



Port Williams, Kings Co. Submission for the Lieutenant Governor's Community Spirit Award

May 10, 2019

Dear Selection Committee:

The Port Williams History Committee, in cooperation with the other organizations in the village, is pleased to nominate our community for this award.

We feel that we are just the right size. Small enough for people to know each through our schools, churches and community organizations, but large enough to have plenty of volunteers to get big things done for the betterment of our village.

Sylvia Jacquard

Port Williams History Committee
sylviajacquard@ns.sympatico.ca



Introduction:

Port Williams, a small village of approximately 1200 people, is located in the Annapolis Valley on the Cornwallis River between the towns of Wolfville and Kentville. It has been the home of the Mi'kmaq, and was later settled by the Acadians and New England Planters. When the apple industry was at its height in the interwar years, Port Williams was a key port for shipping apples to Great Britain.

The newest group in the the village, the Port Williams History Committee, is excited to be partnering with 15 other organizations in Port Williams to prepare the village's submission for the Community Spirit Award. One of the special things about this village is the interconnectedness of its organizations. This occurs because many citizens belong to more than one group and this results in a cross pollination of ideas, support for each others projects, and a willingness to work together on village wide events. You will see as you read their stories how often this occurs.

Churches and Schools:

Port Williams United Baptist Church
St. John's Anglican Church

Port Williams Elementary School
Booker School

Village Services and Service Clubs:

Port Williams and District Lions Club
Port Williams Health Auxiliary
Port Williams Village Commission

Port Williams Volunteer Fire Department
Port Williams Women's Institute

Organizations for History, Recreation and Youth:

Murdoch C. Smith Memorial Library
Prescott House Museum
Port Williams History Committee
Port Williams Recreation Department

Port Williams Park
Cornwallis Project 4-H Club
United Baptist Church Youth Group

Village Wide Events:

Participation in the Apple Blossom Festival
Port Williams Days

Remembrance Day Observance
Village Christmas Tree Lighting Party

CHURCHES AND SCHOOLS

From a visual perspective, the **United Baptist Church**, with its tall steeple pointing heavenward, visible from every direction, is a focal point of Port Williams. For the past 150 years, it has been an integral part of the community in many other ways too.

Community outreach is a continual emphasis. Youth Groups and summer day camps are open to children and youth from the village and beyond. Seniors and shut-ins are entertained at an annual luncheon. The Loyal Workers hold a monthly Soup and Chowder Lunch during fall and winter, attended by folks from the local area and beyond. Everyone is invited to weekly Coffee and Conversation. The church hall is the location of a weekly Play Group for infants and toddlers from the community. This provides an opportunity for parents, caregivers and little ones to meet, connect and socialize with others. There's an Ice Cream Social every summer at the park.

The church participates in community events like the Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony, and Port Williams Days, and has supported the Wolfville Food Bank for many years.

Two years ago the church sponsored a refugee family from Syria. The Muslim family of six was welcomed into the community and has made life-long friendships, offering back their affection and hospitality to those who brought them here. As well, the church is associated with a small church in Oliva, Cuba, with regular visits and assistance with projects there.

One of the most significant aspects of the Port Williams United Baptist Church is its emphasis on diversity. The church firmly states that it "welcomes and affirms all persons, regardless of race, class, origin, sexual orientation or any other distinction."

The church's beautiful gardens are much-admired and tended to by volunteers with a green-thumb. Extensive work done to the exterior of the building during the 150th anniversary in 2018 adds to the beauty of the village.

Through worship, education and ministry, the friendly village church seeks to transform the world into the Kingdom of God.

St. John's Anglican Church began with a Christmas Eve Service in 1810 and two hundred plus years later the church is a recognized historical site as well as a church that is involved in the community.

Our famous Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper has been a tradition in the area for over 30 years. 1986 was the beginning of a quilting group which consisted of ladies from the church meeting in their houses to tie or quilt on a weekly basis. Over the years, this tradition continued to grow and today the quilters meet each Monday at the Parish Hall with ladies from not only our church but also several from our surrounding community. It has given those who want to quilt an opportunity to learn and socialize with others..

