

2015

# Lieutenant Governor's Community Spirit Award

## Spryfield





## Preface

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I want to thank you for taking the time to review the community of Spryfield's application for the Lieutenant Governor's Community Spirit Award.

I think it is time for Nova Scotia to discover Spryfield as the beautiful, active, diverse, and supportive community that those of us who live here know it to be.

When I was five years old, my parents decided they had enough; they left my four siblings and I in a mall and never came back. We had no friends and no family in Canada. We were separated and I ended up being raised in foster homes in the Spryfield area. This community clothed me, educated me, fed me, and picked me up whenever I fell. Though I was not born in this community, it quickly became my home.

Thirty-five years later, my wife and I are raising our two children here, and I am now the MLA for the area. This is a community that did not judge me for my beginnings and forgave me for my mistakes; this is a community that sees the good in people when others don't and reaches out a hand to help you when you stumble.

I think it is time we return the favour and celebrate the people of Spryfield for all the good they do!

Thank you,

Brendan Maguire  
Proud MLA for Spryfield



The following Spryfield organizations have come together to nominate their community for The Lieutenant Governor's Community Spirit Award:

Boys and Girls Club of Spryfield	Chebucto Connections	Chebucto Family Centre	Family SOS
In the Loop	Mainland South Heritage Society	St Paul's Family Resources Institute	Spryfield Business Development Commission
	Urban Farm Museum of Spryfield Society	YWCA	

### Spryfield - A Rich History

The story of Spryfield has a consistent theme throughout its history; diverse, hard-working families coming together to build a community.

The origins of Spryfield are found in an agricultural heritage that began in the late 1700s. Nine Halifax business owners were each granted 500-acre parcels in the area then known as Leiblin Manor. Between 1769 and 1773, Captain William Spry purchased and developed three of the Leiblin Manor lots. This land came to be known as Spry's fields, and ultimately evolved into what is present day Spryfield.

Spry was a member of the British Corps of Engineers and served as Chief Engineer for the colony of Nova Scotia. He is credited with significant improvements of the Citadel, as well as the construction of Forts Needham and Massey. He returned to England in 1783 and sold his land holdings to George McIntosh, a Captain in the Militia, who further acquired the remaining Leiblin lots on the western side of the Northwest Arm.

McIntosh subdivided several of his 500-acre parcels, encouraging families to settle and farm in the area. Some of these farmers came from Lunenburg, descendants of the German foreign Protestants. Others, like the Sutherland and Kidston families, were of Scottish origin. The new farm families harvested their produce and butchered their meat to sell at the Halifax market.

Spryfield opened its first school in 1859, with 16 pupils in attendance. The teacher was Elizabeth Sutherland, whose grandfather had settled in the community in 1816. The 1859 school house also provided for spiritual needs within the community, doubling as the local



Church of England. It would be another 90 years before other religious denominations built a house of worship in this community.

In 1900, the Kidston family started a dairy and delivered milk to local families and to stores in Halifax. Growth and development continued in the community, and by 1903 Spryfield was home to a general store and licensed hotel - The Pinegrove. The hotel catered to travelers, as well as to sports fishermen and hunters, as well as city residents on day trips to the area.

Following the First World War, Spryfield experienced an increase in population, as returning soldiers found that Spryfield had affordable land for sale. This was attractive opportunity for those who were keen to begin their post-war lives. By this time however, farming was in decline; increasingly Spryfield's sons and daughters had taken jobs in Halifax factories. The end of the Second World War brought about yet another population boom, and new housing developments began to appear.

On January 1, 1969, Spryfield amalgamated with the City of Halifax. This brought both challenge and change to the community. The Greystone public housing and low-rent apartments were built in the early 1970s; increasing our population and need for services.

## Unique Strengths

### *Geographic Location*

Spryfield lies within Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), in the area called Mainland South. Although primarily an urban enclave, the community is nestled around lakes, woodland, fields and rocky barrens. We have an abundance of natural beauty that is unique to an urban community, and we are determined to preserve our natural environment.

### *Our People*

Spryfield is rich in diversity. With a large portion of the population composed of visible minorities, and a larger immigrant population than other areas of HRM, we are made stronger by our differences. This diversity promotes the sharing of our stories, and has produced a culture of embracing those who are new to the community.

