

## **Lieutenant Governor Community Spirit Award Entry Form**

**Community Name:** East River Valley, Pictou County

*Names of groups in the community who have joined together to put forward this application*

East River Valley Community Development Association  
Municipality of the County of Pictou  
Pictou Regional Development Agency  
Golden Glen Seniors  
Residents of the East River Valley  
Iona Park Committee  
Hopewell Footbridge Ceilidh committee  
Bonnie Crockett - First Presbyterian Church  
SBI 4H club - Carla Marshall  
Churchville Women'n Institute - Arlene MacGregor  
Plymouth Community centre - Glenda

*The East River Valley is comprised of a number of communities located in the Municipality of the County of Pictou:*

Plymouth, Churchville, Mountville, Irish Mountain, Springville, Bridgeville, St Paul's, Glencoe, Iron Rock, Sunny Brae, Millstream, Centredale, Island East River, Eureka, Hopewell, Lorne, Elgin, Marshdale, Fox Brook, Riverton

*History of the East River Valley Area*

The first human inhabitants along the lower areas of the East River Valley were the aboriginal Mi'kmaq. These First Nations people settled the coastal areas along the Northumberland Strait and wintered inland on most of the major rivers in Pictou County including the East River.

The French established a few plots of cultivated land on the lower sections of the East River Valley and Pictou Harbour. These dwellings were short lived and ended during the expulsion of the Acadians in the mid eighteenth century.

The first major thrust of settlement of the East River Valley occurred after the arrival of the Ship Hector in 1773. Scottish immigration increased dramatically during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

The East River itself was used as natural boundary point by the early surveyors dividing up the many grants of land given to the pioneers. Plots ranging from 100 to 500 acres were established along the riverbank and protruding in a rectangle shape upwards to the valley hills and beyond.

In the year 1784, our major East River towns of New Glasgow and Stellarton and the up river rural areas of Plymouth, Churchville, Springville, Bridgeville, St. Paul's, Glencoe, Riverton, Fox Brook, Island, Hopewell, Elgin and Lorne were established. Many of the new settlers were disbanded soldiers from loyal British Highland Regiments who fought in the American Revolution.

Over the ensuing years the East River Valley population continued to grow with the large influx of Scottish immigrants. The new pioneers were encouraged to settle the upper East River areas and communities such as Sunny Brae, Cumming's Mountain, Kerrowgare and Blanchard were established.

Today, our proud East River Valley is made up of not only the early Scottish pioneer descendants but many other nationalities that contribute greatly to its development and success.

**Our Mission:**

*"To promote the sustainability of the communities of the East River Valley"*

***ESSENTIAL CRITERIA***

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**Unique Strengths:**

**The Hopewell Footbridge Ceilidh** - One of Nova Scotia's last remaining footbridges, dating back to 1818 and steeped in history and nostalgia, is located in the heart of the Village of Hopewell.

The original bridge was destroyed by a flood back in 1990. A group of concerned citizens of the village got together to lobby and work with various levels of government to have the bridge restored, as this cable bridge was such an important part of the community's identity.

The bridge provided a walkway for children attending the local school and today is a source of a leisurely walk and a popular tourist attraction. Also many couples go to the footbridge for their wedding pictures and families for their family photos.

In October 1991 the footbridge was declared a Municipal Heritage Site and an unveiling ceremony and a ceilidh was held with a large crowd in attendance.

Over the past number of years the Ceilidh continues to grow with many former residents planning their vacations around the Ceilidh which is always held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in August.

The Ceilidh starts with a parade through the village and proceeds to the park. This is followed by a blessing of the bridge and then the Ceilidh swings into a wonderful musical afternoon with family, friends and visitors.

The Eureka Fire Department has a booth with hot dogs, hamburgers and cold drinks.

The Village decks out with lots of tartan and flags and the local musical talent is second to none. Hopewell has a local band called “Home Grown” which has provided entertainment for the Ceilidh for the past 19 years.

