

COMMUNITY LEADS: Profiles of PEI Community Development Works in Progress

he following articles were written by Yvette Doucette in early 2002 as part of a research project on Community Capacity Building, led by the Institute of Island Studies at the University of Prince Edward Island. The articles profile rural development initiatives in various stages of development, representing all rural regions of Prince Edward Island.

Yvette Doucette, 2002

EXPOSITION AGRICOLE AND FESTIVAL ACADIEN

The Evangeline region is renowned for its volunteerism and its community spirit. One of the manifestations of this spirit has been alive for almost 100 years. In 1903, the Farmers' Union of Urbainville organized for the first time an exhibition, which was so successful that by 1905 all the farmers in Egmont Bay and Mont Carmel were invited to participate. In 1939 a property in Abram's Village was purchased, and over the years the boundaries of this small fair have grown to include people the Island over. The Acadian Festival was held for the first time in 1971 during the Agricultural Exhibition. It was organized for two main reasons: first, to accentuate the Acadian culture and, second, to complement the agricultural fair activities and contribute to its survival.

These two organizations joined to form one body - L'Exposition Agricole et le Festival Acadien, in 1992. The organization's mission is the promotion of agricultural awareness and Acadian culture. This is the most significant celebration in the Evangeline area and the largest gathering of Acadians on PEI. It is held annually during the Labour Day weekend and as many as 15,000 visitors attend.

In 1997, after much discussion, the community approved development of the site, and the Board of Directors moved to acquire infrastructure needed to accommodate major festivals and special events. Development included:

- a community events centre (Centre Expo-Festival) in 1998
- a multi-purpose centre (L' Etable) in 2000
- a camping area for recreational vehicles (105 serviced sites) in 2001

With these facilities in place, the community hosted seven new festivals in the summer of 2001. The economic spin-offs for the region were described as significant. The goal of the community is to have a special event taking place every weekend during the tourist season. The growth to date of this sustainable economic base for the region is largely due to the dedication and hard work of community volunteers.

LAKESIDE BOARDWALK

Once Lakeside Beach was used mainly by locals and summer cottagers, but this is no longer the case. Dennis Clough, along with other residents in the area, realized the dunes were showing signs of heavy traffic. They felt the dunes would be protected from further damage by funneling foot traffic down one safe path to the shore.

Discussions late in 2000 led to a decision to build a proper walkway from the end of Lakeside Beach Road over the dunes. The walkway would make the trek to the shore easier for seniors and for parents with strollers. Signage by the walkway educates users that the dunes are fragile and that only the walkway should be used going to and from the beach. Plastic lumber manufactured on PEI by Island Plastics was used in the construction.

Kevin McAdam, local MLA, assisted with securing funding. Construction was completed for the summer of 2001. It included an observation deck with seats, and tiered stairs that turned several times on the way down to minimize environmental impact. The Morell and Area Development Corporation took out liability insurance as part of their commitment to site maintenance.

Unfortunately, ten to twelve feet of dunes were lost in a storm surge in November 2001. Repairs and renovations to the boardwalk will take place in the spring of 2002. The group will have a bigger observation deck built at that time - in response to comments that the first deck was too small - and they will reinforce the dunes underneath the structure in hopes of preventing further storm damage.

COMMUNITY HEALTH RESOURCE CENTRE, NORTH RUSTICO

Health care is a concern well-visited by the media, especially in the past ten years. Doctor and nursing shortages, both in rural Canada and in large urban settings, dominate the dailies and make the national news with distressing regularity. Islanders wonder what decreased health care funding will mean in the long run. According to demographics, our Island population is aging. Seniors are increasingly concerned about obtaining access to the health care they need. Communities are asking: Is there an alternative to the increased costs of maintaining the health of our communities?

Sixty kitchen table discussions in 1999 revealed health services, environment, green tourism, and harbour & marina restoration as areas of concern to the Gulf Shore Region. The CDO met with interested community members and gave them a report. They met every two weeks for a year. In spring of 2000 they had a public meeting and elected the board for a non-profit organization to oversee development in the region. Norman Gallant is Chair of the Gulf Shore Community Corporation.

The Gulf Shore area is comprised of sixteen communities and has a population of roughly 4000. It is important to note that this region sees its population increase as much as eight fold in the summer. A sub-committee of the Gulf Shore Community Corporation, the North Shore Health Committee, feels this population can support a part-time or full-time doctor as well as other health care professionals. They have been working in a logical way establishing their need: the

committee has conducted appropriate research and has developed a comprehensive plan for addressing the ongoing needs of rural health care.

Two Year Process:

- conducted kitchen table interviews with Community Development Officer (CDO) Nancy Murphy
- created Service Organization Directory (asset Mapping)
- created Business Directory
- published two newsletters
- arranged meetings between community leaders and the CDO
- organized public meetings
- created non-profit Corporation, elected board
- consulted community: interviews, focus groups, survey, and public meetings
- established 82% support for health, wellness, and medical services in the area
- started fund-raising with a business mixer (150 attended)
- developed in-depth Profile of Gulf Shore area
- explored options, researched existing Health Resource Centres - "PEI's Four Neighborhoods," the "McAdam Centre" in New Brunswick
- discussed agenda with Queens Region Health, Health and Social Services, and the Medical Society
- assisted with physician impact study
- developed Communication Plan
- held public meeting (180 attended)
- hired Kevin MacAdam as coordinator
- looked into revolving shared practice
- sought Queens Region Health support, invited Helen Flynn to sit on committee

-- established approach: multi-disciplinary, wellness, fitness, awareness programs, primary care, nurse practitioners, and community development

In winter 2001, the Health Committee established a night clinic in North Rustico that operates one night per week (so as not to compete with Hunter River). Their research indicates that a Health Resource Centre in North Rustico is a cost-neutral initiative which can promote quality of life for physicians with families who want to live in the community. Kevin MacAdam, in consultation with the Gulf Shore Health Committee, CDO - Nancy Murphy, and Queens Region Health - Helen Flynn, has overseen the completion of the Concept Plan. He continues to negotiate with government, Health and Social Services, and the Medical Society on the committees behalf..