In the words of Darlene MacLean, Executive Director of the Boys and Girls Club of Spryfield;

*"The community of Spryfield is a place where you easily get to know people. They speak to you and chat with you at the bus stops and grocery stores. They know you by your first name, and when you or someone in your family is not well, everyone is there to support you, no matter what your circumstances are. There is always a helping hand, a kind word, useful information and someone around that can do just about anything to help! Bartering happens when someone has no money; people gather together when there is an emergency, like the fire that happened in the community here a few years ago. The community responded right away with locations for people to stay, food, blankets, drives to places, toys, books, places for children to go."*



### *Our Challenges*

Spryfield has long struggled with the level of education amongst its residents. If taken purely at face value, an unemployment rate comparable to other parts of HRM could easily mask this core issue. According to province-wide statistics in the early 2000s, a much higher percentage of our population did not complete high school. With great courage, and recognition of the need for change, the community has rallied to support education opportunities for youth. A shining example is the *Pathways to Education Program*; celebrated for helping more young adults graduate from high school.

Residents have also identified that access to public transportation services is an issue, as current service levels prove difficult for those commuting to work in other parts of the city.

Finally, another on-going challenge has been a long-standing negative public perception of Spryfield — in the media and in the general public, as well as in politics. This unfair judgement is rooted in the channeled of low income housing to the community in the 1970s, and the identified challenges around education. Despite crime rates actually being lower in Spryfield than other areas of HRM, this attitude persists.

Our people are not afraid to speak up when the community is unfairly stereotyped in the media. A culture of a hard day's work, and a community mindedness within Spryfield, fuels a "salt of the earth"-pride amongst our people. Those who truly care about this community practice an honourable and ethical attitude; something that unfortunately is overlooked. Just this past July a Good Samaritan found over \$13,000 in cash that was lost in the Spryfield area and returned it. This action shows an attitude of caring and empathy that is widespread in Spryfield. Honest people live in this community.

This Community Spirit Award application demonstrates, this is a community that chooses to believe in itself; in its people. It finds strength in standing tall against stereotypes, and in bringing people together to work as a team. We come together to celebrate our successes, and to care for each other as a rule, rather than the exception.

### *Our Non-Profit Organizations*

The source of our strength - the very backbone of our community -are the various community-based, community-driven non-profit organizations. There are over 40 non-profit groups in Spryfield, all committed to the making the community stronger; allowing residents to better themselves. The groups work with the community in areas of social support, education, and recreation. They work tirelessly to help our children, our families, and our seniors. Below is just a few examples of the some of our organizations that make Spryfield a great place to live:

- ❖ **Boys and Girls Club of Spryfield:** The Boys and Girls Club promotes healthy development of children and youth. Opened in 1997, they have provided programming based on needs identified by the club participants and the community itself. Our *After School Program* (5 -12 years) fosters a sense of belonging, personal empowerment, achievement, and self-confidence. Through semi-structured programs, the children develop life skills, and the knowledge that they need to reach their full potential. For older youth (13-16 years), we offer the *Rogers Raising the Grade* technology and mentoring program. This highly successful program gives



them the tools to excel in school, to explore their personal interests, and connect with mentors, tutors and friends, all while enhancing their digital literacy.

The club offers a physical activity program called Cool Moves, a healthy eating program called *Kids in the Kitchen*, *Artists' Corner*, *Sewing Club*, *Mad Science*, *Techy Tuesday*, *Passport Program*, *Game Tech*, and *Torch Club* leadership development program to name a few. In addition, there are Day Camps on school Professional Development days and a summer day camps in July and August.

- ❖ **Chebucto Connections:** Since it started nearly 40 years ago, *Chebucto Connections* has been nurturing the spirit of collaboration and community pride. The innovative Multi-Service System was established to bring agencies and services together to provide a supportive network for local residents. Bringing together the City of Halifax, Spryfield Lions Club, and the Province - spearheaded by Premier Buchanan - *Chebucto Connections* was instrumental in the establishment of the Captain William Spry Community Centre. This brought a swimming pool, library, community meeting spaces, and a variety of services into one space.

*Spryfield Area Family Support Task Force* is facilitated by Chebucto Connections. Service providers in the Task Force have launched a variety of literacy projects for children, and produce the Spryfield Book Bonanza every spring.

*Friends for Life* is a multi-disciplinary team that facilitates an anxiety prevention program for 1,800 local elementary children from 2013-2018. *Pathways to Education* is hosted by Chebucto Connections to improve high school graduation rates.

