

THE PARTICIPAPER

An Inverness County Periodical

Spring 2025

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Chief Administrative Officer's message

KEITH MACDONALD
INVERNESS COUNTY CAO

As we settle into the warmth and renewal of spring, it's a time for reflection, celebration, and looking ahead to the future. This issue of *The Participaper* is filled with stories that highlight our community's achievements, and the incredible people who make Inverness County so special.

In this edition, we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the LeMoine Fire Department, where five of the 12 founding members continue to serve today. This milestone is a testament to the dedication and commitment of those who have kept our community safe for half a century.

We also recognize CKJM, the Chéticamp-based radio station, which is celebrating 30 years of keeping our residents informed and entertained. This station has been a vital source of local news, culture, and connection for three decades.

Our municipality recently hosted the inaugural Awards for Excellence in Healthcare Gala Reception, where several outstanding healthcare professionals

were honored for their exceptional contributions. These individuals are at the heart of our community's well-being, and it was truly inspiring to celebrate their dedication.

In collaboration with the municipality, We'koqmaq Mi'kmaw School hosted its first-ever healthcare-focused careers fair, aimed at supporting and inspiring the next generation of healthcare professionals. It's initiatives like this that build a brighter future for our community and the individuals who serve it.

For those interested in career development, we are excited to unveil the Futures in Film program, an initiative designed to encourage the film industry to consider Inverness County for future projects. This program will not only boost our economy but also support local businesses, including restaurants, accommodations, and service providers.

This issue also features the incredible oncology team at the Inverness Consolidated Memorial Hospital. Their compassion and the positive impact they have on patients and their caregivers are immeasurable, and we're proud to share their story with you.

Lastly, we look forward to the return of the Big Ride, a cancer research fundraiser that has traveled the globe and is returning to Inverness County for the second year in a row this June. Your support of this cause helps make a difference in the lives of those battling cancer.

There is so much to celebrate in this edition of *The Participaper*, and we hope you enjoy reading about the wonderful accomplishments and stories that reflect the strength and spirit of our community. ■

Keith

The Participaper

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Art direction/design: missbrenna Studio

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A letter from the editor

DAVE MACNEIL

info@invernesscounty.ca

Healthcare in Inverness County is on the upswing, and there are many reasons for optimism when it comes to providing medical services to residents.

In this edition of *The Participaper*, readers will learn about a recent career fair at We'komaq Mi'kmaw School, which exposed students to the many options open to those considering a career in healthcare. Expanding healthcare services in the county is important, but inspiring local students to be a part of that growth is just one more step in the right direction.

Also in this edition, we talk about how the continuing evolution of the Cancer Care Clinic at Inverness Consolidated Memorial Hospital has seen more Inverness County cancer patients receive treatments in the county, instead of having to travel to Sydney for those same services.

In previous editions of this magazine, we've shared stories about the generosity of donors in the county, like Zutphen Contractors, who have put their money where their mouth is to provide the medical equipment and services so needed by our residents.

Inverness County has become the envy of many rural areas of the province when it comes to providing healthcare for its residents. This multi-pronged approach to expanding services is clearly working and can serve as a roadmap for other municipalities in the province. ■



Cover photo: Traps sit ready on the wharf at Murphy's Pond in Port Hood as the start of lobster season approached earlier this month. (Photo: Dave MacNeil)

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Young pianist brings a lot (and a piano) to Sessions

BY DAVE MACNEIL

Musician Iain MacQuarrie has been a staple at the weekly Wednesday Sessions in Port Hood since they began a year ago, and he recently added piano rescuing to his repertoire.

Just before Christmas, MacQuarrie and some friends, including Melody and Derrick Cameron – themselves regular performers at the weekly event – headed for Heatherton, Antigonish County, to salvage a piano that was no longer needed by the community centre. The piano now graces the stage of the Admiral Lounge and Café, as does MacQuarrie every chance he gets.

“I’m willing to do it for anybody,” MacQuarrie said recently. “I’m just happy to save these acoustic pianos that people are getting rid of.”

“Happy” also describes Tammy MacDonald, who coordinates events at the Admiral, who said that from the very beginning

Iain MacQuarrie plays the piano at Admiral Café and Lounge that he rescued from the Heatherton Community Centre in December.

MacQuarrie has been an integral part of the Wednesday Sessions, which features some of the best Celtic music performers in the area.

She said the arrival of the piano was “100 per cent Iain.”

“He said to me, ‘God it would be great to have a piano in here,’” MacDonald recalled. “And I said, ‘not in the budget, Iain.’ But then he said, ‘People are giving them away.’”

“My sister found out there was a piano at the community centre in Heatherton where she lived, so I messaged Iain. He said, ‘I’ll go right now.’”

MacDonald said she can’t say enough about what MacQuarrie has contributed to the Wednesday Sessions – besides a piano of course.

“He is a passionate young man” she said. “He is the heart of our sessions. People come just to see him because his whole body smiles when he’s playing. We just love him.”

She said it’s “incredible” to think the 20-year-old MacQuarrie only began playing publicly when the Sessions began in April 2024.

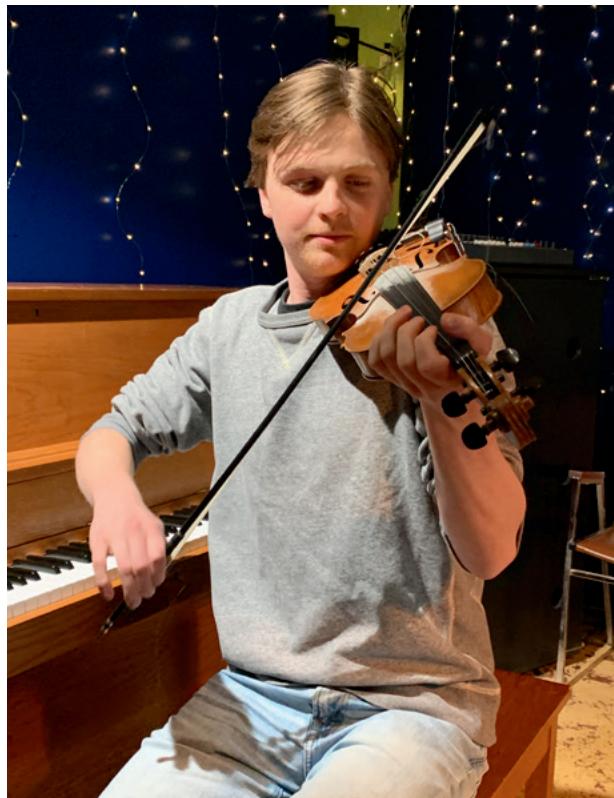
“I told his mother, ‘He’ll be the next big thing. He’ll be a Cape Breton legend one day.’”

