

THE PARTICIPAPER

An Inverness County Periodical

October/November 2022

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Participaper Listings

The Municipality of the County of Inverness

Main Switchboard
902.787.2274

Main Fax
902.787.3110

Executive Office
Chief Administrative Officer
902.787.3501

Finance, Water and Tax Dept.
Tax Collections
902.787.3510

Water Utility
902.787.3505

Tourism and Recreation
Director of Tourism
902.787.3507

Director of Recreation
902.787.3508

Adult Education / Literacy
902.258.3110
1.877.258.5550 (toll free)

Public Works
Dept. of Public Works
902.787.3503

Water / Wastewater Operations
902.787.3503

After Hours Emergency Number
902.258.5048

Toll Free Number for Missed Solid Waste Pickup
GFL Missed Garbage Collection
1.888.863.1744

Other Municipal Waste Management Questions
1.866.258.0223

Other Listings
Eastern District Planning Commission
General Inquiries
902.625.5361

E-911 Civic Addressing
902.625.5366

Building Inspector
902.625.5361

Secondary Number
902.295.2900
1.888.625.5361 (toll free)

Assistant Building Inspector / Fire Inspector
902.787.2900

Secondary Number
902.631.2900

Other Services

Community Services
902.787.4000
1.800.252.2275 (toll free)

Inverness County Home Care
902.787.3449

Cheticamp Home Care
902.224.1872

Municipal Homes
Foyer Pere Fiset
902.224.2087

Inverary Manor
902.258.2842

Coady Tompkins Library
902.248.2821

Emergency Measures Contact
902.787.3500

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETINGS

take place on the first Thursday of each month and start at 3:00 p.m. These meetings are open to the public.

The municipality's Facebook page also carries up-to-date information on Inverness County events and other items of interest to our residents.

 **@InvernessCounty**

Stay up-to-date with what is happening in the county.



A Letter from the Editor

DAVE MACNEIL

“Build it and they will come.”

It’s not exactly the *Field of Dreams* of motion picture fame, as just the promise of the Seawall Trail has hundreds of adventurers flocking to Cape Breton’s northern-most points every year to experience the nature and solitude offered by this multi-day hike. So, they are coming already, whether on their own, or as part of an organized expedition with groups such as Live Life In Tents, based in Margaree Forks.

The Seawall Trail Society, a volunteer group established eight years ago, has been diligently working towards having the 48-kilometre, five-day, hut-to-hut experience approved for construction, so that they can start to attract a growing international clientele. As you’ll read in this issue of *The Participaper*, approval for the project has stalled in recent years as governing authorities seek further study in the area proposed for the trail, but that hasn’t dampened people’s enthusiasm for what is often a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

So, will the volunteers who envisioned the development of this trail nearly a decade ago ever see their dreams realized? World-wide interest in this type of adventure would indicate that their patience will eventually be rewarded, as countries like New Zealand, Peru and the USA have for years been capitalizing on this growing global phenomenon.

Northern Cape Breton boasts natural beauty that would rival any region of the world, and the involvement of the local Mi’kmaw community in the Seawall Trail project promises the opportunity to offer travelers more than a hiking experience, but an educational one as well.

They’re coming already. It’s time to put out a proper welcome mat.



Our cover photo is from the proposed Seawall Trail, taken from the top of Big Head, looking over the Gulf of St. Lawrence.
Photo: Tom Young, 2017

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THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE PARTICIPAPER, OUR DECEMBER/JANUARY EDITION, COMES OUT THE SECOND WEEK IN DECEMBER.



Chief Administrative Officer's Message

KEITH MACDONALD
INVERNESS COUNTY CAO

30 Years of Service

Recently Donna MacDonald retired after 30 years of service with the Municipality of the County of Inverness. Donna's legacy is profound as she connected and collaborated with numerous community organizations and volunteers over the years. Her commitment to the growth of the County exemplified an individual that went above and beyond in their role as a municipal employee.

The career of Donna is profiled in this edition of *The Participaper*. The story highlights the positive impacts she brought about in community development, tourism, cultural spaces, recreational programming and celebrating volunteers. She was able to build and strengthen networks of organizations throughout the County. Museums, community development organizations, event committees, trails groups and many other community organizations were constantly in contact with Donna and her team.

Speaking of team, anyone who has had the pleasure to work with Donna can attest to her unwavering support of her colleagues over the years. Donna led with kindness and grace which translated into a strong loyalty and dedication from her departmental coworkers. That team synergy resulted in many successful and long standing projects, events and programs. One of my favourite events that Donna hosted and organized is the annual volunteer recognition dinner. The event is truly a County-wide celebration showcasing the achievements of the tireless volunteers that shape and provide the grassroots underpinnings of our communities. It is a magical night that brings to stage the inspiring stories of the County's unsung heroes.

Donna is not one for the spotlight herself and asked that her retirement celebrations be kept low-key. Her wishes were followed (for the most part), but her friends here at the Municipality felt it would be apropos to feature her transformative work within *The Participaper* publication that she maintained and cherished over her career. Her parting from the Municipal team left a hole in the organization and she is missed. The team will work hard to continue to uphold her legacy and promote the place that she loves.

The Participaper
Editor/writer: Dave MacNeil
Art direction/design: Brenna MacNeil

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Subscription or administrative queries:
info@invernesscounty.ca | 902.787.2274
or visit the Municipal Building in Port Hood.

While every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of information that appears in this publication, the Municipality of the County of Inverness, Editor, staff and printer accept no responsibility for errors or omissions contained herein.

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Survey still open to develop Seniors' Safety Program

The Municipality is conducting a public survey that was launched September 1 that will determine how a Seniors' Safety Program can best accommodate the needs of older adults across Inverness County.

Residents who are interested in providing feedback for the development of Inverness County's new Seniors' Safety Program will have until October 28, when the public survey closes.

Maggie MacDonald, Accessibility and Seniors Safety co-ordinator with the Municipality, says the survey is an opportunity to determine the highest priorities when it comes to serving older adults in communities and creating more age-friendly spaces.

“...there seems to be an interest in recreational activities targeted towards older adults.”

The Seniors' Safety Program is a community-based program that addresses the safety concerns of seniors by promoting education and awareness opportunities around seniors' abuse prevention, crime prevention, and other safety and well-being topics.

MacDonald says the survey was developed after collaboration with other Seniors' Safety Officers in Cape Breton, noting that meetings with the Department of Seniors' and Long-Term Care to hear about other Seniors' Safety Programs across the province and what services they provide, was very valuable.

“Some common themes in other Seniors' Safety programs across the province were sessions around fall prevention, frauds and scams awareness, and emergency preparedness,” MacDonald says. “So far, there seems to be an interest in recreational activities targeted towards older adults.”

“Once the public survey closes, we hope to begin implementation and start offering services throughout the various communities,” MacDonald says. “We don't know what the program will look like yet but look forward to working with community organizations and seniors, to learn more about the challenges they face and how we can better serve them”.

“The municipality recognizes the importance of making our community socially and physically accessible and inclusive,” says Keith MacDonald, CAO for the Municipality of the County of Inverness. “The Seniors' Safety Program will work with community seniors and service providers to ensure the county is an age-friendly community where all people have lifelong opportunities to thrive.”

Paper copies of the survey are available in large print for pick-up at the Municipal Recreation and Community Wellness office at 86 High Road, Port Hood.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact Maggie MacDonald at 902.258.7960 or by emailing maggie.macdonald@invernesscounty.ca.

TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY ONLINE

The survey can be found at:
www.invernesscounty.ca/seniorssafety



Gioia Usher credits her father, Jeff Stanley, for getting her interested in fly-fishing when she was growing up in D'Escousse, Richmond County. *Photo: Ian Cavanagh*

New We'koqma'q CEO grateful for 'big picture'

BY DAVE MACNEIL

Gioia Usher says she's thankful every day for the opportunity to learn about the challenges facing First Nations communities.

Usher, who took over as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) at We'koqma'q First Nation earlier this year, says she realizes she's in a unique situation.

"It's nice every day to have the ability to learn (about life in First Nations communities)," she explains.

"When people talk about reconciliation, this job feels like steps towards that," Usher adds. "When I go home at the end of the day and I've worked on a project in the community, or you see a community member take advice and do something with their career, or whatever it is that I'm able to have a hand in and see it play out for the betterment of the community, it feels really good."

The 29-year-old Usher was first hired in February 2020 by We'koqma'q as a financial analyst. Three months later, she took on the job of Chief Financial Officer. When the former CEO retired in January, she assumed that role. She says it's been an adjustment moving into her new job.

“Now I’m making decisions that affect everything versus decisions that maybe affect money or the finance side,” she notes. “So that was an interesting change. More big picture.”

Usher, who grew up on a hobby farm in D’Escousse, Richmond County, received her accounting degree from St. F.X. University and earned her Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA) designation in 2017 while working with Ernst and Young in Halifax.

“At that time, a lot of my colleagues were moving to Australia and Denmark and doing all these exciting things,” she recalls. “When I said I was moving back (to Cape Breton), I got a lot of crazy looks.”

“It’s easier to buy a house in Cape Breton, it’s easier to enjoy a slower pace in Cape Breton, and I think knowing that I had a CPA designation to fall back on it took the employment worries out of the equation too.”

Usher went to work for Grant Thornton in 2018, based out of offices in Port Hawkesbury and Sydney. She now lives in Baddeck with her husband, Kyle Usher who, incidentally, now fills her old role as CFO at We’koqmaq.

“It was really a lifestyle change,” she says. “Looking back on it, it was one of the best decisions I made because now we have a house. Some of my friends who lived in Halifax, they can’t even afford to buy a one-bedroom condo anymore. So, it really set us up for a really well-balanced life at an early age.”

Working as an accountant in a more rural setting also provided a unique career opportunity.

“It was an interesting change going from Ernst and Young, where we worked on a lot of public companies, to moving to Cape Breton with Grant Thornton where the clients are much smaller, private, more mom-and-pop shops,” she explains. “I just didn’t get that with Ernst and Young, so it was a really nice way to round out my experiences in accounting.”

During her time at Grant Thornton, she had the opportunity to work with a number of First Nations communities in Cape Breton, so that prepared her professionally for her move to We’koqmaq.

“It’s interesting to feel such a sense of community. Every decision is made community-first. Everything, at the end of the day, comes back to the community. So, it’s figuring out ways to be creative and inventive to either sustain that community or drive the economy of that community in absolutely every decision.”

Usher gained some media attention in the past year for her efforts to grow the sport of fly-fishing among women. Having started out fishing with her father, Jeff Stanley, when she was growing up, she began getting requests from other women asking her how to get into the sport.

“I started guiding because of the number of women who were reaching out to me because they felt they connected with me as a woman or beginner,” she says. “So after quite a few requests...I decided to get my guides’ license to help get more women into the sport.”

This would have been her third year as Cape Breton’s only female fishing guide. But her new job no longer affords her the time.

“After I took on the CEO role, I found myself doing less and less of it,” Usher says. “I’m really grateful that (women’s fly-fishing) has got some popularity. It’s nice that people want to know the story. But at the same time, it’s really very difficult to do both. I fish for myself mostly now.”

While she’s given up the guiding, she’s still working with a good number of women, including Annie Bernard Daisley, who has served as chief since 2020. In fact, seven of the departments overseen by Daisley and council members are headed by women, including Health, Education, Human Resources, Social, Daycare, Employment and Training, and One Stop/Gaming.

“We’koqmaq is a very supportive environment for any individual looking to develop skills and pursue a career,” she says. “Working with the chief is great. We each have unique skill sets which complement each other, so we are a good team.”

“She is a smart woman with a business-focused mind which makes it easy to collaborate on special projects which better serve the community.”

A whale of a tale (tail) to tell

Visitors to the Whale Interpretive Centre in Pleasant Bay no longer have to wait to board a boat to catch a glimpse of a whale tail.

The Municipality of the County of Inverness recently commissioned the fabrication of a 10-foot whale tail and matching whale tail benches. The installation is the first major project of the county's Brand and Signature Spaces program.

Kathy Hannigan, special projects coordinator with the Municipality, says the Brand and Signature Spaces program was used as part of the Whycocomagh Façade Program, but she notes that the Pleasant Bay installation was the "first big one."

"Working with Pleasant Bay as the signature space, we wanted to combine a site plan for the interpretive centre that also included the other big aspect (of the centre) and that's the whale watching," Hannigan explains. "So it was combining those two and getting that giant whale tail structure as a focal point down there. It's pretty cool."

The Whale Interpretive Centre was established more than 20 years ago and is operated by Friends of Whale Watch Cape Breton, a non-profit organization.

The museum features loads of information about whales, dolphins and porpoises located along the Cabot Trail, and staff take bookings for whale watch operators in the area. Along with viewing a life-size model of a pilot whale, visitors can learn about the size of these creatures, as well as their dietary habits and the classification of whales. There's also a gift shop and bookstore on site, as well as an informative video detailing the transition from whale hunting to whale research.

Whale Interpretive Centre
104 Harbour Rd, Pleasant Bay
June 01, 2022 - October 15, 2022
902.224.1411 | whaleintcentre@gmail.com
whale-interpretive-centre.business.site



Maura Beaton, a special projects coordinator with the Municipality, tries out one of the whale tail benches (top photo), while Brian Adams, the former harbour master in Pleasant Bay (bottom photo), gives the project a big thumbs up.

Getting to know...

Lewis MacQuarrie

For this recurring series, we ask a municipal employee in each issue a series of questions to better get to know them.

Where were you born/where do you live?

I was born and raised in Inverness.

What's your job title?

Lead Hand for Infrastructure and Emergency Services

What do you actually do?

Mainly, I organize services for infrastructure projects and oversee the work when the projects are underway to ensure everything goes smoothly and safely. I still get my hands dirty whenever I have to, though.

How long have you worked for the municipality?

Approximately 24 years.

What's the biggest change you've seen in Inverness County in that time?

Technology. What we use on the job now is totally different from what we used years ago. We do a lot with our phones, which has been a good learning curve for me.

What's your favourite thing about Inverness County?

There's a lot to love, but it's probably the scenery. We live in an amazing place. My work with the municipality is still taking me to places I haven't seen yet. For example, I was recently working on a project in Mabou and had to ascend the water tower; the view from up there was just spectacular, and I saw (Mabou) in a whole new way I hadn't seen before.

What do you think your legacy will be?

My five children: Tyron, Bridget, Britney, Megan, and Desmond.

One last question, coffee or tea?

Coffee. It gets me going and keeps me going.



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Pignons



Visit Les Trois Pignons for a special view into Acadian culture and the history of Chéticamp



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- Visitor Information Centre
- Gift Shop
- Genealogy Centre

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info@lestroispignons.com www.lestroispignons.com
15584 Cabot Trail, Chéticamp

Acadie **BIENVENUE!**

Attention: Inverness County Community Organizations

The Tourism & Culture and Recreation & Community Wellness Departments are now gathering information for the annual **Canada's Musical Coast Winter Events Guide**. The 2023 Winter Events Guide will include Inverness County events occurring between January and April 2023. This guide is a free service provided by the Municipality. It is an excellent promotional tool for "spreading the word" – don't be left out!

