

THE PARTICIPAPER

An Inverness County Periodical

Winter 2025/26

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Chief Administrative Officer's message

KEITH MACDONALD
INVERNESS COUNTY CAO

When *The Participaper* was first published in 1979, it was a simple eight-page recreation and tourism flyer, created to share what was happening across Inverness County. Over the years, it has grown into the magazine you know today—one that celebrates the people, places, and stories that make our communities strong.

In this edition, we're reconnecting with those original roots. Winter may not be what people first think of when they picture year-round fun in Inverness County, but there is a long, proud history of cold-weather recreation here—and countless ways to stay active and connected. This year, you'll find our Winter Activity Guide right inside the magazine: a four-page spread of events and programs that brighten the colder months and bring neighbours together. The inclusion of this guide in the magazine feels like a welcome return to where *The Participaper* began.

You'll read about the revival of organized senior men's hockey in Port Hood with the Cape Breton West Blackstone Knights. The team is owned by two local young men and supported by a local business. The arrival of this team gives men the opportunity to play organized hockey longer and gives the community the chance to rally around them.

Two features explore the legacy of girls' hockey in the region. One highlights Jennifer MacInnis-Moore's efforts to record and promote the trailblazing efforts of female players and coaches in the early '90s and the lasting friendships formed along the way. The other shares the story of Ambrah MacNeil and her neighbour Angus, whose support helped launch her career in the sport—a heartfelt reminder of the power of community.

Finally, stories about the Ski Margaree Trails Association and the French language feature on snowshoeing in the Highlands showcase a renewed energy in winter recreation, even in the cold. Visit participaperonline.ca to read Daniel's story in English.

Winter can feel long, cold, and dark—but this edition shows just how much warmth, fun, and community spirit carry us through the season. ■

Keith

The Participaper

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A letter from the editor

DAVE MACNEIL

Normally in this space, I highlight some of the stories we've worked on for this edition, but a couple of people from our county have achieved special milestones in recent months, and I'd like to shine the spotlight on them this time around.

One of them is Nicole MacLennan, originally from Mabou and a graduate of Mabou Consolidated School. On September 29, Nicole retired after 31 years working at CBC, the last 29 of those years as associate producer for Information Morning Cape Breton in Sydney.

For nearly three decades, Nicole has been the person responsible for pitching and chasing stories, as well as booking guests for the show. Her work has been recognized by both the Atlantic Journalism Awards and the Radio Television Digital News Association.

And while Nicole was wrapping up her career at CBC, Colten Ellis was just beginning his in the National Hockey League (NHL). The 25-year-old netminder from River Denys made his NHL debut on October 22 in a 4-2 Buffalo Sabres' victory over the Detroit Red Wings.

Colten, who was featured in the pages of *The Participaper* last year, not only registered the victory, but was also chosen first star of the game.

Congratulations Colten on a brilliant start to what will hopefully be a long and storied career in the NHL. And Nicole, here's wishing you all the best in your retirement. It's well-deserved. ■



Cover photo: Chris and Jan from A for Adventure snowshoed up a wintry Meat Cove Mountain and were greeted with incredible views and strong wind gusts!
(Photo: Adam Hill, Courtesy of Destination Cape Breton)

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A new chapter for Foyer Père Fiset Nursing Home

It's not every day that residents of Chéticamp see a mobile crane roll into town, but this summer, they had a front-row seat to just that, as part of the construction of a brand-new nursing home.

The Foyer Père Fiset Nursing Home first opened its doors in 1971. Owned and operated by the County of Inverness Municipal Housing Corporation, the facility currently includes two residences: a 60-bed nursing home and a residential care facility (RCF) that supports an additional 10 residents. The RCF component was added in 2011.

Connected directly to the Sacred Heart Community Health Centre, the facility also supports hospital operations by providing food services and laundry.

In January 2021, the Government of Nova Scotia announced a multi-year plan to invest in long-term care infrastructure across the province. Foyer Père Fiset was selected for redevelopment as part of that initiative. The goal: to create a more home-like setting where each resident has a private bedroom



Construction site throughout October 2025.
(Photos: Lindsay Construction Ltd.)

and bathroom, enhancing both dignity and comfort.

Design work on the new building began in March 2023, with special attention given to ensuring the new facility reflects the surrounding Acadian culture and community. Construction officially kicked off in November 2024, on a site adjacent to the current building. The new home is expected to be move-in ready by fall 2027.

Once completed, the upgraded Foyer Père Fiset Nursing Home will accommodate 72 residents and maintain its direct connection to the Sacred Heart Community Health Centre.

To learn more about the project and stay up to date, visit: invernesscounty.ca, click [Projects](#) ■



Project Management Consultant:

Colliers Project Leaders

Design Consultant:

Architecture49 Inc.

Construction Manager:

Lindsay Construction Ltd.

Budget:

This project represents an investment by the Nova Scotia Department of Seniors and Long-term Care.



**About the County of Inverness
Municipal Housing Corporation**

The County of Inverness Municipal Housing Corporation (CIMHC) was established in 1971 under the provincial Municipal Housing Corporation Act.

This not-for-profit corporation is comprised of four separate entities: two long-term care homes; Inverary Manor (Inverness) and Foyer Père Fiset (Chéticamp) and two small option homes; Koster Huis (Mabou) and Port Hood Small Options (Port Hood). In September 2022, CIMHC brought all four entities of the corporation under one leadership team to enhance operations for residents and staff.



Marble Mountain celebrates past with an eye to the future

BY DAVE MACNEIL

When you drive through Marble Mountain, there's no shortage of reminders of its heyday, when this community of about 100 full-time residents was home to nearly 2,000 people.

Whether it's the very visible remains of the marble and limestone quarries, or St. Joseph's Catholic Church, built in 1905, or the now closed MacLachlan and Sanders general store, which still stands as a testament to the glory years, it doesn't take much imagination to bring that history to life.

It's that history that serves as a focal point for efforts currently underway to bring new life to this area, says Bill Legge, vice-chair of the North Mountain Cultural and Recreation Association (NMCRA), which serves a four-kilometre stretch

along the Bras d'Or Lakes encompassing the communities of Marble Mountain, Malagawatch and Big Harbour Island.

"We have the history as the background and for many years it just sat there, and what we're trying to do is use it as a backdrop to help us in our current activities," Legge explains.

A key part of that effort was the creation of the association's website earlier this year (marblemountaincommunity.ca), which marries the past with efforts to engage both full-time and seasonal residents of this area.

The area served by the association has no more than 100 full-time residents, but in the summertime that number swells upwards of 400. Legge is one of those seasonal residents and he says he's seen encouraging trends.



“In today’s world, nobody builds a cottage anymore,” he says. “Costs are such that it doesn’t make sense, so people are building full-time residences and choosing when to come here instead of letting the season determine it.”

One of the key assets in the effort to engage full and part-time residents alike is the community hall, which was built in 1907 as an Oddfellow’s Hall. Renovated over the past 15 years, the hall features a community library with internet access, tables and regular programming such as games nights and special events on the ground floor. The second floor showcases historical artifacts dating back to the early 1900s, offering a glimpse into the area’s past.

The hall was the site in October of a special event to celebrate the area’s heritage. “Memories on the Mountain” featured a harvest table as well as heritage displays and demonstrations. Guests also shared memories of the area through stories and poems.



In photo at top, some local men pose for a photo with the Marble Mountain quarries in the background. In the middle photo, the quarries are shown as they were around 1914. In the bottom photo, the Bras d’Or Lime Company Building served as a company office and a hotel. (Photos: contributed)



In the top photo, Judy Cairns hooks a garbage can. She is helping to revive a dying art as she leads the Marble Mountain Hookers in weekly sessions at the community hall. In the bottom photo, Linda Campbell, left, and Alice Gowans work the harvest table at the “Memories on the Mountain” heritage fall event at the hall in October. (Photos: Dave MacNeil)

Legge says that event is a big part of the NMCRA’s efforts.

