

2014

Submission - Lieutenant Governor's
Community Spirit Award



Gordon Kerr

St. Peter's Economic Development

Organization

3/25/2014



Introduction

This nomination is submitted on behalf of the St. Peter's and area communities and was prepared with input from many volunteer organizations in the community. The Village of St. Peter's has an estimated population of between 800-900 although there is no recent census data. No efforts were taken to estimate the population of the surrounding area. This nomination begins with a history of St. Peter's and continues with stories and evidence to address the four essential criteria and finishes with supplemental evidence of our spirit. You should find, of particular interest, the **YouTube video**, [St. Peter`s Canal](#),

History of St. Peter`s

St. Peter's is one of North America's oldest European establishments. Prior to the arrival of the French, it was a Portuguese trading and fishing post named Santo Pedro in the 16th century. It was abandoned by Portugal in the early 17th century, and taken over by France in the 1630s when a small fortified settlement named Saint-Pierre was built by merchants from La Rochelle, France on the isthmus. In 1650, La Rochelle merchant Nicolas Denys took possession of Saint-Pierre and encouraged the fur trade with local members of the Mi'kmaq Nation who used the isthmus as a canoe portage route between the Atlantic Ocean and Bras d'Or Lake. In addition to establishing a fur trading post, Denys later used the isthmus as a "haulover road" for portaging small sailing ships from Bras d'Or Lake to the Atlantic and vice versa.^[1]

The village of St. Peter's was founded early in the 1800s. Local residents rehabilitated Denys's old "haulover road", laying wood skids for portaging small sailing ships across the isthmus. The route through Bras d'Or Lake was considered a much shorter and safer voyage to Sydney than travelling around the exposed southern coast of Cape Breton Island. In 1825 a feasibility study into building a canal was undertaken. Construction of the St. Peters Canal began in 1854 and took 15 years of digging, blasting and drilling through a solid granite hill 20m high (66ft) to build a channel 800m long (2,600ft) with an average width of 30m (100 ft). The canal opened in 1869 at the dawn of the industrial age on Cape Breton Island.

More Recent History

The Village of St. Peter's was incorporated in 1939. The Village has five volunteer Commissioners whose mission is to utilize its resources in accordance with Municipal Legislation to enhance the quality of life, both material and cultural, for the greater advancement of its people. The volunteer Commissioners operate the wastewater treatment plant, manage infrastructure and beautification, and govern all other village matters on behalf of its residents. The Commissioners also volunteer on the Board of Directors for the St. Peter's-Samsonville & Area Water Utility. The Commissioners take pride in the beautification and accomplishments of the Village and are proud of the service they provide to its citizens.

Story contributed by Rena Robertson, Village of St. Peter's.



1/ Building on Unique Strengths

a) St. Peter's is Located on the St. Peter's Canal National Historic Site, an area with historical and cultural heritage dating back to the 17th century. There is a unique beauty and functionality to the area that was recognized by the Mi'kmaq peoples and the first settlers from Europe who gravitated naturally to the site. There remains an integrated community of Mi'kmaq, Acadian and Scottish ancestors. This is where a canal was built to service commercial vessels and more recently recreational vessels. This is why a Marina was built and maintained by the Lions Club which is being developed into a successful commercial enterprise.

The Nicolas Denys Museum is situated on the hill overlooking the St. Peter's Canal and commemorates the life of the seventeenth century French explorer, trader and colonizer. It preserves much of the cultural heritage from some of the earliest European contacts with the Mi'kmaq. The Museum is run by the volunteers of the St. Peter's Community Club. Each summer there are seminars provided at the museum to celebrate this cultural history.

b) St. Peter's is Located on Route 4, Grenville Street, which is one of three land routes that connects the Canso Causeway to the Fortress of Louisbourg, Sydney and Newfoundland. This has led to a vibrant business district on the main street that developed to service the high flow of traffic along route 4 and all the neighbouring communities. This thriving business community centres around our beautifully restored main street which is a pedestrian friendly focal point for the Village where a variety of shops provide access to everything from banking to hardware to groceries and so much more.

The Visitor Information Center in St. Peter's receives about 14,000 visitors annually. St. Peter's has become a hub of services not only for all the surrounding communities and for the summer boating community but also for the summer road traffic. There is a business directory listed on the www.visitstpeters website that lists all the businesses in the village. This website is currently maintained by VOCA volunteers.