MacQuarrie is quick to give MacDonald credit for helping to create a place where singers and musicians aren’t afraid to share their talents, regardless of their level of experience.”

“It’s more like a community hub than a tavern,” he said. “It’s so crazy to walk in somewhere in the middle of February, and you have people sitting at their tables talking and doing their thing, you have some people at the pool tables playing pool, and you have the musicians on the stage playing and talking about the tunes. It’s such a great atmosphere to have, especially in the middle of February, when it’s so cold and dark.”

MacQuarrie said he’s been interested in music since he was a kid, but that he’s only started playing a lot over the past year.

“I also play fiddle, but piano is about 90 per cent of what I do,” he said. “Last summer I was playing (piano) every day, sometimes twice a day.”



Even though he’s primarily a piano player, Iain MacQuarrie of Mabou can easily transition to fiddle, and can sometimes even be called upon to provide a step or two.

“Things like the Admiral make it easier to go out and try it with everybody,” MacQuarrie said. “It’s not like you’re playing a gig all by yourself. You just bring your fiddle along and you try a couple of sets.”

The young pianist comes from a musical family. His uncle, Howie MacDonald, is one of the most sought-after fiddlers in Cape Breton. His mother, Cheryl MacQuarrie, is an accomplished step dancer. His great-great grandfather, John Alex MacDonald, was tall in stature (six feet, four inches) and long on talent. Known as The Big Fiddler, he was a preeminent performer in Inverness County a century ago.

Where his musical talents take him remains to be seen. For now, MacQuarrie is busy travelling between his home in Mabou and New Brunswick, where he’s enrolled at Moncton Flight School. He said he’s looking at a number of career options.

“I’d eventually like to go commercial with the airlines, but I’m in no rush to get there,” he said. “I’m enjoying it here.”



Members of LeMoine Volunteer Fire Department pose for a photo during training exercises. The department will celebrate its 50th anniversary with a dinner and dance later in the year. (Photo: contributed)

LeMoine firefighters mark 50th anniversary

BY DAVE MACNEIL

The role of a volunteer firefighter has changed dramatically since the communities of Grand Etang, Cap LeMoine and St. Joseph du Moine decided half a century ago that they needed their own fire brigade.

LeMoine Volunteer Fire Department will mark its 50th anniversary with a dinner, dance and awards ceremony later in the year.

Alfred Aucoin, the department's chief since 2005 and a member since 1988, says the demand on his department increases each year.

"We used to average from eight to 15 calls a year," Aucoin explains. "Now we're doing 40, 50, 60 a year – a lot of medical."

The LeMoine department, one of the smallest in Inverness County at 23 members, serves residents along an 11-kilometre stretch of the Cabot Trail. But despite its size, Aucoin is quick to point out it's a very well-trained group, as 16 of those 23 members are trained as medical first responders.

Aucoin retired two years ago after working as a paramedic for 21 years. His son, Jason, is currently employed as a paramedic, and is a captain in the department. The younger Aucoin also provides much of the medical response training for the other members.

Previously served by the volunteer firefighters in nearby Chéticamp, the communities currently served by the LeMoine station decided in 1975 that they needed their own firefighters following two major fires that year, one of which included fatalities. So, they joined the Chéticamp department as a substation.

“When we first started, we were on Pembroke Lake Rd. and we purchased a piece of land and erected a building for \$12,000 in 1976,” Aucoin recalls. “All the labour was donated by the parishioners. That was just the cost of the building and the land.”

There were 12 founding members in that first department, five of whom are still members today.

In 1989, the LeMoine firefighters established their own department, and the following year purchased the old school in St. Joseph du Moine from the county for one dollar, and that building serves as their fire station to this day.

That same year, the fledgling department battled its biggest blaze to date, as fire destroyed the former St. Joseph’s Church in St. Joseph du Moine on New Year’s Eve. It was Aucoin’s first fire.

He says the department spent much of its time in the early days fundraising. Along with dinners, dances and bingos, they also found more creative ways to help sustain their department. He says with a number of professional pulp cutters in the community, it was decided in 1989 they’d cut pulp and donate the proceeds from that effort to the department. He says they did that for 12 years.

The annual St. Joseph du Moine Scottish Concert was another major fundraiser for the department. It ran from 1977 until 2003, when it became difficult to find enough volunteers.

Today, the LeMoine department is aided in their fundraising efforts by the Nova Scotia Firefighters Weekly 50/50 Draw.



LeMoine fire chief Alfred Aucoin, a retired paramedic, is joined in the fire department by his son Jason Aucoin, who currently works as a paramedic and provides first responder training to his fellow firefighters. (Photo: Michel Soucy)



Shown, from left, during a recent weekly training exercise are Jason Aucoin (captain), Brad Purdon (lieutenant), Keith Aucoin, Alfred Aucoin (chief), and Jeremy Smith. The LeMoine Volunteer Fire Department is marking its 50th anniversary this year. (Photo: Dave MacNeil)

"That's a lifesaver," Aucoin says. "We take in about \$15,000 from that every year."

That money has helped greatly in providing the training and equipment needed by the department.

"I remember when I joined the department, we had two portable radios and two SCBAs (Self Contained Breathing Apparatus)," he recalls. "Now everyone's got their own radio, everybody has their own pack (SCBA) and everybody's well-equipped with good turnout gear. We've come a long way."

Aucoin says the biggest challenge he sees for his department is the aging population in the communities it serves.

"It's the age factor," he says. "We have an aging population, so it's more and more medical. Fire-wise, we've done a good job on fire prevention and fire training. Last year we had one chimney fire. We used to go to a dozen chimney fires a year. People are more careful."

"You have that burnout coming way sooner than you want, especially with medical calls," Aucoin adds. "Even though you're trained, the stress that comes with doing medical calls is very high."



One of the highlights during the first 50 years of the LeMoine fire department was the tribute paid to Cyril Chiasson, second from left, and Roger Bourgeois, who saved Leonard Cormier and his wife Claudia Deveau from possible carbon monoxide poisoning. LeMoine chief Alfred Aucoin, right, was joined in the tribute by Robert Deveau, who was the fire chief in Chéticamp. Cormier was the LeMoine department's president at the time. (Photo: contributed)

But even those challenges have not affected recruitment, he notes.

"I've got people knocking on my door almost every day trying to join," he says. "We're very lucky."