This past summer we had the largest crowd ever. Once again, without all the volunteers who help prepare ie: park grass mowing, advertising, decorating village, etc. – it would not be possible to continue with this Ceilidh. For a small village – the community spirit is alive and well.

*This summer we will be celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> Annivesary of the Ceilidh and we hope to make it an extra special event. Ciad Mile Failte (A Hundred Thousand Welcomes)*

### **Citizen Participation in Community Projects:**

The East River Valley Community Development Association (ERVCDA) goals and objectives are based on Community Spirit. The ERVDA Strategic Plan considers all of the communities in the East River Valley.

In 2006, a proposal to install four “Community Kiosks” in the East River Valley required that an association be created in order that the project could move forward. After a couple of meetings it was decided that (ERVCDA) should form to oversee the kiosk project and to expand on the concept of the many communities of our valley working together with a view to breaking down barriers formed by community jealousies.

Since its inception the association has been active in either heading up or supporting such valley projects as; producing: “the Spotlight” a newsletter highlighting businesses and residents of the valley and valley activities; a website has been developed and is undergoing revision to parallel and expand upon the newsletter; Placemaking workshops

were held highlighting two of our villages; various beautification projects such as “paint the valley red” and tree-plantings have been held; several country markets have been put on; spring community yard sales encompassing the entire valley and we have been active in supporting development of a multi-use trail on the site of the old railway that terminated in Sunny Brae.

Most of our projects are ongoing, some more active than others. As a result of a survey of the whole valley carried out in November and December of 2010 we have decided that it is time to take on the concept of sponsoring workshops catering to interests such as quilt making, baking etc. this year.

### **Community Pride**

Back in October 2006 our Local Post Mistress Lois Ward was about to retire after 37 years of devoted service to the residents of Hopewell and surrounding area.

Being postmaster Lois wanted not to leave her personal mark on the position but something of the village of Hopewell. In her many years of handling mail, she was not satisfied the postmark on outgoing mail just said “Hopewell”. She wanted a district stamp. There is a footbridge which is part of every person who lived in Hopewell, “The footbridge has been part of her life more years than she wishes to remember said the 79 year old post master.

A footbridge committee (namely Lois herself) lobbied for it to be a cancellation stamp from the Hopewell post office. A drawing sketch of the footbridge by Paul MacKinnon was submitted for consideration to Canada Post. In July of 2006 Lois’s request was granted and a special ceremony with representatives from Canada Post and many local residents were on hand to witness Lois stamp the first outgoing letter with the footbridge stamp. With many letters leaving the Hopewell Post Office for various places around the world our footbridge is well known.

After the cancellation stamp was unveiled many people came to Hopewell to mail a letter to a loved one who had been former residents just to get the footbridge stamp. Upon Lois’s retirement the community honoured her with a special celebration for her faithful dedication and service to its residents.

Now that’s Community Spirit.

### **Creating an Enduring Community**

In July of 2006 the first edition of the newsletter was hand delivered by members of the East River Valley Community Development Association (ERVCDCA); a group of volunteers that had been formed in the Spring with its focus aimed at working on community and economic projects for the communities in the valley.

It was comprised of 2 pages and was conceived as an attempt to fill the gap left from the discontinuation of the Waterways Newsletter of the Hopewell-Eureka-East River Pastoral Charge. It was initially anticipated that it would be printed four times a year.

It contained an overview of ERVCDA, articles of community happenings/groups including the Women's Institutes, both valley fire departments, ERV Recreation, Eureka Day and Hopewell Footbridge, Ceilidh and Parade, and a profile of one of our valley community residents.

Our first newsletter was so well received that in October of 2006 we produced our 2nd edition followed by subsequent editions every 2 months delivering to 950 households. Responding to the demand, we gradually increased our distribution area to include Riverton to Lorne, across the east river to Sunnybrae, and up to lower Plymouth. Copies are delivered to a Home for Special Care and several seniors apartments, and several to a local drug store and a community center for residents of nearby Plymouth Park.