- ❖ **Chebucto Family Centre:** The Chebucto Family Centre provides a place for all community members to access programs and services free of charge. Nearly 1000 people utilize the centre every year, and make good use of our various parenting programs. Prenatal Classes, Child and Preschool programs, Fitness, Mental Health programs, life skills/cooking classes, and in-home services are delivered. Onsite childcare is provided for people while they are attending programs.

Of specific note, the centre is home to the only Volunteer Doula program in the province. The program currently has 180 volunteers, providing thousands of hours of service annually. Forty percent of people accessing this program are newcomers to Canada.

The centre also offers an Income Tax Clinic, Dal Legal Aid Services, a clothing and trading cupboard where people can find basic needs, toiletries and clothing at no charge. Bus tickets and taxi chits are provided to support community members facing transportation barriers. In addition, approximately 15 community events are hosted annually; allowing neighbours to share a meal and conversation.

The centre is privileged to work and collaborate alongside many community organizations and partners. One example that comes to mind is the partnership with J. L. Ilsley High School. We host student placements annually, providing youth with work experience and mentorship. J. L. Ilsley has built and delivered 2 new sandboxes for our play yard, in which the entire community can benefit from.



- ❖ **Family SOS:** Community is a strong focus at Family SOS. They believe that through building stronger families we will have stronger communities. Our *Healthy Kidz* program is focused on the Greystone area and is an annual summer block party attended by over 300 people. The day consists of games, bouncy castles, a BBQ and a 'Greystone Idol' singing competition for youth aged 6 to 18 years.

The organization hosts a variety of family focused activities. This year alone, some 350 community members attended the annual haunted house. A Christmas dinner prepared by our *Healthy Teenz* youth group is served to our *Healthy Kidz* participants and their families. These events showcase the true spirit of Spryfield, and what can happen when community members work together.

- ❖ **In The Loop Community Group:** The mission of this non-profit organization is to promote our rich culture through community engagement. Members share a common bond — pride in where they live and a commitment to showcase this local culture. They host events within the community, and reach out to residents of other areas.

The very first event hosted by *In the Loop* was a yard sale throughout the neighbourhoods of the Sambro loop. This was a huge success, and found residents and visitors swapping stories and goods across a yard sale table. In promoting the wonderful diversity found in Spryfield, the group assisted the Ethiopian Society with their community event. This event celebrated Ethiopian culture through music and food, and brought people together to share in the lives of others.

- ❖ **St. Paul's Family Resource Centre:** St. Paul's Family Resources Institute undertakes an outreach of love and caring for people whose needs are economic, social or educational. They are committed to helping individuals become more self-sustaining. Over the past thirty years they have served the community through a variety of programs. They currently operate a food bank, Food Bank Café, community volunteer income tax program, a Christmas hamper program, school-break camps for children 5-12 years old and a Christmas toy store.

One of the most successful programs has been the John Umlah Community Garden - named for the man who previously farmed the land on which the church sits. The program, now in its 21<sup>st</sup> year, provides facilities and equipment to those who wish to grow organic produce for their families. Over 40 gardeners, who vary in age, education, and ethnic back-grounds, work together to make the garden better. As well, children from our summer day camps participate in growing a collective garden, which when harvested is donated to St. Paul's Family Resources Food Bank.

- ❖ **YWCA:** Since opening our doors on Herring Cove Road in 2012, YWCA Halifax has greatly benefited from the community's wisdom, energy and support.

The organization has been involved in a wide range of initiatives that nurture the health of the community. Examples of the shared community-organization commitment of to the well-being of our citizens include:



- The launch of the *ECHO Hub*, a shared model of service delivery for community service providers, allowing them to streamline service access by working together;
- Community participation on the Advisory Committee of the YWCA's Bridge to Self-Sufficiency, a case management employability program for women in Spryfield. Advisory Committee members volunteer to support Spryfield women living in poverty to find their way back to school, and work to address the financial sustainability of their households;
- Ongoing community collaboration and coordination to address food security, including the Urban Farm, YWCA's Food First Program, community gardens and food banks;
- Referrals to the YWCA's free women's wellness clinic, a partnership between the IWK and YWCA;
- The Chebucto Junior Hockey Association and the volunteer run tournaments and jamborees for young hockey players throughout HRM; and,
- Ongoing support by parents at the YWCA's Spryfield Child Care Centre to the broader community, through fundraising activities and leadership in initiatives affecting childcare planning throughout the province.

