A house league coach's dream. Think early 90's Cam Neely with a nicer head of hair. The first period was winding down and Mike found himself behind the opposition's net. He faked to go around the net on the left and then quickly shifted right. The

sudden burst of power dropped Mike to his knees, but he managed to emerge from behind the net, extended his stick and puck across the crease and tucked the puck behind the goalie on the far side. It was a wraparound goal for the ages, executed whilst sliding on his knees. I've watched a lot of hockey in my years, but I'd never seen a goal both so ugly and beautiful before.

So that goal either made it 1-0 or 1-1. We'll say 1-1. BMB's next goal came off the stick of Matt Gunning. A slender centerman and one of the more charismatic car salesmen north of the Mason-Dixon line. His goal was nice as well, coming from a wrist shot off the rush, just over the goalie's outstretched glove hand. 2-1.

The score remained 2-1 for much of the game until midway through the 3rd. FPH surged in front of BMB's net, swarming the crease with bodies and sticks and willed a rebound into the back of the net. 2-2. FPH kept the pressure on as time wound down, coming close several times. Defenseman, and human smokestack, Kyle MacEachern, chipped the puck out of BMB's zone almost too far ahead of McMaster. But Mike willed himself up the ice to retrieve the puck, miniscule pieces of ice bursting from his skate blades as he rocketed over the red line. 32 seconds left on the clock. McMaster glided over the blue line and loaded up a wrist shot, releasing it from just outside the top of the faceoff circle. The puck whistled into the far top corner. 3-2. 30 seconds left. What a shot.

The ensuing faceoff saw FPH win the draw and enter the offensive zone. They managed a shot on net, and the resulting melee for the rebound would normally have been cause for at least 4 penalties. I saw tripping, slashing, high-sticking, headlocks, and MMA submission moves. But the ref had put away the whistle for this final stand. The two teams fought in front of the net for the puck for what seemed like hours but was probably five seconds. In the end, BMB managed to hold their ground and win the game. 3-2. Two goals for Big Mike, including the dramatic game-winner. If Team Canada brass happened upon that game while compiling the national roster, ol' Mikey boy would've likely got some 4th line consideration.

No high-profile championship game is without some controversy. Early in the game, FPH ripped a shot on net that handcuffed BMB goalie Homer. As he fell to cover the puck, it rolled underneath him. His body blocked the referee's sightline, but judging by the look on Blair Falconers face behind the net, the puck was super close to - or may have crossed - the goal line. Unfortunately, or fortunately depending on your perspective, the ref didn't see it.

Sorry, Blair, sometimes a game shakes out that way.

River John Pickleball Club (RJPC) News

By: Rhonda Calcott

RJPC Plans and Activities for 2026

It's expected that the upcoming year will be busy with continuing the great work happening within the club and acting upon suggestions that members expressed in last year's membership survey. Initiatives include installing the e-bike charging racks at the outdoor courts in May; confirming the feasibility of offering onsite internet access; purchasing a ball machine and possibly installing a practice wall within the court; securing new demo pickleball paddles to be available

onsite; offering a variety of player development opportunities for different skill levels from beginners to advanced; offering summer social activities such as BBQs, potlucks, the summer dance, as well as arranging fun round robin play and the annual Pickleball Tournament during River John Festival Days.

Welcoming Beginner Players

Members of the River John community are invited to learn more about the sport of pickleball and take advantage of RJPC's offerings. For those who may ask, "What is all the Hype About Pickleball?" the following information may be helpful.

Pickleball is an activity that almost anyone can play at any age; is easy to learn; has minimal costs; is low impact with little chance for injury; supports physical and mental health improvements and fosters social connections in a fun environment. People within the River John community are fortunate to have the opportunity to explore and join the fun that happens on one of the best outdoor pickleball courts within the province, which are located on the grounds of the River John Legion.

Everyone who plays now has started as a beginner - learning how to hold a paddle, the simple game rules and etiquette as well as benefiting from the support and encouragement of fellow "seasoned" players.

RJPC offers regular play opportunities at the Firehall during the off-season and at the outdoor courts from spring to fall. The club also offers introductory lessons and the following Beginner Mentorship Program for those who are newer to the game.

The Beginner Mentorship Program

This program was initiated in January, 2026 to help those who want to learn how to play pickleball (or play better) and who have little or no experience. Eight experienced members of the River John Pickleball Club have volunteered to mentor interested beginners. During the off-season, mentors and beginners have been working together at the firehall on Friday from 2:15-4:15 pm. The program will also be integrated into the outdoor courts scheduling beginning this spring. Two mentors help four beginners at a time to learn the pickleball play fundamentals such as practicing with serving, returning, rallying and playing the game. If you are interested in learning more about the Beginner Mentorship Program and how to register for a learning session, email riverjohnpickleball@gmail.com.

The RJPC has demo pickleball paddles on site to use. The only things you will need to bring as a beginner are supportive sneakers and the willingness to try something new. We hope to see you on the courts in 2026.

The RJPC Board of Directors for 2026 year is comprised of new and returning officers:

The Executive:

President: Ed Kennedy
 Vice President: John McKim
 Treasurer: Kelly Kolke
 Secretary: Barb Foulds
 Directors and assigned portfolios:
 Membership - Jan Langley;
 Operations and Maintenance/
 Construction - John McKim;
 Events - Sharon Myra;
 Communications - Rhonda Calcott.

Brain Teaser Answer: A map.

Church News

Lent into Easter 2026

By: Rev. Enjei Achah

Dear beautiful people of our lovely community of River John, it is always great to connect to the ongoing activities in our community through the Pioneer newsletter and we are grateful to all who put in so much work to make this happen.

We are heading into the season of Lent, beginning from February 18. Lent is a 40-day period (excluding Sundays), leading up to Easter. It invites us to a meaningful journey of reflection, repentance and renewal in Christ. During this time, we are encouraged to intentionally draw closer to God through prayer, studying our Bibles, fasting, and acts of kindness and compassion. We are invited to slow down and reflect on where God is calling us to grow, habits or attitudes we need to change, and how we can express Christ's love more faithfully to one another. We invite you to participate in our Lenten services as we gather to journey with Christ. As we do, let us remember that the ultimate goal of the season of Lent is for us to be led to the cross and from the cross to the resurrection. And if you do not know Him, this is a good time to accept Him as your Lord and Saviour and I'm sure any of the ministers in our three churches will be able to walk with you in this journey. May this holy season prepare us to fully celebrate the victory and love of Jesus Christ at Easter and beyond. Below are our Lent events, dates and times:

Church Services and Lent Services

St. David's Presbyterian Church, Toney River – Every Sunday at 9:30 a.m.

St. George's Presbyterian Church, River John – Every Sunday at 11:00 a.m.