The newsletter has increased to 8 pages with 1250 copies printed and a good number being mailed electronically. Each contains community and business profiles of local areas, persons and businesses, a note from ERVCDA chair, and many articles of community interest and happenings in the east river valley. We continue to receive positive feedback from our readers who enjoy being apprised of happenings in their own and surrounding communities. Our newsletter indeed embodies ERVCDA's mission statement to promote the sustainability of our communities.

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### ***SUPPORTIVE CRITERIA:***

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#### **History, Tradition, and Cultural Heritage**

**Iona Park** - Iona Park is situated in the community of Hopewell, NS on Rte 374 between Stellarton & Sheet Harbour. It is a place of peace & tranquility along the west branch of the beautiful East River.

Iona Park boasts beautiful mature trees and species of plant life that are rare to be found on a natural flood plain. There are five picnic tables, several park benches for your enjoyment and relaxation, as well there is an old style outhouse so no need to rush away. We have an interpretive panel, artful signage that marks our location and stone pillars at the entrance to mark our location for years to come.

The Park was first established in 1960 by a local men's club of St Columba Church and was recently restored by Friends of Iona Park with help from generous donations from private sector as well as municipal, provincial and federal governments.

Iona Park held it's grand reopening on June 13, 2010 with over 400 in attendance. An afternoon enjoyed with pipers, favours from guests, opening ceremony, and cutting of ribbon, BBQ, ice cream and cake along with music by local entertainers.

Iona Park has since hosted two musical afternoons in the Park and we look forward to future engagements with community participants at this lovely spot.

### **Inclusivity and Diversity**

#### **Nothing Says Welcome like something from the Oven**

On Tuesday December 14<sup>th</sup>, at the Plymouth Fire Hall, the Welcoming and Inclusive Community Committee hosted the first ever Welcoming Holiday Dinner. Members of the newly formed committee shared the evening with over 60 newcomers to Pictou County.

The WICS Committee partnered with the Pictou County Multicultural Association and the YMCA Y-Host program to identify newcomers.

Guests were treated with two traditional Pictou County holiday beverages, Scotsburn Dairy's eggnog and Big 8's sparkling cranberry. While guests waited for their traditional maritime holiday dinner to be prepared they enjoyed playing a quick icebreaker and listened to live entertainment. The children occupied their time reading books donated by the Adopt-a-Library program.

After dinner, guests enjoyed John Ashton's reading of a couple Christmas stories. Santa was also able to stop by and handout candy to everyone and took time to hear what each child would like for Christmas. Members of the multicultural Association shared traditions from around the world, including traditional South Korean dress, formal Indian dress and how to use chopsticks.

Before leaving each family was given a welcoming gift, handcrafted by the Pictou Landing First Nations. The dream catchers were very unexpected and everyone was very thankful for the gift. Each family was also provided with information on different ways to become involved with the community. The community information package included brochures on recreation, the library, festivals and events and healthcare.

The Welcoming Holiday Dinner was held to ensure any newcomers had someone to spend a part of their holiday season with. The WICS committee wants to help newcomers make connections within their new community. The Holiday Dinner was the perfect way to help them make those connections. Having newcomers from different

companies and towns allowed individuals to meet people they might not have had the opportunity to meet otherwise.

### **Welcoming**

“As a Councilor in District 14, I live in Springville, an area that is so blessed with people of different nationalities and diversities. These people are the finest you will ever find.

When attending community suppers, church meetings or community meetings I get to meet new people who have moved into our community. I tell people that I am the municipal councilor for this area and if they need to contact me for any reason to please call anytime.”

Fielding P Smith

**Women’s Institute** - Women’s Institute branches throughout Nova Scotia have been a vital part of the rural landscape and Pictou County is no exception. There are currently four branches in the East River Valley: Churchville, Springville - Island, Bridgeville and Fox Brook. This organization has as its motto “For Home & Country” and members have worked tirelessly over the years to making their communities better places to live. Years ago the Women’s Institute members provided for the local schools – everything from cod liver oil capsules, firewood, accommodations for teachers and anything else the teacher requested. Today our local branches are assisting with the local school breakfast program, volunteering their time reading, being speakers for various topics and still generally assisting the schools in providing the best possible experiences for our children.