Our community universally agrees that YWCA Halifax, through supports for girls, women, newcomers and immigrants, directly contributes to improving the fabric of the Spryfield Community. Their childcare centre in Spryfield works with families to ensure healthy development and school readiness of our children. Continually at full capacity, and with 90% of families in receipt of government subsidy, this childcare service plays a critical role in poverty alleviation and women's empowerment and participation in the workforce.

#### *Our Recreational Facilities*



### **Citizen Participation**

#### *Volunteers*

The success of this community is grounded in the many local volunteers who help to make it a better place to live and work. In addition to the ten community organizations that are nominating Spryfield for this award, there are numerous other organizations active in the community.

Parent-Teacher associations, the Lions Club, a minor hockey association, a ringette association (plus many other sports associations), Williams Lake Conservation Company, McIntosh Run Watershed Association, Girl Guides of Canada, the Scouting movement, seniors groups, school breakfast and lunch programs, a family resource centre, community



gardens groups, and various smaller neighbourhood associations all make our home the dynamic, caring place it is. When people care about their community, they willingly volunteer. Spryfield is a testament to what community spirit and character can accomplish.

#### *A Helping Hand*

When the *Boys and Girls Club of Spryfield* lost everything 6-years ago due to a fire, the response from the community was overwhelming. Within 2-weeks, the club was running again because the citizens of Spryfield responded to the need in their community. The donations of space, equipment, office supplies and money made it possible for the club to re-open almost immediately.

More recently, *Chebucto Connections* suffered severe damage to their premises from a flood. Once again, the amazing people of Spryfield came forward with a helping hand. Chebucto Connections collects Prom Dresses to give out to graduates that may not be able to afford a dress for their Prom Night. Unfortunately, these dresses were damaged during the flood. Recognition of the special place Chebucto Connections holds in the community came in the form of over 250 dresses donated after news of the flood. This not only supplied the graduates of the Pathways program, but also to help many other graduates look good on their special day.

#### *Our Seniors*

We value our seniors and the important role they play in our community. The *Golden Age Social Club* provides a safe place for seniors to meet and enjoy some company. The club hosts darts and cribbage each week, and dances throughout the year. Also, the Spryfield Legion hosts numerous events for seniors such as their monthly dance and lunch; encouraging activity and social interaction.

#### *Holiday Dinner hosted by Brendan Maguire, MLA and the BGC*

The second annual Holiday Dinner was held at the Boys and Girls Club of Spryfield last December. Over 40 volunteers helped serve dinner to over 100 people from the community. The attendance more than doubled at this event over the previous year and is expected to be even larger next year!

#### *Community BBQ*

Last summer marked the first Community BBQ co-hosted by our local politicians and several community groups. Over 700 people joined together to enjoy a beautiful August day at Ravenscraig Field. The event included a petting zoo, children's games, a bouncy castle and live entertainment. This family day was filled with activities for both the children and adults, and there was a great mix of long-time residents and newcomers.

#### *Kyle Henneberry Memorial Ball Hockey Tournament*

On June 25, 2011 we tragically lost one of our own - 21 year old Kyle Henneberry died in a motor vehicle accident. The community responded to this tragedy by creating a tribute Ball Hockey Tournament in his name, with the proceeds funding a Scholarship at JL Hsley High School. For the past 3 years, young people throughout the area and beyond join together for a friendly Ball Hockey Tournament. Each year the tournament grows larger, thanks to the hard working volunteers responsible for planning the event.



## Community Pride

### *Spryfield Beautification*

The Spryfield and District Business Commission has helped showcase Spryfield as a good steward of both the built and natural environment. Their Beautification Program installs flower baskets and street banners throughout the business district in the spring and summer and, in the holiday season, they put up Christmas wreaths. From May to October they help sponsor the Landscaper Challenge, where local landscapers plant and care for flower boxes throughout the community. The *Chebucto News* promotes the program and the participating businesses, and at the end of the growing season they announce the winner. Another initiative is the Streetscape Program, in partnership with HRM, has brought improvements to the Herring Cove Road and to the entrances to the Captain Spry Community Centre.