Getting to know... Jessica Grande

In this recurring series, we ask a municipal employee a few questions to get to know them better.

Where are you from?

I'm originally from Ontario.

What's your role with the municipality?

I'm the GIS (Geographic Information Systems) technician and I fall under Capital Planning and Projects in the Engineering and Planning Department.

What's your service time?

Just over 10 months now.

What are your main responsibilities in your job?

The Municipality is working towards better management of their assets. I'm focusing on our water and wastewater

infrastructure, developing an asset inventory of all that infrastructure within our GIS software. That involves digitizing it and being able to map out all of our water and wastewater systems.

What's the best part of your job?

I've been able to see how excited everybody is, because now they're not looking at drawings from 1975 that are maybe fading away, and they're having trouble finding, or going to three different people to get information.

What's your favourite thing about Inverness County?

Well, it's stunning. This summer I was able to go to the beach in Port Hood with my family.



Jessica Grande

What's your favourite shop/store/service in Inverness County?

The gift shop, The Nest. I ended up getting my husband's birthday gift from there. It's totally unique and it has quite a wide range of stuff.

Finally, coffee or tea?

Coffee, 100 per cent. Even though it should be in my blood because of my mother, who is from Glace Bay, I'm not much of a tea drinker.

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County honours healthcare professionals

The Municipality of Inverness County honoured the winners of its first annual Awards for Excellence in Healthcare at a gala event in Chéticamp on April 23.

Close to 140 community members gathered at the Canton Culturel de Chéticamp to pay tribute to the exceptional work of healthcare professionals across Inverness County.

Winners were chosen in seven categories, each receiving a one-of-a-kind stained-glass ornament handcrafted by local Acadian artist, Polycarpe LeBlanc of Polycarpe Glass Art. The ornaments were designed to reflect the beauty of each award winner's home communities: a scenic view of Le Butterieu for Chéticamp honourees, and a depiction of Margaree Island for those from Inverness.

Two special awards were also presented during the evening. Heather Gillis, site lead at Inverness Consolidated Memorial Hospital, and Johanne Doucette, site lead at Sacred Heart Community Health Centre, were both honoured for their exceptional leadership and unwavering commitment to patient care.

This celebration marks the beginning of what will become an annual tradition—one that shines a light on the incredible healthcare providers of Inverness County and the invaluable services they offer every day.

Read on to learn more about the well-deserving winners.

Outstanding Collaborative Care Team

CANCER CARE CLINIC (ICMH)

The Cancer Care Clinic at Inverness Consolidated Memorial Hospital (ICMH) is making it possible for Inverness County cancer patients to receive treatment in a hospital not only closer to home, but also to family and loved ones. This translates to less travel time, fewer expenses, and can also be a critical component in the treatment and healing process for cancer patients and their caregivers.

This past year, the clinic welcomed 106 patients who made a remarkable 874 visits. These numbers reflect not only the increasing need for local cancer care, but also the trust and gratitude patients feel toward the clinic's dedicated team.

For many, the clinic has become more than a treatment center—it's a place of connection and compassion. Patients often speak of the staff as an extended family, citing their kindness, professionalism, and unwavering support throughout each step of their journey.

See story featuring Cancer Care Clinic team on page 20

Outstanding Physician

DR. RAYMOND LOK

Dr. Lok has been a cornerstone of healthcare in Inverness County since 1985, serving as both a family physician and the region's sole anesthesiologist. A tireless advocate for patient care, he launched a vital after-hours clinic, easing emergency room strain and ensuring timely access to healthcare. Beyond his clinical work, Dr. Lok is the backbone of local surgery, enabling visiting specialists to operate in Inverness. He also leads care at Inverary Manor and remains a trusted mentor to fellow healthcare workers. Dedicated, skilled, and compassionate, Dr. Lok is the definition of commitment to his patients and community.



Outstanding Nurse

Practitioner

MARY ANDERSON

Mary Anderson has been a constant presence in healthcare in Inverness County for nearly 40 years. Graduating from St. F.X. University in 1981 with her nursing degree, she spent her early years at Halifax Infirmary before coming to Inverness Consolidated Memorial Hospital (ICMH) in 1986, serving as nursing supervisor and head nurse until 2000. A trailblazer, Anderson became one of the first nurse practitioners in Cape Breton in 2003, when she brought her expertise to the Inverness Health Centre, where she continues to provide care for Inverness County patients. Her busy work schedule doesn't prevent her from giving to her community in other ways. She is a member of the ICMH Hospital Foundation, the Inverness County Accessibility Committee, the St. Margaret's Parish Finance Committee, and the Inverness Pickleball Association.



Outstanding Nurse

EDITH MACKAY

Edith MacKay, RN, has devoted 50 years to the Sacred Heart Community Health Centre in Chéticamp, serving primarily in the Emergency Department and Medical Unit. Her career embodies compassion, professionalism, and steadfast dedication, earning her deep respect from colleagues, patients, and the broader community. Edith's extensive experience ensures exceptional patient care, and her empathetic approach has profoundly impacted countless lives. Beyond her clinical expertise, she serves as a pillar of support and guidance within the healthcare team. Celebrating this 50-year milestone, Edith's enduring commitment continues to inspire and significantly influence the nursing profession.



Outstanding Long Term or Palliative Care Professional

LORI ANN GILLIS

Lori Ann is a beacon of compassion and resilience in Nova Scotia's palliative care community. Renowned for her holistic approach, she supports patients and their families physically, emotionally, spiritually, and mentally during life's most challenging transitions. Her unwavering dedication led her to return to palliative care after exploring other opportunities, underscoring her commitment to this demanding field. In recognition of her exceptional service, Lori Ann received the Mona Baryluk Clinical Award of Excellence at the Cancer Symposium in Sydney on September 28, 2018, highlighting her advocacy and tireless efforts to ensure the best possible care for her patients.



Outstanding Allied Health Professional

YVON PINO

For over two decades, Yvon has been a pillar of strength and compassion as a paramedic in Chéticamp, serving his community with unwavering dedication. Bilingual in French and English, he ensures every patient feels understood and cared for in their most vulnerable moments. Yvon brings professionalism, empathy, and exceptional care to his work with Emergency Health Services. Over the years, Yvon has enriched his community by organizing fireworks for different occasions, as well as mock accidents and lectures with the Prevent Alcohol & Risk-Related Trauma in Youth (P.A.R.T.Y.) program at local schools. An executive member and building manager at Royal Canadian Legion Branch 32, he is a medical first responder (MFR) facilitator for the Chéticamp and Pleasant Bay Volunteer Fire Department, and still responds with the Chéticamp department as an MFR.