“We had enough going on that day to fill two days, and next year we should split it up and make it a two-day event,” he says. “There was so much going on and so many people that it made it difficult to capture and see everything.”

The story of Marble Mountain began in 1868 when Nicholas Brown from Prince Edward Island

stumbled upon a large deposit of marble and quickly claimed mineral rights for the area and began quarrying marble and limestone. He named the area Marble Mountain to promote his business and was responsible for establishing the community’s first post office in 1871.

Brown died in 1879 and six years later the site was bought in a sheriff’s sale by Bras d’Or Lime and Marble Company, which extracted a grey marble from the lower quarry to produce white lime for the construction and agricultural industries, while large blocks of white marble from the upper quarry were cut into slabs for use as building and monument stone.

Industrial activity in the area reached its peak after the Dominion Steel Company (DOSCO) purchased Marble Mountain in 1902. For the next 20 years, DOSCO produced crushed limestone which was used as flux in the company’s steel plant. (Flux is used in the smelting process to remove impurities.)

DOSCO stopped operations on Marble Mountain when it developed a new source of limestone in Newfoundland, but for those two decades the village flourished, as the company employed nearly 1,000 people. During that time, the village boasted two churches, seven stores and a branch of the Royal Bank of Canada. It even had its own power generating station to provide electricity for the quarry, which meant that residents of the community had electric lights while the remainder of rural Cape Breton were still using candles and oil lamps.

The quarry sat idle for 40 years following DOSCO’s departure, until it was purchased by Marble Mountain Quarries Limited in 1961. Company president Lester E. Hubley, who was also president of Nova Scotia Sand and Gravel, bought the operation to quarry and market marble and crushed rock, which he did for more than 20 years.

Hubley also started the first sand and gravel barging operation in St. Margaret’s Bay and was a founding partner of Hubley Centre, the shopping area in Tantallon, Nova Scotia that bears his name.

Since Hubley abandoned the operation in the 1980s, there have been occasional tests and small-scale extractions, but no significant production, although it’s estimated there may still be about three million tons of marble at the site. ■

Getting to know... Dawn Beaton

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

Where are you from?

I'm from Mabou – Southwest Mabou to be specific.

What's your role with the municipality?

I am a project coordinator for the Culture and Community Development Department.

What's your service time?

I started in June of this year.

What are your main responsibilities in your job?

I get to work with various arts and culture entities across the county and do what I can to help them continue to grow, with the goal of serving Inverness County residents, as well as attracting visitors and newcomers alike.

What's the best part of your job?

I really appreciate working with so many wonderful folks here at the municipality, as well as getting to be home. The thing that I found so refreshing is when you walk into a workplace, and they know both of your parents. I never experienced that before, and I really appreciate it.

What's your favourite thing about Inverness County?

It has to be the people, without a doubt, and being anchored to a place by virtue of your own family.

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

I have to say the Freshmart in Mabou is one of my favourites. Walking in



Dawn Beaton

and having a chat with a fisherman I don't get to see that often, and instantly talking about Red John (Beaton), my grandfather, who I never had the chance to meet.

Finally, coffee or tea?

I'm a big coffee person. I appreciate the art of tea making and you can't touch it at a Mabou hall function, but day-to-day coffee is the go-to.

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Plants on the move

Transplanting tips

BY CAROLINE CAMERON

Maybe a special plant just isn't doing well, and it wasn't really meant for that shady spot that you wanted to fill. Maybe a plant is doing so well that it is bullying its neighbours and needs a "time out." Perhaps a friend admires a showy flower, and you want to share it.

As the garden settles in for the winter, this is a good time to "plan your next move." Transplanting is one of the easiest gardening tasks, but if technique and timing aren't considered, it can end poorly. The big challenge for the plant is that you are disrupting its roots' ability to get water to the leaves when you move it. Knowing a few details encourages transplanting success.

Plants have to breathe. Their leaves have pores (stomata) that let air enter, and they use the carbon from carbon dioxide (CO₂) as a building material, and to store energy as carbohydrates. But where air comes in, moisture escapes, particularly on dry, windy days. This evaporation is what draws water up the plant from the roots.

Loosen the surrounding soil and drive a shovel straight down the middle of a clumping perennial to lift a good mass of roots. Hostas, day lilies, astilbe, and iris all ready for a new home.

(Photo: Caroline Cameron)

If more water is lost from the leaves than supplied by the roots, the plant will wilt, and if severe enough, it may not recover. The best strategy is to take the leaves out of the equation, by making the move when the plant is dormant - any time after the leaves fall, but preferably in early spring, before they come out again, or as they are barely emerging. This is usually "no fail" if you don't damage the roots too much.

Make sure that the plant is watered well in advance, so that the roots have time to absorb the water. I often have a bucket of water on hand and just drop the newly dug up plant in and let it sit for about an hour (also great for preparing your seedlings for transplanting).

If the plant is actively growing, it is best to plan for an evening move, so that it has the night to recover (and stomata close at night in most plants). Overcast and mild days are great, and if it is sunny or windy, I will place a bucket upside down over it afterwards (or a loose plastic bag), so that the

humidity will be kept high around the leaves to reduce evaporation, while also making sure it doesn't get cooked in there!

Moving a plant in bloom is not recommended because it will set it back a bit, but removing the blossoms will help to lessen the stress on the plant.

Transplanting a smaller plant can be as easy as driving your shovel in and lifting the whole root ball in the soil. Don't remove more soil from the roots than necessary, but you can gently tease apart a clump and pull out any weeds that you see.

For a larger plant, imagine that the full root system is roughly the same size as the above-ground part. Use a shovel to loosen the roots far from the stalk, then use a pick or a garden fork to dig down deep under the plant and pry it out. If the whole root ball doesn't come easily, work to loosen the roots more. Patience is your friend.

Dig out the hole and loosen the ground where you plan to place the plant and set the plant in at the same level as before. Don't fertilize, except for a bit of bone meal for the roots. Loosely place the soil in around it and water very well. After the water soaks in, gently firm down the soil to remove large air spaces. I often leave a very shallow hollow to allow water to pool, rather than run off.

You can reduce the damage caused by shock when moving a plant from a shady spot to full sun by using a piece of fabric or a structure to provide some shade for a few days.

Research the plant first, in case there's some detail that will encourage success. For example, if you transplant a biennial that is in flower (like lupines or hollyhocks), it flowers in its second growth year, and doesn't typically grow back for a third year, so it is on its last legs. Among the large plants, you'll find little one year-old plants that will produce flowers the next year, and you may also get some seeds in the soil along for the ride.



Hostas clumps are notoriously difficult to cut apart, but they take the move well. (Photo: Caroline Cameron)

Perennial flowers such as day lilies, asters, daisy, hosta, or phlox, are essentially a clump of many individual plants, each with its own root. With care, any piece that you dig out will certainly have a few intact plants in there, even if you've had to take an axe to the clump to break it apart! Many perennials are very hardy, and if set back, will still spring up from their roots the next year.

Woody shrubs or trees with a single trunk and large root system require greater care. All of the above apply, and special effort is required to work out as much of the root system as possible. Root pruning the previous season, and cutting back the size of the shrub can also help. ■

Happy Gardening!

Caroline Cameron lives in Strathlorne and is the Food Security Coordinator at Mill Road Social Enterprises. Please submit any gardening tips, questions, and news to strathlorne@gmail.com and visit Facebook at [Nature/Nurture Gardening & Hiking](#).