The Concept Plan, presented by the Health Committee of The Gulf Shore Community Corporation, is a long-term strategy for a cost-effective Community Health Resource Centre which would take a multi-disciplinary approach to providing for health-care needs. It would provide primary care (including counselling, obstetrical support, diabetes clinics, substance abuse counselling, physiotherapy, blood work, chiropractor services, and minor surgery), health-related programs for families that emphasize health promotion and disease prevention, and community development programs. Part of the proposal may see the use of a telemedicine system of transferring patient information back and forth between doctors located in Hunter River and North Rustico. This would allow for secure, instant information exchange. The emphasis of the Centre will be on a holistic, multi-disciplinary approach that shows promise of contributing over the long term to a happier, healthier community. A healthier community will in turn will put less strain on the health care system.

Evaluation:

The community is very interested in ongoing evaluation and monitoring of the Health Resource Centre once it becomes a reality. The goals of the Health Centre could be summarized as follows:

- to decrease use of hospital emergency departments
- to develop increased partnerships with community organizations, health professionals, and provincial organizations
- to identify disease and illness faster
- to promote wellness and improved quality of life
- to coordinate a team of health care professionals working together
- to disseminate information relating to health

Possible means of evaluation:

- establish benchmark emergency room data and compare over a period of time
- keep record of partnerships, request survey forms be filled out by each community partner
- maintain log of % of persons in community at risk for designated health problems, such as diabetes
- conduct interviews and evaluations with nurses and doctors
- conduct telephone interviews, participant surveys, and targeted needs surveys

Kevin MacAdam says, "The North Shore Health Committee has worked many volunteer hours over the past three years toward understanding the issues surrounding health care, and creating a template for a community based Health Resource Centre that will work for the community. As the community is 100% committed to making this initiative a reality, this template could be the model upon which other centres are built in the future. Gulf Shore area residents have devoted money, time and effort towards this goal and they still have a way to go. But they will get there! They will not give up!"

THE ROMA SETTLEMENT

The historic Roma settlement was the site of one of two attempts by France to start a permanent colony on L'Ile-St.-Jean. Located at Trois Rivieres - the name for the area of the three rivers: Brudenell, Montague, and Cardigan - it was established in 1732 by Jean Pierre Roma. The settlement was privately funded by a chartered company which was interested in profits from the settlement. As such, there were no soldiers present for defense. In 1745 privateers from New England landed at Trois Rivieres and destroyed many years of labour in a matter of hours. The settlement was razed to the ground by fire.

The property changed hands many times and the MacDonalds (Hugh & Angus) established a store on the site in the early 1800s. It was there that A.A. MacDonald (son of Hugh), one of the Fathers of Confederation and Lieutenant Governor of Prince Edward Island, was born.

Archaeological excavations conducted in 1965/66, yielded important artifacts which are now housed in Louisberg, Fort La Joie, and the Musee Acadien in Miscouche.

The approximately 110 acres of Crown land, now known as Brudenell Point, have been the subject of much community interest. The Three Rivers Heritage Group, comprised of Barney Bree (Chair), Edgar Dewar, and Hugh MacDonald, with Melody Beck facilitating, has met several times since its inception in Autumn of 2000. This committee is a sub-committee of the Riverview Area Community Enhancement Group.

A preliminary action plan has been developed to map out a strategy of development for the site. Consistent with tenets of Green Tourism, ideas for economic development include walking trails, cross-country skiing trails, a campground, and historic signposting.

Goals:

- Submit proposals for funding
- Hire a short-term coordinator
- Conduct public meetings
- Clear dead fall at site
- Set up a guided tour of the site, potentially for the summer of 2002
- Re-build part of the site and build an interpretive centre.

Along with Parks Canada and the Heritage Group, Scott Buchanan, an interested archaeologist, is developing some of the groundwork for this undertaking. A scale model of the settlement is available for viewing in the Montague Museum. The committee wants the Roma settlement to be recognized for its significant role in the history of the Island and of Canada.

VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK AND GARDENS, KENSINGTON

Known officially as the "Lieutenant Colonel E. W. Johnstone Branch #9, Royal Canadian Legion," the Legion in Kensington is a driving force in the community. Among other things they support and sponsor youth sports, youth exchanges, the Community Harvest Festival, Meals on Wheels program, Christmas basket deliveries, and the Salvation Army.

Among Legion members is Lea Bell, who was president of the Veterans Memorial Park Committee, a group that included Garnet Turner, Clair Mayhew, and Ian McGougan. Their vision was to create a memorial to the servicemen and women from Kensington and Area. Kensington also had no park at the time, so it was decided that both a community park and a memorial garden would be planned around the memorial.