Outstanding Young Healthcare Professional

GRAHAM MCISAAC

Graham is the heartbeat of the Inverness Consolidated Memorial Hospital (ICMH) pharmacy. As a dedicated pharmacist and team leader, he goes above and beyond every single day. Whether it's weekdays, weekends, or after-hours emergencies, he's always just a phone call away – often dropping everything to rush back when needed. His unwavering commitment, expertise, and compassion make him an irreplaceable asset to ICMH. With integrity and a drive to provide the best care, Graham sets the gold standard for healthcare professionals. ■





Backyard foraging - proposing perennials

BY CAROLINE CAMERON

Many of us were foragers in our early years, coaxed into a series of expeditions, from gathering wild strawberries, to late fall cranberry sessions. Money was not plentiful in families, but labour was free with a handful of children, and adults welcomed being able to leave behind the concerns of home.

We often made the annual trip to Cape Mabou to find the large strawberries on the “cradle hills” of the farm that our mother knew as a child, and we then went back for the blueberries later in the season. And we knew where the good summer apples were for pies and apple sauce, and then the crab apples for jelly.

Photos, clockwise from top left: Backyard peaches can be left to ripen to perfection; fiddleheads are a spring delicacy; rhubarb is an old favourite; the flavour of fresh-from-the-garden is unequalled. (Photos: Caroline Cameron)

The habit of foraging fell out of practice when cash became more accessible, with smaller families to feed, and goods being so available on the store shelf. But the pendulum swings again, and we find food more expensive. Many discover how good local foods taste, and there's a greater interest in finding cleaner, healthier food sources.

If you've lost the habit of foraging, or the access to favourite patches, you're not really prevented from connecting again with that primal practice of food gathering. You need only to travel to your back yard for the pleasure. Everyone can consider replacing an ornamental shrub with a perennial food plant that returns year after year—like that stubborn little rhubarb that still grows on the abandoned Cape Mabou farm.

If you plan well, you can be greeted yearly with some special treats, or a whole seasonal procession of crops.

Rhubarb, fiddleheads, asparagus, haskaps, strawberries, currants, Saskatoons, raspberries, plums, pears, peaches, apples, blackberries, grapes, horseradish, hazelnuts, walnuts, Jerusalem artichokes, cherries, garlic, leeks, even hops! There's also a couple of new-to-me native species that I am anxious to get growing: the ramp (wild leek), and the ground nut, an edible root used by the Mi'kmaq.

That's a pretty good start on a list of perennial foods that can be grown in your yard. These ones only require planning and pruning in order to have crops year after year.

Considerations:

- Most people fail to account for the amount of space that the mature plant will require. That little high bush blueberry plant will be about the size of a fridge when mature. And for goodness sake, check the label for mature size of fruit trees (look for dwarf varieties)!
- Fruit production is typically better in sunny locations, while the fiddleheads like to grow under leaf trees, getting spring sun with summer shade, and currants do well with less sun.
- For the most part, shrubs and trees are pretty forgiving of low fertility soil, and only suffer when the texture is extreme, like mucky clay or dry sandy conditions. Feeding the soil, watering, and attending to drainage will help.

- The most important consideration in deciding whether to invest in backyard food production is how much you want to be thinking about dealing with a crop in the middle of the summer, when it is competing with beach time and céilidhs. It is far easier if you actually enjoy the process of harvesting. It is not everyone's cup of tea.
- Raspberries and cherries ripen right in the peak of the summer season. I am okay with making the time for harvest because I've gotten into the routine of driving everything into the freezer (even the crab apples), and then coming back for winter enjoyment, or making the jam, jelly, or pies later on when things quiet down. When these treasures come out of the freezer, I feel as though I am eating like royalty, for free.
- When life goes sideways, one can always leave the crop unharvested, but I really try to avoid leaving the fruit on the ground near the plant, since I worry that it may encourage disease problems.
- Another aspect of planning is the size of the harvest. You can avoid having to deal with a tree's-worth of apples if you partner with a few friends: someone grows pears, another grows blueberries, another apples, another peaches, and so on. Everyone has a reasonable quantity and enjoys a variety of fresh fruits. And if, for example, two different kinds of pears are required for production, perhaps your next-door neighbour would like to plant one of them.

While there's always hiccups and challenges with growing, I suggest that you make these your problems, rather than being bothered with too much screen time, and not enough exercise. The benefits extend in many directions! ■

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.



...And Action! Film industry program launches in Inverness

BY DAVE MACNEIL

If Inverness County ever attracts a major motion picture to the area, the roots of that success may be traced to an event held in March at the Inverness County Centre for the Arts (ICCA).

Bill Culp, Creative Economy Development Officer with the Cape Breton Partnership, recently unveiled the Futures in Film program, which will be rolled out over the coming year.

The program had its official launch with a networking and information session at ICCA on March 25, and Culp says about 40 people turned out for the event as a number of presenters talked about opportunities in all aspects of the film industry.

“It was a blast,” Culp says. “There was great energy in the room. We had some awesome film equipment that was brought in for the occasion, including a 15-foot movie crane.”

Presenters included Screen Nova Scotia, ACTRA (The Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists), and the Directors Guild of Canada, as well as unions representing camera operators and other film industry professionals.

“They talked about what their organizations do, and then they talked about entry level opportunities they can provide, whether it’s in training or referral programs for people just starting out,” Culp adds.

Also participating in the event were representatives from Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC), who introduced some of the programs they offer to people interested in getting involved in the industry.

“They’ve got an excellent screen arts program in Dartmouth, and now they’ve got a new program, a one-year program called Applied Media and Communications Arts at the new NSCC Waterfront Campus in Sydney,” Culp says.

“I appreciated everyone coming,” he notes. “I think they were impressed with the amount of interest that was shown.”

Culp, who went to work for the Cape Breton Partnership in 2022, was the among the group who lobbied the Nova Scotia government to establish a film incentive for rural parts of the province, much like a similar program that’s in place in Ontario.

“So, we did our research on what was going on up there and, working with Cape Breton University and people like (Inverness County) Warden Bonny MacIsaac, we created a 65-page report to advocate for the provincial government to take on a similar sort of incentive for rural areas of Nova Scotia,” he recalls.