Childhood friends bring senior hockey back to county

BY DAVE MACNEIL



Bret Walker and Dixon Gillis have known each other since they were kids, but never thought they'd be co-owners of a hockey team, until organized senior men's hockey returned to Inverness County for the first time in decades.

Walker, from Port Hood, and Gillis, from Inverness, are co-owners of the Cape Breton West Blackstone Knights, which began play in the new Nova Scotia Senior Hockey League (NSSHL) in October. The league is the brainchild of Gerard MacDonald, who is also president of the Nova Scotia Junior Hockey League.

The new league will play a 20-game regular season, with the Knights' 10 home games being played at the Al MacInnis Sports Centre in Port Hood, before playoffs begin in February.

"Honestly, we had no idea the league was starting up, until we saw they had made a post on Facebook that they were looking for teams," Walker recalled.

"We jumped right on it," he added. "We were just kicking tires with the original application because we didn't know anything about it. Everybody was in the same boat."

The Knights are playing in the league's Cape Breton division, along with the County Islanders and Glace Bay Miners. The Northumberland division features the Pictou County Shoreline Pipers, the East Hants Senior Penguins, the Antigonish Senior Bulldogs and the Truro Senior "A" Mosaik Bearcats.

With the backing of Hockey Nova Scotia, the NSSHL is open to players 20 years and older. MacDonald launched the league mainly to provide an option for former junior players to continue their hockey careers.

Walker said MacDonald brings a lot of experience from his involvement with the Nova Scotia Junior Hockey League and that he's the right person to spearhead the new league.



The Blackstone Knights are shown tangling with the Glace Bay Miners in exhibition play in October. The Knights' players are, from left: Danny Gillis, Olan Spears and Neil MacLean. (Photo: Dave MacNeil)

“I think he’s got everyone’s interests at heart,” Walker said. “He’s a pretty good guy to be leading the charge for this.”

Stepping up to become the major sponsor for the Knights is Blackstone Construction and its owner, Dwayne Beaton, and Walker said he couldn’t be happier with that partnership.

“It’s huge,” Walker said, noting that they’ll have several minor sponsors as well. “You have to have a major sponsor. Blackstone has been pretty good to give back. They sponsor everything they possibly can.”

For their inaugural season, the Knights have turned to a familiar face in Inverness County hockey circles in head coach Kyle Gillies of Port Hood. Gillies was an assistant coach with the Cape Breton West Islanders for 11 years, later becoming its head coach for a couple of seasons. He was on the bench when the Islanders claimed the 2017 Telus Cup,

becoming the first Atlantic Canadian team to win the national Under-18 championship.

Before the Knights even held their first practice this past fall, Gillies was already very familiar with most of his players. Interviewed hours before their first exhibition game in October, he said 13 of the 20 players on that night’s roster were former members of the Islanders.

Gillies said icing a team full of local players is the only way to foster interest in the fledgling league.

“It’s everything,” he said. “No one wants to come to Port Hood and see a bunch of imports, and I think that’s what’s going to make the team successful. There’s a lot of buzz in Port Hood.”

Gillies, who has spent the past two seasons as head coach of the Dalbrae Academy Dragons, said the league provides an excellent option for players who may otherwise have to say goodbye to their competitive hockey career.



With a Glace Bay player waiting for a rebound, Blackstone Knights' netminder Ewan MacDonald prepares for a shot from the point during exhibition play in October.
(Photo: Dave MacNeil)



Blackstone Knights' head coach Kyle Gillies, left, watches the play with assistant coach Rory MacEachern.
(Photo: Dave MacNeil)

"It's such an abrupt stop," Gillies said of 20-year-old players who age out of junior hockey. "The lucky ones might get to play some pro or even university. It's a big world, but it's a small hockey world."

He said the Knights have seen players come from various levels of hockey, including junior, major junior, university and even the pro ranks.

"It's a very interesting mix," noting that he's happy with the team's depth.

"There are some hard-nosed, tough grinders all the way through the lineup and people who can put the puck in the net," Gillies said. "We're very balanced. And we have two goaltenders who have junior and AUS (Atlantic University Sports) experience."

"I don't like naming a first, second and third line," he added. "It kind of takes care of itself, and anyone can step up. I like rolling four lines, so you're not going to see the same six players out on the ice the whole game. Everybody's going to play."

He said the NSSHL will have a league management team, including a director of discipline, noting

that that this role will be key to the league's success, given the fact it will allow fighting.

"That's a big relief on my end," Gillies said. "I know that it will be done right, and I know it will be organized. With the physicality in the league, I think you really need a body overlooking that. I think the last thing anybody wants is for it to go overboard in any way like that."

"It just brings legitimacy to the whole thing," he added. "It's not some sort of backyard outlaw league. There's a lot of really good players, and I think everyone wants it to be a very classy affair."

Gillies is also happy that money has been taken out of the equation when it comes to player compensation.

"There's no real financial compensation for the players," he explained. "Every player, at least in our organization, was aware of that coming in. It was up to them if they wanted to be here, and the response was great." ■

MacInnis-Moore compiling history of women's hockey on island

BY DAVE MACNEIL

Having grown up in Port Hood playing girls' hockey, Jennifer MacInnis-Moore says she's excited and honoured to be tasked with compiling the history of women's hockey in Cape Breton.

Despite having attended Dalhousie University in the early 2000s, where she played women's hockey, she never completed her degree. But her decision a few years ago to go back to school has opened doors she never anticipated would be open to her.

"I'm married now with four boys, and living in Sydney," she says. "When my youngest boy started primary in 2023 – with the encouragement of my family of course – I thought I'd go back to school."

Currently enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts Community Studies program at Cape Breton University (CBU), majoring in communications, her life changed when she met Dr. Bettina Callary, a professor at CBU and the director of the Institute of Community Sport and Health at the school.

"With my hockey background, I became the lead research assistant for Bettina, and we've worked on multiple projects since 2023, all with a focus on female hockey," MacInnis-Moore says.

The first project involved the new Kehoe Forum on the CBU campus, which was kick-started when



Sandy Batherson (seated), emcee of the discussion panel on the history of girls' hockey in Inverness County, shares a laugh with Jennifer MacInnis-Moore. (Photo: contributed)

Sydney won the Kraft Hockeyville competition in 2022.

"After the new arena opened, they wanted to do a legacy wall and decorate the inside with pictures of female hockey players," she recalls. "Then Bettina discovered, with Jane Arnold (archivist at the Beaton Institute), that there was no collection of women's hockey history on Cape Breton Island at all."

"There was plenty on men's hockey, but nothing on women's," she adds. "So, then the next project was 'let's create a history collection for women's hockey on Cape Breton Island.'"

That's when she fully realized that her childhood had prepared her for this opportunity.

"Having grown up in Port Hood in the 90s, we had an incredible female hockey league thriving at that point," she says. "Mabou had a team, Inverness had a team, Port Hood had a team. We would travel to Antigonish and New Glasgow. It really was pretty incredible. That gave me this huge network of hockey players, and it took off from there."

"All this research work is nothing I ever would have expected. I was thinking about my family life and wanting to get back into the working world. But this has just taken on a life of its own, and I love it and realize the importance of it."



Female hockey players from all over Inverness County came together this summer at the Chestico Museum in Port Hood for a discussion panel to celebrate the evolution of the sport in the county. (Photo: contributed)

As part of her project, MacInnis-Moore organized a panel discussion this past summer at the Chestico Museum in Port Hood. Emceed by lifelong friend Sandy Batherson, the panel included Melissa Cummings, Ambrah MacNeil, Chantelle (Hawley) MacLellan and Leanne MacDonald, who all shared their experiences playing hockey.