The old elementary school grounds were donated to the Legion for the project. Web-based research and meetings dominated the first year of volunteer work. A research trip to Ottawa and meetings there with Government officials proved necessary to communicate the desire of Kensington and Area to honour their veterans. Provincial and Federal grant money came through the Millennium Fund, and the Town of Kensington also committed monetary support. Hundreds of hours of volunteer time, contractors working below rate, and sheer community enthusiasm carried the project forward. Fred Bearisto, President of PEI Command of the Royal Canadian Legion, and Mitch Murphy, the local MLA, contributed greatly to project success.

Collecting all the names for the monument was an enormous challenge, but the Veterans Monument in Kensington was unveiled on July 2, 2001. On it are the names of over 1800 deceased servicemen and women, including those who served in the Boer War, the First World War, the Second World War, and the Korean War. The names of those who gave the supreme sacrifice are in the middle of the monument, surrounded by the names of their brothers and sisters in arms.

THE WELLINGTON AREA BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB

The Wellington Area Boys and Girls Club is a place for youth in the Evangeline region: a place to come for babysitting training, to play cards or pool – or just to have fun hanging out in a non-smoking, non-alcohol-oriented space. The Club is also a community base for activities such as line dancing for seniors, Kids Are First programming for children 0-6 years and their parents, and a computer club. But, in the past, pre-school programs bumped up against teen use, and the space was too small to meet demand. In 1998 the Board of Directors decided to do something about it.

A building committee, with Sally McKinley as Chair, had meetings bi-monthly during the latter part of 1998 and through 1999. They accessed community and government support for building an extension to the existing club. Gabriel Arseneault, the youth representative on the Board, helped facilitate a school survey. Phone interviews were also conducted, and daycare needs were identified. The community continually expressed commitment and enthusiasm for the project.

Marcel Bernard, the Community Development Officer for the Evangeline region, assisted with the funding application to government. The Government committed to half of the proposed budget, and the community rallied to come up with the remainder. After stories appeared in the local press, donations came rolling in. Club de Richelieu of the Evangeline region arranged a "day of free labour" in the community. The Boys & Girls Club of Canada and the Rotary Club of Summerside both generously donated funds to the construction.

Sally MacKinnley, with the help of an occupational therapist, ensured contractors followed code with respect to wheelchair access. Sally's son, Joey Arseneault, is a teen who uses a wheelchair. With her first-hand knowledge of wheelchair access - and the occupational therapist's help - the construction was done right the first time.

The newly renovated Boys and Girls Club of Wellington opened in June 2000. In addition to the expanded space and separate rooms for activities, a full daycare site was built. Unfortunately, it has been unable to open, because a bilingual supervisor has not been found. Rent from leased third floor space helps with maintenance and contributes to the Club's ongoing success.

MOUNT STEWART MARSH AND HILLSBOROUGH RIVER DEVELOPMENT

From the mouth of the Hillsborough River, and all along its winding course, communities stretch one after the other toward Mount Stewart. In April 2000, all of the Crown land known as the Mount Stewart Marsh was designated a Wildlife Management Area by the Government of PEI.

Nancy Murphy, Community Development Officer for Rural Queens region, facilitates meetings of the Hillsborough River Development Committee. The committee is in its infancy and is actively seeking input and volunteers from within the community. They are reviewing a first draft management plan of the Mount Stewart Marsh submitted by the Department of Fish and Wildlife. It is a rough outline of the issues relating to the community use and development of a designated Wildlife Management Area.

Some of the ideas on the table are:

-- To invite birdwatchers, trail users, cross-country skiers, hunting groups, and cyclists to meet to look at the best way to manage the site.

-- To build an interpretive site detailing the culture and ecosystem of the river and what comprises it.

-- To create walking trails with historical signage, picnic sites, and guided tours in and around the marsh.

There is consensus among committee members that development should consider the natural and human heritage of the region and minimize adverse impacts on the Hillsborough and its watershed. Another group with these interests at their core is the Hillsborough River Association. The mission Statement of the Association is that they are "dedicated to the betterment of the Hillsborough River through appropriate actions which recognize, identify, nurture and enhance any avenues for development and management of the River compatible with its human, natural and recreational values."

One step in the long process of recognizing the historical significance of the river was the co-nomination in January 1994, by the Province and the Hillsborough River Association, of the Hillsborough River as a Canadian Heritage River. In June 1997, it received this designation and a monument was erected at Scotchfort to commemorate the occasion.

Don MacNeil, Chair of the Hillsborough River Association for the past three and a half years, is a passionate advocate of sensitive, ecologically sound river development. He was asked by a neighbor, Marylea Trainor, to join the Hillsborough River Association because, as she put it to him, "You spend so much time talking about the river anyway."

Members of both the Hillsborough River Association and the Hillsborough River Management Committee muse about someday connecting all the river communities under one corporate non-profit entity that would oversee river development. Given the progress made by individual groups, it is not hard to image the possibilities if they joined forces.

SENIORS' HOUSING, WELLINGTON

Louise Arsenault is a senior living in the Government-administered seniors' housing complex in Wellington. At an informal meeting in December 2001, she expressed concerns about the residence.

"The building is over 35 years old. It has no basement and the crawl space underneath is always wet. Because of that there is a damp problem and a mouldy smell. Residents have expressed concern to me and want air-quality assessed. We have to leave our apartments to do laundry and some residents have fallen. ...There is no one local to respond to problems immediately." Louise details safety concerns for seniors too: "The safety buzzer is too high (if for example a senior falls and can only crawl). Also, the buzzer does not indicate which unit needs assistance. Whoever responds to the emergency buzzer can only go into those units where residents open doors for them; only the owner of the unit has keys." Louise also expressed the residents' disappointment in the small apartment size that make family visits challenging, if not impossible.