Top photo: Glen Gould is living proof that a Cape Breton actor can make it in the film business. He’s shown here with Sylvester Stallone, who he starred with in episodes of the TV series *Tulsa King* in 2022. **Bottom photo:** Cape Breton cameraman Patrick Doyle is the executive director of the Unama’ki Motion Picture Co-operative and one of the key people involved in securing a film credit that the co-operative hopes will bring more film production to the island. (Photos: contributed)

Those efforts bore fruit in April of last year, when the province announced a new incentive program that will give 10 cents for each film production dollar spent on films shot 150 kilometres or more outside of Halifax.

Patrick Lanctot, one of the principals behind Inverness-based Cape Breton Film, says the incentive will help the industry on the island.

“It’s definitely going to change how producers look outside of Halifax,” he says. “With our dollar being low, and with these incentives, you’re probably



From left are Patrick Doyle, executive director of the Unama'ki Motion Picture Co-operative, Bill Culp, creative economy development officer with Cape Breton Partnership, Pam Marston, vice-principal at We'koqma'q Mi'kmaw School, and Rob Smith, the school's film and video teacher. Doyle and Culp were at the We'koqma'q school for a film presentation last year. (Photo: contributed)

going to start seeing a lot more bigger productions coming to rural Nova Scotia. If you can reduce your costs any way, that's what you want to do."

Lanctot operates Spectra 71, a film company based in Middle River, Victoria County, which provided much of the technical expertise for a television project Cape Breton Film shot for Bell's Fibre TV, which aired last year. The series, called *Sea Class*, focused on the growing popularity of collecting sea glass, and Lanctot says a second season of *Sea Class* has been pitched and they should find out in May or June whether that pitch was successful.

Funding for the *Sea Class* project was already in place before the incentive was announced, but Lanctot says he sees nothing but positives coming out of the province's announcement.

"It helps everything – restaurants, accommodations, antique dealers," Lanctot explains. "A film we just shot, we used local hairdressers, we used makeup people locally. We used different shops to supply us with props. It's off-season stuff too. We shot that in February."

He says the Partnership's Futures in Film program is a great step, and he's been working with Culp to help grow the industry on the island.

He says along with developing all elements of film production, he says he'd like to see a post-production facility established in Cape Breton.

"Right now, there are no post-production facilities outside of Halifax," Lanctot says.

"If someone comes to Cape Breton, like a big feature, there's no real spot for them to edit or even look at dailies with the director at the end of the shoot day to see if there are any problems," he explains, "There's a lot more infrastructure that needs to be built outside of Halifax, and that includes post-production, that includes rentals, everything."

"Right now, everything is Halifax-based. So, it makes it a little bit more difficult for big films to come in and shoot in Cape Breton for 60 days because they have to bring in everything."

The Futures in Film program followed the Inverness session with similar events in Victoria and Richmond counties, and Culp says "the ball is rolling" when it comes to developing the film industry locally.

"We've got great locations," he says. "We've got a really competitive incentive program right now. We've got a developing workforce and we're putting together the infrastructure virtually every day." ■



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Cancer clinic at ICMH bringing care ‘closer to home’

BY DAVE MACNEIL

Investment in the Cancer Care Clinic at Inverness Consolidated Memorial Hospital (ICMH) is allowing cancer patients to receive treatment closer to home.

Valerie Nugent, the Cancer Care Program’s director of operations for the eastern zone, says there’s been a gradual shift away from having to travel to Cape Breton Regional Hospital in Sydney for cancer treatments.

“Government investment in these community clinics has been tremendous over the past couple of years, and that enabled us to move care closer to home,” Nugent says.

“We’re shifting out of the main cancer centres and allowing patients to receive their treatment in their own community hospitals, surrounded by family, friends, and a familiar space,” she adds. “If you speak with any of the patients, they will tell you it’s the place to be, and it aids in their healing.”

Nugent says in the past year they’ve been able to hire two physicians who help the medical oncologist serve cancer patients at ICMH.

“We’re shifting out of the main cancer centres and allowing patients to receive their treatment in their own community hospitals, surrounded by family, friends, and a familiar space.”

“They are general practitioners in oncology, so they are physicians, but they take special training in oncology, and they help our medical oncologists who were really stressed in seeing a large volume of patients in the main cancer centre,” she explains.

One of those doctors is Dr. Annalee Coakley, who arrived in Inverness in 2024. The other is Dr. Mark Bennett, who has been a physician at the hospital for several years.

“Ninety-two per cent of the patients are receiving their treatment in Inverness,” Nugent says. “The remaining patients are probably receiving combined therapies, where they would need to come to Sydney for their radiotherapy piece of it. But in Inverness they receive their systemic therapy, which is their chemotherapy and their immunotherapy, and sometimes they get injections.”

She says within the past 12 months, there were 874 visits to the Inverness oncology clinic, which represents a total of 106 patients.”



Left to right: Dr. Annalee Coakley; Meghan Rankin, Registration & Booking Clerk; Kathy Hannigan, Ward Clerk; Melissa Beaton, RN; Kelly Glabais-Cummings, RN; Laura MacArthur, RN; and Dr. Mark Bennett. Missing from photo is Dr. Kate MacInnes, hematologist.

“So the visits are high,” she adds, noting that Dr. Kate MacInnes, a hematologist, is on-site at ICMH two days a week.

“We also have one of our medical oncologists (Dr. Wissam Saliba) going down (to ICMH) once a month, so patients don’t have to travel,” she says.

“He oversees treatment, if there’s a new patient visit,” she adds. “The GPOs (the general practitioners in oncology), they can’t see new patients, but they can see follow-up visits. So that frees up the medical oncologist to see any new patients.”

Nugent says the local clinic also provides virtual care, which limits the amount of travel patients must endure in order to get treatment.

“If a patient requires a consult with a radiation oncologist (in Sydney), we can do a virtual consult,” she says. “So, it saves patients a trip, and if there’s any follow-up they can do it virtually.”

A third oncology nurse has also recently been hired in Inverness. Along with administering treatments,

their expertise is crucial, Nugent says, in providing the virtual care part of the program.

A further investment has also been made in pharmacy at the hospital, she notes.

“We’ve invested in pharmacy in Inverness so that our pharmacy technicians and our pharmacists can mix the treatments on site, so they don’t have to bring them in.”

“Those pharmacists are employed at the local hospital and a percentage of their time is dedicated to oncology. So, you have the pharmacy technicians mixing the drug, pharmacists checking the drug, nurses administering the drug, and physicians overseeing the entire process.”

Although the Inverness clinic has grown in recent years, Nugent says they’re at the stage where they’re considering what other improvements can be made.