Contact:

Lisa Organ
lisa.organ@invernesscounty.ca
902.787.3507

Deadline for submissions:

December 1, 2022

The Recreation & Community Wellness Department is currently inviting community non-profit groups to participate in the **2023 Winter Active Program**. The Winter Active Program is established to promote fun, physical activities throughout the winter season. Winter Active funding is available to community non-profit organizations and groups who are planning winter community projects, events and activities.

Contact:

Charlotte MacDonald
charlotte.macdonald@invernesscounty.ca
902.787.3508



Transportation Review mapping out improvements

With the findings from a recent survey, the Municipality of the County of Inverness is looking to make improvements to county public transportation.

With the help of an interactive website, CBCL, the consultant for the project, provided residents with the opportunity to map out their desired transit routes and stops, and participate in a short survey. The survey was designed for residents to inform the Municipality how they get around Inverness County – whether it be by car, bus, taxi, or bike.

The Municipal Public Transportation Review is guided by the vision that sustainable public transportation contributes to a healthy population, economy, and environment. Public feedback will help inform recommendations for the future based on public input, travel trends, and sustainable public transportation practices for rural communities.

Maura Beaton, special projects facilitator with the Municipality, says the survey is just one aspect of the review, as CBCL is already examining ridership and other data related to the two public transportation organizations that operate in the county, L'Acabie and Strait Area Transit.

“They are going to come out with a transportation recommendation and strategy that will incorporate engagement and feedback,” she adds. “That’s currently scheduled for the spring (2023).”

Although the survey has concluded, Beaton says residents can still have their say on this issue, or any other, by contacting Special Projects at special.projects@invernesscounty.ca

Strait Area Transit

Strait Area Transit is a non-profit community-based transit system, offering service during weekdays between Inverness and Port Hawkesbury. Customers use the service to get to medical appointments, attend post-secondary school, visit stores and shop for groceries.

Charter services are offered on evenings and weekends for group bookings like golf tournaments, weddings, or birthday celebrations.

Schedule your ride:

Phone: 902.625.1475

Email: dispatcher@satbus.ca

Current schedule: satbus.ca

Departure times:

5:30am	Port Hawkesbury to Inverness
6:40-6:50am	Inverness to Port Hawkesbury
8:35am	Port Hawkesbury to Inverness
10:00-10:10am	Inverness to Port Hawkesbury
12:00pm	Port Hawkesbury to Inverness
1:20-1:35pm	Inverness to Port Hawkesbury
2:55-3:10pm	Port Hawkesbury to Inverness
4:30-4:40pm	Inverness to Port Hawkesbury

L'Acabie

L'Acabie is a community-based, non-profit transportation cooperative that began operation 10 years ago, providing transportation to residents of the North Inverness County Community Health Board catchment area. It serves seniors, persons with disabilities and special needs, people on low income, and all those needing affordable transportation.

The service conducts pickups in Cheticamp, Pleasant Bay, Grand Etang, St. Joseph du Moine, Northeast Margaree, Margaree Forks, Margaree Center and occasionally Inverness. It drops passengers off to local destinations in Cheticamp, Inverness, Baddeck, Sydney, Glace Bay, Port Hawkesbury, Antigonish and sometimes Halifax.

The six drivers employed by L'Acabie help seniors navigate services like medical appointments and grocery delivery. Deliveries for Meals on Wheels to the three senior complexes in Grand Etang, Cheticamp and Inverness are made on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

Phone: 902.224.5069

Email: lacabiecheticamp@gmail.com

Four county beaches added to erosion study

Four Inverness County beaches have been added to a coastal erosion study as a result of a recent funding announcement.

Department of Fisheries and Oceans recently announced more than \$200,000 in funding that will allow the Gulf Aquarium and Marine Station Cooperative (GAMS) in Grand Etang, with researchers from the Biology Department at St. F.X. University, to continue to study the beaches in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence, along western Cape Breton and the north shore of mainland Nova Scotia.

Over the past 10 years, researchers have been studying beaches in several local communities, including Judique, Port Hood, Petit Etang and Cheticamp. This latest funding will allow them to continue their work into 2025, as they bring four additional beaches into their work, including the Point Cross Beach, Whale Cove, Inverness Beach and the West Mabou Provincial Park.

Lead researcher Dr. David Garbary, professor of biology at St. F.X., says the three-year grant will bring two undergraduate students to the Cheticamp area each summer who will base their research and outreach to the public at the GAMS facility, which is located at Grand Etang Harbour. Several graduate students will also take part in the research program.

Garbary says beach systems are increasingly under threat from sea level rise, climate change and human use. This project will provide information which can be shared with the public through GAMS.

“This is a means of the public better understanding – how can they see climate change in their community, how can they see the effects of sea level rise in their

community in a way that is really tangible,” he explains. “This project, I think, provides some of that.”

The research applies a method developed by GAMS and St. F.X. over the past decade for mapping the rate of change in vegetation on the sand dunes. Using hand-held GPS units, researchers can collect data on the margin of vegetation along beaches and, by putting that information into Google Earth, can see how that margin of vegetation has changed over time.

The project focused primarily on the dune vegetation margin this summer but will also examine associated salt marshes in subsequent field seasons.

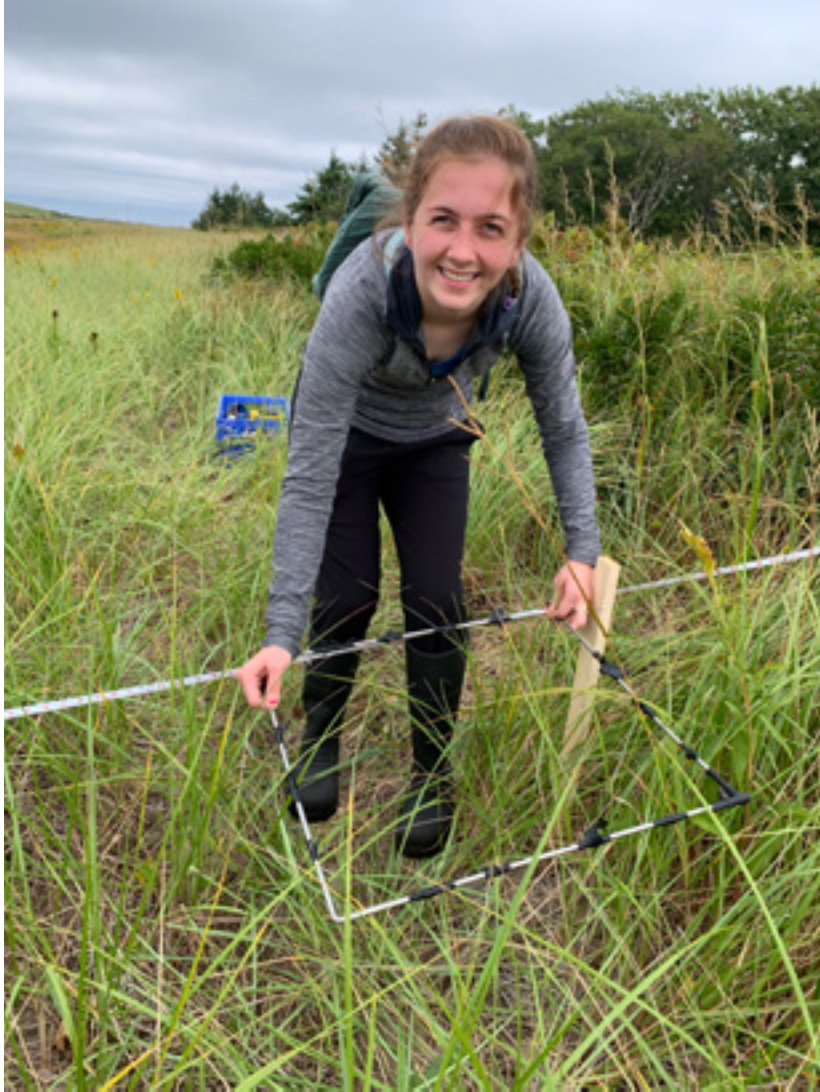
Garbary says the information collected will help industry and the general public better understand what is happening on local beaches, and that’s where GAMS comes in. In addition to providing a base for local researchers, it will also allow them the opportunity to share their findings with the public, particularly those who rely on these coastal areas for their livelihoods and recreation.