That event in part celebrated the first ever female provincial hockey tournament which was held in Mabou during the 1991-92 season, which was won by a team from Cape Breton County. As this edition of *The Participaper* went to press, MacInnis-Moore was preparing for a second panel discussion in Sydney and many of the participants in that event played on that championship team in Mabou more than 20 years ago.

MacInnis-Moore says the Kehoe Forum is home to the CBU women's hockey team, as well as the Cape Breton Blizzard girl's hockey organization, which has more than 500 girls playing there.

"It's not that boys don't play there," she explains. "But the prime ice time, which has always been a barrier for female hockey around here, is for the girls."

That was a barrier, she is quick to point out, that she and her friends didn't experience growing up.

"When I get asked about that in the CBRM (Cape Breton Regional Municipality), 'how could all these little communities have this female hockey league thriving,' I think the answer is that we all had our own rinks and we were all given prime ice time at a time when that wasn't a common thing."

She also gives a lot of credit to their coaches for being an integral part of growing the girls' game in Inverness County.

"There were so many great coaches in our small communities that didn't have the mindset that girls couldn't play hockey," she remembers. "So, my whole childhood was on the ice. We had a fantastic league, and we had prime ice time."

MacInnis-Moore says she doesn't consider herself a pioneer, especially since she's began her research project.

"We are collecting an immense amount of memorabilia," she says. "I can't even speak to how impressed I am at the amount of stuff people have held onto. We're going to have an incredible collection."

"I just met a woman whose grandmother played in the 1920s and there was a women's league here in the CBRM, when women at the time were told

not to be physical, and not to play, but they played anyway,” she adds.

She says the emergence of the Professional Women’s Hockey League is the single biggest game changer in the evolution of women’s hockey.

“The idea of playing hockey for a living and getting paid for it as a female is something that was never an option,” she adds.

“I see it all the time at the new rink. These girls now have an option to go that route. It’s just unbelievable. I just really hope it continues to develop, and we see someone from this area someday playing pro hockey.” ■



Tanya MacDonald of Port Hood, who represented the province at the Canada Games, shows off the Port Hood Bees banner from the 1990s. (Photo: contributed)

The gift that keeps on giving

Panelist says move to hockey changed her life

BY DAVE MACNEIL

Ambrah MacNeil says hockey has given her the life she enjoys today.

“Hockey really shaped me into the person I became,” says MacNeil, one of the participants in the discussion panel on the history of girls’ hockey in Inverness County, held at the Chestico Museum in Port Hood this past summer.

“It wasn’t something I did. It was part of who I was, or who I am,” she explains, noting that she wouldn’t even have her two sons if not for the sport. “I met my husband Damien playing co-ed hockey one Friday night.”

MacNeil became quite emotional in relating her experiences in hockey during the event at the museum, and she says it surprised her.

“I don’t know if it was just the vibe of the whole experience, the coming together and reflecting back on those times. It just caught me off guard in a way that I didn’t expect.”



Ambrah MacNeil, right, is joined by fellow Mabou players Gayle MacDonald, left, and Leanne MacDonald. Mabou hosted the first ever provincial girls’ hockey tournament during the 1991-92 season. (Photo: contributed)

MacNeil got into hockey when she was in Grade 7 at Mabou Consolidated School, after four years of figure skating. She says there were a few reasons she made the change.

“I wasn’t a good figure skater,” she laughs. “I loved skating, but as far as the discipline that figure skating takes – in practicing different techniques – it didn’t really interest me anymore. It’s a very technical sport.”

“The other reason I shifted was a lot of my friends were playing girls’ hockey, and they were loving it.”

So, with the decision made, MacNeil says her father began checking around for used gear for his daughter. But showing up at the rink in second-hand gear was not to be her fate, thanks to the kindness of a neighbour.

“I was just excited that my parents were on board, and I was totally accepting the fact that I was going to get second-hand gear,” she recalls.

And that was the plan, until one day when neighbour Angus Campbell made one of his frequent visits for tea.

“He didn’t think the idea of me having a second-hand pair of skates was a good idea,” MacNeil says. “He thought I needed a new set of blades.”

So, Campbell accompanied MacNeil and her parents as they went to Canadian Tire in Port Hawkesbury in search of skates.

“I found a pair of CCM Tacks that fit nicely, and we were fully prepared to go, but Angus had grabbed a cart and was just telling me to try other things on,” she remembers. “There were shoulder pads, elbow pads, one thing after another, until I had a full set of equipment.”

“We were all swept up in the moment. My parents were really adamant about it. ‘You can’t do this, Angus. We can’t allow this. This is way too much.’ But it was something that he really wanted to do.”

Though he refused to take any money for the gear, Campbell, who today is in his 90s, did receive a very special thank you many years later, thanks to Stuart McLean and his Vinyl Café show on CBC Radio. MacNeil was listening to the show one day when listeners were encouraged to nominate

someone for the show’s annual Arthur Award, which celebrated “ordinary” people for acts of kindness.

“I thought, ‘the Arthur Award was the perfect thing for Angus,’” she recalls. “I wrote a letter and emailed it to the show’s producer. I just sent it in and never gave it another thought.”

“I think it was months later that I got a phone call from that same producer and she said, ‘we loved your letter, and Stuart wants to interview you and Angus on the radio, and we want to give Angus an Arthur Award,’” MacNeil says. “I couldn’t believe it. I was so happy.”

“We did the interview. Stuart absolutely loved him. He got such a kick out of him. They were really happy with the interview.”

MacNeil, who still plays regularly today, says she doesn’t consider herself a pioneer in the least.

“I look at girls like Shelley Cummings and Leanne MacDonald (both fellow students in Mabou) and Norma MacKinnon (in Inverness), because they were in my time when I was starting. Those to me were the trailblazers because they were playing really competitive hockey.”

She says playing hockey for a living wasn’t something she considered possible, although she remembers as a kid hearing about the exploits of Manon Rheaume, who in 1992 became the first female player to try out for a team in the National Hockey League (NHL).

“That was the only time that the seed was planted in me that that could actually be a thing,” she says. “You know, ‘maybe there could be a national women’s league.’”

“We didn’t have that to look forward to,” MacNeil says. “The boys had the NHL. As a female hockey player growing up, we didn’t have the NHL to strive for, but now with PWHL (Professional Women’s Hockey League), that’s huge. So, girls today have something to strive for.”

Coming up through hockey, she says just having the opportunity to play hockey with her friends was the pinnacle.

“For me that was enough.” ■

Municipal Public Works team uses new leak detection equipment

The municipality's Public Works team has been taking a hands-on, proactive approach to keeping local water systems in good shape. One of the tools helping them do that is special leak detection equipment that listens for water escaping from underground pipes.

Purchased in 2021, this equipment uses sound sensors to find the exact location of leaks without the need for unnecessary digging.

"This equipment has been a huge asset to the team," says Deputy CAO Melanie Beaton. "Finding leaks early—and knowing exactly where they are means less disruption, fewer outside contractors, and a lower chance of water emergencies."

In August 2025, Public Works staff took part in a training session with Graham MacDonald from H2O Leaks at the Whycomomagh Wastewater

Treatment Plant. Staff spent the day learning new techniques and then put them into practice that night, when things are quieter and the equipment can work best. They were able to find and repair several leaks in the Whycomomagh water system, solving a water level issue that had been causing concern in the community.

Because the equipment works by detecting sound, leak detection is usually done overnight when there's less background noise. Notices about this work and any related repairs are always shared on the municipality's [Facebook page](#) and at invernesscounty.ca.

As the municipality continues to invest in water and wastewater upgrades across Inverness County, this equipment is helping staff take care of small issues before they become big ones—keeping water systems running smoothly for everyone.