“We’re growing and we’re getting to the point where we do need to look at how do we expand and where do we expand. That requires a lot of consultation and time, and we’re just in the early stages of that.”



Big Ride back by popular demand

BY DAVE MACNEIL

A cancer research fundraiser that's traveled the globe for nearly 20 years will be returning to Inverness County in June for the second year in a row.

The Big Ride, which last year saw 51 participants cycle the Celtic Shores Coastal Trail and hike the Cape Mabou trail system, will once again cruise the county's famous trail thanks in large part to the support of local communities.

"We've done everything from the circumference of Iceland to Canada into the U.S. for a couple of years, different Canadian destinations and the Alps," says Ashley Ward, who co-founded the charity Give to Live with her husband, Todd McDonald.



Last year's edition of The Big Ride made its first visit to Inverness County, and riders of all ages were captivated and inspired by the beauty offered by the Celtic Shores Coastal Trail. Last year's event included a hike along the Cape Mabou trail system, while this year participants will hike the Acadian Trail in Chéticamp.

Opposite page: Alec MacNeil of Mabou (foreground) and Laura Cormier of Inverness had some fun with Andreas Demone of Halifax (background) during last year's edition of The Big Ride. MacNeil says he hopes this year's event will attract more Inverness County riders. (Photos: courtesy Give to Live)



Give to Live has raised more than \$4.2 million for various charities since 2008, and its Big Ride event, planned for June 20 to 22, 2025, will once again raise money to support the Beatrice Hunter Cancer Research Institute at Dalhousie University.

“We don’t often go back to the same location two times in a row, but the people who came with us last year absolutely loved it,” says Tracy Ashley, events and operations manager for the Halifax-based charity. “The community absolutely wrapped their arms around us.”

“It has to do with having that community response and support,” Ward says, explaining how the charity chooses its venues for The Big Ride. “It’s really important that we can give people a good experience and then things can be available to them. We have to eat, and we have to stay somewhere, and we want to take in some of the local culture, so of course Inverness County is just a shining star in that way.”

A native of Inverness, she says organizers and volunteers were blown away last year by how local communities stepped up to support the event participants.

“During their time on the trail, the word kind of got out that they would be coming through,” she says. “There’d be little coolers with water bottles, or little snacks along the trail, or there were signs encouraging the riders.”

“There was a lemonade stand that was set up and all the proceeds went to the charity,” Ward adds. “Those kinds of things just sort of popped up. We welcome that kind of stuff. It was a nice little touch for the riders who were going through.”

Registration for the Big Ride closed May 15, and instead of the Cape Mabou trails, this year’s event will feature a hike of the Acadian Trail in Chéticamp. Along with paying a registration fee, participants are required to do at least \$1,000 in fundraising. This year’s three-day event will also include cycling the Celtic Shores Coastal Trail, with a choice of two distances – Troy to Inverness, or Port Hood to Inverness.

Ward says she believes the success of last year’s Big Ride is due partly to the impact cancer has had on the county.

“Cape Breton has very high cancer rates, and there’s hardly a family I know that hasn’t been touched by it,” she explains. “That is really why we are out there, and when that mission really connects, that says a lot as well.”

Ward says Give to Live strives to make sure that between 85 and 90 percent of money raised goes to the charity. Last year’s event hit that goal, coming in at 88 per cent.

“We keep our costs down as much as we can,” she adds. “We’re not always doing the most luxurious thing, but we’re always making sure people are taken care of, and they have a good experience.”

One of those people was Alec MacNeil of Mabou, one of two Inverness County residents who joined the ride. The other was Laura Cormier of Inverness. MacNeil says he’d like to see more people from the county get involved this year.

“It was a lot of fun,” he says. “It’s a really important cancer fundraiser in this province and it’s a provincial event. It’s important for our county to have provincial events, and it’s great exposure for the trail and the county.”

MacNeil, who will soon turn 68, says he was surprised by how many people his age and older took part. He adds that the trail itself played a big role in having the event return for 2025.

“People feel safe riding on a trail like this,” he explains. “You don’t have to worry about traffic, and when you have such a quality trail in such a beautiful place, you don’t have to be putting yourself at risk.”

“People were impressed by people along the trail who were actually cheering us on. It wasn’t the Tour de France, but people who knew about it were cheering us as we went by.”

Ward says anyone looking to volunteer for the 2025 edition of The Big Ride should check out the event website at givetolive.ca ■



Why extreme diets don't work

BY GLENNA CALDER, ND

In today's fast-paced world it is tempting to look for quick fixes, extreme diets and a transformed body. The truth is that these diets rarely lead to better health or sustainable results and can even harm your health in the long run. Here are why extreme diets aren't what I recommend:

1. They are impossible to sustain. They drastically cut calories, eliminate certain foods too long and impose strict rules that can hurt our overall relationship with food and our body. Usually when diets end, weight returns, and often extra weight follows.
2. Extreme diets slow our metabolism down. They hurt our thyroid, adrenals and digestion, and cause muscle loss by not providing enough calories or protein. When you drastically cut calories your body goes into survival mode, slowing down your metabolism and trying to conserve energy. Once you start eating enough calories, your body holds onto the calories more efficiently, and that often leads to weight gain.
3. Eliminating healthy fats will hurt your hormone health, your skin and your cardiovascular health. Many extreme diets cut out food groups.