“Most of the beaches we’re studying are really important as an economic resource for these communities, and they’re the basis for tourism, they’re the basis for lots of recreation, and if those shores are deteriorating, it behooves both the province and the local communities to understand why that’s happening,” Garbary notes.

“There are two sides to the project – the research side and the outreach side of things,” he adds. “The outreach and public education portion of it is what Gretchen (Dr. Gretchen Hull-Noyes, president of GAMS) is heading up and that is based out of the Discovery Centre in Grand Etang.”

GAMS is based on three pillars: education, research and community. It offers a place where local residents and visitors can come to learn about the ocean and its creatures. It works with universities, government, and other groups to conduct research on fisheries and the oceans. Past areas of study have included acidification sampling, invasive species and oyster aquaculture.

The cooperative also works within the community, hosting summer camps for children, and also working with industry groups, such as fishermen, to better understand what is happening to coastal areas of the county.



Kiersty Malay (top left), a St. F.X. University graduate student and an intern with GAMS, investigates changes in vegetation and erosion rates in a salt marsh in Pomquet, Antigonish County. In photo top right, undergraduate students Tyler Reed (St. F.X.), left, Haley Ehler (Saint Mary's) take part in the same study in the Cheticamp area. In the photo below that, Kiersty Malay, right, is joined by fellow St. F.X. graduate student Lexie Trevors and supervisor Dr. David Garbary. In the bottom photo is the Inverness Beach, which is among the beaches being studied for erosion.

Gardening as a team sport

COMMUNITY GARDENS AND GARDEN PROJECTS IN INVERNESS COUNTY

BY CAROLINE CAMERON

Community gardens have been popping up all over Inverness County to answer to people's needs and gardening interests. A garden, and a sunny yard for that matter, can be a luxury for young families and for people in apartments.

For the wannabe or veteran gardener, a community garden is a welcome place for people with an interest in sharing their experience, knowledge, and plans, and trade seeds and plants.

There are a few approaches to community gardening. Some gardens are just a big planting that everyone is welcome to pull a few weeds from and take home some herbs and vegetables. Others provide individual plots for gardening for free, or a small fee.

Often organizations play host to community gardens because they have the resources to rally for the project, but there is always a gardener in the mix with a passion to share their love of gardening.

It all starts with someone who decides that it should happen. It usually isn't hard to find a central sunny spot in the community that an owner will make available. If the soil is lacking, it can be enriched, if people have mobility issues, there can be raised beds.

Libraries in Margaree Forks and Mabou were some of the first organizations to establish community gardens in the county. We'koqmaq First Nation has built raised beds that provide a medicine garden as part of its Skye River Trail. Many travelers have admired the unique Tartan Garden as they travel through Judique.

Like the planting of a tree, the best time to start a community garden is twenty years ago, and the second best time is today.

The L'Arche community in Orangedale maintains an accessible garden and greenhouse as an opportunity for learning and growth for the staff and residents. Mill Road Social Enterprises in Inverness is developing a community garden and greenhouse as a way for its participants to connect with the community through providing good produce. Also accessible, the Mill Road garden provides a centre for the county for activities that accommodate people with all abilities.

Seniors' homes are also a great place for providing gardening activities. The Inverary Manor has built raised beds that allow seated gardening.

There are school gardens in the county that educate on many fronts. Cape Breton Highlands Academy in Terre Noire has maintained a garden, and in Inverness, Community Based Learning 11 students have designed, built, and maintained cold-frames and garden boxes. Younger grades work with them to help plant, weed, water and harvest.

As students participate, interested students can connect with community members and groups interested in food production and agriculture. Cheticamp has a school garden at NDA, as well as raised beds there for community use.

Of course, there is the concern about continuity. Schools and other institutions have seasonal cycles that don't always accommodate the growing season, so aren't always active, and might benefit from the boost of a community partnership.

I'm sure that I have missed mentioning a few great County projects, but I hope to feature more in future editions of *The Participaper*, so don't hesitate to contact me about something special growing in your community.



Grade 4 students from NDA in Cheticamp harvest from their school garden in the top photo. In photo, above, Winnie Ward collects some scarlet runner beans, and, in photo at right, the gardening team at Mill Road Social Enterprises Community Garden show off their efforts. Photos: Caroline Cameron

Like the planting of a tree, the best time to start a community garden is twenty years ago, and the second best time is today. It doesn't take much to make it happen. Fall or early spring are the best times of year to get started.

Place a good layer of mulch (mulch is any plant material that will break down, like grass clippings, leaves, seaweed or cardboard) on a piece of ground in the fall or very early spring. If done before the grass starts to grow, it will kill off the grass so that the soil can just be planted later on in the spring. The soil will still be full of weed seeds, but that weeding is far easier than turning sod and tilling.

Once the work has started, the winter is left for spreading the word, deciding which things to grow, how many rows, how many packets of seeds are needed, and plan for tomato cages and supports for viney plants like peas. In the spring you'll need to dig out any rooty weeds, plant, and water as needed.

Then make a plan to meet weekly with a thermos of tea to weed, harvest and share the love of gardening.

Happy gardening!

Caroline Cameron lives in Strathlorne, and offers gardening and guiding services around Cape Breton Island. Please submit any gardening tips, questions, and news to strathlorne@gmail.com and visit Facebook at Nature/Nurture Gardening & Hiking.



Whycocomagh area businesses taking advantage of facelift

Although interest has exceeded expectations, the Whycocomagh Façade Improvement Program remains open to new participants.

“We had hoped to have eight businesses participating in the design process,” says Kathy Hannigan, Special Projects Coordinator with the Municipality of the County of Inverness. “Right now, we have 10. Two of the 10 businesses have completed their projects, and we’re at various stages of work with the others.”

The program is administered by the municipality, working directly with the Whycocomagh Planning and Streetscape Beautification Management Committee, which has representation from the Whycocomagh Development Society, the business

community, and the municipality, in close consultation with community representatives from neighbouring We’koqmaq First Nation.

The Farmer’s Daughter in Whycocomagh and MacKinnon’s Campground in nearby East Lake Ainslie have already completed work within the program. Other businesses currently participating include Keltic Quay, Whycocomagh Home Building Centre, Whycocomagh Co-op, Brook Village Grocery, Bayside Café, Art Ehler Auto Sales, AA Munro Insurance and MacKeigan’s Pharmacy.

Businesses in Port Hood, Cheticamp and Inverness participated in a similar program funded by the federal government through the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency.



MacKinnon's Campground in East Lake Ainslie (on opposite page), recently completed work with the Whycocomagh Façade Improvement Program, as has The Farmer's Daughter in Whycocomagh (lower photo). Meanwhile a number of program participants continue with improvements, including Brook Village Grocery, shown at left.

in several similar projects in other communities, Hannigan says the the Municipality realizes that improving community-shared infrastructure is an effective method of elevating a community's overall attraction capability by linking together individual enhancements and by improving both visitor and residential experiences.