WINTER RECREATION EQUIPMENT RENTAL

The Recreation and Community Wellness department is proud to offer low-cost rental equipment to help you get active this winter!

Cross country skis and snowshoes are available for \$2/day or \$10 for a full week.

Equipment is available:
Recreation & Community Wellness office
86 High Road, Port Hood,
and can be booked online at playfinder.ca

Questions:
Contact the office at 902-787-3508

Photo: Adam Hill, Courtesy of Destination Cape Breton

New group revives interest in cross-country skiing

BY DAVE MACNEIL

A new cross-country ski group in the Margaree Valley is working to revive interest in a sport that 40 years ago brought skiers from all over Cape Breton to the area.

Ski Margaree Trail Society, recently incorporated as a non-profit group, has been meeting since last spring and recently began initial trail work. It hopes to host a family ski day in either January or February to further spark interest in the sport.

“Last winter there was such great snow in the Margaree Valley,” recalls Jennifer Watts, president of the society. “We had at least six to eight weeks of wonderful snow for cross-country skiing.”

That prompted an effort to revive the sport in the area, and Watts says she’s encouraged by the response to that effort.

“Since about March we’ve had about five or six meetings,” she says. “There are well over 30 people who at different times have come to our meetings.”

In October, the group began initial trail work on Watts’ own property, but she’s quick to point out that this project will probably take several seasons to complete.

“It’s just the initial phase,” she explains. “We’ve had great interest, all the way from Belle Côte, all the way up to Lake O’Law, and out to Big Intervale. It’s an exciting opportunity.”

“People who had skied, historically, in the community have come out once again, but there have also been newer people. We’re beginning to look at some trail



Jennifer Watts, right, president of the new Ski Margaree Trail Society, was joined by Emery Ferraro, trails coordinator for the Municipality of Inverness County, as they worked on the initial phase of the new trail system in Margaree. (Photo: Dave MacNeil)

developments. We’ve talked to a couple of local landowners, and we’re looking at the possibility of developing something in the Margaree Valley.”

She says the group has had the support of Ski Nova Scotia, particularly that body’s Cape Breton ambassador, Michelle Richards, who she hopes will be on hand for the family ski day to provide tips for beginner and experienced skiers alike.

Watts says Emery Ferraro, trails coordinator for the Municipality of Inverness County, has provided guidance and expertise to the project, along with local municipal councillor Blair Phillips. But support has also come from other areas as well.

“We do have, from the Cape North Nordic Club, the loan of a small groomer,” she adds. “It can be hauled behind a skidoo, so that’s great to sort of get us started.”

“We’re not looking at having the trail groomed all the time,” she says, noting they don’t yet own the type of equipment other similar groups enjoy. “We’ll groom when we can and let people know through our Facebook group.”

Watts says her group is also looking at supporting those who want to use the trails for snowshoeing. But whether the trails are eventually open for year-round uses, such as hiking, will depend on the participating landowners.



During one of the initial meetings of the Ski Margaree Trail Society, a banner was unfurled that was used by the society's predecessor decades ago. (Photo: contributed)

“That certainly depends on the landowners and what they’re open to,” she says. “As we move along, I think people are very interested in having an active lifestyle and being able to do that in all seasons, so that would certainly be something we would explore.”

“We’re just getting started, but there’s a great deal of enthusiasm, so we’ll build as we go, and we’re hoping for snow! Last year was great, it was just unbelievable the snow. It was magical.”

Ferraro says the well-established history of cross-country skiing in the community will be “vital” to the success of this project.

“It’s the whole reason we were in those rooms together to begin with,” Ferraro recalls of the planning sessions. “We knew there was that history and for various reasons it had fallen to the wayside, but there are so many people who are excited to see it come back and have it become a core part of the community in Margaree.”

One of those people is Anne Morrell Robinson, who was among those attending the meetings. She says interest in the sport peaked in the late 70s and early 80s.

“We didn’t initially formalize the group,” she recalls. “We were just a bunch of people who got together and skied, and then when we decided to start doing things like loppets (cross-country ski races) and family ski days, we became more organized as Ski Margaree.”

“The people who were grooming the trails all got older or they moved away, and it got to be too much. So, it’s nice having new blood to revive it again.”

Morrell Robinson remembers a loppet circuit in the 80s that involved groups from Margaree, Baddeck, Chéticamp, Inverness, Iona, Cape North and Middle River.

“It was almost every weekend from mid-January to mid-March,” she says. “It was something you could go to and ski in a different place. There was a meal and awards and there were door prizes. It was a lot of fun, especially for the kids.”

Along with her enthusiasm for the sport, Morrell Robinson also recently brought something else to a recent meeting, and that was a bag of coins.

“We had a bank account and, when the group kind of dissolved, the treasurer said, ‘here’s what’s left of the account,’” she laughs, noting that she inherited the bag because she was continuing to host family ski days on her property.

“I just kept it in a kitchen drawer and every time we had a ski event, I’d pull a little out to buy hot apple cider and apples and treats. So, all that was left after all those years was about \$30.”

Anyone interested in getting involved with the project is encouraged to check out its Facebook group. ■



Staying fit and healthy through a Cape Breton winter

BY GLENNA CALDER, ND

Living in Cape Breton means embracing all four seasons – and winter is a big one. While many people find their motivation dips as the days shorten and the temperatures drop, winter is actually one of the best times to focus on your health. Staying active, nourishing your body, and taking care of your mood during these colder months can make a world of difference for your energy, your immune system, and your overall sense of well-being.

Why winter wellness matters

Winter brings a slower pace, which can be good for rest and reflection, but it also challenges both our physical and mental health. The lack of sunlight can affect vitamin D levels, mood, and sleep quality. Cold weather often means less movement and more time indoors – and that can lead to increased sugar intake, sluggish digestion, and weight gain.

But it doesn't have to be that way. By being intentional about your habits, you can use winter as a time to recharge your body, strengthen your immune system, and set the stage for feeling your best year-round.

Keep moving – indoors or out

One of the best things you can do for your physical and mental health in winter is to keep your body moving. Cape Breton offers so many beautiful outdoor opportunities – even in the colder months. A brisk walk along the coast (remember how you said you don't like to walk in the heat?), snowshoeing through quiet trails, or cross-country skiing on a sunny day can all lift your mood, support circulation, and reduce inflammation.

If outdoor activity isn't your thing, find an indoor routine you enjoy. This could be a short online workout, yoga, stretching, or resistance training at home. The key is consistency – moving your body for even 20–30 minutes a day can help regulate your hormones, support your metabolism, and improve sleep.

Tip: Put it in your calendar like any other appointment. Treat movement as part of your self-care, not a chore.

Nourish your body with whole foods

Winter is the perfect time to enjoy warm, nourishing meals that support your immune system and digestion. Focus on whole foods: hearty soups, stews, roasted vegetables, lentils, and high-quality protein sources. These foods provide the vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants your body needs to stay strong.

Adding warming spices like ginger, cinnamon, turmeric, and garlic not only enhances flavour but also supports your circulation and immune system.

Also, don't forget hydration. Cold weather can be deceiving – you may not feel thirsty, but your body still needs water to function well. Herbal teas, warm lemon water, and broths are wonderful ways to stay hydrated and cozy.



Support your mood and energy

The long, dark days of a Cape Breton winter can affect your mood and energy levels. This is partly due to reduced sunlight exposure, which lowers vitamin D and serotonin levels – two key factors in how we feel.

Make a point to get outside during daylight hours, even if only for 10–15 minutes. Natural light exposure helps regulate your circadian rhythm and improves mood. A high-quality vitamin D supplement can also be a simple, powerful tool to support mood and immune function during the winter months.