The business district is so vibrant that a Tim Horton's franchise was established in the center of the Village and it is so picturesque that this franchise made it onto a nationally broadcast Tim Horton's commercial.

c) St. Peter's is Located in a mixing pot of musical talent - St. Peter's Kitchen Rackets St. Peter's and area, like many parts of Cape Breton, is rich in the Scottish and Irish music traditions. We have an abundance of highly skilled players and dancers of all ages, many coming from multi-generational musical families. St. Peter's is somewhat unique in its embrace of Acadian, Old Time, Bluegrass and Appalachian traditions, partly resulting from our mix of founding cultures, supplemented by a vibrant live music scene that engages people of all ages.

Capitalizing on this cultural resource, an informal group of amateur musicians volunteered to host musical events that could be promoted to the traveling public during the summer



ST. PETER `S – WHERE THE OCEAN MEETS THE INLAND SEA

months. Our first weekly Ceilidh on the Canal series began in 2006, hosted at Sessions Lounge in the Bras d'Or Lakes Inn.

We have been pursuing a strategy of marketing St. Peter's for its appeal to traveling amateur musicians – with the offer of providing them the opportunity to jam with authentic Cape Breton players, to share their styles and songs, to learn from each other. Since 2006, we have developed the brand of our programs around the name KitchenRackets. In 2011 we created the web site www.kitchenrackets.org.

A group of volunteers working in association with SPEDO further developed the KitchenRackets program to now include three successful annual events:

1. KitchenRackets@CelticColours: 8 nights of acoustic jam sessions open to traveling musicians from around the world, plus 5 days of music workshops presented by some of Cape Breton's top performers. Now in our 8th year of successful experience-building in association with Celtic Colours International Festival.
2. Music Camp on the Canal: now presenting our 3rd Annual weekend featuring instrument skills, composition and dance workshops, band labs, a community concert, jam sessions, communal meals and more....featuring top Cape Breton and traditional performers/instructors. Local businesses have provided bursaries for over a dozen students to attend Music Camp each year.
3. St. Peter's Summer Sessions: KitchenRackets volunteers produce and/or promote events including our original Ceildih, dinner music, jam sessions, open mikes, square dances, museum experiences, sailboat races and more.

With these annual programs, KitchenRackets creates opportunities for artisans and musicians to benefit economically from the events, and engages the community to participate with our visitors.

Story contributed by Greg Silver, Creator, Kitchen Rackets

2/ Citizen Participation

There is a very diverse group of volunteer organizations in St. Peter's and area and most are listed in the table below. Examples of activities some of these groups undertake are listed following table 1.

Table 1 – Volunteer Organizations (# of members)

Organization	#	Organization	#	Organization	#
Bonnie Brae Senior Citizens Club	42	St. Peter's Catholic Church Knights of Columbus	49	St. Peter's Fire Department	27
Camp Rankin	35	St. Peter's Community Club	8	St. Peter's Lion's Club	28
East Richmond ATV Riders	30	St. Peter's Christian Church		St. Peter's Play School	5
Friends of Leona –Pink Positive Team	22	St. Peter's Economic Development Org.(SPEDO)	16	St. Peter's United Church	14



		Kitchen Rackets.org	12		
Roddie’s Square Dance Society	12	Wallace MacAskill Yacht Club	15	Village On The Canal Association (VOCA)	10

The Village on the Canal Association (VOCA) has taken on specific projects to provide activities for both local citizens and tourists. These events include but are not limited to:

- Development and maintenance of www.visitstpeters.com which provides up to date information about community events.
- **Nicolas Denys Days** - Nicolas Denys Days is an annual week-long festival, held in the first week of August that strives to provide visitors to Cape Breton Island with an authentic Island experience. Last year the community partnered with Louisbourg 300 and provided an expanded program of historical Mi’kmaq and French experiences.
- **Festival of Trees** - Organized each November, and now in its 19th year, the Festival of Trees includes a full two days of activities showcasing local talent and providing a dazzling display of decorated trees entered by businesses, organizations and individuals in the area. Activities during the weekend include crafts, music, pictures with Santa, Santa’s workshop (stories and games), and a concert featuring many of the area’s youth.
- **Celtic Colours Concert** – VOCA applies for the concert location in St. Peter’s each year. A group of about 30 volunteers, provides the community support required of the Celtic Colours Festival and, most significantly, is renowned for the deep fried turkey supper provided to the performers and their entourage.



The **Friends of Leona** was formed in memory of Leona Burke and conducts fundraisers during the year to donate while attending the CIBC walk for the Cure in Sydney.