The seniors housing facility in Wellington currently has six empty apartments. By contrast there is a three-year waiting list at the Chez Nous, the community care facility in Wellington.

1999 kitchen table discussions in the Evangeline region resulted in a community meeting to determine the most significant priorities for development. Seniors were identified as one of 22 community priorities. However, too few seniors were present to indicate what their needs were. Over the next two years, the seniors' cause found champions in Louise Arsenault and Ida Gallant (who was the chair of the building committee for Chez Nous while it was in the works in 1994, through to completion in 1997). They, along with a local co-op council, encouraged local MPs to provide funding for a study to look into the issues around seniors' housing needs. After making no headway, they approached Community Development. They formed an ad hoc committee and met with the community development officer, Marcel Bernard, to discuss options throughout the autumn of 2001. The members of the ad hoc committee think vacancies in the current facility are a result of the inadequacy of the units to meet the needs of today's seniors.

Marcel says Ida and Louise are very determined and keep after him all the time. Ida laughs and says, "I am very persistent! I don't take 'no' for an answer!"

The ad hoc committee primarily wants to address the "space" issues of seniors' housing. Seniors tell them that, "If something of reasonable size gets built, I'll put my name in." Seniors say they will have to move to Summerside if the only option locally is an out-of-date, too small, poorly maintained facility. Louise and Ida say eloquently, "Seniors have lived here all their lives... And then to have to move to Summerside. It's hard to depend on your children. Seniors leaving the area have a negative impact economically on the region as well as culturally. Many seniors are women who have worked full time at home, with 7 to 10 children. With 30% of their income spent on housing, with car insurance and groceries and the rest - which increase every year in price over pensions - it is hard to make ends meet. Community and Government should be looking after these people as they looked after others all their lives. They don't want to be a financial burden on their families."

A community meeting has been scheduled in Wellington for January 23rd. Prior to that meeting, an engineer was asked to undertake an informal viewing and assessment of the current facility to determine whether the site could be renovated or whether a new facility is necessary. The ad hoc committee advertised the January 23rd meeting in the local community newsletter sent to every household. The members of the Communauté de Bel Age - the local seniors group that Ida and Louise are members of - plan to attend. Also invited were the communities of Mont Carmel and Abram's Village, to see if they likewise recognized a need for better seniors housing. Wellington is an obvious choice of location, since it is central and has more amenities that residents could access. Ida says, "This is what the future looks like down the road – the statistics show smaller families with school enrollment down, and people living longer. This issue is important to the community."

Evangeline region represents eight different communities, and an incorporated non-profit council for the area will be forming in early 2002. Previously there had been no legal community entity to which community groups could express their ideas. It is hoped the new council will assist with whatever recommendations arise from the January 23rd community meeting. If support for seniors' housing needs is determined by the community, the project will begin to take official shape. Seniors, resource people, and city leaders will be invited to form construction and finance committees.

Topics for the community meeting in Wellington on January 23, 2002:

- 1) Discover the communities' perspectives on the issue of seniors' housing.
- 2) Move forward, if interest and demand exist.
- 3) Identify possible reasons why the current facility is not full.
- 4) Discuss community commitment to ongoing maintenance and upgrades.
- 5) Explore the option of a community or co-op administered facility vs. government-administered.
- 6) Research into a local group that could offer a community kitchen, if residents need food prepared and/or diets improved.

FORT AUGUSTUS COMMUNITY HERITAGE PARK

At a public meeting in Fort Augustus, the decision was reached to request demolition of the old Fort Augustus School and restoration of the site to a green space. It was also agreed to form a committee, the Fort Augustus Community Heritage Park Management Committee, with fourteen

members representing existing organizations in the area and two members at large. This committee will determine how the green space will best serve the community and will manage that development. The committee is a subsidiary of the Hillsborough River Association that is comprised of representatives from communities on both sides of the Hillsborough River, from Dunstaffnage to Mount Stewart to Mermaid. The objective of the Association is to improve quality of life in the region.

After the demolition, The Fort Augustus Recreation Club, a chartered organization, assumed ownership of the land. As a result, the Fort Augustus Community Heritage Park Management Committee now operates as a sub-group of the Recreation Club. The committee has met three times, ratified by-laws, and developed guidelines as to how the property should be landscaped.

Presently, the committee is seeking input as to how the plans should be developed and financed. They want to preserve the heritage and enhance the quality of life while meeting the needs of the community. Hopefully, these plans will be finalized and construction in full swing by spring 2002. Anna Duffy, Committee member notes, "The project may also become a cohesive force in the community, as we implement the suggested plans and activities."

SOURIS DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PROJECT

Eastern Kings Community Enhancement Corporation, a non-profit organization, formed in the autumn of 1999 to begin exploring the results of a 1997 economic development survey. In April 2000 they held a community forum to discuss economic development. Following this meeting a sub-committee of the corporation was formed - the Souris Downtown Revitalization Committee. It has four members on the steering committee: Elizabeth MacDonald, Joe O'Keefe, Brian Deveau, and Richard Deveau (Chair). They hired a consultant group to indicate the best plan of action for downtown revitalization. The first recommendation of the consultants was to renovate the Matthew & MacLean building. The Matthew & MacLean store on the main street of Souris had operated as a community store for over 125 years. It was identified as a heritage site: a well-known, grand old property, which, when fully restored, would be an example of community commitment to the past and the future.