The Anglican Church Women provide financial outreach to many organizations in our community. This has been made possible by those who volunteer their time to help us generate monies that have been recognized by the sale of quilts, home made items, etc.

St. John's is actively involved with other organizations within our community, in particular, the Glooscap Elementary breakfast program and most recently the Kids Action Program.

Over the past 10 years or more, 100+ students the University of Kings College, Halifax, make their annual hike to Cape Split. Upon their return they are hosted by members of our church. The majority of our congregation consists of seniors and it is very rewarding that students appreciate what we do for them.

The current **Port Williams Elementary School** was built in 1966. It is a Pre-Primary to Five school with a total of 247 students serving North Kentville, Port Williams and Greenwich. Students' learning has been enriched with numerous learning experiences including several school activities, traditions, performances and cultural presentations supported by school committees, families and community organizations.

Students and staff are involved in activities to promote a safe and caring environment, as well as extend understanding and acceptance of others. Some initiatives include; 'Light it up Blue' for Autism awareness, Anti-Bullying 'Wear Pink', Hop for the Cure for Muscular Dystrophy, Cystic Fibrosis awareness, Food Bank drives and the Plastic Bag Challenge.

Providing all students with a safe, healthy and positive learning environment promoting Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding and Human Rights has been a priority for Port Williams. Learning has been enhanced with activities, traditions and presentations that have broadened student's awareness and understanding of race, sexual orientation, culture and diversity. Mi'kmaq and African Heritage months are designated times in which we celebrate and further learn about these cultures. We have had numerous culturally rich experiences and presentations through classroom instruction, Music, Physical Education, Visual arts and curriculum.

Working together PWES and community organizations foster our students' intellectual, physical and social development enhancing the ability of families to participate actively and effectively in their child's educational experience. The PW Lions and PWES acknowledged their work together for the past three years providing a community Pancake Breakfast in which the funds were used towards Christmas Hampers and the School Breakfast Program.

PWES is fortunate to have many connections with organizations within the community that broaden students learning and understanding of community citizenship. We are very thankful for our amazing students, dedicated staff and supportive community members.

The **Booker School** is a not-for-profit charitable society located in Port Williams. Our aim is to provide a transformative educational program that provides students with the opportunity to take action from their learning, and to demonstrate agency by allowing students to have voice and choice in their learning. Throughout the school year, students engage in units of inquiry with big ideas at the centre, and explore both local and international contexts.

As an organisation, we believe we can be good role models for the students in our care. We annually participate in Port Williams Random Acts of Kindness Day. We have started the tradition of co-hosting the Terry Fox Run for the area. This year we are also taking on the children's events for Port Williams Days. We have a number of volunteers from the village coming into our school, who lend their skills and experience to support the students.

We believe that we are not just preparing our students for their futures, but supporting them in being good citizens in the present. Students regularly visit L'Arche Homefires in Wolfville to build relationships. Recently, one student studied the intricacies of bike mechanics in order to repair pre-loved bikes and gift them to those in need of transport. Another student helped kickstart the Boomerang Bag initiative in Wolfville to address the single-use plastics issue. Last year, Middle School students received national recognition for their proposed solution to the contentious Cornwallis statue in Halifax.

We have a Case For Support to build a community Makerspace. This space is intended to bring community members of all ages together to create, learn and share skills. It will provide the community with a space to meet and come together, demonstrating that The Booker School truly is an enduring, accessible and sustainable space for the community.

VILLAGE SERVICES AND SERVICE CLUBS

The **Port Williams and District Lions Club** was chartered in February 1970, with twenty-three members and today there are twenty-nine members in the Club. In the past forty-nine years the Club has been involved in many community service projects including building a 40' extension to the Port Williams Community Centre and a house for a Village citizen in need. Other projects include constructing two tennis courts, installing lights for the softball field, constructing an outdoor skating rink, providing Christmas food baskets to those in need each year, building a sun shelter in the Community Park (the Club's 40th Anniversary project), providing annual bursaries to local high school graduates, supported Brigadoon Village, maintaining a public picnic park, selling 911 civic number signs, provided the bronze plaque for the Village's Veterans' memorial in 2005 (Year of the Veteran) and constructed 49 Village Princess' floats for the annual Annapolis Valley Apple Blossom Festival.