3/ Clear Evidence of Community Pride

Two weeks ago, a Facebook site was created called “Old Photos of St. Peter’s & Surrounding Area” which had 1,101 members on March 23rd, 2014. This is clearly a demonstration of the true St. Peter’s and area spirit.

Lighthouse, hydrants, flowers and mural

In June 2013 the Village submitted a business plan to take over the maintenance of the Jerome Point Lighthouse as an historical lighthouse. This was done in order to meet the deadline issued by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to declare Nova Scotia Lighthouses as surplus.



ST. PETER`S – WHERE THE OCEAN MEETS THE INLAND SEA

Take a drive through St. Peter's and you will be struck by the clear evidence of community pride. First you'll notice the fire hydrants painted in caricatures by students in the 1990's. For a view and description of all 25 hydrants follow this link to [St. Peter's photo essay](#). At the same time you'll notice the ever blooming flower pots hanging from the street lamps. The flowers, of course, are provided by our very own Greenhouse CO-OP. Next you see the new mural, painted by a Halifax artist and posted to cover the concrete landscape barrier by the United Church as you enter the Village from the west.



Wallace MacAskill

The community is very proud of one of its most famous citizens, Wallace MacAskill who became a renowned marine photographer in the 1920's. The house he grew up in is now preserved as the Wallace MacAskill Museum and is run by a group on volunteer citizens.

Canal Cutbacks

In November 2012 Parks Canada, the operator of the St. Peter's canal, announced **cutbacks to the hours and days of operation of the canal**. These cutbacks were not communicated clearly or consistently and visitors by sea were not happy when they found out they had to wait to get through the canal. Even commercial fishermen were delayed.

Initial complaints about the cutbacks came from the St. Peter's Marina. In the summer of 2013 the Wallace MacAskill Yacht Club developed a petition to request that Parks Canada review their decision. The **petition was signed jointly** by the Chief and Fisheries Manager of Potlotek, the President of the Inshore Fisherman's Association, the President of the St. Peter's Lions Club, the Warden of Richmond County and the Commodore of the Yacht Club. The petition was **presented to our Member of Parliament** for presentation in parliament. An online petition was also created at change.org which contains hundreds of comments from residents and visitors. The petition was followed by a **YouTube video, St. Peter's Canal**, which focused on the historical and current operational experience of the canal. The video was produced by a local resident, local musicians and a **cast of dozens from the community**. The video has received over 4,500 hits and we are optimistic that it and the petition efforts will have a positive effect on the future operation of the canal.

Fundraisers

The MacBouch Restaurant and Lounge hosts fundraisers for local citizens in need. Although there are no official records of these activities, discussions with staff provide the following numbers. *"If we have four or five benefits a year some are really good and none are really bad (below three thousand), not including trivia nights, then I would guess that it's fair to say **over five years we have raised approximately \$120,000-\$150,000**, give or take. For example in year one five benefits raised \$10,000; \$3,000; \$7,000; \$4,000 and \$8,000. I would definitely lean more towards the \$150,000 number and I would also add another \$10,000 for the 50/50 taking it to \$160,000"*.

Story contributed by Shelly Webb-Macrae, Manager, MacBouche Restaurant and Lounge



Live amateur music

The MacBouche also hosts Tuesday night music sessions which have become a consistently well attended event. Local musicians get on stage to perform their favourite songs. There is a huge amount of pride in the community for how well this is attended and how it attracts visitors, especially in the summer. The hosts of these "jams" or "open mic sessions" are often developing a music career and gain valuable experience with their performances.

4/ Focus on Creating the Enduring Community

St. Peter's & District Volunteer Fire Department

In the early morning on December 6th 1960 a large fire on the Main Street of St. Peter's highlighted the need to form a Volunteer Fire Department in St. Peter's.

The closest Fire Department was in Port Hawkesbury some 45 kilometres (45 minutes by fire truck). In the summer of 1963 the St. Peter's and District Volunteer Fire Department was formed. Fund raising was started involving people in neighbouring communities from River Bourgeois, Sampsonville, French Cove, Barra Head, L'Ardoise and Grand River.

The major fund raiser was weeklong activities which included bingos, street dances, suppers and ticket sales. These events continued annually for a number of years.

Over the years the Fire Department continued to grow both in the amount of equipment we purchased and the service we provide. In a survey that was done, people of our area wanted to see the Fire Department involved in Medical First Response. As a result we took courses and are now a registered MFR agency. We also do cold water rescue.

Over the years the Fire Department has been involved in the community of St. Peter's by providing first aid at large functions, providing traffic control at functions, information booths at the local school and information and demonstrations at the pre-school level. The twenty eight members of our Fire Department help protect our community and provide mutual aid to neighbouring Fire Departments.