Sleep is another cornerstone of wellness. Aim for seven to nine hours each night and try to keep a regular bedtime routine. Turn off screens an hour before bed, enjoy a calming herbal tea, or try a magnesium supplement to help you unwind.

Strengthen your immune system naturally

Cold and flu season is unavoidable, but you can help your body stay resilient. Eat plenty of colourful fruits and vegetables for antioxidants and vitamin C, and include zinc-rich foods like pumpkin seeds, lentils, and seafood.

Daily movement, good sleep, stress management, and proper hydration are all immunity boosters too. If you tend to get frequent colds, consider adding immune-supportive herbs such as astragalus or echinacea, or speak with your naturopathic doctor for personalized support.

Embrace the season

Winter in Cape Breton has its own beauty and rhythm. Instead of fighting it, lean into it. Use the longer evenings to rest, cook more meals at home, read, or try new hobbies that bring joy and relaxation. This mindset shift – seeing winter as a time for restoration – can completely change how you feel through the season.

Take advantage of the cozy moments: a warm cup of tea by the fire, nourishing soups simmering on the stove, and peaceful walks in the crisp air. These simple, mindful routines create balance and keep you grounded when life feels busier or darker outside.

In summary

Staying fit and healthy through the winter isn't about perfection – it's about consistency and awareness. By keeping your body moving, eating nourishing foods, getting enough rest, and taking care of your emotional health, you can move through the winter feeling stronger, calmer, and more vibrant.

Even here in Inverness County, where the snow and wind are part of daily life, you can thrive through the season – not just survive it. Your body and mind will thank you when spring arrives, and you'll feel ready to take on whatever comes next. ■

Glenna Calder, Naturopathic Doctor

Winter Events Guide

Community Events

Crafternoons

Storytellers Gallery

5764 Highway 19, Judique

Mondays | 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Enjoy crafts, friendship, and tea.

Minimum \$20/person.

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

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

Toast & Tea

Storytellers Gallery

5764 Highway 19, Judique

Wednesdays | 8:00 – 11:00 a.m.

\$5/person

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

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

Kitchen Party

St. Michael's Parish Hall

1176 East Margaree Road

Last Saturday of each month

7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Year-round family friendly event.

Enjoy a night of traditional music.

\$10/person 16+

\$5/person under 16

Pickleball

Whycocomagh Waterfront

Centre, 9650 Hwy 105

Wednesdays | 6:30 p.m. | \$5

Seniors Card Play and Social

Whycocomagh Waterfront Centre, 9650 Hwy 105

Wednesdays | 1:00 p.m.

All are welcome.

Indoor Curling

Whycocomagh Waterfront Centre, 9650 Hwy 105

Thursdays | 11:00 a.m. | \$5

Family Place Playgroup

Whycocomagh Waterfront Centre, 9650 Hwy 105

Wednesdays | 10:00 a.m. – noon

Winter Music Circle Series

Whycocomagh Waterfront Centre, 9650 Hwy 105

January 24, February 14,

March 21 | 8:00 p.m.

Performers are to be announced.

\$20 per ticket.

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

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

Monthly Breakfasts

Fr John. A. Rankin Cultural Centre

4248 Hwy 105, Glendale

Third Sunday of each month

9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Adults \$13. Seniors \$10.

Kids under 12 \$7.

Celtic Shores Coastal Trail Valentines Day Snowshoe

Creignish Recreation Centre

2061 Hwy 19, Creignish

February 14 | 10:00 a.m.

Snowshoes available, snacks and drinks provided.

For more information, contact

Richard Beaton at 902-302-1010

Festival de la Mi-Carême 2026

Centre de la Mi-Carême
51 Old Cabot Trail Rd.

March 8–14

6:00 p.m. – 12:00 a.m.

Free admission, free food, and free entertainment. Come as you are or dressed as a Mi-Carême.

www.micareme.com

St. Patrick's Parish Hall Concert

6541 Cabot Trail

North East Margaree

March 13 | 7:00 p.m. | \$10

Enjoy an evening of singing, violin selections, keyboard selections, stories, jokes.

Even split tickets for sale.

Jiggs' Dinner

St. Patrick's Parish Hall

6541 Cabot Trail Rd.,

North East Margaree

March 15 | 11:30 a.m.

Scrabble Games

Scotsville School of Crafts

2234 Strathlorne-Scotsville Rd.

March 14 | 1:00 p.m.

Boards and snacks are provided.

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

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

Ian Stewart's Hypnosis Show

Strathspey Performing Arts

Centre, 11156 Route 19, Mabou

March 27 | 7:00 p.m.

For full details, visit

strathspeyplace.com

Inverness County Recreation & Community Wellness Programs

For more information or to register for community programming, visit playfinder.ca, or call Inverness County Recreation & Community Wellness Department at **902-787-3508**



(Photo: Adam Hill, Courtesy of Destination Cape Breton)

Ecole NDA	Monday	Walking Group	7:00 – 8:30 p.m.
	Tuesday	Adult Pickleball	6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
	Wednesday	Adult Badminton	7:00 – 8:30 p.m.
Cape Breton Highlands Education Centre/ Academy			
	Thursday	Adult Soccer	7:00 – 9:00pm
Inverness Education Centre/Academy			
	Monday	Adult Pickleball	7:30 –9:00 p.m.
	Wednesday	Adult Pickleball	7:30 –9:00 p.m.
	Thursday	Adult Basketball	7:30 –9:00 p.m.
Whycocomagh Education Centre			
	Tuesday	Adult Pickleball	7:00 – 8:30 p.m.
	Thursday	Adult Badminton	7:00 – 8:30 p.m.
	Friday	Adult Ultimate Frisbee	6:30 – 8:00 p.m.
Dalbrae Academy			
	Wednesday	Adult Soccer	7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
Bayview Education Centre			
	Monday	Adult Pickleball	7:00 – 8:30 p.m.
	Tuesday	Adult Volleyball	7:00 – 8:30 p.m.
	Tuesday	Youth Soccer	6:00 – 7:00 p.m.
	Wednesday	Adult Pickleball	7:00 – 8:30 p.m.
Please note: <i>Activities will not take place when schools are closed due to holidays or school functions.</i>			

Skate Schedules

Cabot Trail Arena Chéticamp 15582 Cabot Trail 902-224-3337 cheticamp.rinkbook.ca	Adult Skating	Thursdays	1:00 – 2:00 p.m.
	Family Skating	Saturdays	6:00 – 7:00 p.m.
		Sundays	3:00 – 4:00 p.m.
	Family Disco Skating	Saturdays	7:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Dr. Bernie Recreation & Cultural Centre Inverness 59 Forest Street 902-258-2712 inverness.rinkbook.ca	Adult Skating	Tuesdays/ Thursdays	2:00 – 3:00 p.m.
	Parent & Tot Skating	Tuesdays/ Thursdays	3:00 – 4:00 p.m.
	Family Skating	Saturdays/ Sundays	5:00 – 6:00 p.m.
Mabou Athletic Centre Mabou 186 Mabou Harbour Road 902-945-2378 mabou.rinkbook.ca	Open Skating	Mondays	3:30 – 5:00 p.m.
	Family Skating	Sundays	5:30 – 7:00 p.m.
Al MacInnis Sports Centre Port Hood 45 Wharf Road 902-787-3210 porthood.rinkbook.ca	Senior Skating	Tuesdays	10:00 a.m. – noon
	Family Free Skate	Sundays	Time varies. Check online for schedule.

Check weekly arena schedules for up-to-date times.

(Photo: Adam Hill, Courtesy of Destination Cape Breton)



Winter Active 2026

The Inverness County Recreation & Community Wellness Department is partnering with community groups and organizations throughout the county to sponsor Winter Active 2026.