The Club has been a financial supporter of the Valley Regional Hospital Foundation for many years and recently donated \$1200.00 for two Roho cushions from the proceeds of the 9th Annual Valentine's Day Dinner. The Club was instrumental in developing crosswalks for the Village and, as well, established the Neighbourhood Watch Program in the Village. In recognition of the Club's 45th Anniversary two radar speed signs were installed - one on Highway 358 and the other on Belcher Street near the two

schools. In 2017 Lions International celebrated its 100th Anniversary and the Club donated new blinds for the entire Community Centre in observation of this milestone.

All of the projects completed and the services provided by the Club are too numerous to mention but one of the most rewarding projects has been the Club's participation in the Adopt-A-Highway Program which had its beginnings in our Village in partnership with the Port Williams Women's Institute as a pilot project in 1992 and was ongoing for five years when the Program was officially launched by the Province of Nova Scotia in 1997. This Program still continues each spring and fall and involves not only members of the two groups but youth and other community members.

The Club has been the driving force behind Port Williams Days which has continued for over 75 years since its beginning as an Ox Pull to raise funds for the war effort in 1943. The Club continues to live up to its motto ' WE SERVE '.

The **Port Williams Health Auxiliary** was formed in 1978 to support the Eastern Kings Memorial Hospital in Wolfville. We were a group of young women who wanted to provide small items for the comfort of patient and staff, such as toys and a rocking chair for the waiting room, books, pictures and wallpaper for the children's unit. Fund-raising projects were enthusiastically supported by the community, and gradually larger projects were undertaken.

When the EKM closed in 1994 we could have disbanded, but we chose to expand our focus to three areas: Valley Regional Hospital in Kentville, the EKM Community Health Centre in Wolfville, and community health projects.

As a small auxiliary in a rural community, we feel we have made a difference. Our operating budget is not large, but over the years we have purchased many pieces of equipment. However we are most proud of our more personal contributions, such as baby layettes for needy moms and babies, hygiene kits for patients arriving at the hospital unexpectedly, knitted hats for newborns, adult bibs for geriatric patients, knitted "toe socks" for patients in leg casts, knitted "shrugs" for chemo patients, and tray favours every month for a local nursing home. These items are provided by volunteers within and outside of our auxiliary.

There is an educational component to the auxiliary. We see a need to provide up-to-date information on health-related issues, therefore we have open meetings with guest speakers. We also provide two bursaries each year to high school graduates entering the health field.

Our 40th anniversary was celebrated in 2018. Many of the original members still attend, but many new members have joined us, reflecting the vibrancy of the auxiliary and supporting our vision of enhancing health care for people in Port Williams and beyond.

The **Port Williams Village Commission** strongly supports endeavours proposed by village citizens like the Port Williams Park, a full time Recreation Director and, most recently, when the local newspaper discontinued all of the community news columns, they supported the request of the former columnist to morph her column into a weekly e-newsletter. As well, within two weeks of the founding of the History Committee, a storage area with shelves was built for their use.

The **Port Williams Volunteer Fire Department** currently has 22 volunteer members who are all actively involved in the community. We open our doors whenever able and during larger community events throughout the year to educate citizens and youth about fire safety and to continue to build community relationships with all ages. Providing knowledge of what we do and helping to allay the possible fears of the younger generation re emergency situations is a particular focus of ours and we offer tours for preschools in the area and visit the local elementary schools once or twice a year. We are invested and established in the community as ambassadors for education, safety improvement and fire prevention.