St. George's Church Hall - Every Wednesday from 9:30 a.m. Morning Coffee Hour organized by Earl Johnson Wednesday, February 18: Ash Wednesday at St. George's Presbyterian Church.

Friday March 6 at 3:00 p.m. – World Day of Prayer at Sedgwick Memorial Presbyterian Church, Tata-magouche. This year's theme is: "I will give you rest: come." Written and produced by the women in Nigeria.

Lent Luncheon:

Wednesday, March 11: St. John's Anglican

Wednesday, March 18: St. George's PC

Wednesday, March 25: Salem United

Thursday, April 2: Maundy Thursday at St. John's Anglican Church

Friday, April 3: Good Friday at Salem United Church.

Sunday, April 5: Easter Sunday

St. Michael's Church

By: Netta Heukshorst



Regularly scheduled Mass is on Saturdays at 4 p.m., followed by a social gathering downstairs in the hall.

On December 6th we were blessed to have Bishop Martin Currie celebrate Holy Mass with us, followed by a lovely reception.

From January 20th to March 17th, an Alpha course is taking place from 6-8 p.m. that is open to all denominations. Starting at 6 p.m. with fellowship and a simple meal followed by a video on Jesus and Faith and a short discussion afterwards. All are welcome.

On February 14th, Fr. Brian Dunn, the Archbishop of Yarmouth/Halifax, celebrated Holy Mass here, an honour indeed to have had him with us. A special reception took place afterwards, lots of treats.

The season of Lent is upon us and on Ash Wednesday during Mass; holy ashes were distributed to all attendees by Fr. Jim O'Connor.

Each Saturday during Lent, Stations of the Cross will be said at 3:15 pm. prior to the celebration of Mass.

The Easter weekend schedule is as follows:

Good Friday service at 3 p.m.

No Saturday Mass

Easter Sunday morning Mass at 9 a.m.

Happy Easter, everyone.

Everyone is welcome at St. Michael's.

Smile and be kind to one another.

St. John the Baptist Anglican Church

The congregation held its annual general meeting on February 8, following Holy Communion celebrated by the Rev. Keith Denman, and then "Muffin Sunday" treats shared with visiting members of Salem United Church in River John.

To explain: the Rev. Denman is a retired priest from Newfoundland & Labrador, now living in Westville, who celebrates with us on the second Sunday of each month – circumstances (like weather) permitting. Muffin Sunday was initially scheduled for the last Sunday of each month, but the congregation moved it to the second Sunday so we could host our visiting priest.

As an energy-saving measure, St. John's takes turnabout with Salem United hosting Sunday worship during the winter months – a practice for several years now. It is energizing to raise our voices in prayer and praise with a larger group.

At the annual meeting, James White and Dana Jefferson were elected as wardens, Elizabeth Langille as secretary, and Denise White as treasurer. At time of writing, the Annual General Meeting for the Anglican Parish of Northumberland, comprised of churches in River John, Middleton Corners, Wallace, and Oxford, was scheduled for Monday, March 2.

On November 16, the congregation welcomed the Rev. David Maginley of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), which is in full communion with the Anglican Church of Canada. He celebrated communion in the morning and, in the afternoon, gave a presentation on the transformative power of spiritual growth. An author, four-time cancer survivor, near-death experiencer and psychospiritual specialist with decades of clinical experience in cancer, palliative and intensive care, the Rev. Maginley fielded dozens of questions and comments from an intensely interested audience from the River John area. (www.davidmaginley.com)

Because no priest was available to celebrate Holy Communion at Christmas, the church postponed that service until Sunday, December 28, with Rev. Denman.

On Christmas Eve, the congregation presented "A Nativity Scene," a tableau organized by Jocelyn Heighton, with assistance from Licensed Lay Ministers Gerry Bowles, Denise White and Monica Graham, and with music by Faye Jefferson, Carol Smith, Jim White and Denise White. The presentation involved placing figures of the Holy Family and others in a creche as their stories were told through Scripture and music, interspersed with prayer and commentary. The event involved most members of the congregation and drew strong attendance. It closed with singing "Silent Night" by candlelight.

In other news, St. John's now has a small lending library of books related to scriptural and religious topics. Anyone wishing to borrow simply has to write his/her name, contact information, date and book title in a register provided by the bookcase at the back of the church. If anyone else seeks the title – they know who to contact.

Our Lent 2026 observances include ecumenical prayer luncheons, and the usual Holy Week observances, all governed by a yearly schedule agreed upon among the River John Churches.

Salem United Church

Connie's Comment



An Advent Luncheon that didn't get cancelled because of a snow storm.



Here we have the workers at one of our Salem UC Take Out Suppers last summer - it's fun when we get together to work!

Salem United Church, and the other four churches I serve, will be utilizing the theme "Tell Me Something Good" throughout the season of Lent and Holy Week in 2016. A very appropriate impetus considering that the news in our world can be rather overwhelming these days with global conflicts and climate concerns and economic and political uncertainty. We need a break from the doom and gloom. So, let me share some good things that are happening here and now.

Salem United Church and St. John the Baptist Anglican Church are once again sharing our winter worship services, moving back and forth between the two churches on each successive Sunday. Together the two congregations enhance our hymn singing, our sharing during 'theme conversation' time, and our learning in faith - and it's all good!

And if two is good, three is better. The Lenten Luncheons are once again being hosted by St. George's Presbyterian Church with a short worship program at noon, followed by a potluck luncheon. Wednesday, March 11th will be led by St. John the Baptist Anglican Church; Wednesday, March 18th will be led by St. George's Presbyterian Church; and Wednesday, March 25th will be led by Salem United Church - and it's all good!

On Wednesday, March 18th, Salem United Church will host "Musique Royale" featuring David Greenberg playing the Cape Breton fiddle and the baroque violin; and Chris Norman playing the wooden flute. The concert will begin at 7:00 p.m., and tickets are \$25 in advance (contact: annie@waldegrave.org) or \$30.00 at the door. Try something new for an evening's entertainment - and it's all good!

During Holy Week there will be more ecumenical togetherness as worship services will be held at St. John

the Baptist Anglican Church for Maundy Thursday on April 2nd; at Salem United Church for Good Friday on Friday April 3rd; and at Bissell Park with leadership provided by St. George's Presbyterian for Easter Sunrise worship - and it's all good!

After Easter, with the warmer weather on its way, Salem United Church will hopefully be planning several more "Take Out Dinners" from May through October as a fund-raising opportunity that also offers fellowship and feeding as the whole community comes together to support our venture - and it's all good!

May the good help the bad to fade as the warmth of spring melts the winter snow, enabling our faith may be strengthened and our hope uplifted; for when we live and worship and work together - it's all good.

Blessings, Connie

Read by the Sea Meet and Greet

By: Diane Kennedy

As you may have heard, the Read by the Sea (RBTS) Festival is returning to River John this summer on July 11th as a one-day event. The new committee would like to invite previous committee members to join us on April 18th, 1-3 pm at the River John Library, with light refreshments provided.