The Town of Souris, a partner in the project, committed to purchasing the building. They also undertook responsibility for operating and maintenance costs of the building for a two-year period. This set the ball in motion for further money being requested from Provincial and Federal coffers. Terry Campbell, the Community Development Officer for the Eastern Kings region, worked alongside the committee on grant applications and moving the project forward.

All the aspects of the renovation were tendered, and carpenters and craftspeople from the community completed all of the work. Donald McCormack was one young adult from the community who worked on the construction through a job creation program. As a result of this experience, he went back to school to get further training in that profession.

Phase one of the Matthew & MacLean building renovation was completed in June 2001. The old carriage house on the property was unsalvageable, and that ground was turned into much-needed parking for the building. The entrance to the parking lot is a beautiful wrought iron fence

lovingly handcrafted by a local resident. Two sides of the ground floor were renovated. One side is leased to the Department of Tourism for the Visitor Information Centre. The local MLA, Andy Mooney; the Dept. of Tourism; and the Dept. of Development worked with the committee to enable the move of the VIC from its former location. A display of historical artifacts, now in the VIC, is on loan from Chris Blaisdell. He is a member of the community, who, like so many others, got involved in the spirit of the restoration. The other side of the building is a retail store – "Lighthouse Crafts and Gifts." On the parking lot side, toward the back, is a family restaurant called the Avalanche. The Grand Opening of Phase I was held on July 5, 2001, and the community turnout was described as "unbelievable." Paul Gallant, who initially had serious doubts about the wisdom of renovating the building, commended the committee and expressed his appreciation for a job well done. "I was wrong and I admit it!" he said.

In the words of committee member, Brian Deveau: "The significance of the Matthew & MacLean project is that it is a catalyst to the rebirth of community spirit. In the early stages of the renovations, many commented that the building should have been torn down, but, slowly, as the project progressed attitudes changed dramatically. In the early 1800s the building was described as a meeting place for the community. Residents would travel for miles to do their monthly shopping while catching up on the news of the day. At the grand opening, an elderly resident commented that, indeed, the building, "has come full circle - it is once again a meeting place."

Phase Two of the project began on January 14, 2002, and is due to be completed May 15, 2002 – just in time for the tourist season. The large room toward the back of the building, between the VIC and the retail store, will be a cultural and historical multi-use facility. It will promote the history of the region and provide a space for community theatre and entertainment. This attraction will encourage tourists to remain in the town of Souris longer.

During initial renovation, two sides of the old "grand staircase" were recovered from behind a wall. This staircase will be restored by craftspeople and is sure to become a focal point in the building. It will connect the downstairs cultural, historical space with an upstairs re-creation of the old store. The upstairs will also have commercial rental units and restrooms, and it will be wheelchair accessible.

Some property owners in the downtown have joined in the revitalization by renovating their own buildings. It has also been noted that there has been no vandalism of any kind on the Matthew & MacLean property. Members of the Downtown Revitalization Committee report an obvious increase in community pride as the result of the magnificent job done on restoring the building. The Matthew & MacLean building is an important symbol of the ability of the community of Eastern Kings to create sustainable, economic opportunity in the region.

The Value of a Comprehensive Community Survey

In 1997 the Eastern Kings Business Association Inc. commissioned a survey of the Eastern Kings region to determine community priorities for economic development. This survey was very successful in determining the direction of future development.

-- The survey was sent to every household in Eastern Kings over two months.

-- Seven public relations representatives worked full time distributing and retrieving surveys.

-- The region represents 2500 households. 1511 completed surveys were retrieved by October 31, 1997.

83% of respondents wanted Eastern Kings to adopt and promote an aggressive " 'we want your business' attitude within the region."

Most respondents accepted change as the cost of sustainable economic development.

Community ownership and empowerment were identified as being paramount to success in community development.

In section A of the survey, respondents were asked to indicate directions for potential economic development. The pursuit of green tourism was among the top directions indicated.

In section B, people were asked to help with the development of a policy for evaluating and prioritizing prospective initiatives. They are ranked in order of importance:

-- job creation

-- viability

-- ability to attract private sector investment

-- local ownership

-- ability to act as a catalyst to create significant economic spin-offs for the region.

In section C of the report, the top statement was that, "serious steps should be taken to ensure that Souris becomes, once again, the shopping centre of Eastern Kings, with a wide variety of retail stores/services being offered." 79% of respondents supported downtown Souris revitalization.

The results of this comprehensive, specific survey continue to determine the course of development in the Eastern Kings region.

WOOD ISLANDS AND AREA DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

One initiative of the Wood Islands & Area Development Corporation is the complex of retail outlets and Liquor store complementing the new Visitor Information Centre being built near the Wood Islands Ferry Terminal (at the triangle where Route One intersects Route Four). The aim is to help maintain the ferry and to create economic benefit for the region. A community multi-use space, a gazebo, and a sign plaza (ad signs sold to local businesses adjacent to a map of Southern Kings pinpointing their location) are all part of the proposed development.

In 1996, a small community group assembled at a local home to discuss economic and social development in the community of Wood Islands and the surrounding area. From that initial meeting, a working committee was formed. Community surveys were conducted and a formal Board of Directors was put in place, elected by the community. John Rousseau is chair for the Wood Islands & Area Development Corporation. The Board has proceeded to seek out potential beneficial programs for the area.

Thom MacMillan, project manager, notes observations of the process to date. He states, "The learning process is ongoing throughout."

Obstacles:

- convincing potential funding partners that the planned project had a future
- getting through red tape and contacting the proper decision-making people
- keeping the community up to date on events - which can be difficult for volunteers

Learning curve:

- have a well-developed plan
- deliver a consistent message

- have the same people doing presentations
- keep community members interested
- prepare good budgets - do not underestimate
- hire a project manager from the community
- keep community and area informed through newsletters, public meetings, etc.