Our department fundraises to assist with purchases necessary for equipment upkeep and normal operations. Our members are involved with local fundraising efforts through events such as Trivia nights and Port Williams Days, as well as volunteering their time throughout the colder months to flood a local outdoor skating rink with the recreation committee so that it can be enjoyed by the community. Not all departments are as involved in their own community events as we are and part of that comes with being a smaller community. It is where we live, and raise our families and strive to provide fire safety and protection.

The main focus of the Fire Department is to provide first response emergency fire and rescue to the citizens of our own township of Port Williams, but are sometimes called upon to assist other departments in the surrounding areas. Our skills, training and equipment enables us to help each other out in different ways that benefit us all. We take pride in what we stand for, what we do and how we protect.

The **Port Williams Women's Institute (PWWI)**, whose motto is "For Home & Country" was brought to Nova Scotia in 1913. We are one of the remaining 3 that started that year and have therefore been serving our community and beyond for more than 100 years. The PWWI is part of the Women's Institutes of Nova Scotia, the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada and the world organization, the Associated Country Women of the World who are currently active in 71 countries with 9 million members. The members of our WI have also served at the provincial and national level, three members have served as Provincial President and two as National President.

Some of the projects the PWWI has been involved with include working with the Red Cross in WWI & WWII, supporting the local hospital, erecting street signs for our village as part of a Centennial Project in 1967 and writing a history of the village titled "The Port Remembers". Currently we are supporting women's shelters, local schools with bursaries at the high school level and the breakfast program at the elementary School. Recently the PWWI started a Tuesday morning craft group inviting women of the area to join us for coffee and chat and bring along whatever project they are working on including knitting, cross stitch, quilting or painting .

We also support the Christmas Tree Lighting Party, the Remembrance Day Observance and the village's participation in the Apple Blossom Festival.

In 1994 the Lions Clubs, the Women's Institutes of Nova Scotia and Clean Nova Scotia discussed the idea of bringing Adopt a Highway to Nova Scotia and several groups were selected to take part in a

pilot project. At that time the Lions Club and the Port Williams Women's Institute became partners in this and since that time have continued to partner in the Adopt a Highway clean up.

The Port Williams Women's Institute has been working in our community whenever and wherever the need arises and continues to support the local, provincial, national and international projects.

ORGANIZATIONS FOR HISTORY, RECREATION AND YOUTH:

When a native son, Dr. Murdoch C. Smith, left money for the establishment of a library in Port Williams back in the 1940's, it was a far sighted group of citizens that expanded that idea into a Community Centre built in 1951 which contained not just a library but an auditorium with kitchen, fire department, village office and meeting rooms. In the years to follow the Community Centre was expanded, the library renovated and the Centre is now home to our Lions Club, many of the programs of our Recreation Department and provides meeting space to many village organizations.

The **Murdoch C. Smith Memorial Library** is a branch of the Annapolis Valley Regional Library system and offering an excellent collection of books, DVDs, magazines, free wifi and access to computers and printers. They have weekly programs for mothers and babies and preschoolers with special programs throughout the year for children, teens, adults and seniors.

A museum cannot survive without the support of the community in which it is located and in which its history lies. The Village of Port Williams, is proud of their history and often will partner with **Prescott House Museum** to create an exhibit or event telling their stories of the past. The Museum has been pleased to partner with various groups to help present and celebrate that history:

- The Port Williams Women's Institute hosted a garden party and an exhibit of their history during their 100th anniversary year (2013).
- Many family and community members visited to learn about George Price's story as the last man to be killed in WWI. Private Price was born in Port Williams, and some of his family still live in the area (2014).
- The St. John's Anglican Church had their 200th Anniversary picnic on the grounds (2010); most appropriate as Charles Ramage Prescott as well as his great-granddaughters were members of the church and are buried in the graveyard.
- Port Williams' parents sent their children to our popular children's workshops - at one point reaching 65 registrations - during the summer months which. The attendance grew mainly by word of mouth.
- There are extensive grounds around the museum that many people in the community visit to enjoy a peaceful moment sitting in the garden or under a tree, take family or wedding photos and even have their wedding on the grounds.