We look forward to meeting you and sharing our plans for this year and the future of RBTS. We also want to express our sincere appreciation and gratitude for your vision and dedication in establishing and running a very successful festival for 25 years. We have had amazing support from the local business community with our sponsorships. This is truly a community event much like Festival Days and we want to share it with you.

Please mark your calendar, reach out to your fellow organizers, and join us. They say many hands make light work but also many minds working together accomplish great things. We are new to the RBTS Festival organization, we have been working hard, and we are excited about this year. We look forward to meeting you.

Any questions, contact me at ldianekennedy@gmail.com

Learning About Apuknajit with Pictou Landing First Nation School (PLFNS)

By The Students and Staff of PLFNS



Hunter, Val, Zach and Landen Feeding Apuknajit

As February settles over Mi'kma'ki, the land reminds us of winter's full force. Cold winds sweep in from the Northumberland Strait; snow piles high along roads and shorelines, and daylight slowly, patiently begins to return. In Mi'kmaw knowledge, February is understood as the coldest and harshest month of the year - a turning point that marks not only endurance but also hope. It is during this time that Mi'kmaw people traditionally acknowledge and feed 'Apuknajit', the spirit associated with winter, cold, and the forces that shape the season.

Each year at Pictou Landing First Nation School, we take part in a meaningful act of learning and remembrance rooted in this tradition. Guided by one of our Mi'kmaw Language Teachers, Valerie Bernard, Principal Haley Bernard, and supported by teachings shared by Elder Ralph Francis, we offer tobacco and food to Apuknajit at the edge of our playground - a simple but powerful gesture connecting past and present, land and learning, spirit and season.

For many communities in our province, these teachings may be unfamiliar; yet they speak to a deep relationship with the land that has existed here for thousands of years.

Who Is Apuknajit?

Apuknajit is understood in Mi'kmaw as the spirit of winter. Apuknajit governs the cold, the storms, and the difficult conditions that come with the season. Rather than being something to fear, Apuknajit is respected - a powerful presence that must be acknowledged and welcomed properly.

Our school's Elder Ralph Francis explained to us that offerings are made at the end of January/beginning of February (or around the full moon of February), before winter begins to loosen its grip.

"It helps bring the start of the end of winter," he shares. "After February, things start warming up again. That's why you want to welcome the winter spirit."

This act of welcoming is essential. By putting out food and offerings, people signal respect and gratitude. It is a way of saying: you are acknowledged, and you are welcome to pass through.

"If you don't welcome Apuknakit in, it's going to be a long, cold February and end of winter," shared Elder Ralph Francis.

Feeding Apuknajit

Traditionally, Mi'kmaw families would prepare a plate of food and place it at the edge of the woods. This location mattered. The forest edge is a place of transition - between open space and shelter, human presence and the natural world.

"You put out a plate (of food)," Elder Ralph Francis says, "Right at the edge of the woods or whatever."

By morning, the food would often be gone.

continued on page 22

“Of course, next morning it’d be gone,” he adds with a chuckle, “Because a fox or some other animal ate it.”

In Mi’kmaw worldview, this is not accidental. Animals are part of the system of sharing and receiving. The offering is accepted through the natural world, reinforcing the idea that humans are not separate from nature, but part of it. Food offerings may include whatever is available - bread, meat, or other simple foods and/or meal leftovers. These offerings are often accompanied by tobacco, which holds special spiritual significance. Tobacco (or Tmawey) is not used casually in Mi’kmaw culture; it is a sacred medicine offered with intention, respect, and prayer.

Learning That Was Once Suppressed

One of the most powerful parts of Elder Francis’ teaching is his honesty about how all Mi’kmaw traditions were interrupted.

“No, we didn’t do Mi’kmaw stuff back in my days,” he says, when asked whether Apuknajit was fed when he was a child. “Because you weren’t allowed.”

For generations, Mi’kmaw language, ceremony, and spiritual practices were actively suppressed through colonial policies and the residential school system. Children were punished for speaking their language or practicing their culture. Knowledge that had once been passed naturally from Elders to youth was forced underground.

“It just came back recently,” Elder Francis explains.

He recalls first hearing more openly about feeding Apuknajit in the early 1990s.

“Maybe about back in ’94,” he says. “That’s when I started hearing about it.”

The year is significant. The last residential schools in Canada closed in the 90s, marking a painful chapter in our country’s history, but also the beginning of cultural reclamation for many Indigenous communities.

“My mom mentioned it back in the early ’60s,” he adds, “But we didn’t do anything like the kids do now.”

At our school, these teachings are now being intentionally brought back - not as relics of the past, but as living knowledge.

On January 30th, we all gathered in the cafeteria with our Mi’kmaw Teacher, Valerie, Principal Haley, and other staff, to make a tobacco offering as part of our feeding Apuknajit. Tobacco was offered, acknowledging the spiritual importance of the moment and showing respect before any other action was taken. Then, three students - Hunter, Landen and Zach - and Valerie carried food outside to the edge of the playground, choosing a place that echoed the traditional forest boundary described by our Elder Ralph Francis.

The students reflected; “It helps animals. It gets us to feed them food,” commented Hunter.

Landen elaborated on why we feed Apuknajit, “We need to feed it so it can live another day, and the animals can live another day.” Zach explained that “Apuknajit is a winter spirit; I feed it at home, too. We fed it spaghetti and garlic bread.”

Though the setting was a schoolyard rather than deep woods, the meaning remained the same. Our offering was made with intention, humility, and learning at its core.

For us, this is not just a lesson about history. It is a cultural experience - one that reminds us about the importance of seasonal cycles, respect for the land, and the responsibilities that come with living in Mi’kma’ki.

Valerie, as one of our Mi’kmaw Language teachers along with Elder Helen Francis, plays a vital role in ensuring that our language and cultural teachings are connected, where our words, ceremonies, and land-based practices are intertwined.

Why February Matters

In Mi’kmaw seasonal understanding, February is not simply another winter month. It is a threshold. It represents survival through the hardest part of winter and the careful, respectful welcoming of what comes next. Feeding Apuknajit acknowledges both gratitude and readiness - gratitude for making it through, and readiness for change.

This understanding contrasts with modern ideas of controlling or conquering nature. Instead, Mi’kmaw teachings emphasize relationships: listening to the land, observing patterns, and responding with respect. It reminds us of the importance of ‘Etuaptmunk’ or ‘Two-Eyed Seeing’.

Why This Matters for All of Us

For readers in River John and surrounding communities, learning about Apuknajit is an opportunity to better understand the land we all share.

These teachings remind us that Mi’kmaw history is not distant or abstract - it is rooted right here, in the same winters we endure, the same forests and shorelines we pass every day.