### *Spryfield Harvest Festival*

One of the biggest celebrations in the community is the Spryfield Village Harvest Festival - four days of cultural activities and events, and a whole lot of fun. It highlights both local and ethnic food, and provides opportunities to explore a variety of cultures. Partnering with the Urban Farm Museum of Spryfield Society, St. Paul's Family Resources Institute, Spryfield Boys and Girls Club, the YWCA, City Church, Metro Works, Chebucto Connections, Spryfield Lions Club, Spryfield Legion and various other local churches and community groups, this annual festival attracts a wide range of visitors to Spryfield.

### *Santa Claus Parade*

The Spryfield Santa Claus parade is a tradition in the community, marking its 41<sup>st</sup> anniversary last year. The event is actually the longest running Santa Claus Parade east of Montreal - a point of great pride amongst our residents. Each year, thousands of people line Herring Cove Road to cheer on the local organizations, businesses, schools and bands, as they show their festive community pride. This parade attracts local residents and enthusiastic visitors alike.

## Creating an Enduring Community

### *Understanding our Past*

In order to create an enduring community, we must understand and embrace our past. The Mainland South Heritage Society has been in existence for well over 20 years, and preserves the history, traditions and culture of our area. Members routinely gather photographs and stories to build an archive for future generations. Their efforts only confirm that we are a very vibrant community, with a rich history.

The group also speaks with seniors, preserving their life stories and seeing their lovely artifacts from their lives. Many are happy to entrust us with their highly coveted family treasures, so that we may copy and protect these items for future generations. As word of the society's work has spread, numerous people seek out their expertise and view the collection.

The society's archives and outreach activities bring about an understanding of the real history and heritage of Spryfield.



#### *Food Security*

The Urban Farm links children, youth, adults and seniors with our agricultural heritage. People can visit the farm on any day of the week, and participate in a variety of learning opportunities. Volunteers share their skills and develop new ones, passing their knowledge and enthusiasm. By promoting local, seasonal eating in Spryfield, the farm is celebrating the past, and helping to produce a healthy, safe food supply for the future.

#### *Community Collaboration*

Chebucto Connections has been a faithful advocate for meeting the needs of the community. Through the Multi-Service Roundtable, networks, partnerships and collaborations focus efforts on local priorities. With a focus on community development and capacity building, the roundtable harnesses the various strengths of our non-profits, so as to respond quickly to the needs of the community.

E.C.H.O. (Eastern Chebucto Hub Organization) helps agencies better serve the community. Collaboration allows groups enhance service sustainability, resiliency, and capacity. This arrangement also facilitates clients and agencies having a central location to meet, reducing travel by residents when they access the services they need.

#### *Protecting our Environment*

There are several community groups dedicated to providing our residents with natural trails and protecting our waterways. The Long Lake Park Association is working to develop more trails throughout the park that can be easily accessed by the residents of Spryfield. Also, the MacIntosh Run Community Trail was developed by a community group and is a much used Active Transportation Trail. There are also freshwater lakes in Spryfield that are enjoyed by the residents all summer long.

#### **Final Words**

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The true character of Spryfield is evident in the synergy of the ten nominating organizations, along with many others in the community. These groups are only some of the leaders who make a positive influence on Spryfield; on how individuals and families prosper, and overcome challenges in their lives. The long tradition of caring for one another has sustained Spryfield through tough times, and helped polish this jewel on the outskirts of Halifax. Volunteerism defines us, and giving back for the help we receive is engrained in us. We are built on values, which means our foundation is strong.

Ten years of a building boom means Spryfield is growing. This growth is welcomed, and the attention makes a positive contribution to the community. More affordable housing means that adults who grew up in Spryfield can stay close to their parents, raise families, and keep our home the vital, dynamic community it has grown to be.

The final word goes to Darlene MacLean of the Boys and Girls Club, "This truly is a community where people take pride in their homes, help their neighbours, join in to help out a stranger and give you a great sense of belonging to something that is so unique."









### **(1) A Brief History of Washabuck**

Situated in the centre of the Island of Cape Breton, surrounded by the waters of the internationally fêted Bras d' Or Lake lays the community of Washabuck. Undeniably, the native Mi'kmaq people were these waters earliest navigators. The name Washabuck is of Mi'kmaq origin, the most likely meaning being "an angle of land (Washabuck Peninsula) formed between a river (Washabuck River) and a lake (Bras d' Or Lake). For centuries fishermen and traders from France reconnoitred its shoreline, with Loyalists later settling more out-lying lands, before the pioneer Hebridean Scottish Gaels, made Washabuck their new homeland in 1817.