The program is offered as an incentive for businesses and commercial property owners to improve their storefronts. It is a 50/50 cost sharing program that is offered on a reimbursement basis to eligible participants while program funding is available.

The program will reimburse 50% of approved expenditures to a maximum of \$20,000. That includes the cost of services, labour, and materials for the following: applicable building permits and fees; exterior siding, doors, windows, and materials; exterior signage and lighting; roofing (if less than 20% of total project); and soffits, gutters, attached pergolas or covered decks; and certain landscaping improvements tight to building perimeter or signage. Other exterior improvements that meet the goals of the program will be considered.

Each participating business works with a façade design consultant team, and the façade design concepts are covered at 100% for businesses who participate fully in the program.

While streetscape beautification components have been concentrated along the main road (Highway 105) and Main Street Whycocomagh, the program planning base is much larger and encompasses the primary service center customers. Therefore, the committee identified the village of Whycocomagh's planning boundaries to be from the Little Narrows ferry to River Denys Road, including Orangedale. The planning boundary will also border Brook Village Grocery on Route 252 and MacKinnon's Campground.



"Whycocomagh was the last community with a large business base that hadn't participated in it," Hannigan explains.

In the spring of 2019, the Committee hired the consultant team of Vibe Creative Group, in partnership with Highland Landscapes and Wayne McGibbon, to undertake a community planning process. This process resulted in the creation of a Village of Whycocomagh Conceptual Development, Brand and Streetscape Plan.

The community planning process was carried out in close collaboration with community members and leadership of We'koqmaq First Nation and the surrounding area that would use the village as a primary service centre. Having participated

Society trying to get Seawall Trail project over finish line

BY DAVE MACNEIL

The Seawall Trail will be a five-day, 48-kilometer wilderness hike. The main coastal route will travel from south to north and will expand upon existing, historical trails (with plenty of new trail added). An east-west inland spur trail will begin near Cape North. Trailheads on the main and spur routes will connect the trail to communities in both Victoria and Inverness counties.

The future Seawall Trail is largely bound by the Polletts Cove Aspy-Fault Wilderness Area. Development in a protected area requires a special process.

www.seawalltrail.com



“Good things come to those who wait.”

The phrase has been used to sell Guinness stout and Heinz ketchup, and proponents of the Seawall Trail can only hope it bodes well for a project that’s been almost a decade in the works.

Ray Fraser chairs the Seawall Trail Society, a registered non-profit group formed in 2014. In 2019, it presented a plan to the province for approval to develop a multi-day, hut-to-hut coastal hiking experience in the Polletts Cove-Aspy Fault Wilderness Area of northern Cape Breton. He’s



A lone hiker is shown from the top of the Seawall Ascent. *Photo: Live Life In Tents.* In the photo below, Clare Waque, Seawall Trail Development Lead, left, is joined by project advocate, David Williams, as they hike the area proposed for the trail. *Photo: Seawall Trail Society*

encouraging supporters of the project to write the provincial Minister of the Environment and Climate Change (ECC) urging support for the project.

Fraser says since 2017 there have been multiple independent studies done that have endorsed the plan. He says a study commissioned by Tourism Nova Scotia said, “the trail plan is good, as is, and can stand to make \$2-3 million a year,” noting that the study outlined ways it could actually increase that yearly revenue to \$5 million.

He says the same conclusion was reached by a study of adventure tourism in northern Cape Breton, which was completed for Destination Cape Breton, and a third that was conducted for Develop Nova Scotia.

“Both those studies indicated that the trail plan, as is, is fabulous and would generate millions of dollars, and you don’t have to change a thing,” he recalls. “And here are some suggestions, in case you wanted to put guiding into effect, and bring it up to a \$5 million-a-year industry.”

“So that’s several independent firms that have looked at this trail and said it’s fabulous, but the Department of the Environment has not yet approved it.”

He says then-Environment Minister Margaret Miller told the group in 2014 she endorsed the plan. In 2020, Gordon Wilson, the environment minister with the MacNeil Liberal government, sent a letter to the society indicating his personal support for the project, while indicating the need for more studies and the involvement of the Mi’kmaq community.

Clare Waque, trail development lead with the society, and its only paid staff member, says that letter in 2020 led to the establishment of a working group with representation from the society, ECC and the Mi’kmaq community, and that it’s met regularly since that time.

Some of the studies requested by the minister have also been undertaken, Waque adds.

“There have been several studies done of alternate alignments, as well as a botanical study, as well as



Robert Bernard (top photo), a member of the Seawall Trail Society, has spearheaded Mi'kmaw involvement in the Seawall Trail project. The photo above shows the coastline near Lowland Cove. Photos courtesy Robert Bernard and Seawall Trail Society

an archaeological study which is about one third complete," she explains.

"There's been an ongoing conversation about how to address waterways, how to address potential impact on Mi'kmaw artifacts, how to address minimizing the impact on the environment, essentially," Waque adds.

"All of those studies are very expensive, and the department (ECC) has covered the cost of all the botanical studies, and they've contributed towards some of the archaeological (study).

Waque says it's difficult for a group of volunteers to fundraise for these expensive studies, noting that the archaeological study is a great idea – and indeed an opportunity – if only the province's request for the study came with funding.

"We're really interested in the archaeological work from an interpretive standpoint, really interested in it from the standpoint of working with Mi'kmaw already and having the opportunity to explore history," she explains, noting that whatever may be found in terms of archaeological findings could eventually become part of the trail experience."

"Our relationship with the Mi'kmaw is really one of the wonderful things that has come out of all this."

Robert Bernard, executive director of Nova Scotia Indigenous Tourism Enterprise Network, has coordinated the involvement of the Mi'kmaw community in the Seawall Trail project, and has actually become a member of the society himself. He agrees the Seawall Trail project presents a great opportunity for education.

"We could actually really incorporate a lot of Mi'kmaw cultural education and cultural tourism into this project," explains Bernard, who still lives in his native community of We'kopma'q. "Thousands of tourists come through the Cabot Trail every year that don't get this education."

"The trail itself is an incredible opportunity," he adds. "It's an international opportunity for visitation from tourists and hikers...from around the world. But it also has to be done right."



“Our relationship with the Mi’kmaw is really one of the wonderful things that has come out of all this.”



Top: Polletts Cove River Valley in winter. Photo: Clare Waque, 2021
 Left: Lower Delaney’s River, facing inland. Photo: Clare Waque, 2016
 Above: Refuelling at upper Delaney’s Brook. Photo: Live Life In Tents



Most of the proposed 48-kilometre trail hugs the rugged coastline along the Polletts Cove-Aspy Fault Wilderness Area.

Photo: Live Life In Tents

“We’re kind of in the middle of continuing to also educate the (Seawall Trail Society) board members, the staff,” Bernard says. “Clare (Waque) has been amazing. Dave (former society vice-chair David Williams) and Ray (Fraser) have been very open and willing. The challenge has always been they (the society) don’t have a lot of funding, and the funding that government has issued to the project has been very specific on certain infrastructure development.”

“There’s so much more needed for research.”

According to documents prepared by the society earlier this year, the project, with a \$5.6 million price tag, anticipates a return on that investment in less

than 10 years from opening. In addition, the society says it will generate \$6 million in new tourism dollars for every 10,000 visitors due to an increase in global visibility and Nova Scotia brand awareness.

Along with significant tax revenues accrued by the province, it maintains the project will generate at least \$10-12 million annually in indirect economic benefit.

Thirty full-season jobs would be created during the three-year construction period, and another 10 to 17 employees would be required to operate the trail once it’s open.