They also remind us of resilience. Knowledge that was once silenced is being spoken again. Practices that were forbidden are now being taught openly to children, with guidance from Elders and educators.

As Elder Ralph Francis’ words teach us, cultural revival is not about recreating the past exactly as it was, but about restoring meaning, connection, and respect.

By feeding Apuknajit, we are doing more than placing food outdoors. We are participating in a relationship with the land, the season, and our ancestors - and ensuring that this knowledge continues forward.

As winter begins to loosen its grip, these teachings offer a reminder: the changing seasons are not something we simply endure; they are something we acknowledge, welcome, and learn from - together.

Traffic Lights on Cape John Road

By: Marg Jones



Temporary traffic lights at Murphy Creek, Cape John Road.

If you haven’t travelled along Cape John Road recently you may be surprised to see a set of traffic lights as you approach Murphy Creek, and find that the road across the creek is down to one lane. In the last few years, drivers going across that piece of road have learned to slow down as they do so because of the dip in the road, which could very easily do some nasty damage to your vehicle if you go across too fast.

Recently, the south lane of that section was closed off to traffic, and the lights were installed; the trees and shrubbery beside the road in that area were trimmed so that drivers had a clear view of oncoming traffic. Warning signs in both directions give drivers ample warning of the lights ahead. You don’t have to wait too long if you hit a red light - it usually only lasts about 45 seconds before it turns green.

I recently wrote to our MLA, Marco MacLeod, for information of what will happen there, and here is his reply:

“Please find the following statement from DPW:

Current plans call for the Cape John Bridge to be replaced beginning in 2027. The ex-isting large timber box culvert is approaching 70 years old and needs to be replaced. There is a significant amount of pre-engineering work that needs to be done before this tidal watercourse structure can be replaced, and we will be doing that over the next year.

Maintenance crews are monitoring the condition of the culvert, and the eastern lane remains passable. Two-way traffic is being managed with temporary signals.”

I don’t know what will replace the culvert in 2027, but whatever it is, it will definitely be an improvement over what Capers have put up with for the last number of years.

River John
Community
Action Society
will hold its
**Third Annual
Fundraising
Fashion Show**
**Sunday
May 24th
2pm-4pm**
at the Legion.

Stay tuned for
ticket sales.

Obituaries

Della Bernice (Ingraham) Jefferson

October 31, 1936 - January 30, 2026

In Loving Memory.

With her heart overflowing with love, our beautiful Mumma, Della Bernice (Ingraham) Jefferson gently slipped away in the early moonlit hours of January 30, joining her Phillips-Ingraham family in everlasting joy.

Born in Belle Cote on October 31, 1936, she was the daughter of Alfred and Annie (Phillips) Ingraham, and the second youngest in a large family of five brothers and five sisters.

Della's true passion was caregiving. She shared that gift generously - not only as a devoted aunt and mother to her own family, but also to the many children she lovingly babysat while living in Conquerall Bank, Dartmouth, and River John. Following twelve years of life and work on the family dairy farm, Della faced the challenge of going it on her own, which she did with strength and courage. She embraced her independence by learning to drive, purchasing her own little home, and working full time as a personal caregiver for numerous elderly folk.

Della became deeply involved in her River John community. She was a dedicated member of Salem United Church, contributed to the Ladies Auxiliary of the River John Volunteer Fire Department, and loved bowling with her River John bowling group. Music was a constant in her life - she especially cherished harmonizing with the West Branch Area Singers.

In the final chapter of her life, Della was blessed to be surrounded by the love and care of the incredible nurses and caregivers of Willow Lodge in Tatamagouche.

Della leaves behind her five children and their spouses: Ruby & Gerry Bowles, Dana & Faye Jefferson, Kevin & Dianne Jefferson, Lisa Jefferson, and Amanda & Leo Gillis; her eleven grandchildren, and her fourteen great-grandchildren.

A special celebration of her life will be held on Sunday, May 17 between 2 and 4pm at the Toney River community hall where we will honour her memory with tea and biscuits (her favorite snack) and other refreshments along with stories and, of course, music.

Glen Patrick Foance

September 8, 1969 - November 29, 2025

It is with deep sadness that we announce the sudden passing of Glen Patrick Foance at home in Melville on November 29, 2025. Born in Pictou, he was a son of the late Lloyd and Eleanor (Shea) Foance.

Following in his father's footsteps, Glen pursued a successful career as a truck driver allowing him to visit most of Canada and met a wide array of like-minded people. He had exceptional navigation skills and was able to find destinations with landmarks and signage alone. He was ecstatic to learn that his son Hazen had also chosen this career path and proudly passed down his years of knowledge and training. After more than 20 years of driving, his career ended abruptly due to an underlying health condition.

During his retirement he liked to keep busy at home, doing yard work and small home renovations. Throughout his life he took pleasure in assembling model cars and trucks, of which he ended up building a significant and cherished collection. He enjoyed attending truck pulls and car shows with his friends and son, and spending time with his family, whether it was the four of us going for a drive or just staying home and watching a movie.

Glen is survived by his spouse, Sandra; daughter, Chantal (Justin) Marriott, Timberlea; son, Hazen (Taya), Mulgrave; precious granddaughter, Maisie who will miss her 'Pepaw'; sister and brothers, Aleatha, David, Jim; sisters-in-law, Donna, River John; Ann, Hedgeville; brothers-in-law, David, Pictou; Bob, Cape John; special niece, Ashley whom he often lovingly referred to as 'Wart'; chosen brothers, Alexander Crim, Stuart Allen; several nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his precious angel granddaughter, Marilyn Faith; sisters-in-law, Beverly, Marilyn; brothers-in-law, Lennie and Greg.

There was a celebration of life Saturday, December 13th from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the River John Lions Club. A graveside service was held later.

Drive into the sunset, Dad; you will forever be in our hearts.

"And they lay you down so fast
'Til you look straight up and say
Oh, Lord
Am I really here at last?"