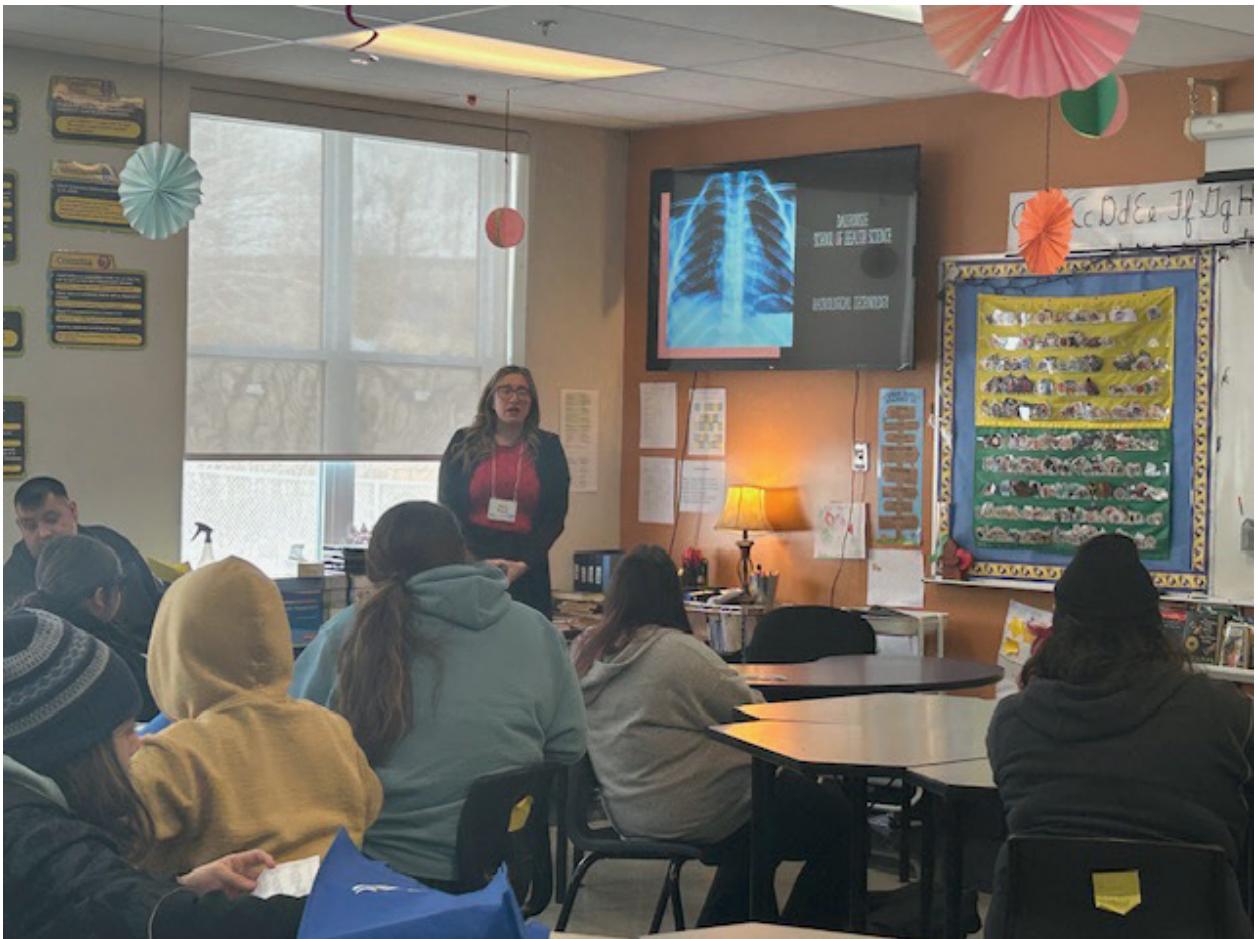
4. They can harm your relationship with food. They promote an all-or-nothing mindset when it comes to food, leading to guilt and binge-eating cycles. Many people who follow extreme diets end up in a cycle of restriction, overeating and frustration. This can damage your mental health and emotional well-being, making healthy eating stressful and unenjoyable.
5. They ignore the bigger picture of health. Weight loss and health improvements aren't just about what you eat. They are also about how you eat, how you move, sleep and take care of yourself overall. Extreme diets ignore the long-term habits that truly support a healthy lifestyle.

What to do instead

- **Focus on small, sustainable changes** that support your well-being.
- **Eat a variety of whole foods.** Include lean protein, healthy fats, whole grains and plenty of fruit and vegetables.
- **Practice portion control.** You don't need to eliminate foods. Just eat them in appropriate amounts.
- **Listen to your body.** Eat when you are hungry and stop when you are satisfied and avoid emotional eating.
- **Stay active.** Find a form of movement you like and do it often. Be active in some form five to seven days per week.
- **Get enough sleep.** Poor sleep can affect your hunger hormones and lead to weight gain.
- **Manage stress.** Chronic stress can lead to overeating and cravings for unhealthy foods.

Extreme diets might promise quick results, but they rarely lead to long-term success. Instead, focus on making small, manageable changes that support your overall well-being. Sustainable habits, not deprivation, are the key to lasting health.

Dr. Glenna



Dr. Shanté Blackmore was among the presenters at the Healthcare Careers Fair in February at the We'koqma'q Mi'kmaw School. In bottom photo, she's joined by Cassandra Googoo, the school's career navigator. (Photos: contributed)

We'koqma'q Mi'kmaw School Hosts Healthcare Careers Fair

On the second full moon of 2024, or Apuknajit, (ah-boo-gah-na-jit, Mi'kmaw for 'snow blinding moon'), We'koqma'q Mi'kmaw School hosted its first-ever healthcare-focused careers fair on February 12.

The fair was developed as a collaboration between the school and the Municipality of Inverness County's Culture & Community Development department, with provincial funding from the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment (OHP). The OHP Fund, established in 2022, has been supporting a wide variety of healthcare recruitment and retention initiatives across the province, including in Inverness County. This is the third healthcare-focused careers fair the municipality has collaborated on since 2023 and the first one to be held in We'koqma'q.

One hundred students from grades seven to 12 from We'koqma'q Mi'kmaw School and neighbouring Wagmatcookewey School in Wagmatcook attended the fair. Thirty-five healthcare professionals travelled from near and far to share their insights and experience with the students, showcasing a wide variety of healthcare professions and how to navigate careers in fields of continuing care, dental hygiene, dietetics, early childhood behaviour and development, emergency health services, medical lab technology, medicine, nursing, speech pathology and ultrasound technology, to name a few. The school's teachers were generous in lending their classrooms for presentation spaces during the day, and also being on hand to help with any technical questions.

The fair was opened and closed by the school's own drum group,

White Bear. Prayers were offered by teacher, Phillip Prosper, with opening remarks from vice-principal, Pam Marston, and the municipality's healthcare navigator, Lynn Carter, who also gave the land acknowledgement and expressed the municipality's pride in being able to partner with the school for the event.

One of the highlights of the day for everyone was the keynote address by Dr. Shanté Blackmore, a recent family medicine graduate, who grew up in Millbrook First Nation. Dr. Blackmore is now a family physician based in Wije'winen Urban Indigenous Health Clinic in Halifax.

Dr. Blackmore spoke movingly of her own journey from a young student progressing through college and medical school to a flourishing and rewarding career. She outlined many of the setbacks and challenges she faced along the way, highlighting how the support and encouragement she had received from her Mi'kmaw community was crucial in keeping her focused and able to persevere.

Dr. Blackmore impressed upon the students how important it was to have Indigenous healthcare professionals working throughout the community and how much she valued being able to serve her community in an Indigenous clinic.