They have been the one organization that welcomed newcomers and helped them become a part of the local communities. Many friendships were formed over tea and cookies. Newer mothers and homemakers welcomed the wisdom and skills of older women.

Many speakers and workshops have been hosted that are open to community members. Funding has been applied for to allow communities to improve their community buildings, to learn new crafts and exercise classes and generally fill a void in the communities.

### **Find Solutions to Community Challenges by Working Together**

It has been a long standing practice in the Valley, that if one group, or facility requires the assistance of another, adaptations are willingly made. One example is that of the Springville I.O.O.F. Hall. The building has no running water, so when it comes time to host a community dinner, the group uses the nearby Springville church hall.

The Golden Glens Seniors Group has held card parties at the Plymouth Community Centre for more than 40 years. The building became too expensive to heat, so the neighboring Fire Hall has been home to them for the past two years. It was important that the Golden Glens remain in their “home”, so the Executive of the Plymouth Community

Centre applied for, and received a grant to refurbish the Seniors Room. They should be back to playing cards every Tuesday by the end of February 2011.

### **Adaptable and Flexible**

**Annual Christmas Tree Lighting and Candy Cane Campaign** - Five years ago a committee was formed to decorate the village of Hopewell during the Christmas season and thanks to the generosity of the residents of the Village of Hopewell we were able to purchase seventeen beautiful five foot red and green candy canes which hang throughout the village on the power poles.

These candy canes were bought at a cost of \$450.00 each and this was made possible by various residents, local businesses, and Municipality of the County who purchased them in memory of deceased family members.

The first year the candy canes went up there was a dedication of the candy canes and a Christmas tree lighting was held at the Hopewell Post Office followed by refreshments and entertainment in the Presbyterian Church Hall.

The village is very proud to have it's very own village crier, Lester Ward, who willingly participates in all our events and leads the Ceilidh Parade.

The tree lighting has now been an annual event for the past six years, and like the Ceilidh seems to be growing. A special person or family is chosen each year to turn the switch to officially light the tree. It is a wonderful time for the residents to get together during this special season.

Once again we participated with Nova Scotia Power on the LED light exchange program during this evening. Also residents were asked to bring an item for the food bank and they responded generously.

In this day of closure and downsizing and the decline of rural communities, how wonderful it is to see the spirit of community alive and thriving in the village of Hopewell and throughout the East River Valley.

### **Positive Change**

As times changed and smaller communities; that once thrived on their own; found themselves more distanced by demographics, aging population, etc., the need to eliminate, or at least decrease, some of the stresses and problems brought on by these issues became obvious and as a result the East River Valley Community Development Association was created by a group of concerned citizens. In 2006, the need to unify the Valley became apparent and as a result, the E.R.V.C.D.A. was formed. It's goal: to

“umbrella” each of the 18 smaller communities, and act as spokesperson, advisor, coordinator.

In the nearly five years since then, it has been noted that more community members are beginning to think “Valley-wide”, instead of separate communities. Now, more often than not, you’ll hear someone say, “I’m live in the East River Valley.” As opposed to, “I live in Churchville.” The latest step forward for ERVCDA, was to hire a Community Coordinator, a person to organize events and apply for grants, attend meetings, up-date [eastrivervalley.ca](http://eastrivervalley.ca), and act as a go-to person.

The ERVCDA is a group that is committed and dedicated to the future of their communities. The success and sustainability of a community relies on the commitment of the community and the pride of ownership.

Due to the hard work and collaboration of the ERVCDA the East River Valley has been chosen to host the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Rural Development Conference April 2011. This conference provides rural communities an opportunity to network, plan and engage community to support sustainable development. East River Valley is an example of effective community economic development; full of spirit and community pride. Each community and all residents are asked to participate, whether it is to sell their products at the Trade Show, or decorate their homes/yards to accentuate the beauty of the area.