Story contributed by Raymond Ferguson – Chief, St. Peter's Volunteer Fire Department

Lions Club

St. Peter's Lions Club plays a vital role in the promotion of our village. We provide financial support to our area schools and we also provide eye-glasses, groceries and travel assistance for medical reasons to local citizens who are unable to afford these costs. We have two Lions members who volunteer their time with the Canada Revenue Agency Income Tax Program assisting seniors and low income Canadians with their income tax forms. Our Lions Club also owns and operates a marina in the village and the boaters who use the marina have an estimated \$500,000. impact on the business community in St. Peter's. We work to promote boating on the beautiful Bras d'Or Lakes and to attract more tourists to visit our village. Besides the Marina, the Lions Club built and maintains a community hall, a ball field, a soccer field and a walking track in the community. They are well used and promoted throughout the community.



Story contributed by Kelvin Digout, President - St. Peter's Lions Club

St. Peter's Conceptual Plan (2008) and Tourism Strategic Plan (2013)

We wanted to make the Village more beautiful for our visitors along Route 4. This led to the St. Peter's Conceptual Plan (April 2008) which was developed by volunteers and a consultant over a 6 week period from mid February 2008 to March 2008. The volunteers had earlier formed a new organization, The St. Peter's Economic Development Organization (SPEDO), a not-for-profit group registered as a society in November of 2006 as an umbrella organization to represent volunteer organizations in St. Peter's. SPEDO has been responsible for implementation of this plan, together with ex-officio representatives from Richmond County Council and Strait-Highlands Regional Development Agency (SHRDA). They had a broad mandate to realize a community branding and positioning concept, a main street facade theme, a streetscape revitalization and overall conceptual community development plan for the Village of St. Peter's. The Main street facade improvement program has been completed and there have been many accolades for a job well done. One of our members was asked by the town of Port Hawkesbury for advice on implementing a similar plan.

Richmond County recently embarked on a new strategy for tourism which identified that St. Peter's should be targeted with a unique strategic tourism plan of its own. Again SPEDO was selected as the umbrella volunteer organization to work with consultants to develop and then implement the plan, along with the Municipality. The plan was completed in the spring of 2013 and is now in the implementation phase. The tagline developed to promote the area is "Where the Ocean meets the Inland Sea". The central 100% point of this plan is a new facility at the St. Peter's canal that is expected to develop the site into an experiential tourism destination. Spacial plans of the site have been presented to council and approved. Funding is being secured as well as a leasing agreement with Parks Canada. We are optimistic that ground will be broken at the site this summer.

Literacy

The **St. Peter's Library** is the newest branch of the Eastern Counties Regional Libraries. The library opened on July 9, 2012, replacing and expanding upon the services offered through the previous Library Links Community Site. The library has quickly become the busiest in the region. The number of registered users has gone from 186 in March 2012 to 497... a 167% increase. Circulation has increased to 12,565 (in the last twelve months)... a 274% increase. Programs at the library include three book clubs, children's summer reading, as well as story hour and crafts for kids. The librarian is very busy helping with the GED program held at the C@P site, providing workshops for adults including ornament making, craft making, using e-readers. She hosted numerous author readings and visits and has hosted visits from the Richmond Villa, School classes and Girl Guides and Brownies.

St. Peter`s also has a **C@P Site** at the same location where GED programs have been well attended and computer/internet facilities are available for public use.

Story contributed by Pamela Samson, Library Assistant - St. Peter's Library



Supportive Criteria

Wide-spread support for recreational and cultural activity

The **Wallace MacAskill Yacht Club** has been active for many years and has undertaken to run race a series the first week of August during Nicolas Denys days. Historically, two cups have been presented, the Wallace MacAskill Cup and the MacDonnell Cup. In 2013 a weekly Wednesday night race series was introduced with invitations to tourists to hop on a boat to enjoy the race.

The **Home Routes concert series** arrived in St. Peter’s two years ago and has arguably become the most successful concert location on the Atlantic tour. Six concerts a year are presented in the home of local residents with an average attendance of over 40 from a community of about 900 residents. For further evidence please see the letter from the Artistic Director of Home Routes in Appendix A.

Story contributed by Gordon Kerr, citizen.

The **East Richmond A.T.V. Riders Club** was incorporated on July 3rd, 1998 with the idea of building a multi-purpose trail. In the first years we worked on fund raising and presented the local Fire Department with a new rescue sleight (\$2500).