The Winter Active Celebration will provide opportunities for children, youth, and adults to participate in fun recreational activities that encourage a healthier active living lifestyle.

Pickleball & Badminton Club

Beinn Mhàbu

Mid January – mid March
Weekly sessions of pickleball and badminton held in the gymnasium of Beinn Mhàbu. Open to all ranges of age and experience with pickleball or badminton.

Sunday Ceilidhs

Celtic Music Interpretive Centre

Dec 28 / Jan 4, 11, 18, 25 /
Feb 1, 8, 15, 22 / Mar 1, 8, 15
2:00 – 5:00 p.m.

All ages gathering with traditional local music for Cape Breton square dancing on Sunday afternoons. For knowledgeable dancers and those who want to learn and listen to some great music. \$10 admission.

www.celticmusiccentre.com

Ski Margaree Try It!

Cross Country Ski and Snowshoe
Ski Margaree Trails Society

Cranton Cross Road

Community Center

206 Cranton Crossing Rd,
Margaree Centre

Saturday, January 24

(storm date Sunday January 25)

10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

All ages are welcome to try cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. Cross Country Ski Ambassador will give tips and do fun activities in the morning and then lead a guided ski. For registration, equipment loan and cost, please contact us.

www.facebook.com/groups/margareeski

skimargareetrails@gmail.com

L'Arche Cape Breton Winter Games

February 9–13

3 L'Arche Lane, Orangedale

Outdoor and indoor games for people with and without intellectual disabilities.

Outdoor activities include curling, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, ball hockey in snow, tug of war, and other games. Indoor activities include bingo, limbo, Zumba, games, karaoke, art and crafts. The event ends with a catered meal.

Whycocomagh Winterlude

Whycocomagh Waterfront Centre

February 10–14

A week of tournaments, snowshoeing, lunch, and music. Check Facebook for finalized plans in February.

www.facebook.com/WhycocomaghWaterfrontCentre

[WhycocomaghWaterfrontCentre](http://www.facebook.com/WhycocomaghWaterfrontCentre)

Cold Hands, Warm Hearts

Inverness Women's Society

February 13–16

Kids and adult Valentine's Day dances, crib tournament, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, Nordic Walking, family skate, snowga and storyteller's circle.

Keep an eye on Facebook for full details & schedule

[www.facebook.com/](http://www.facebook.com/invernesswomensgroup)

[invernesswomensgroup](http://www.facebook.com/invernesswomensgroup)

La Magie d'hiver -

Festival Chocolat Chaud

La Société St. Pierre

February 15

Spend an afternoon celebrating winter, community, and outdoor living! Enjoy stories and s'mores around a campfire, tobogganing, sleigh rides, and a snow sculpture contest!

[www.facebook.com/profile.](http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61570469908676)

[php?id=61570469908676](http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61570469908676)

Winter Family Fun Day

Glendale Area Community

Cooperative Ltd.

4248 Hwy 105 Glendale

February 16 | 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Family winter fun day. Snowshoes available in different sizes.

Pizza and hot chocolate will be free for everyone. All are welcome.

[www.facebook.com/glendale.](http://www.facebook.com/glendalecommunity.coop)

[community.coop](http://www.facebook.com/glendalecommunity.coop)

Mi-Carême en Fete- Outdoor Square Dance

Société Mi-Carême

March 8

Come join in on an outdoor square set during Festival de la Mi-Carême.

A great family event, gather at the outdoor stage, enjoy warm food, great music, and dance in the snow!

www.micareme.com



Craig and Terry Gillis from the Waterfront Centre Association stand in what would soon be the new library in the lower level of the centre. (Photo: Dave MacNeil)

Waterfront Centre to house Whycomomagh's first library

BY DAVE MACNEIL

Readers of *The Participaper* could soon be perusing their favourite municipal magazine at the new library at the Whycomomagh Waterfront Centre

The Municipality of Inverness County is partnering with the East Coast Regional Library (ECRL) and the Whycomomagh Waterfront Centre Association to establish a library in the lower level of the community centre.

"I think it's extremely important that the county is behind it with us," says Terry Gillis, secretary of the Waterfront Centre Association, noting that her group has been advocating for library services for about four years. During much of that time, she adds, the Municipality has been conducting a review of library services in the county, so the time was right for this partnership.

The municipality has already collaborated with groups in Mabou and Chéticamp to establish ECRL branches in those communities, but this model is a unique one, says Morgan Murray, the director Culture and Community Development with the Municipality.

"This is different in that council has agreed to fund and operate this library and we're in partnership with ECRL, where they'll provide the collections, access to online materials and e-books, and borrow-by-mail, and all the other things they do at other library branches," Murray explains. "So, in terms of library services you'll get the same thing you'll get everywhere else."

"This is a pretty unique situation in that it's the first municipally funded library in Nova Scotia, outside of Halifax," he notes. "So, it's a bit of a learning curve."

A visitor information centre (VIC) operated out of the centre this summer for the first time. Murray says that VIC will be one of the services provided by the librarian, who will be a municipal employee, and that it will now serve visitors year-round, making it the first of its kind on Cape Breton Island.

The Municipality will also use the new library as a place to provide municipal recreation equipment, so that a patron might be able to take out a pair of skis simply by using their library card.

“We’re hoping we can expand those services to the other branches too,” Murray adds. “But being municipally led and funded, we can kind of launch those in Whycocomagh.”

He says the municipal council has been prioritizing the growth of the municipality, and attracting newcomers, so that it can maintain services and keep communities thriving.

“Libraries are seen by council and by municipal staff as being the cornerstone of that,” Murray adds. “They’re a place for people to spend time together

and to build community, and for newcomers to connect to the community. We see it as a great opportunity to help the community grow and thrive.”

Being able to address the needs of the community is the key, according to Gillis, who says she’d like to see neighbouring communities like Little Narrows or Blues Mills consider this their library.

“Right now, there’s nowhere in the village to go if someone wants to do some photocopying or faxing, or anything along those lines,” she says.

She says a group of local mothers has expressed interest in holding weekly children’s reading circles, and that the new library could also eventually house much of the material compiled by the Whycocomagh Historical Society, so that patrons could research their genealogy. “We’re hoping that through time, we’ll be able to incorporate many of those needs the community has.” ■

A grand opening event will take place this winter and will be promoted through the municipality’s website and Facebook page.

Après Snow, anyone?