### **Recreational and Cultural Support**

**East River Valley Recreation** - A summer program for children ages 5 to 12 and is held at the East River Valley Rec. building in Springville, from 9.00 am to 2.00 pm. There are two age groups; 5-8 year olds and 9-12 year olds. The groups alternate days. The facility includes the John Heckimovich Memorial Playground, baseball field and basketball court. They are part of the Pictou County Recreation Program which means they are also included in the major trips that PC rec. provides. Beach Days and Movie Night are also a part of rec. The rec leaders are university students that are hired for the summer. This program has been in place for 20 years.

The village of Springville has hosted a Children’s Summer Recreation Program for many years. Children from each of the eighteen communities are invited to participate for a minimal fee ( free if it needs to be). This past summer (2010), Plymouth Community Centre hosted a L.A.R.K. (leisure and recreational activities for kids) Program. Pictou County Cycle offers a mapped bike route throughout the Valley and there is a Trails system being worked on which is a community involved project to create a shared use recreational trail for all ages. Visit the website for more details <http://ervtrail.50webs.com>.

### **Youth Involvement**

**4-H** - The SBI 4-H club is a local branch of the provincial and national 4-H program, offering projects and learning opportunities for youth from ages 10-21. SBI stands for Springville, Bridgeville and Island East River; these were the original communities

served by the club. Originally a homemaking club formed in 1964, girls participated in sewing, crafts and foods projects. In the early 1980's, a number of new projects were offered and membership opened to offer projects to boys in the area. The geographic area of members also expanded, with numerous families from Churchville to Sunny Brae participating. A long list of projects have been offered over the years: Sewing, Crafts, Foods, Cake Decorating, Heritage, Photography, First Aid, Scrapbooking, Outdoorsman, Welding, Dairy, Poultry, Swine, Market Turkey, Beef, Waterfowl, Rabbit, and Light Horse.

In addition to project work, members and leaders have been actively involved in the community. One major project was completed in 1989 when the club restored a pioneer cemetery in Bridgeville. Ongoing community service projects include Christmas carolling to local senior citizens, sponsoring a needy family at Christmas, rural beautification, and collecting for the Canadian Cancer Society.

Over the 48 years of SBI club activities, members have been very successful at local and provincial competitions. Our 4-Hers have participated in Public Speaking and Demonstration competitions at all levels and project work is always of high quality. Members and leaders have also been awarded many National Travel awards, reflecting the enthusiasm and commitment of the club's participants. The 4-H motto is "Learn To Do By Doing" and SBI 4-Hers continue to learn life skills and gain valuable experiences that will serve them well in the future.

### **Authentic Respect for Seniors**

The Golden Glen Seniors in Plymouth received their Certificate of Achievement as the first seniors group in Pictou County on September 26th, 1977. It is the oldest seniors group in Pictou County.

Heating the room in the winter became a problem, so we met in members homes for a time. We approached the Plymouth Firemen, and they welcomed us to their hall for as long as we have a need.

The group meets at the Plymouth Fire Hall every Tuesday. We have a business meeting once a month, play 45's, there is a collection of a one dollar a week.

We recognize member's birthdays, celebrated Christmas with a Chinese Dinner; in the spring we have lobster Supper, and at the last meeting before the summer break, we enjoy Strawberry Shortcake.

We make a donation to LORDA. We also have made donations to Valley View Villa to buy a VCR/DVD player and to help fund wheelchairs.

The Golden Glen Seniors are always ready to welcome new members.

### **Unique and Lasting Partnerships**

The idea for the community kiosk initiative came out of the strategic planning sessions that Pictou Regional Development Association has been facilitating with the East River

Valley Community Development Group. Beginning in May 2005 community meetings were held in various areas in the fifteen villages of the East River Valley. The group identified the kiosk as a priority project.

We organized “community kiosk teams” from each of the interested villages (Churchville, Eureka, Hopewell and Sunny Brae), also a main body called the East River Valley Community Development Association was organized to develop community partnerships and to oversee the kiosk project. Our community kiosk teams met regularly and continuously researched historical information about each of the kiosk communities that helped explain the wonderful history of the East River Valley.