Iola Mae SWANTEE

It is with great sadness that we share the passing of Iola Mae Swantee on February 6, 2026, at Willow Lodge, Tatamagouche. Iola was the last remaining member of her immediate family. She was a daughter of Chester and Edna (Patriquin) Langille. Iola had a great sense of humor and loved to laugh and have fun. She was a classy dresser, a beautiful cook, and loved to host many dinner parties and family potluck suppers, always welcoming everyone for a cup of tea or an afternoon cocktail. She was a faithful member and Elder of St. George's Presbyterian Church, and an active member of the River John Legion Br. 108. Iola was so proud of her Bed & Breakfast being a dream she made come true. She was happiest when serving her guests breakfast in her dust hat and apron. She will be sadly missed by her husband, Chester; and his children, Patti (Kevin), Janice (Bryan), Angus (Carol); her son, Jess (Annabelle) and daughter, Debbie (Wayne); her step-children, Jean (Warren), David and Keith Jewell; chosen sister, Bessie (Daryl); all her grandchildren; sisters-in-law, Millie and Jeannie Langille; brother-in-law, Ian Swantee and special friend, Bonnie Hiltz. Besides her parents, she was predeceased by her son, Glen; grandson, Brian; husband, Walter Jewell; brother, Douglas (Helen), Philip, Willis; and sister, Alice (Walter). Iola's family would like to Thank Dr. Bush and the staff at Willow Lodge for their wonderful and amazing care while she was a resident. Visitation was held 6-8 PM March 6th from St. George's Presbyterian Church, River John. The funeral took place 2 PM Saturday March 7th also from St. George's Presbyterian Church with Rev. Enjei Achah officiating. Donations in Iola's memory may be made to St. George's Presbyterian Church or the River John Legion Br. 108.



Derek Alexander Thompson

It is with great sadness that we announce the sudden passing of Derek Alexander Thompson, who departed this life on December 31, 2025, following an unknown battle with heart disease. Born and raised in God's country, River John, he was the son of Stanley and Rose (Jollimore) Thompson. He was a beautiful blonde haired little boy, always gentle and kind, full of energy and famously never wanted to cut his hair.

Derek began working on the Northumberland Strait, fishing with his uncle Raymond and his cousins, Dwayne and Travis Falconer. He was always happiest when he was working, especially on the water, and took great pride in providing for his family. Alongside fishing, Derek also built a strong career as a steel worker, spending over ten years working in Halifax. His work later took him to Alberta and Nunavut where he continued to form lasting friendships that he considered family. Derek eventually returned to the sea, setting sail once again, a place where he truly felt at home. Derek had a deep passion for motorcycles, especially his Harley Davidsons, he spent countless hours travelling across Canada with his bike family.

Derek's greatest accomplishment, and his pride and joy, was becoming a father to his daughter, Sharla, whom he loved and cherished with all his heart, along with his beautiful granddaughter, Sophia.

Derek is survived by his parents, Rose and Stanley Thompson; his daughter, Sharla Thompson (Chris); his granddaughter, Sophia; his brothers, Dion and Leon Thompson; nephews, Parker and Balie MacDonald-Thompson; aunts, Betty Jean Falconer (Raymond) and Faye Thompson-Peters (Jim); and many cousins. A service to celebrate Derek's life was held on Sunday, January 11, 2026, at 1:00 p.m. at McLaren Funeral Home, 246 Faulkland Street, Pictou. Rev. Dr. Glen Matheson officiated.

Donations in Derek's memory may be made to his family.

Life is going to feel heavier without you. Love always and forever.

"Catch ya later sweet pea."
Catch you later, Dad.

Obituaries



Keith (William) Heighton

January 17th, 1961 - December 17th, 2025

It is with deep sadness and heavy hearts that we announce the death of Keith William Heighton, who passed peacefully on December 17th, 2025, with his wife and children by his side. Born in Tatamagouche on January 17th, 1961, he was the youngest son of Ralph and Jean (Langille) Heighton. Following in his father's footsteps, he was born to be a fisherman. Starting at the young age of 17, he fished the Northumberland Strait for almost 50 years. The last 18 years he had the privilege of teaching and sharing his knowledge of fishing with his son, Travis. Keith was also very proud of the interest and skills his grandson, Chase, had in fishing. Keith played hockey as hard as he fished. Every game mattered, and he loved every minute of it. He excelled in the sport and played on many teams through minor, junior, senior and recreational leagues. He loved to socialize and tell stories. Whether it was new friends he met on his travels, or old friends he had known for years. He will be missed by many but most of all by his wife of 43 years, Marilyn; and his children, Erica and Travis (River John); granddaughters, Nora and Elena; and chosen granddaughter, Jorja; siblings, Mary Monk (Merlie), Ronnie (Sharon), Faye Jefferson (Dana); in-laws, Barry Holt (Nancy), Ann Heighton, Sandra MacKay, Linda Munro, David Munro (Ann Marie), Alison Munro; as well as his many nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his parents and parents-in-law, Doug, and Kay Munro; siblings, Ruth Fraser, Robbie Heighton; brothers-in-law, Ronnie Fraser, Ronnie Munro, Charles Munro; sister-in-law, Leona Heighton (Dwyer); niece, Stacy Ann Heighton; great-niece, Phoebe Tate. He was also predeceased by his one and only grandson, Chase Heighton. Funeral was held at St. George's Presbyterian Church on Sunday December 28th, 2025, at 2pm. with Rev. Enjei Achah officiating. A celebration of Keith's life was held directly after the service at the River John Firehall. In lieu of flowers, a donation to a charity of your choice can be made in Keith's name.



Raymond Langille

March 29th, 1943 - October 24th, 2025

With heavy hearts, we share that Raymond Langille has passed away on October 24th, 2025. Ray was born on March 29th, 1943, in River John, Nova Scotia, to the late Hazel and Clyde Langille.

Ray began his career working with Ford Motor Company in Oakville, Ontario. The career was short-lived for Ray, as he headed home to Nova Scotia, where he began his journey working with the Tim Hortons Franchise in 1976. Ray became an owner of the brand and proudly served customers, his community, and, more importantly, built long-lasting friendships.

After a long journey, Ray finally retired in 2000, and outside of his career, Ray loved spending time outdoors, whether it was fishing, hunting, riding four-wheelers, or simply maintaining his vegetable garden. His absolute favourite place to be was home in River John, but as many know, his true passion was his love for being on a golf course.

Ray will always be remembered for his kind heart and his sense of humour. Ray loved to laugh and joke as he was the king of one-liners and could fill a room with laughter and joy. Ray always cherished his time spent socializing with family and friends. Ray was a very proud father. His kids meant the absolute world to him, and he treasured his grandchildren. He was the happiest surrounded by the people and places he loved most.

As we lay Ray to rest, we know God got a beloved soul and heaven just got a bit brighter. As you look down upon us as our guardian angel, we pray for your blessings, and we keep your memory close until the day we all meet again. Rest In Peace, we love you, Ray.

Ray was predeceased by his brothers: Herb, Bob, Gerry, Boyd, Charles; Leo and his sister Shirley. He is survived by his sisters: Thelma, his brothers: Arnie, Wayne, and Colin. Ray is also survived by daughters: Rae-Shelley (Mike), Ashley (Anthony), Tara Lynn (John), and grandchildren: MJ, Nicholas, Joshua, Alexa, Willow, and Remi. As well as his two cherished stepdaughters, Gina and Joanne. Along with his son, Michael, and daughters.

Steven Leslie Innis

December 18, 1961 – November 29, 2025

It is with deep sadness that we announce the sudden passing of Steven Innis, 63, at home in River John. Born in Tatamagouche on December 18, 1961, he was the youngest son of the late Alex and Irma Innis.