Table Doucet En Hiver

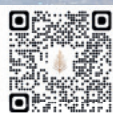
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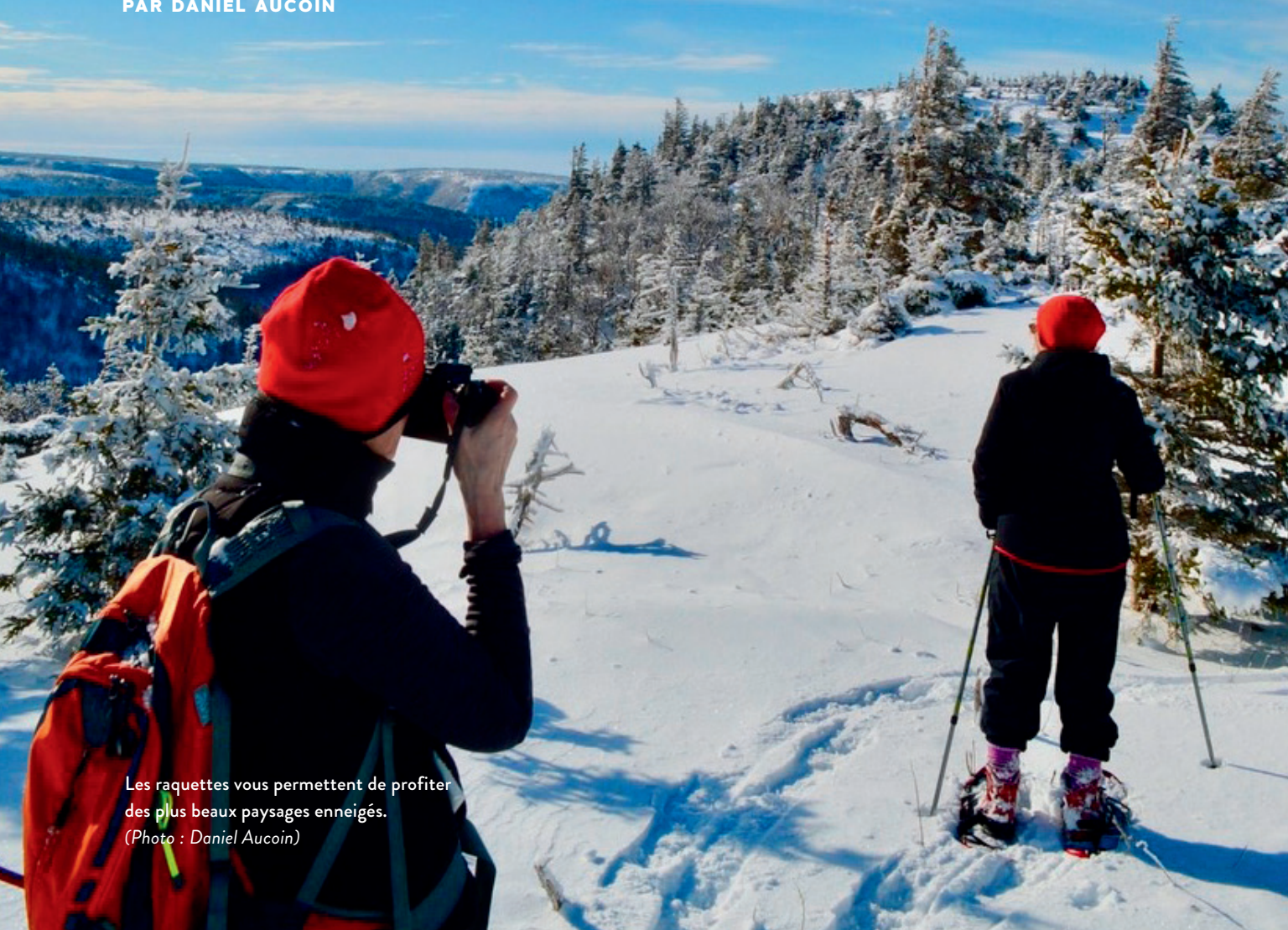
La raquette : activité idéale pour profiter de la beauté de l'hiver

De tous les sports d'hiver, la randonnée en raquettes est l'activité la plus accessible, la moins dangereuse et la moins chère. La raquette comme sport d'hiver gagne en popularité grâce à la technologie. Plus petites et plus légères, les raquettes modernes ont été adoptées par les amateurs de plein air et de randonnée en forêt.

PAR DANIEL AUCOIN

Les raquettes vous permettent de profiter
des plus beaux paysages enneigés.

(Photo : Daniel Aucoin)





Depuis plusieurs années, les adeptes de sports en plein air ont redécouvert le plaisir de marcher dans le bois l'hiver, et la raquette a connu une renaissance. (Photo : Daniel Aucoin)

La raquette à neige est l'équipement le plus léger pour découvrir la montagne hivernale. Les raquettes permettent de se faufiler facilement entre les arbres, là où les skieurs essaieraient même pas. La marche en raquettes se pratique en liberté : elle ne nécessite pas d'installations particulières. C'est donc le moyen idéal d'explorer des secteurs calmes.

Que ce soit avec de traditionnelles raquettes en bois ou avec un équipement plus moderne, cette activité hivernale ne cesse de charmer les amateurs de plein air. La randonnée en raquettes à neige est l'activité idéale pour un retour aux sources. Une fois bien équipés, on peut se lancer à la conquête des grands espaces.

Accessible à tous, la randonnée en raquettes ne nécessite pas un long apprentissage. Il suffit juste de les chauffer, d'aller à son rythme et à celui de la nature qui nous entoure. Une belle façon de s'évader, de se détendre et d'oublier tous les petits tracas du quotidien.

S'évader en raquettes, c'est l'occasion de se ressourcer au grand air et, tout simplement, de se faire du bien. Côté équipement, rien de plus simple : une paire de raquettes, de bonnes chaussures de randonnée imperméables et des bâtons de marche pour répartir l'effort musculaire.

Considérée comme une très bonne activité d'endurance complète, la raquette permet l'amélioration du souffle, de protéger le cœur et de faire travailler l'ensemble des muscles du corps. La randonnée en raquettes de neige n'est pas qu'une simple balade de santé : c'est une activité complète qui permet de brûler des calories.

Que vous soyez expert ou apprenti de la raquette, il est important de bien vous préparer avant chaque sortie sur les sentiers. Peu importe la durée de la randonnée, il est recommandé d'apporter au minimum un sac à dos dans lequel vous pourrez incorporer une bouteille d'eau, des collations et une lampe de poche afin d'être prêt à faire face à un imprévu.

Le plus important quand on part en randonnée raquettes, c'est d'avoir des chaussures très confortables. Il vous faut des chaussures chaudes et surtout imperméables. Afin de protéger vos chevilles tout au long de la journée, il est conseillé de porter des chaussures à tige haute pour que vos pieds soient bien maintenus.

Le système des trois couches est le meilleur moyen de vous vêtir en randonnée de raquettes. La première couche, en contact avec la peau, doit forcément être respirant pour garder votre corps au sec. La deuxième couche aura pour but d'isoler votre corps du froid. Préférez des vêtements en fibre synthétique. La dernière couche est celle en contact direct avec le vent, la pluie ou bien la neige. Elle doit être imperméable à tout cela.

Assurez-vous de consulter les prévisions météo et les conditions de la piste avant de partir afin de pouvoir adapter votre équipement si nécessaire. Vous pourrez par exemple déterminer si vous devez vous servir de bâtons de marche ou de crampons d'appoint. N'oubliez pas de communiquer votre destination à un de vos proches afin qu'il puisse communiquer votre position aux services d'urgence en cas de besoin.



Une randonnée en raquettes est l'activité de plein air parfaite pour les nouveaux initiés aux sports d'hiver. (Photo : Daniel Aucoin)

Un décor féérique s'installe en hiver dans le parc national des Hautes-Terres-du-Cap-Breton. Des arbres couverts de neige scintillante et des sentiers paisibles attendent les amateurs de randonnée et de raquette. Notez que l'accès à certains points de départ de sentiers peut être limité pendant l'hiver comme la priorité relativement au déneigement est accordée à la route Cabot Trail.

Le Parc national offre la location de raquettes au centre d'accueil d'Ingonish sur réservation préalable et les sentiers non balisés restent ouverts pour des aventures hivernales. Préparez-vous à ce que les conditions météorologiques changent soudainement, surtout le long de la côte et sur le plateau. Sur les sentiers, faites attention au vent qui peut souffler la neige et recouvrir vos traces ; il vous sera alors plus difficile d'emprunter le même chemin pour le trajet de retour.

Toute personne qui se rend dans le parc national des Hautes-Terres-du-Cap-Breton pendant l'hiver devra assurer sa propre sécurité, être bien préparée et prendre les précautions nécessaires pour se protéger des intempéries et des dangers naturels possibles que présente le parc. ■

Read an English version of this article at: participaperonline.ca

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invernesscounty.ca/healthcare
or call 902-323-0057

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REGULAR COUNCIL MEETINGS take place on the first Thursday of each month and start at 9:30 a.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.



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