Two ships, *Ann* and *Harmony*, arrived in Sydney Harbour carrying Gàidhlig immigrants some of whom settled in Washabuck and these were joined by a second influx of settlers in 1821. Pioneer families dignifying clan names of MacKinnon, MacNeil, MacLean and MacKay merged with families named MacAulay, MacIver, Munro, MacDougall, MacKenzie, MacDonald, Sutherland, Ross, Matheson, creating a thriving mosaic hamlet.

During the ensuing two centuries these intrepid pioneers and their descendants gradually established themselves and advanced their humble homesteads into a maturing community. The pursuit of farming, fishing and forestry activities became traditional industries that were rewarded with the erection of government wharfs that in-turn helped the community sustain itself and even flourish economically. Commodities including, pit-props, pulpwood, lumber, livestock, farm-produce, fish, and shell-fish were transported and marketed via these wharves by vessels and steamers while expediting passage for the travellers along the same corridor. A matrix of roads gradually connected residences, stores, schools, a church, and post-office stations.

Washabuck's heritage has been perpetuated by its Gàidhlig culture. Traditional pipes and fiddle melodies and Gàidhlig airs now enriched with a palette of supplementary instruments, reflect the lyrical strains and harmonic voices that today captivate world audiences.

### **(2) THEN AND NOW:**

The forest has reclaimed much of the farm land originally wrestled from it in the early eighteen hundreds. Gone are our government wharfs, store, gas pump, post offices, schools, and regularly scheduled Church services, all victims of drastically diminishing population and numerous other circumstances. Now we are barely fifty permanent residents; in 2014, through a Canadian Automobile Association campaign, our main exit road, known as "The Gillis Point Road" was voted "The Worst Road in the Atlantic Provinces". Yet this is a community that will not, ever, die; the memories, stories, and personalities of the past, shared and remembered in the present by and with young and old, with nostalgia, pride, humor and/or pathos are kept alive through tales told around



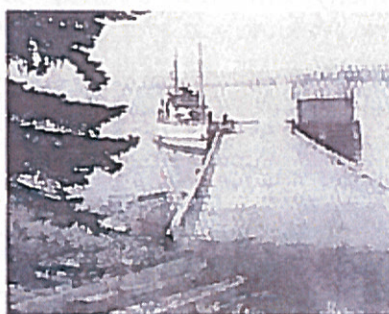
summer camp fires, winter wood stoves, numerous house parties, and community ceilidhs.

It is difficult to accurately describe the tremendous "sense of place" possessed by Washabuck residents, but we will try. For example, the site where our Co-op store stood is still called "Marjorie's," even though both long-time storekeeper Marjorie and her store are gone and many who now use the appellation remember neither; the site of our last government wharf is still referred to as "Down at the Wharf" and "Murdock's Beach" is the prime summer swimming spot, although both wharf and Murdock are no more. Many of the present homesteads are still referred to by the names of the original homesteaders and families.

Many changes have taken place since 1817, but the enduring sense of loyalty and commitment to family, community, and neighbour, and the pride that these ties engender, locally and beyond, make this a very special place to be.



Marjorie MacLean in front of the "OLD"  
Washabuck CO-OP



Down at the Wharf



Murdock's Beach

There is much more to tell, let's start with our **Community Centre**, the heart and hub of the community.

### **(3) The Washabuck Community Centre:**

The Washabuck Community Centre, originally a one room schoolhouse opened in 1949 and closed in 1972, is our "go-to" place. The metamorphosis from its humble beginnings to its present "ideal" multipurpose state did not occur without extreme determination, hard work, long range planning, and commendable foresight on the part of numerous community members, many since deceased. However, the "community spirit" torch was continually passed on to younger residents, assuring there has been continuous attention paid to the Centre's care and development.

When the last Washabuck school closed in 1972 the community felt the land and building should be kept for community purposes; following negotiations, in 1973 the property was transferred from the Municipality of Victoria to the newly formed Washabuck Community Centre Association (Incorporated in 2000 under the Societies Act of Nova Scotia.) From that time to the present day, continuous and varied fundraising efforts, beginning with weekly card games to help pay maintenance and insurance, and assisted through numerous successful grant applications (e.g., "Little