The **Port Williams History Committee** is the baby of the community organizations having only started in March of this year. Our second project is to interview seniors who have lived in the village for a long time and/or grew up here. We want to preserve for posterity their memories of of life in the village.

There is a lot of pride in the history of our village. On June 3, 2000 a new post office cancellation stamp, the first postmark in the Valley, was first used. The concept originated with Kenneth Bezanson who has the postmark designed by noted Cape Breton songwriter, Allister MacGillivray. The stamp,

featuring a sailing ship, harks back to that era when village folk say Port Williams was referred to as "the Biggest Little Port in the World".

Providing Recreation facilities and programs for youth and adults has long been important to the village. The Port Williams Recreation Committee fundraised and worked to construct and/or maintain recreation facilities and programs to the village starting in the late 1980s. The facilities included an outdoor rink, ballfield, soccer fields, tennis courts, and a beach volleyball court. To these have been added a rugby pitch (home of the Valley Bulldogs) and a throws field (home of Launchers Athletics). They ran a summer day camp and in the winter held a Winter Frolic.

The Committee is now known as the **Port Williams Recreation Advisory Committee** as the village has hired a full-time Recreation Director, who is responsible for the organizational and day-to-day work. She continued the day camp and Winter Frolic and greatly expanded the scope of the programs which now serve all ages. Indoor walking, Active Living program for seniors, yoga and chair yoga, zumba, Functional interval training, Family basketball, a climbing club and adult painting classes are the current recreation opportunities.

The **Port Williams Park** is a terrific example of what can happen when community members of all ages and socio-economic backgrounds come together to make their corner of the world a better place. Proposed in May 2008 by a parent relatively new to the area who was bringing her two young children to parks in neighbouring towns, she reached out to the Village, friends and neighbours and soon there was a strong committee of 11 community members.

The Committee started meeting the fall of 2008 and with a financial goal of \$180,000, soon agreed to a three-phase, three-year plan to build a centrally-located park that would appeal to all ages. Many village residents are young professionals raising families, while there are also a strong senior community who have lived in the Village their entire lives. There were two particular events that demonstrate the fine character of the Village, both completely different. The first was the need to remove rocks and debris from the area where the hard-surface court was being planned. A dirty and labour-intensive, but important job! Using email, community members were asked to help. And help arrived! Entire families showed up, children as young as four, teens and adults, all working together to clean up the space. It was an inspiring! The other event was the Park at the Port fundraiser with a goal of \$10K For Play. Between ticket sales (event sold out), and a live and silent auction (total retail value of all items was approx. \$100K), the goal of \$10K was smashed to bits in the Live Auction alone. The next day, the Committee was thrilled to report that more than \$20K for Play was raised in mere hours!

The Port Williams Park officially opened in the late Fall of 2010 with the last plaque in our Donor Recognition Garden being placed in 2011. The park features all of the items mentioned above, in addition to a shelter pavilion financed by the Lions Club, legacy gift items such as benches, picnic tables and trees, and several years later, a StoryWalk (an interactive story placed around the path's perimeter) was added thanks to the Board of Trustees of our library branch.

The park became the heart of the community. A place where on any given day, you will see children playing, adults chatting on a park bench, others playing catch on the green space, and family and friends sharing a meal under the pavilion.

The **Cornwallis Project 4-H Club** is based in Port Williams and draws its members from the village and surrounding area. 4-H members range from age 7 to 21 and their families are often involved as well. Our club was started in 1945 and planning is underway for its 75th anniversary next year. Each year they participate in the children's parade during Port Williams Days and in November they make Christmas cards that they deliver personally to a neighbour who is a senior.

The **Youth Group of the United Baptist Church** (Junior and Senior Groups) draws tweens and teens, not just from the church but the village and area. They meet weekly during the school year for fun and fellowship. In November they participated in the Bells of Peace Commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War. Each year they provide children's activities for the village's Christmas Tree Lighting Party.