The Seawall Trail Society is responsible for the development of the Seawall Trail. The Society - a registered non profit - was formed in 2014 with the goal to develop Northern Cape Breton's natural walking assets and to create a product that would support both locals and visitors from around the world. In addition to attracting hikers, the Society believes that the trail has great potential as a sustainable economic engine in rural Nova Scotia.

The Society is comprised of a diverse group of members who are passionate about nature, exploring, hiking and grassroots community development. Board members include teachers, engineers, professors, fishermen, writers, contractors, chefs, outfitters, and guides. The Society is also guided by an excited and committed Advisory Group comprised of outdoor enthusiasts who understand the value and importance of the Seawall Trail.



Fall routines for a healthier winter

BY GLENNAL CALDER, ND

This is my favorite time of year. To me it is the season of routine, crisp weather, sweaters and lattes!

As you read this we are well into Fall and perhaps have started to skip our walks, becoming less active because of shorter days and cooler weather. What I have noticed in my practice, is that this time of year is KEY to setting us up for Healthy Winter months. This is the time of year that we can walk, bike or run outside 5-7 days per week without weather being an obstacle. We are much more likely to continue to be active at least a few days per week once the colder months are upon us if we are active in the fall. We all find it more difficult to start regular exercise in January and maintain it throughout the winter and spring months if it hasn't already been a regular part of our routine. Darker mornings and evenings along with cooler months make it harder for us to stay motivated.

BENEFITS OF STAYING ACTIVE IN WINTER

With colder months we may start to sit more, socialize less, and stay indoors more. This means we have less exposure to Vitamin D which has been shown to boost serotonin levels (which boosts our mood and helps to regulate our food cravings). Exercise and any movement also boosts our serotonin as much or more than anything else

we can do or eat. Logically, why would we avoid it? As our energy decreases with the shorter days we find it harder to stay active but I guarantee, if you stay active your energy will be higher, and your mood more stable throughout the shorter days and colder months.

There is a vast number of studies that show that exercise improves memory and improves brain health. The conclusion of one study from the National Center of Biotechnology Information stated that there is adequate evidence that shows that **physical exercise (PE) is a strong gene modulator that induces structural and functional changes in the brain, determining enormous benefit on both cognitive functioning and wellbeing.** PE is also a protective factor for neurodegeneration. This study was conducted April 27, 2018. I included the study link at the end of this article.

EXERCISE IDEAS

Yoga, chair yoga, swimming, walking, running, weights, biking, and yardwork.

A FUN HEALTHY RECIPE

Here is a healthy recipe that will satisfy our cravings for comfort foods! The reason to choose a healthy latte recipe is that they contain less sugar and little to no artificial ingredients.

RECIPE

PUMPKIN SPICE LATTE:

This healthy Pumpkin Spice latte is a lighter, healthier alternative, using 5 easy ingredients.

1 cup of brewed coffee

1 tbsp of maple syrup

1 tsp of almond butter

1 tbsp of pumpkin purée

1/4 tsp of pumpkin pie spice
(see below)

It tastes like a decadent coffee drink, without using refined sugar or preservatives. You can use 2% milk, skim, or your favourite non-dairy milk to make it at home!

Pumpkin pie spice is a blend of spices that you can buy as a pre-made mix, but you can also make your own.

PUMPKIN PIE SPICE:

1/4 tsp ground cinnamon

1/8 tsp ground ginger

pinch of ground nutmeg

pinch of ground cloves or allspice

You'll need 1/4 tsp of this mix for the recipe, but if you make two servings, use all of it!

Reference for the study mentioned on page 22:

The National Center for Biotechnology Information is part of the United States National Library of Medicine, a branch of the National Institutes of Health. It is approved and funded by the government of the United States.

www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5934999

HOW TO MAKE A PUMPKIN SPICE LATTE:

1. **Stir the ingredients.** Add the coffee, milk, pumpkin, maple syrup, and spice to a small saucepan and whisk them together to make sure the pumpkin is incorporated smoothly.

2. **Warm it up.** Bring the mixture to a gentle simmer, over medium-high heat. When it starts to simmer, test it to see if it is the right temperature for you.

3. **Enjoy!** Garnish your latte with whipped cream and extra pumpkin pie spice on top, for a coffee drink that looks like it came from a coffee shop. I typically make this recipe with almond milk, but you can use any milk. I recommend using homemade oat milk for cold lattes only because it will thicken when heated, unlike store bought.

HELPFUL TIPS

You can always add more sweetener. 1 1/2 tablespoons of maple syrup makes it taste like a coffee shop version. The perk of making it at home is that you're in total control of the final outcome. You can use honey or maple syrup, which both easily dissolve into the drink.

Adding pumpkin puree to coffee can give it a slightly grainy texture if you let the drink rest too long, so keep that in mind when making this! Just stir it again to re-incorporate, if needed.

If you don't care for coffee, feel free to use extra almond milk instead, for a caffeine-free drink. It will be more of a steamer. You could also use your favorite tea to replace the coffee.

To make it an iced drink simply whisk the ingredients together and serve it over ice.

Enjoy your lattes and the fall!



Donna MacDonald recently retired after a 30-year career with the Municipality.

MacDonald looks back on 30 years with Municipality

Playing a part in helping Inverness County communities reach their true potential is the legacy left by Donna MacDonald as she looks back on 30 years working with the Municipality.

MacDonald retired this summer as director of Tourism and Culture. She says being able to help volunteer organizations chart the course for their communities and seeing the creation of a tourism plan that would increase visitation to Inverness County have been two of the most fulfilling parts of her three decades.

MacDonald was hired full time in 1992 to work alongside John Cotton, then director of recreation with the Municipality. At that point Cotton had been working with community leaders and supporting community growth for over 12 years including historical societies, service groups, arenas, community halls, schools and minor hockey and ball programs.

She points to the Inverness County Trails Federation as a prime example of the many hard-working organizations in the county.

“It is made up of volunteer trail organizations who have been building and maintaining trails, securing funding and partnerships,” she notes, “and who in the late 1990s were instrumental in the transformation of the abandoned rail line into Inverness County’s section of the national Trans Canada Trail, known today as the Celtic Shores Coastal Trail.”

“The trail has been one of Tourism Nova Scotia’s Top 10 cycling destination trails for several years now,” MacDonald adds. “Inverness County is fortunate to have volunteer trail organizations in communities across the county, including Whycocomagh, Lake Ainslie, Mabou and Cheticamp.”

She says in 2005 Cotton encouraged the creation of development organizations throughout the Municipality and, with Council, created funding support in the form of seed funding for those organizations.

“What (Cotton) encouraged them to do was to create a development association in their area, so basically, if there was a major project in that area, there would be a lead development group that would spearhead it,” MacDonald explains. “So, there were 16 development associations created back then.”

Many are still in place today and have worked with Municipal staff on many initiatives such as beautification, as well as façade and signage programs.

MacDonald also holds up the county’s five cultural centres as another example of what can be achieved by communities when they have proper support. They include the Celtic Music Interpretive Centre in Judique, Strathspey Place in Mabou, the Inverness County Centre for the Arts in Inverness, the Centre de la Mi-Careme in Grand Etang, and Place des arts Père-Anselme-Chiasson in Cheticamp.

“We have five cultural centres in Inverness County that I’ve seen grow over my years,” she says. “I think that is remarkable for a rural municipality. Unfortunately, with COVID and the state of

everything, there have been struggles. But to see them develop and standing on their own, and be resilient, it's pretty incredible."

When MacDonald began her career with the County, the work of the Recreation Department was broken into various responsibilities, including recreation programming, literacy, adult education, and culture. Community development and tourism would soon be added to that list.

"We often joked that anything that wasn't water and sewer kind of fell under recreation at the time," she recalls. "In the early '90s, the province was looking to municipalities and other agencies to help with tourism promotion."