Other successful initiatives undertaken by the Wood Islands & Area Development Corporation are the 70 Mile Coastal Yard Sale, the celebration of The Ferries Festival, community suppers, ceilidhs and other social events, and restoration of the 126 year old Wood Islands Lighthouse which is now the Interpretive Centre for all Island Lighthouses.

Thom MacMillian says, "The success of the Wood Island Development Project will depend upon the commitment of the community and surrounding area, the Board of Directors, the support of the Government through the CDO, Susan Myers, and the following of a sound financial management plan."

FUTURE TECH WEST IN O'LEARY

Future Tech West is an initiative to capitalize on emerging opportunities for rural-based economic development within the Information Technology sector. The O'Leary Area Development Corporation has identified the need in Western PEI for a facility that will combine several areas of specialty, including business development, distance education training, and enhanced service delivery. Future Tech West will lead to new employment opportunities and encourage new technology-based businesses to come to the area. The centre will house state-of-the-art office space, training labs, and "smart services" such as video conferencing. The province will help with the development of new IT companies and entrepreneurs.

The O'Leary Area Development Corporation is the group behind the new IT Centre in O'Leary. The Information Technology/Agriculture Committee, a sub-committee of the Corporation, developed and submitted the proposal for funding for the IT Centre. They will continue to manage the project, now that contributions from Technology PEI and the federal government's Strategic Community Investment Fund have been approved.

A contribution from Technology P.E.I, and from the federal government's Strategic Community Investment Fund, will assist in turning the former McKenna's Furniture Store into a information technology centre, Future Tech West. Mike Currie, Minister of Development and Technology said that Future Tech West will also be a tie-in with the province's Atlantic Technology Centre, under construction in Charlottetown.

The steps taken by the committee according to Thelma Sweet, committee member:

- 1) Developed project and submitted applications to Provincial and Federal governments.

2) Developed a partnership with community of O'Leary who agreed to guarantee a portion of funding, tax incentives and an outright operating grant.

3) When funding was approved, purchased the building.

4) Now in process of designing and renovating building.

The Corporation and the IT committee will study how to utilize the facility profitably, while benefitting the community. An opening date for Future Tech West has not been set. Denton Ellis, Committee Chair, says, "We want to get the centre up and running as soon as possible!"

ST. PETER'S BAY DEVELOPMENT

After a parcel of land at Greenwich was deeded to Parks Canada in late 1998, the community of St. Peters and area began discussions about economic development to complement the increased tourist traffic the area would receive. James MacAulay, Chair of the St. Peters Development Corporation, reports, "The community reached general consensus that economic development should be within the St. Peters area proper. There have been in excess of 35 public community meetings conducted and in excess of 70 executive meetings. The community is very motivated and excited about the progress being made."

The first and biggest problem identified as a definite obstacle to tourism expansion was the odour in the Bay. The terrible smell was caused from silt and farm run-off built up over the years and by raw sewage dumped into the Bay up until approximately 1980. The community, under leadership from the St. Peters Development Corporation, decided to dredge the Bay. Half of the work was completed in 2001, and this all but eliminated the smell. The remaining half of the work will be completed in spring 2002.

The information from local public meetings is disseminated through word of mouth, and through "The Bay Bulletin" - a local independent publication delivered free, once per month, to all residents of St. Peters and area. M. Anne Stewart, the publisher, attends all of the meetings and reports on the discussions and decisions made. There is a proposed development plan in the works with seven sometimes overlapping phases.

Conceptual Proposed Development for the area includes:

-- an interpretive Centre for Mussel Industry which started in St. Peters' Bay

-- a market centre site using Barrick design for retail outlets

-- a raised Boardwalk from the Visitor Information Centre (VIC) to market site loop

-- two pedestrian bridges

-- a multi-use trail

- a waterfront park with walkway
- a parking lot
- park furniture: benches and picnic tables
- landscaping and lights
- the renovation of, and addition to, Quigley Hall - a community landmark - to be used as a multi-use building including a theatre with seating for 104
- firehall landscaping and seating to serve as a gathering place for community & tourists alike. The grounds of the firehall offer an incredible view of the bay.

St. Peters' Area Development Corporation is working on the plans and on getting funding for these economic initiatives.

Le Club des garçons et des filles de la région Évangéline

Le Club des garçons et des filles de la région Évangéline est l'endroit où les jeunes de la région peuvent venir prendre un cours de gardiennage, jouer aux cartes ou au billard, ou simplement passer un moment agréable dans un environnement sans fumée et sans alcool. Le Club organise aussi des activités communautaires telles des soirées de danse pour les personnes âgées, le programme Les Enfants d'abord, destiné aux enfants de 0 à 6 ans et à leurs parents, et un club informatique. Toutefois, dans les années passées, les programmes préscolaires empiétaient sur le temps destiné aux jeunes et l'espace était insuffisant pour répondre aux besoins de tous. C'est pourquoi le conseil d'administration a décidé de faire quelque chose en 1998.

Ainsi, de la fin 1998 et en 1999, un comité de construction, présidé par Sally McKinley, s'est réuni tous les deux mois. Les membres ont obtenu l'appui de la collectivité et du gouvernement pour l'agrandissement du club. Gabriel Arsenault, représentant de la jeunesse au sein du comité, a mené un sondage dans les écoles. On a aussi effectué des entrevues téléphoniques, ce qui a permis de découvrir des besoins en matière de services de garde. En outre, la collectivité a exprimé son enthousiasme et son engagement continu envers le projet.