VILLAGE WIDE EVENTS:

Our community pride is most evident when we work together for a common goal. Each season there is an event that brings us together: the Apple Blossom Festival in late May, Port Williams Days in early June, our Remembrance Day Observance on the Sunday before Remembrance Day and our Village Christmas Tree Lighting Party on the last Sunday of November.

The village has been involved in the **Apple Blossom Festival** since its beginning in 1933. In 1945 the coronation of Queen Annapolisa was held in an orchard in Port Williams. Almost every year we have a Leadership Candidate to represent our village and she is well supported by community organizations. Not only is she assisted financially by the Village Commission (who assist the Child Attendant as well), the Lions Club, the Women's Institute, DanceTime at Port Williams but these groups do other things for her as well. The Women's Institute host the very popular dessert party where the young woman is chosen and introduced to the village. DanceTime at Port Williams invites her to their spring dance. The Lions Club builds a float for the Festival and provides a driver so that Princess Port Williams is able to partake in parades held in other communities in the Valley during the summer. While many of the community visits are part of other Festival activities, the Royal Visit to Port Williams stands on its own and yet is always well attended.

The genesis of **Port Williams Days** goes back to 1943 when an Ox Pull and community supper was held at the farm of Robert Chase to raise money for the war effort. The ox pulls and suppers continued for approximately 50 years. The current Port Williams Days feature a wide range of events over two days but still end in a community supper for which numerous residents provide baked beans, potato scallops and desserts. The Lions Club is the main organizer assisted by the Recreation Department, with the Fire Department and the Booker School. Also involved are the library, the Health Auxiliary, the Baptist Church and the History Committee. The Mock Jail, Night Market, fireworks, Village wide yard sale, Spring Fair, children's parade and activities, chicken BBQ and historical display draw people from miles around to our village as well as raising money for the participating groups.

Our Memorial Park began in 2005, "The Year of the Veteran" with the installation of the Veterans' Memorial stone and it was also the year of first **Remembrance Day Observance** and both have grown ever since. The service is jointly presided over by the ministers of the Anglican and Baptist Churches with participation by members of the Fire Department and the elementary school choir as well as the laying of wreaths by many local organizations. It is followed by a reception with refreshments provided by the Women's Institute.

The park began with a plaque attached to a granite boulder in front of two flag poles and grew over the years to include additional plaques, benches, lighting and landscaping. One plaque lists the names of those casualties from WWI and WWII and tells the story of Pte George Price the last Commonwealth soldier to be killed one minute before the Armistice came into effect and Mary Clerk Peake, believed to be the first Canadian woman killed in WWII.

Another plaque lists the names of residents who served in the military during the World Wars, the Korean War, in Peacekeeping missions and in Afghanistan. The park also welcomed the addition of the Women's Institutes and War Brides Memorial and most recently, their memorial recognizing the contribution of women on the home front, a first in the province.

The past year's service focused on 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War and the death of Port Williams resident, Pte George Price, who was the last Commonwealth soldier killed in the war, two minutes before the Armistice came into effect. Memorial Banners were commissioned to honour the World War I casualties from our village and they were displayed on the fence beside the Community Centre. The Lieutenant-Governor was on hand to review the West Nova Scotia Regiment Honour guard and laid a wreath on behalf of the Queen.

Village Christmas Tree Lighting Party

Organized by the Recreation Committee, the Baptist Church, their Youth Group, the Fire Department, the Women's Institute, Lions Club, and DanceTime at Port Williams work together to provide a festive, intergenerational evening enjoyed by all. The event starts with an outdoor Christmas Carol sing, then the lighting of the village Christmas Tree and more singing as the grownups and children wait for Santa to arrive on a fire truck. After his arrival everyone heads inside to the decorated Hall for cookies and hot chocolate and for the kids to tell their Christmas wishes to the jolly old elf. There are many other activities provided for the children as well as a Silent Auction for baked goods. It a great time for socializing with one's friends and neighbours.

CONCLUSION

It was wonderful to connect with so many people in the compilation of this submission and see the many ways in which our people and organizations have come together to make this such a great place to live and why we are all so proud to live in "The Port".