Steven was employed by Nova Scotia Power, Trenton, NS. He also enjoyed fishing, working in the woods, and in his shop.

Steven is survived by his brothers, James (Caroline), Warwickshire, England; Duane (Gail), River John; sister, Glenna Tarr, Country Harbour; as well as several nieces and nephews.

Besides his parents, Steven was predeceased by brother, George; brother-in-law, LeRoy Tarr; nephews, Kelly Innis and Gavin Innis.

Graveside service was held at West Branch Cemetery December 9, 2025, at 2 p.m. with Rev. Enjei Achah officiating. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to your local SPCA.

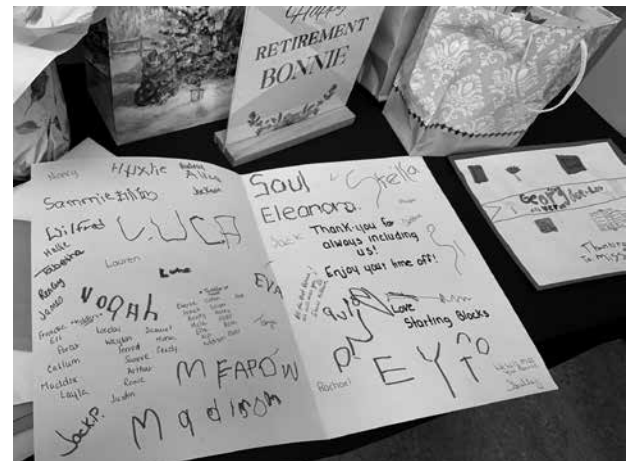
A FISHERMAN'S PRAYER

God grant that I may live to fish until my dying day,
And when my final cast is made and life has slipped away,
I pray that God's great landing net will catch me in its sweep
And in His mercy God will judge me big enough to keep.

Announcements



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



The gift table, featuring a card signed by the local daycare Starting Blocks

Watch for the **Spring/Summer issue of Sunrise Trail Magazine arriving this May**. Discover North Shore businesses, events, and destinations through stories written by local Nova Scotians.

Proudly published in River John by Pink Lemonade Creative Media. Pick up your free copy at many north shore businesses and local libraries.

Guidelines for Writing an Obituary

Obituaries are important historical documents. They can offer a glimpse into the lives, values, and social norms of past generations. They are a kind of mini biography that provides details about a person's life, relationships, and accomplishments. They also serve as a public announcement of an individual's death.

A clear picture is an important inclusion. It is typical to include the individual's full name. Including both their birth and death date will help people determine when they knew the person. Historians use these to track trends. Who was the person predeceased by, and by whom were they survived? How would you share their personal essence; the things they loved doing and helped make them who they were? What are the funeral/burial arrangements? Do you have any thanks you want to include? Perhaps to individuals who were especially helpful in the time leading up to the individual's death. Where might one make a memorial donation?

Many thanks to Joan McLeod for putting together these guidelines that might support writing an obituary.

Announcements



Congratulations to Kelly Shaw who has just graduated with honours from Yorkville University. Kelly now has a Master of Arts in Counselling Psychology. Her husband, Eric Ogilvie, their children Ashley and Ryan, her mom, Debby Shaw, as well as her extended family congratulate her and wish her continued success in her newly endeavour. Since this is her sixth degree, Eric says she has more degrees than a thermometer and Debby says stop already!



Lexus Binns

Age: 17

Parents: Tanya and Pat Binns

School: Tatamagouche Regional Academy

Extracurricular: Volleyball and cooking

Future plans: NSCC in fall to advance my culinary skills in order to become a chef



Barbara Young and Robert Holton, celebrating their 50th anniversary in February. Robert's MacLeod ancestors, Malcolm and Lillian (Mackay) MacLeod, lived on Cape John; he now spends half the year there.

Births



John Michael MacMaster was born to Mike and Ally MacMaster on October 2nd, 2025

“The best way to predict the future is to create it.”

— Peter Drucker

Enduring Love Story

River John couple knows the meaning of Valentine's

By: Steve Goodwin, Special to the Advocate

For Florence and John Craib, it seems as if Valentine's Day is everlasting.

The River Johners enjoy where they live, revel in each other's company and glow with the love they have shared while having been married for 70 years.

“We just live day-to-day,” Florence says. “Every day is Thanksgiving Day.”

“I don't know what I'd do without her,” John said. “I definitely would be lost.”

Both of the Craibs are in their early 90s. Florence was born in 1932 in nearby Welford, while John was born in 1934 in Wallace.

Florence was not totally sure how they met. However, their mutual love of dancing provided a hint.

“I suppose we met at a dance, likely Wallace,” she said. Their romance did not lead immediately to marriage. John was away working, but they kept in touch.

“We corresponded before we got married,” Florence said. “I was in Nova Scotia and John was in Ontario.”

“I was fishing lobsters and after that I took off to Ontario,” John said. “I was up there 10 or 12 years.” He spent part of that time working on construction of the St. Lawrence Seaway that opened in 1959.

They married on July 19, 1955, in Cornwall, Ontario and later returned to Nova Scotia.

John's work in construction included helping to assemble an Oberon-class submarine, the HMCS Ojibwa.

They moved to River John and built their home. Florence's brother helped John build the house, and both the Craibs say they wouldn't live anywhere else. The brightest part of the main floor later in the day is the kitchen and dining area.

“We just knew what we wanted to live in,” John said. “We like it here. We want to stay here as long as we can.” The house is in a neighbourhood that she said formed the main area of River John.



Florence Craib with her husband John Craib
Photo Credit: Goodwin Photo

Both the Craibs found work once they returned to the village, although John's job kept him mostly in Halifax. One exception he mentioned was a project to install a local sewer.

“I worked at a drug store for quite a while,” Florence said. “When they first opened, I was the first clerk.” Three children were born to the Craibs - two boys and later a girl.

“The youngest son, Steven, was 15 when we had a girl, Cheryl,” Florence said. “She's in Fort St. John, B.C.” Steven retired after working at Michelin for 35 years and lives in Pictou County.

The older son, David, worked in River John and Halifax as an electrician and passed away recently.

Both the Craibs remain active. Florence is involved in the community and attends meetings often. She spent part of her time as a rural correspondent for the Advocate.

“I think it's been enjoyable,” she said, while adding they would like to go to dances but are no longer able. John's activities are more domestic.

“I keep active,” John said. “I love the outdoors, gardening, looking after the yard and keeping the driveway open.”

Mary Beth Sutherland praised how the Craibs have contributed to the community over the years.

“Florence went to high school with my father,” she said. “I've known her most of my life. They're a lovely couple, very community minded, just wonderful people.”