Future economic activity and tourism growth can also result by establishing these community kiosks in the areas of the East River Valley. The kiosks will direct the visitor to walk-about the community and explore its historical and cultural past. Other benefits include increased tourist visitation, promotion of the history and culture of the East River Valley, development of cultural and eco-tourism, living museums and themed tourist routes. All this leads to rural economic development, growth and hope for the future. The development of the kiosks will also encourage community pride and a sense of accomplishment. Establishing community kiosks will also generate other celebrations, occasions and events to increase tourist visitation. We hope to promote this concept as a community kiosk heritage tour in the future.

Partners of the project included: ERVCDA, PRDA, ACOA, community groups. East River Valley has become a best practice with the kiosk project, and today 14 other communities in the process of establishing community kiosks in their rural areas.

### **Listens to one another to form better decisions**

In August 2009, a small group of concerned citizens formed the executive of the Plymouth Community Centre. The Centre had been used over the past 40 years but as population decreased, etc. the building fell into a desperate state and some community members felt that perhaps it should be demolished or sold. As a group of five, we developed a strategic plan, and put it into action. The first thing on our agenda was to get people into the building. We needed money to put oil in the tank. We hosted craft sales, light exchanges, garden parties, anything to bring people in. It worked, and after receiving grant money for improvements and repairs, the main hall has been beautified and made more attractive by painting it with modern colors and cleaning and waxing the floor, placing electric heat in certain areas, repairing the furnace, building an outdoor gazebo and access ramp. The result is many bookings for weddings, birthday parties, baby showers, Municipal Council meetings, jam sessions, and exercise classes.

We have achieved our initial goal and in doing so have cemented our belief that if we build it they will come. Our next project, currently underway, is the complete renovation of the Seniors Room. To be in use by February 2011. As well as being used for weekly card parties; the room will be rented for meetings, etc. to create a revenue that will help sustain the building.

By working together as a unified group of concerned citizens, we were able to make the best decision possible for the community center and are very proud to say that it is a thriving heart of our community.

### **Respects the environment**

**General Community Cleanup Day** – The East River Valley Community residents participate in the annual Go Green Get Clean community clean up day. Preparation for the clean-up is just before Earth Day. The purpose of this community clean up day is to encourage residents to have pride in their community and reduce litter in order to beautify the community they live in and increase their quality of place. Friends, families, service clubs and community groups are encouraged to register and participate in cleaning up an area of their town, municipality, or neighborhood.

### **Respects faith-based groups in the community**

The ERV has a number of United and Presbyterian churches. United in Bridgeville & Hopewell. Presbyterian in Springville, St Paul's, Sunny Brae & Hopewell. The church groups are very involved in the communities and are always remembering those who are ill or shut-in.

The First Presbyterian Church in Hopewell has three children's/youth groups which run on Wednesday evenings. The youngest members are the Jewels, who are from three to seven years of age; the next group are the Gems who are eight to ten years of age and the last group is the Youth Group. We have over thirty children registered. Each evening we have Bible stories/ or mission stories, crafts and games.

Each year we follow the A Mission Learning/Sharing Experience for Children and Youth sponsored by the AMS. The ladies from the AMS often come for a special night to share foods, stories and songs from the countries we study. Last fall we did another special project earning money for a "Flock of Hope". Last year we also adopted as secret pals, and visited with, the Riverview Residential Center- making special cards, crafts and entertaining them at the Center.

We conduct church services throughout the year and put on a Christmas Concert. We love to celebrate the special days of the year- Valentine's Day, Easter, Halloween, Christmas to name a few. We make special crafts and often have a party time. We also have a March Break Day camp and Vacation Bible School in the summer.

We couldn't run this without volunteers. It is wonderful to see how many Youth Group and Gems members come out early each evening to help with the Jewels. It is a wonderful learning experience for these young people. It shows they have the spirit of future volunteers for our communities.