Marcel Bernard, l'agent de développement communautaire pour la région Évangéline, a aidé à préparer la demande de financement auprès du gouvernement. Le gouvernement provincial s'est engagé à déboursier la moitié du budget proposé et la collectivité s'est mobilisée pour recueillir le reste. À la suite de la parution d'articles de journaux sur le projet, les dons ont commencé à arriver. Le Club Richelieu de la région Évangéline a organisé une «journée de corvée» dans la communauté. Enfin, le Club des garçons et des filles du Canada et le Club Rotary de Summerside ont généreusement contribué de façon monétaire pour la construction de l'agrandissement.

De son côté, Sally McKinley s'est assurée, avec l'aide d'un ergothérapeute, que les entrepreneurs en construction respectaient les normes liées à l'accès en fauteuil roulant; Joey Arsenault, le fils

de Sally, est un adolescent qui utilise un fauteuil roulant. Grâce à la connaissance de Sally des besoins liés à l'utilisation d'un fauteuil roulant, et à l'aide de l'ergothérapeute, la construction a été bien faite dès le départ.

Le nouveau Club des garçons et des filles de Wellington a ouvert ses portes en juin 2000. En plus de l'agrandissement et de la construction de salles d'activités autonomes, un centre complet de service de garde a aussi été construit. Malheureusement, ce dernier n'a pas encore ouvert ses portes, car il n'a pas encore été possible de trouver un superviseur bilingue pour s'en occuper. Les revenus de location des espaces du troisième étage servent à l'entretien de la bâtisse et contribuent au succès continu du Club.

L'Exposition agricole et le Festival acadien de la région Évangéline

Les gens de la région Évangéline sont bien connus pour le bénévolat qu'ils effectuent et leur esprit communautaire. L'une des manifestations de cet esprit dure depuis près de cent ans. En 1903, l'Union des fermiers d'Urbainville organise la première exposition agricole qui connaît tellement de succès qu'en 1905, on invite les fermiers de Baie-Egmont et de Mont-Carmel à se joindre à la fête. En 1939, on achète une propriété dans la municipalité d'Abram-Village et, au fil des ans, l'exposition agricole grandit et en vient à accueillir des participants de partout dans l'Île. Le Festival acadien voit le jour en 1971, dans le cadre de l'Exposition agricole. On l'organise pour deux grandes raisons, soit de promouvoir la culture acadienne et de compléter les activités de l'Exposition agricole et ainsi contribuer à sa survie.

En 1992, les deux organisations s'unissent pour ne former qu'un organisme: l'Exposition agricole et le Festival acadien. Le mandat de l'organisme est de promouvoir la culture acadienne et la sensibilisation à l'agriculture. Il s'agit de l'événement le plus important organisé dans la région Évangéline et du plus grand rassemblement annuel d'Acadiennes et d'Acadiens à

l'Î.-P.-É. L'activité a lieu chaque année pendant la fin de semaine de la Fête du travail et plus de 15000 personnes y participent.

En 1997, à la suite de longues discussions, la collectivité approuve le développement du site et le conseil d'administration propose d'acquérir les infrastructures nécessaires pour répondre aux besoins des grands festivals et des événements spéciaux. Le développement comprend:

- un centre communautaire (Centre Expo-Festival), ouvert en 1998;
- un centre multi-fonctionnel (l'Étable), ouvert en 2000; et
- un terrain de camping pour les véhicules récréatifs (105 emplacements avec services), ouvert en 2001.

Grâce à ces installations, la communauté a pu accueillir sept nouveaux festivals à l'été 2001. Les retombées économiques pour la région ont été importantes. L'objectif de la communauté est qu'il y ait une activité spéciale par fin de semaine pendant toute la saison touristique. À ce jour, la

croissance de cette activité économique viable est due en grande partie au dévouement et aux efforts continus des bénévoles de la communauté.

Hébergement pour personnes âgées à Wellington

Louise Arsenault est une personne âgée qui habite la résidence pour personnes âgées de Wellington, gérée par le gouvernement provincial. Lors d'une réunion informelle tenue en décembre 2001, elle a exprimé ses inquiétudes par rapport à la résidence.

«La résidence a plus de 35 ans. Il n'y a pas de sous-sol et le vide sanitaire est toujours humide. Ainsi, nous avons un problème d'humidité et de senteur de moisi. Les résidents m'ont parlé de leurs inquiétudes et souhaitent que la qualité de l'air soit évaluée. Nous devons sortir de nos appartements pour aller à la buanderie et quelques personnes ont fait des chutes. Il n'y a aucune personne locale qui se charge de régler les problèmes de façon immédiate.» Madame Arsenault poursuit en expliquant quelques problèmes de sécurité pour les personnes âgées: «Le bouton avertisseur est trop élevé (par exemple, pour une personne qui est tombée et qui ne peut que ramper). En outre, le bouton avertisseur n'indique pas l'unité d'où vient l'alarme. La personne qui répond à l'appel d'urgence ne peut entrer que dans les unités où le résident ouvre la porte; seul le résident possède une clé pour son appartement.» Madame Arsenault rapporte aussi que les résidents sont déçus de la taille des appartements, qui sont tellement exigus qu'il est presque impossible de recevoir des visiteurs.

À l'heure actuelle, il y a six appartements vacants dans la résidence pour personnes âgées de Wellington. Par contraste, il y a une liste d'attente de trois ans à la résidence Chez-Nous, le centre de soins communautaires de Wellington.