Beginning in 2004 we spent many hours meeting with D.N.R. officials, clearing brush and spent over \$300,000 building a trail and bridges on the old railroad bed from River Tillard to Louisdale. This trail will bring all communities together as we have received great help from L’Ardoise, Louisdale, Evanston and all communities in between. As soon as this trail is complete many events are planned including, but not limited to:

- bird watching
- hiking
- a special day for horseback riding
- motor cross
- ski trips
- bike & snowmobile rides

Other club activities not directly related to trail development include:

- Support to the Oceanview Wildlife Museum (maintenance and oversight).
- Assisted Camp Rankin by cutting logs and hauling rocks to the beach.
- Support Christmas Daddies with presents for needy children at Christmas.
- Helped repair the ball field in Sampsonville.
- Prepare a turkey dinner during Nicolas Denys days in St. Peter’s.

We have a very strong club and hope to keep it up in the future to make our community a peaceful and pleasant place to live.

Story contributed by Ann L. Carter, President – East Richmond A.T.V. Riders Club



Demonstration of youth involvement

Camp Rankin, located on the shores of the beautiful Bras d'Or Lake, began as a Centennial project of the Richmond County **4-H Leaders' Council**. Prior to 1966, summer camps for 4-H clubs were held in the area using rented tents and makeshift facilities, but they were far from satisfactory, especially if the weather was not cooperative. The idea of a permanent camp seemed a fitting commemoration of Canada's 100th birthday, while filling a definite need for our 4-H program. Our leaders and the local community embraced the idea and Camp Rankin officially opened in 1972.

The facilities were expanded when the Nova Scotia 4-H division of the Dept. of Agriculture recognized the potential of Camp Rankin as a camping facility for 4-H members throughout the Province. Each summer the Nova Scotia Dept. of Agriculture rents the camp and runs five camping weeks for 4-H members from across the Province. The balance of the camping season the camp is widely used by other youth groups, church groups, aboriginal groups, family reunions and other such functions, mainly by residents of St. Peter's area.

The camp has enjoyed great success, with the exception of one incident, when a fire, caused by spontaneous combustion, completely destroyed the main building. Quick action by the St. Peter's and Area Fire Department, assisted by neighbouring fire departments, contained the fire to one building. This could have spelled the end of Camp Rankin, but the indomitable community spirit of the St. Peter's area, quickly rallied to raise the camp from the ashes to be a bigger, more modern facility than the original.

This year marks the 42nd year of the camp's operation. It has provided employment for our **young people**, economic spin-off for the area and countless hours of **wholesome recreation and leadership development** for our youth. It is one more example of **why St. Peter's deserves this "spirit award"**.

Story contributed by Eva Landry, Director – Camp Rankin

Has an authentic respect for seniors

- The world class **Richmond Villa has over 100 volunteers** providing comfort and activities for seniors. Musical entertainment is, of course, a big part of the show.
- **The Bonnie Brae seniors club** took over the old Richmond Line railway station and has developed a well-run seniors club with activities weekly.

Respects the environment as shown through activities or programs

It is not possible to include everything that makes our community spirit so strong so I will not elaborate on the very important environment except to say that Parks Canada has a **National Historic site** in our community. Battery Provincial Park, is **run by individuals**



very committed to the environment and we also have the *Wildlife Museum and a number of individuals in our community are members and active in the Bras d'Or Lakes Biosphere Reserve Association.*

Appendix A - Supporting Evidence from the Home Routes Organization



March 18, 2014

Re: St. Peter's, NS

To whom this may concern,

When house concert presenter Ann Marie Kerr called and told us she and Gord were moving back to her hometown of St. Peter's, I have to say I was skeptical that the success with the shows they had developed in Saint John would transfer to their new location.

The instant they told folks they were moving back and presenting living room shows, the buzz was happening and the anticipation was strong for a new house concert series in town. Now three years in, the folks in St. Peter's have proved themselves to be one of the strongest supporters on the Home Routes Maritime house concert circuit. Every show is at capacity and for performers coming from away, they sure appreciate the enthusiastic welcome they get when they are introduced. For a house concert series to become successful it truly depends not only on the person hosting but the community support behind it. We can say without hesitation that the folks in St. Peter's have a community spirit deserving of ten thousand awards.

Tim Osmond
Artistic Director/Banjo Picker

2-156 Sherbrook Street Winnipeg MB Canada R3C 2B4
Toll Free:(866)-925-6889 ext.207 Fax:(204)786-6259 E:tim@simplyfolk.com