At that time, the Cape Breton Tourist Association was the marketing agency for Cape Breton Island with the name eventually changing to Destination Cape Breton Association (DCBA). In 2010, Mary Tulle was hired as Chief Executive Officer and under her guidance and expertise the Municipality began to look seriously at developing a tourism plan for Inverness County, says MacDonald, who was named Recreation/Tourism Director when Cotton retired in 2007.

"It wasn't until I started working with Mary Tulle and her staff at Destination Cape Breton that my eyes were really opened to the possibilities of expanding tourism opportunities in Inverness County," she adds. "Under her leadership, she encouraged municipalities and the tourism industry to work collaboratively. The partnership with DCBA remains strong, now under Terry Smith's leadership as CEO."

With the scope of both recreation and tourism growing, the decision was made in 2019 to split the departments, and MacDonald became the Municipality's Director of Tourism and Culture.

She credits Cotton with helping to shape how she approached her responsibilities over the years. "His vision and approach were always grassroots focused, it was always community, community organizations, and the volunteers."

In the early years, she says, others who helped her along the way included Mary Anne Ducharme, former editor of *The Participaper*, Jim St. Clair, teacher and noted historian, who was also a regular contributor to the municipal publication, and Donna MacDonell-Doiron, with whom she worked for many years.

MacDonald says she also gained invaluable insight and experience from working with neighboring municipalities in Victoria County, Richmond County and the Town of Port Hawkesbury and serving on Destination Cape Breton Association's board of directors, the Cabot Trail Working Group and the Celtic Heart of North America, through partnerships and interactions, fellow board members and committee members.

"Since becoming Director in 2008 I have to mention those who supported me along the way including former CAOs Kate Beaton, Joe O'Connor and the Municipal Council of the day. Anna Lee MacEachern was our Recreation Program Coordinator for 19 years before she retired in 2018. She was my biggest supporter and was really the strength of the recreation portion of the department."

"Margie Beaton was our dedicated Administrative Assistant until 2018 and Marie Aucoin, editor for *The Participaper*, was part of the team until her retirement in 2020. Long time literacy instructor Shirley Miller left her position this year to enjoy full retirement and Jesslyn Timmons is our Literacy Coordinator and Instructor. There have been a lot of transitions made over the last number of years. I have to say, though, the hardest part was saying goodbye to my staff and coworkers at the 'Courthouse.'

"In recent years, tourism coordinator Amey Beaton and administrative assistant Lisa Organ were my anchors. I was so lucky to have all of these strong women on my team. They did much of the leg work and heavy lifting and always made me look good. I miss them all very much."

County's Recreation Master Plan counting its steps

Inverness County's Recreation Master Plan, which is to be unveiled in 2023, moves a step closer to completion as consultants are expected to soon release the first draft of the plan.

Charlotte MacDonald, Manager of Recreation and Community Wellness with the Municipality, says she expects to see that draft sometime before the end of the year, at which time the municipal staff committee, comprising members from several municipal departments, will review it and provide any necessary edits before it goes to council for consideration.

The Municipality is working with REConsulting Group, in conjunction with Upland Consulting, to conduct a review of recreation facilities and programs in Inverness County, looking at the assets, relationships and services offered by the Municipality and other recreation providers in the County.

Their initial report, titled "Current State of Recreation," was completed in March of this year. Since then, the Municipality has conducted two separate online surveys – one for adults and one for youth – allowing residents to provide their input. As well, representatives from recreation facilities and associations were invited to one-on-one interviews with the consultants, during which they answered a series of questions. Participants in those interviews represented community halls, arenas, trail associations and minor sports groups.



Hallie MacNeil (top photo) was the Recreation Summer Student Coordinator during this summer's recreation programming offered by the Municipality's Recreation and Community Wellness Department. The full Student Recreation Team (bottom photo) included, from left, MacNeil, Neil MacLean, Sarah MacDonald and Taylor MacIsaac.

MacDonald says the results of that public engagement were compiled into the “What We Have Heard” report, which again was reviewed by the municipal staff committee and their feedback was provided to the consultants so they could start work on the initial draft of the plan.

“The ultimate goal for me would be that the Recreation Master Plan would be unveiled in the new year,” MacDonald says, noting that the exact timing of that “will depend on what council’s decision is — if they decide to approve it as is, or if they decide to engage the public for additional feedback.”

If councillors decide another survey is necessary, then the results of that will be provided to the consultants, who will then complete a revised final draft for council’s review.

The background report released in March looked at a number of areas, including the provincial and federal recreation and well-being programs that are already in place, program registration and accessibility.

One of the key areas examined in the report was population trends in the county. The report found that between 1996 and 2006, population in the

county declined by 10 per cent, and by another 12 per cent between 2006 and 2016. For comparison, the population of Nova Scotia grew by 0.7% between 1996 and 2006 and declined by 2% between 2006 and 2016. Canada’s population grew by 10% between 1996 and 2006, and by 11% between 2006 and 2016.

However, since 2016, the Municipality has seen a slight turnaround in its population trend, with an in-migration during that period of 0.5%. Despite that, the report has outlined a dramatic shift in age distribution, as adults aged 65 and over comprise an even greater portion of the county’s population than is currently being seen at the provincial and national levels.

Despite a decrease in the overall population, the Municipality experienced a 42% increase in population among adults 65 and over between 1991 and 2016. In fact, the average median age of the population in Inverness County has risen from 46.2 years old in 2006, to 52.7 years old in 2016. During that time, the average median age in the county has remained higher than the provincial median of 41.8 years old in 2006, and 45.5 in 2016.

“Council is eagerly awaiting the plan, which will set the future course of recreation in the County,” MacDonald says.



Mother Nature more than cooperated this summer as children from across the county enjoyed various recreational activities organized by the Municipality’s Recreation and Community Wellness Department.

Judiquers show their true colours

Judique's new tartan was on full display this week as the community celebrated the awarding of the Lieutenant Governor's Community Spirit Award for 2022.

The Honourable Arthur J. LeBlanc was the guest of honour at a public reception at the Judique Community Centre on Sunday, October 23 as the king's representative in the province presented one of two such honours to local residents. The community of Weymouth Falls in Digby County was the other recipient of this year's honour.

Accepting the award on behalf of the community were members of the Judique Tartan Group, who submitted the application for the honour on behalf of all Judiquers. Mildred Lynn MacDonald, a volunteer member of the group, says the award "hits on the strengths of the community, which is really nice."

"It would be family connections, valuing heritage, generosity, kindness, hard work," she explains. "Just a general appreciation for each other, and coming through COVID, that was really highlighted. The community really came together during the two years of COVID."

"What qualities in the community that had existed before – and these would have been qualities passed on by grandmothers and grandfathers – people tapped into those qualities, and really helped each other, as everywhere on Highway 19."

The Judique Tartan Group was formed in 2020 when an enthusiastic group of Judiquers decided the community needed a tartan. The call went out to



Tetley, the dog, (top photo) is a big fan of the Judique Spirit Tartan, and the efforts of the Judique Spirit Tartan Group, shown in bottom photo. In the back row, from left, are Barbara Downie, Donna MacLellan, Jean MacDonald, Yvonne MacDonell and Florence Beaton. In the middle row, from left, are Alice Campbell, Theresa MacInnis and Deborah Graham. Seated in front is Mildred Lynn MacDonald.

local residents to submit potential colours and their meaning, and the response was “overwhelming,” MacDonald notes.

The following year, the Judique Spirit Tartan was officially registered with the Scottish Register of Tartans and is now displayed on their website. The tartan features “striking blues for the ocean and sky, green for the forest and fields, peach for the red-orange-yellow sunsets, white for the first settler’s winter arrival, and red for the faith and strength of the people.”