In introducing Dr. Blackmore, the director of education, Eleanor Bernard, and principal, Christina Sylliboy, shared how proud their community was



of her achievements and what an inspiration she was to the students.

Cassandra Googoo, the school's career navigator, who was part of the planning committee for the fair, said it was a life-changing event for the children of her community and one that she hoped will stay in their minds for years to come.

The intention is to hold two annual healthcare careers fairs in the future to serve all the local high schools.

The careers fairs are part of a wider municipality effort to grow and attract more healthcare professionals to meet the evolving needs of its communities.

For more information about any of the municipality's healthcare projects, contact Lynn Carter, Healthcare Navigator, lyn.carter@invernesscounty.ca



Out and About

Three generations of the Sutherland family in Port Hood are shown preparing their traps for lobster season at Murphy's Pond Wharf. From left are Peter Sutherland, his grandson Luke Lacourse, and son Mike Sutherland. They weren't just getting the traps ready for dumping day, but were also keeping alive a family tradition, as Peter began fishing out of Murphy's Wharf 50 years ago.

(Photo: Dave MacNeill)



On aperçoit à gauche Blair Fiset, directeur général actuel de Radio CKJM, et à droite Angus LeFort, premier directeur général de Radio CKJM en 1995. (Photo : Daniel Aucoin)

La radio communautaire de Chéticamp fête ses 30 ans

PAR DANIEL AUCOIN

Depuis sa mise en ondes en 1995, la radio communautaire de Chéticamp a eu un impact énorme dans sa communauté, aussi bien pour la préservation et la revitalisation de la langue française que pour la sauvegarde et le développement de l'identité culturelle acadienne. L'année 2025 marque le 30e anniversaire de Radio CKJM.

Le projet d'implanter une radio communautaire à Chéticamp a vu le jour en 1991. Lors d'une réunion publique afin de sonder l'intérêt de la population envers ce projet, il fut résolu d'organiser une diffusion de courte durée. Le succès est si important qu'il fut décidé de poursuivre les démarches pour l'obtention d'une radio communautaire permanente. La Coopérative Radio-Chéticamp est créée en février 1992.

Les membres du premier conseil d'administration étaient Jean Marc Renault, Marie Stella Doucet, Pauline Dunn, Jeannot Chiasson, Angus LeFort, Daniel Aucoin, Lisette Bourgeois, Emmanuel Bourgeois, Fidèle LeFort et Camille Cormier. Le 6 octobre 1995, CKJM fait son entrée permanente en ondes.

Aux dires de plusieurs intervenants dans le milieu, la radio est l'outil qui a eu le plus d'impact pour la préservation et la revitalisation de la langue française dans la communauté. C'est qu'elle a pour particularité de toucher le plus grand nombre de gens et ce sur une base quotidienne en s'adressant aux gens de tous les groupes d'âges.

La radio a aussi contribué à la sauvegarde, à la promotion et au développement de l'identité culturelle acadienne à Chéticamp. Avec l'arrivée de la radio communautaire, les citoyens de Chéticamp ont pu redécouvrir la musique acadienne. Les artistes locaux ont eu le goût de chanter et même d'écrire leurs propres chansons. La radio a joué un rôle important dans leur cheminement en les enregistrant et les diffusant.

Le studio d'enregistrement Marcel Doucet a été conçu par un expert conseil de Nashville. En plus d'être employé pour la production et la diffusion d'émissions musicales radiophoniques, le studio a été utilisé pour l'enregistrement d'artistes locaux pour fin de diffusion sur les ondes ou de production d'albums d'artistes. Ashley MacIsaac, JP Cormier et Ronald Bourgeois sont parmi les artistes qui ont enregistré des disques compacts dans ce studio.

Radio CKJM a aussi numérisé et diffusé 565 chansons traditionnelles acadiennes répertoriées par le Père Anselme Chiasson et le Père Daniel Boudreau. Deux albums (Un suête musical en Acadie et Le lendemain d'un suête) regroupant des enregistrements d'artistes locaux ont aussi été produits. La radio a aussi contribué à relancer des traditions acadiennes en train de sombrer dans l'oubli telle la Mi-carême.

Le produit musical est en parfaite cohérence avec la mission de la radio. La musique locale, acadienne et traditionnelle y occupe une large place. Les



Bruno Bourgeois est un animateur bien apprécié sur les ondes de Radio CKJM. (Photo : Daniel Aucoin)



Charlie Dan Roach et Marie Stella Doucet animent une émission spéciale lors des célébrations de la Mi-carême. (Photo : Daniel Aucoin)



Elyse Delaney et Michelle Deveau participent au radiothon annuel au profit de Radio CKJM. (Photo : Daniel Aucoin)



Des élèves de l'école NDA de Chéticamp en visite dans les studios de Radio CKJM. (Photo : Daniel Aucoin)

animateurs rémunérés et les bénévoles produisent plusieurs émissions qui font la promotion de la musique acadienne et française. Ils assurent aussi une diversité des styles musicaux. Pendant plusieurs années, une émission présentant la musique gaélique était diffusée chaque semaine.

En diffusant l'information communautaire, CKJM permet aux gens de mieux savoir ce qui se passe chez eux. Elle fournit aux organismes un canal privilégié pour s'adresser à la population, annoncer leurs activités et faire connaître leur travail et leurs projets. Depuis ses débuts, la radio s'est mérité de nombreux prix, tant sur le plan national que régional.

Au cours des 30 dernières années, l'ancre local a toujours constitué la principale force de CKJM. C'est cet ancre qui a permis à la radio de naître, de se développer et de passer à travers les difficultés qu'elle a rencontrées.

À toutes les étapes de l'existence de CKJM, les membres de la communauté ont manifesté un

appui sans équivoque à leur radio tant sur le plan financier qu'en y étant impliqués en tant que bénévoles au conseil d'administration, à la production radiophonique ou à des tâches de soutien. Des bénévoles de tous âges assurent plusieurs heures de programmation par semaine. Ces bénévoles contribuent à la richesse et à la diversité de la programmation. Leur apport est précieux pour la radio communautaire qui ne saurait s'en passer.

Au fil des années, en raison de son utilité sociale reconnue, la radio communautaire a pu compter sur l'appui financier indispensable de ministères et institutions pour des projets ponctuels. Tout au long de l'année, les activités de prélèvements de fonds sont diversifiées ; bingo, club 50/50, radiothon, encan, etc.

Radio CKJM représente la fierté et l'attachement des Acadiens de Chéticamp à leur langue et culture. La radio est un outil de développement linguistique, culturel et social depuis 30 ans déjà. ■

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