Nova Scotia Honours River John Peacekeeper with Certificate of Recognition

By: Brenda White

This year, 2026, on the 80th anniversary of the United Nations, Nova Scotia is acknowledging the United Nations Peacekeepers from Nova Scotia with a Certificate of Recognition in appreciation of their service. Here is Harley White from River John receiving his certificate at one of the events, held in Truro. Wallace Sutherland and Willis Langille were unable

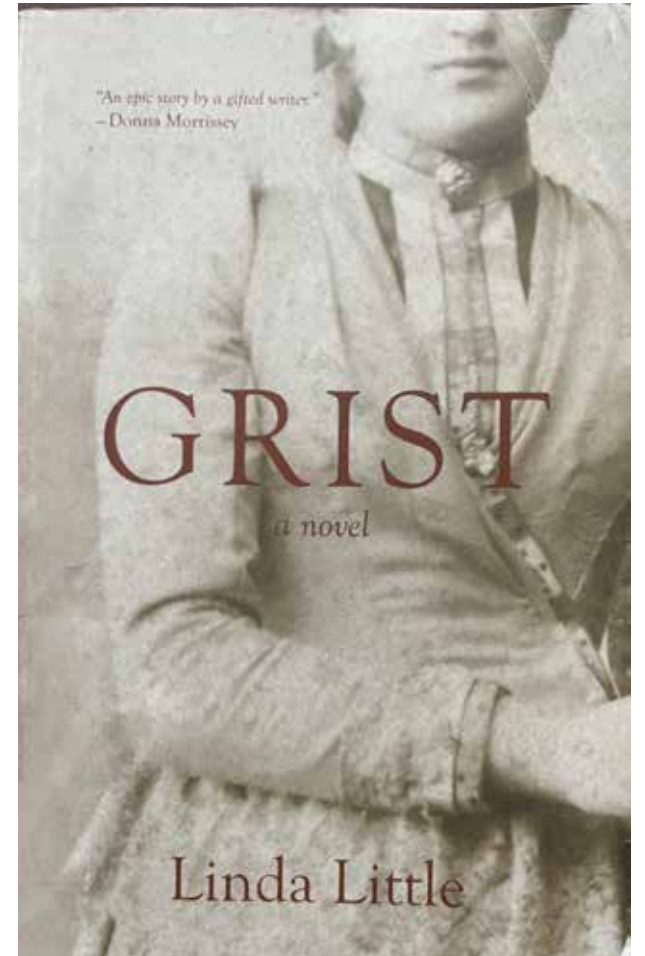
to attend, but have also received their certificate.

If any other veteran who served with the United Nations at any time was not aware of this, they can contact military.relations@novascotia.ca and have their certificate mailed to them.



A Reading of *Grist*, by Linda Little

By: Diane Kennedy



Linda Little, Rivers John's own author, designer-cake maker and Read by the Sea supporter, will present her book *Grist* at the Colchester Historeum in Truro at 29 Young Street on Wednesday June 3rd 12-1 p.m. Her presentation is part of the Museum's ongoing lunch-and-learn series focused on historic Colchester County. Admission is by donation and it is often standing room only.

Although *Grist* is a work of fiction, Linda drew her inspiration from the Balmoral Grist Mill, tucked away in Matheson Brook, Balmoral Mills in neighbouring Colchester County. Penelope MacLaughlin marries a miller but soon finds out he is not who she thought he was. In this epic story, Linda takes us on a journey of hardship and heartache, a situation for many women living in rural Maritime communities at that time.

Linda is a gifted author, but her talents don't stop there. She has a sparkle in her eye and a joyful personality. I dare say her storytelling is every bit as great as her writing and that says a lot. You will be carried away to a different time but to a familiar landmark location. This setting is especially pertinent now as the Government of Nova Scotia is making dramatic closures and cutbacks to our Provincial tourist sites.

Please mark your calendar, tell your friends and come out in support of a great author and presenter. You may laugh or cry, but you will definitely be touched by *Grist*!

CENTRAL NOVA

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[/SeanFraserMP](https://www.facebook.com/SeanFraserMP)

sean.fraser@parl.gc.ca



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.

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Book Review 1984

By: Joan MacLeod

1984

Published by Penquin Group in 1949, 266 pp.

(292 with appendices)

By George Orwell

It is over 70 years since Geoge Orwell wrote *1984*, his dystopian vision of a world in which not only one's every action but also one's thoughts and facial expressions are controlled by "Big Brother." They are continually watched and listened to by telescreens with receivers in every home and hidden microphones everywhere. It is a world where even the children are taught to spy on their parents and denounce them to the "Thought Police."

The world was divided into three perpetually warring superstates: Oceania (the Americas, British Isles, Australasia, Southern Africa); Eurasia (Europe and Russia); and Eastasia (China, Japan and Korea and Northern India). "Airstrip One" (The British Isles) is ruled by "the party" who brutally purge and vanish anyone who does not totally conform to their regime. By having a perpetual war, (probably fabricated), the people are permanently mobilized, scrutinized and on rations. The party periodically insists on a frenzied two minutes of hate towards Goldstein, the perceived enemy of the state or the citizens of the superpower with whom they are at war. Hate week is much anticipated, as are public hangings.

Within Oceania's capital there are four ministries of government:

The Ministry of Truth concerns itself with news, entertainment, education and the fine arts; The Ministry of Love concerns itself with law and order; The Ministry of Peace concerns itself with war; the Ministry of Plenty with economic affairs. These ministries are in four enormous buildings in London, where this novel is set. The party's slogans are War is peace, Freedom is slavery, and Ignorance is strength.

The novel's main character, Winston, works for the ministry of Truth where his job is to ensure that anomalies are "corrected." For example, if someone has lost favour with the party, they need to be written out, and a story or new persona is fabricated to fill the space. When Oceania decided it was no longer at war with Eurasia but was at war with Eastasia and had always been at war with Eastasia, Winston and the ministry of Truth worked night and day for weeks to correct the narrative and rewrite history.

Winston, against party rules, has a clandestine affair and joins a secret brotherhood. He is ultimately found out, tortured and re-educated to the party's views in the ministry of love.

This book is a classic literary example of a world gone awry, where people lead fearful, miserable lives, oppressed by a totalitarian government. Times Magazine includes this book on its list of the 100 best English Language novels published between 1923 and 2005.

This novel has popularized terms such as "Big Brother," "Double Think," and "Thought Police." The book's themes of censorship, propaganda, surveillance, love and sexuality as well as policed language, are relevant today.

In the afterword, Erich Fromm says that "Orwell wants to warn and awaken us. *1984* teaches us the danger with which people are confronted today of a society of automatons who have lost every trace of individuality, of love, of critical thought, and yet who will not be aware of it because of 'doublethink.'" I am sure that we can all think of parallels in our present world.