An initial order of Judique Spirit Tartan scarfs and throws was so popular that the group was to recently receive a second shipment from Scotland, and MacDonald says participants at the award celebration were encouraged to bring along their tartans to show their community spirit.

Also on display during the event was the Judique Spirit Tartan Community Quilt, which was completed by volunteer quilters in recent weeks and displays various cultural aspects of the community. And to bring it all together, the group invited Mabou fiddler Andrea Beaton to perform the “Judique Spirit Tartan Reel” which she composed earlier this year at the request of the group.

“It’s made people very proud,” MacDonald says of the award, adding that it’s captured the imagination of both local residents, as well as Judiquers living in other parts of the world.



Showing off the Judique Spirit Tartan Community Quilt are, from left, Theresa MacInnis, Jean MacDonald, Mildred Lynn MacDonald and Donna MacLellan.



Striking blues for the ocean and sky, green for the forest and fields, peach for the red-orange-yellow sunsets, white for the first settler’s winter arrival, and red for the faith and strength of the people.

John Allan made me cry

BY DAVE MACNEIL

“What’s wrong with you?” my wife asked, as I wiped tears from my eyes.

“I’ll tell you in the car,” I stammered, as my eyes adjusted to the house lights and the audience began to stream out of the concert.

At that very moment, I had no idea what had prompted the waterworks just moments earlier. I just know that the second I opened my mouth to join the chorus of the closing number, the noise that came out was anything but pleasant.

I’m not a crier. In fact, my daughter jokingly (I think) tells me I’m dead inside because I’m not one to show much emotion, although there’s one thing that might trigger such an involuntary response, and that’s music.

We had just enjoyed a concert with Gordie Sampson at the Port Hawkesbury Civic Centre. Gordie chose to close the show with a song he had learned from years performing with John Allan Cameron. As he sang the first verse of Wild Mountain Thyme, a rather sizeable lump began to form in my throat.

Under normal circumstances, this is a song that strikes at the heart of anyone with an ounce of Scottish or Irish blood. And though I’d heard it a million times, this time was different for some reason. As I left the show that night, I struggled to make sense of my reflexive outburst.

As we drove away, I realized that it wasn’t just the song that had moved me. It was the mention of John Allan himself. You see, the last time I heard Gordie sing this song was the last time I saw John Allan perform live. It was probably almost 20 years earlier at the Granville Green concert series in Port Hawkesbury, and John Allan shared the stage with Gordie, his son Stuart, and Ashley MacIsaac.

That particular show ended with Wild Mountain Thyme, with all four performers taking center stage. To say it was a “moment” would be an understatement. Darkness had long since fallen on the outdoor concert site. A thick mist had begun to roll in off the Strait of Canso. It almost seemed that at any moment, some unseen director might rouse me from my musically induced reverie by hollering, “Cut, cut! We need more mist in here!”

As I recalled sitting on the grass that night, proudly belting out the words “...will ye go, Lassie go...” I realized something. It wasn’t the “bloomin’ heather” that got me all worked up. It was John Allan himself.

To the rest of the country, he was the “Godfather of Celtic Music.” To us he was simply “John Allan.”

Some of my earliest memories are of Sunday mornings at my grandmother’s house. While my uncle put the finishing touches on the Sunday dinner, we sweltered from the heat of the wood stove while listening to his favourite album, “Here Comes John Allan Cameron.”

Long before the Rankin Family, the Barra MacNeils, Ashley and Natalie brought “our music” to the world, there was the iconic album cover of a kilted John Allan, standing in the weeds (the “bloomin’ heather,” perhaps), with his guitar resting on his shoulder. Long before I realized that the song told of an adulterous woman who, with the help of her doctor, attempted to knock off her husband, “There Was an Old Woman From Mabou” was something special. For the first time, I realized that someone could sing about my hometown and that someone else would want to pay good money to listen to him.

I had the opportunity to see him live many times, and the “magic” of John Allan was the simple fact that even when he had a crowd on its feet, clapping and singing along, absolutely no one enjoyed a John Allan concert more than John Allan himself.

But my most indelible memory was an opportunity in the mid-seventies to actually share a stage with him. I was a member of the Young Mabou Dancers, who performed a square set at local community concerts. Looking back on those days, it’s not clear to me whether we were just cute or if we were actually good. It didn’t really matter at the time. We always seemed to leave the stage to hoots and hollers from the crowd.

I think it was 1977 that we were invited to perform at the International Girl Guide Jamboree on the

Mira River. The fact that I was a 12-year-old boy performing in front of a sea of similarly-aged girls was totally lost on me. But what I do remember was how important I felt that day.

Father Norman MacPhee, our parish priest in Mabou at the time, had offered to drive us to our “gig.” Looking back, I’m sure there was another vehicle involved, although at the time it certainly wasn’t uncommon for eight kids to pile into a single vehicle.

We were to meet at a Sydney hotel, where a bus would transport the performers to the concert site. We dutifully claimed our spot at the back of the bus, and anxiously waited as other performers boarded.

Other than fiddler Winnie Chafe, I don’t recall knowing at the time who we were sharing the bill with. That was until I heard a commotion at the front of the bus. With his trademark “Yes!” and a short hoot, John Allan appeared in the aisle, and eventually made his way to the back of the bus. He couldn’t have appeared more excited when he learned we were from Mabou and made a point of speaking with each of us.

Our performance that day was incidental. For just a few fleeting moments, I was on par with the guy who sang about Peggy Gordon and the Lord of the Dance. If my uncle could see me now!

Province expands Seniors Care Grant

Inverness County seniors can now apply for grants to help with the cost of household chores, healthcare services and home heating.

Applications will be accepted until March 31, 2023, for the Seniors Care Grant, which provides up to \$500 to help support eligible seniors to live well at home. **People applying for the grant are also able to apply for a new, one-time grant of \$250 to help with heating costs.**

The grant helps cover the costs of services such as snow removal, small repairs, lawn care, transportation, and grocery and medication delivery. The list of eligible expenses has been expanded this year to include phone and internet costs, and health services like eye exams, dental work, mental health supports, physical therapy, and foot care.

The new \$250 home heating grant is available to eligible Nova Scotians 65 and older, including people who have already received money through the Seniors Care Grant or Heating Assistance Rebate Program in the past year. The grant is available for the cost of furnace oil, natural gas, propane, firewood, wood pellets and electricity.

“We know that rising costs, growing healthcare needs, and challenges completing household chores make it difficult for some older Nova Scotians to live comfortably in their own homes,” said Barbara Adams, Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care. “By expanding the types of services supported through the Seniors Care Grant and helping with heating costs, we are giving seniors the help they need and the peace of mind they deserve.”

Quick Facts

- People who received a Seniors Care Grant between December 1, 2021, and May 31, 2022, are eligible to apply for a new grant.
- Applicants must keep receipts for work or services provided, live in a home or apartment they own or rent, and have an annual net household income of \$37,500 or less.
- The government is investing about \$29 million in the grants this year.
- More than 27,000 Nova Scotia seniors received a seniors care grant in the program's first year.

Eligibility

To qualify for the grant, you need to be 65 or older by March 31, 2023, and meet all of the following criteria:

- have a household net income of \$37,500 or less
- live in your own home or apartment
- have your name on the property title, Land Titles Initiative Certificate of Claim or residential lease agreement
- have paid (or that you will pay) for household and healthcare services and home heating between June 1, 2022, and March 31, 2023

Seniors Care Grant eligibility, information and application:

Print applications are available at Access Nova Scotia Centres and MLA offices, or by calling 1-800-670-4357 to request that one be mailed.

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