Des discussions informelles menées en 1999 dans la région Évangéline ont abouti à une rencontre communautaire pour déterminer les priorités en matière de développement communautaire. Les personnes âgées sont l'une des 22 priorités de la communauté. Toutefois, trop peu de personnes âgées étaient présentes à la réunion pour indiquer quels sont leurs besoins. Au cours des deux années qui ont suivi, la cause des personnes âgées a été prise en main par Louise Arsenault et Ida Gallant (présidente du comité de construction de la résidence Chez-Nous de 1994, année de la planification, à 1997). En partenariat avec le conseil coopératif local, elles ont demandé aux députés de la région de financer une étude sur les besoins des personnes âgées en matière de logement. Après s'être heurtées à un refus, elles ont communiqué avec le personnel du développement communautaire. Un comité spécial a été formé et, au cours de l'automne 2001, ce comité a rencontré Marcel Bernard, agent de développement communautaire, pour discuter des possibilités. Les membres du comité spécial croient que les appartements vacants dans la résidence actuelle le sont parce qu'ils ne répondent pas aux besoins des personnes âgées d'aujourd'hui.

Monsieur Bernard indique que Louise et Ida sont très déterminées à faire avancer le dossier et qu'elles ne lui donnent aucun répit. Cela fait rire Ida qui dit: «Je suis très entêtée; je n'accepte pas de refus!».

Le comité spécial veut d'abord et avant tout s'occuper de la question d'espace dans les résidences pour personnes âgées. Ces gens affirment que si quelque chose de raisonnablement grand se construisait, ils mettraient leur nom sur la liste d'attente. Ils ajoutent qu'ils devront déménager à Summerside si la seule possibilité d'hébergement local consiste en un édifice désuet, trop petit et mal entretenu. Louise et Ida ajoutent avec éloquence: «Les personnes âgées ont passé leur vie ici... puis d'avoir à déménager à Summerside. C'est difficile d'être dépendant de ses enfants. L'exode des personnes âgées a un effet négatif sur la région, tant au plan économique que culturel. Un grand nombre de personnes âgées sont des femmes qui ont travaillé à la maison à temps plein, à s'occuper de 7 à 10 enfants. Si elles doivent dépenser 30% de leur revenu sur l'hébergement, en plus des assurances, de l'épicerie et du reste – sans compter les augmentations annuelles des prix de loyer – c'est difficile d'arriver. Le communauté et le gouvernement devraient s'occuper de ces personnes comme celles-ci se sont occupé des autres toute leur vie. Elles ne veulent pas devenir un fardeau financier pour leur famille.»

Une rencontre communautaire est prévue pour le 23 janvier, à Wellington. Avant la tenue de cette rencontre, un ingénieur doit effectuer une évaluation informelle de la résidence actuelle pour déterminer s'il est possible de rénover le site ou s'il est nécessaire de construire un nouvel établissement. Le comité spécial a réservé un espace publicitaire dans le bulletin d'information local envoyé dans tous les foyers de la région pour faire part de la date de la réunion. Les membres du Comité Le Bel Âge, le club de personnes âgées local dont font partie Louise et Ida, prévoient s'y rendre. Les gens des communautés de Mont-Carmel et d'Abram-Village sont aussi invités à participer à la rencontre pour déterminer si eux aussi sentent le besoin d'améliorer les services de logement pour personnes âgées. Wellington semble être l'emplacement idéal puisque c'est plus central et que les résidents auraient accès à plus de services. Madame Gallant souligne: «C'est ce que l'avenir nous réserve; les statistiques démontrent que les familles seront plus petites, qu'il y aura moins d'inscriptions dans les écoles et que les personnes vivront plus longtemps. C'est une question importante pour la communauté.»

La région Évangéline compte huit communautés et un comité à but non lucratif pour la région doit voir le jour au début de 2002. Auparavant, il n'y avait aucun organisme communautaire légal auprès duquel les groupes communautaires pouvaient faire valoir leurs opinions. On espère que ce nouveau comité pourra aider à la réalisation des recommandations qui seront exprimées lors de la rencontre communautaire du 23 janvier. Si la communauté décide qu'il est nécessaire de venir en aide aux personnes âgées pour répondre à leurs besoins en matière d'hébergement, le projet pourra prendre forme de façon officielle. Les personnes âgées, les personnes-ressources et les officiels municipaux seront alors invités à former des comités de financement et de construction.

Les représentants de Santé Prince-Est ont déjà exprimé leur intérêt pour la cause puisque le problème de l'hébergement des personnes âgées s'étend à toute la province. Le village de Wellington pourrait vraisemblablement être à la source d'une solution durable.

***Points de discussion pour la rencontre communautaire
du 23 janvier 2002, à Wellington:***

- 1) Obtenir le point de vue de la communauté par rapport au problème d'hébergement pour les personnes âgées.
- 2) Si l'intérêt et le besoin se font sentir, aller de l'avant.
- 3) Déterminer les causes possibles de l'inoccupation de la résidence actuelle.
- 4) Discuter de l'engagement de la communauté envers l'entretien continu et les améliorations à apporter.
- 5) Explorer la possibilité d'une résidence communautaire ou coopérative plutôt que d'une résidence gérée par le gouvernement.
- 6) Est-ce qu'un groupe communautaire local peut organiser une cuisine communautaire si l'on se rend compte que les résidents ont besoin d'améliorer leur régime ou d'avoir accès à des repas préparés?