River John Square Knitters

By: Netta Heukshorst

Hello River John, winter has not stopped our clicking needles from knitting or crocheting squares for the AIDS orphans in South Africa. There will soon be another shipment going out. Last fall, one of our long-time knitters and all-around assistant, June Kirjavainen, moved to Ontario to be closer to family. We wish her well.

Six lovely lapghans were donated to the Lillian Fraser Hospital this winter.

Over the Christmas season, several local markets were attended to sell things so we can raise postage money. Fun times at the Meadowville hall, West Branch and Willow Lodge.

At the Tatamagouche Festival of Trees we decorated a tree with 72 colourful squares. It was kind of pretty, if I do say so myself.

In February we were very touched and grateful for the donation of ten very large bags of beautiful yarn from the family of the late Kathleen Tattrie of Tatamagouche. Thank you.

If you can knit or crochet, or would like to learn, the group warmly welcomes new members, needles, and yarn provided. No fees to join, even better, LOL!

If anyone wishes to get more information on all that it entails, check out the website,

www.knit-a-square or Google KAS, lots of info and pictures. If you delve deep enough, you will see River John listed under contributing groups. Many countries are listed, nice to know that RJ is well-known at the bundles' destination!

Below is a picture of our Festival of Trees tree, and one of a child holding a doll that came from River John. Wow!

As always, smile and be kind to everyone.



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The Tuna Fishery Season

By: Joan MacLeod
As related by Leonard
and Shelly Bigney



2 for 2! Congrats to Captain Leonard Bigney and crew aboard the F/V Bite Me! on their 2nd fish into Ballantynes Cove in two days.

Last year was a bumper year for the tuna fishery. Most of the tuna fishers caught one or two tuna fish.

The giant blue fin tuna fishery is regulated by Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO). The season runs from July 1st until December 31st or until the quota (based on weigh) is reached. To fish tuna you must first get a license, get instruction on the conditions and then buy tags which cost \$165 each. This year they allowed two tags per fisher, but sometimes fishers team up and they can also buy tags from other fishers.

The necessary equipment for this fishery is not cheap. The leader and line that is spliced into the leader line costs \$1000. This is 180-220 test weight and is surprisingly thin. The rod plus the reel costs about \$8000. Apart from that, special mono gloves are required which cost \$20 a pair. The hook itself is only 2-3 inches long. This is improved technology since Leonard first started fishing tuna and a lot of that change has been led by the Americans who have a year-round fishery off the Southern Atlantic coast. One innovation is to put black marker over the crimps and any metal parts which would otherwise reflect the light and scare the fish away.

Tuna are fished with bait of live mackerel. The hook is inserted in the back (dorsal) fin of the mackerel and once it is released, it takes off with the hook in its back and emits a distressed cry, which attracts the tuna. Once the tuna is on the hook it typically runs for 1-2 hours but sometimes goes for as long as 5 or 6 hours. It is also possible for the fish to break the line and get away.

It is a busy and exciting time, once the tuna is hooked, the line must be kept taut. In Leonard and Shelley's case, Leonard is the boat captain, Nick handles the rod, which is on a device called a gimble, which holds the rod and reel securely attached to the boat. Shelley makes sure the line comes in evenly on the reel, which sometimes requires running from one side of the boat to the other. Once the fish is played out, and tired, it is brought to the side of the boat. Leonard puts a dart in the fish's spine (by the gill plate) and secures it with an additional line.



From left to right Brian Noel, a tuna fish, Mike Noel.

Only certain harbours with certified scales accept the tuna. For their recent two catches, they went to Cape George. A monitor must receive and verify the catch. The 13-digit confirmation plus the number of their tags all must match up. This is trickier than it used to be with CB radio, as cell phone coverage can be less reliable. The fish must be weighed and then "dressed" – its head, tail and innards removed. The fishers pay \$1 per pound to have this done. They are paid for their dressed weight. As quickly as possible the fish are put on an icy brine, and a truck takes them to the airport where they are shipped to either Boston or Japan.

For their recent catches on October 3rd and October 4th, the combined dressed weight of the fish was 880 pounds. They will eventually get paid \$10 per pound. This may seem like a lot of money, but in one year Leonard and Shelley made over 100 trips and did not catch a fish.

In the past, the tuna were much larger, running from 800-1000 pounds. The average weight of this present school of tuna is 300-600 pounds. Leonard thinks that they swim up towards Tidnish and then along the Northumberland Strait to Cheticamp, then back down by Port Hood and Mabou, then up to Cheticamp again, continuing around the tip of Cape Breton to Canso and then out to sea, all the time chasing bait.



Tuna after dark. Congratulations to Captain Kevin Reid and the salty crew aboard the F/V Room for More on their 540lb beauty into Canso. Way to go guys.

Leonard told a couple of great stories about fishing in the early 90s, when the price of tuna was much higher. They used to take their boats through the locks at the Canso causeway to fish at the Hellhole, 100 miles out from Shelbourne. There was a group of four boats who travelled together: Leonard and Shelley, Sonny MacDonald from Lismore, Doug Mathews from PEI and Jason MacDonald also from Lismore. Sonny and Doug are now deceased. They had fished at the Hellhole but had not used all of their tags and were heading home. Sonny spotted some tuna jumping near the Halifax harbour and radioed to the others, and so they decided to fish the tuna and then spend the night in Halifax. They each caught a tuna. Leonard got \$38 a pound, Sonny got \$52.50 a pound and Doug got \$40. The buyer was from McRae's Fishery in St Margaret's Bay. Leonard feels he was a smart businessman as the high prices were like bait! At that time, catching one large fish was like winning the lottery!

They went to harbour at Eastern Passage which seemed to me a long way from Halifax, but Shelley assured me that by sea it is very close. At that time the wharf was decrepit. You had to be careful where you stepped, or you could fall through. Now Eastern Passage has been redeveloped and is booming. There are restaurants, a Tim Horton's, cafes and a state-of-the-art wharf with a fishing fleet of 200!

Leonard related another great fishing story, also from the 90's and also in Halifax. They arrived the day before the season started so Leonard took the kids for a ride around the harbour. He saw tuna jumping near the North-West Arm. He caught four fish on that trip and even caught one under the bridge. The other fishers were dumbfounded as they were not catching anything. He would wait until they left before setting off. When they asked where he was catching the fish, he told them, "Just around the harbour," but they thought he was lying.

Another local fisher was about to haul in his tuna when a shark approached and took a huge bite out of the side of it. The fish was spoiled and had to be released.

Local fishers Kevin Reid, Jason Langille, Mike Noel, Ryan Thompson, Freddy and Blair Falconer, Robert Falconer and Clifford Elliot and others all had successful seasons this past year.

As a fun side note: George Cripps (one of Mary Beth Sutherland's grandsons) wondered how they got such a large fish in such a small tin!