

# Rural at Heart

Jan.-Apr. 2015

Issue 2



The Rural Communities Foundation recognizes that small investments in rural Nova Scotia can result in significant positive impacts. In an effort to celebrate initiatives in rural Nova Scotia (both small and large) the RCF will publish this newsletter, Rural At Heart, 3 times a year (late fall, early spring and mid-summer). Rural at Heart will share (re-share) stories of success, resiliency and entrepreneurship. The stories will come primarily from websites, newsletters and newspapers from across the province. If you have a story or an announcement that you would like to share with those on the RCF mailing list submit it to: [info@ruralcommunitiesfdn.ca](mailto:info@ruralcommunitiesfdn.ca)

## The Rural Communities Foundation was founded in 1999 under a partnership agreement of Coastal Communities Network and Literacy Nova Scotia.

The RCF's mandate is to nurture and support rural Nova Scotia, which makes up 90 percent of the province's land base, and in which 60 percent of the population lives. Through its grant programs, it supports community-based initiatives that improve understanding and offer solutions to sustain rural and coastal Nova Scotia. The leadership initiative grants seek to develop leadership capacity in rural communities.

The Rural Communities Foundation of Nova Scotia is now entering a decade of grants to rural communities in Nova Scotia. The typical grant size varies between \$1000 and \$5000 for projects. \$15,000 in total has been awarded by the 2014 Rural Leadership Initiative granting program. Grants were awarded to The South-West Nova Transition House (Yarmouth), Conseil des Arts de Cheticamp, The Bluenose Coastal Action Foundation of Lunenburg and the AIDS Coalition of Nova Scotia. To read more about the successful projects go to: <http://www.ruralcommunitiesfdn.ca/2015/02>

Applicants must be a registered charity (or be sponsored by one) and the program or service must relate to rural leadership, with a goal of enhancing leadership within rural communities.

## Don't write off rural N.S. just yet

Original article by: Teresa MacNeil

Perhaps columnist John DeMont didn't intend to ignite a debate about the inevitable disappearance of rural Nova Scotia ("Bleak future for rural communities: The real hollowing-out of Nova Scotia countryside is just beginning," Feb. 4)

Regrettably, it is true that many lovely rural features are disappearing. It is also true that there are communities in rural Nova Scotia so severely challenged by their demographics that they could disappear completely. In the main, however, DeMont's article is highly misleading. He treats rural as though it were a solid, homogenous entity, with no distinctions along lines of location, economy, culture, demography, and just plain traditional determination. Worse is his implication that the principal loss will be the good ol' days. Nothing is mentioned about concrete contributions of rural enterprise, be it social, economic or cultural.

Rural Nova Scotia is filled with vibrant organizations and communities that find ways to build on their strengths and particular uniqueness to be economically,



socially and culturally resilient. It is commonplace to find rural communities dealing successfully with challenges such as employment opportunity, population retention, environmental health, rural voice and social satisfaction. Community projects funded by the Rural Communities Foundation of Nova Scotia, and the roster of recipients of the Community Spirit Award provide, among many sources, evidence of successful community development throughout rural Nova Scotia.

Necessary as it is, in the end, rural community transformation cannot be realized entirely by inside effort. There are places without sufficient internal resources

to even consider whether their community has a chance for continued life. They need help to recognize what they are up against. And, in places where human resources are reasonably

strong, they also need external support to bolster that strength. Evidence is mounting at the Rural Communities Foundation that too many government supports for rural have dried up. It comes through growing calls for financial support from organizations in communities across the province. Even small-scale projects are not being assisted. They would have been readily handled a few years ago by government programs.

The foundation has limited capacity to replace such support. It asks why the financial and social support provided by, for example, the Rural Secretariat, has disappeared. It asks why the province no longer assists communities to work their way through tangible issues with extension services that enable adult learning for change in such crucial areas as forestry, fishery, housing, and agriculture. Essential as it is, assistance does not always mean financial help. It is also about assisting communities to define and solve problems with the resources they have. Social development is an inherent part of economic development.

Yes, we have dying and we have vibrant rural communities, making for a highly diverse rural scene. What we don't have is sufficient external recognition that rural development is a work in progress. Such recognition is about doing what it takes to work with communities to build and sustain places where residents have sufficient means to live comfortably. The unity for teamwork mentioned in the One Nova Scotia document includes external teammates. It is a unity that happens when external and internal forces work together in recognition that rural life is a life worth living.

To see the full article visit:

<http://thechronicleherald.ca/opinion/1269082-don't-write-off-rural-n.s.-just-yet>

## More hobby farms cropping up in rural areas

Original article by: Jordan Sprague



As commercial agricultural farms slowly disappear from the countryside, people are shifting their focus to buying local produce in a demonstration of consumeristic integrity and supporting smaller hobby farms. Many are taking to a route of self-sustainment, producing their own goods and resources on a smaller scale. Lately it is not uncommon to see chickens running around a yard, or vegetables growing behind a homes.

"People want to know where their food comes from now," says Cecil MacLeod, who recently moved his family of five to the North Shore. "It's a growing trend as cities grow bigger and markets become more popular."

In 2012, the MacLeods left the bustling city of Halifax for a quiet place in the country with hopes of having an entirely self-sustaining property. So far the family produces their own vegetable crops and perennial plants, doubling production this season. They have also begun work on their West New Annan property to include a chicken coop and a space to raise pigs.

"I hope to give my children the same foundation I received from my grandfather," says MacLeod. "It's nothing to see my children out weeding and filling wheelbarrows. It's a team effort that keeps us all close and healthy."

The family says they are not looking for wealth or recognition from this venture; their families and community are all they need.

"The goal will be reached when my children come home some day long into the future... and say 'thank you for the way you raised me, thank you for the values you instilled in us.'"

Twenty kilometres north of the MacLeods is another hobby farm-in-progress, co-operated by Vanessa Haug and her family. Near Tatamagouche, the 93-acre farm has everything from rabbits, horses, chickens, dogs, and occasionally the odd pig.

"It's nothing fancy," says Haug. "We have a lot of land, and we might as well put it to good use."

Although the family-oriented hobby farm is mostly for self-use, Haug says that one day they hope to make more products available for profit.

Haug and her family have started selling farm-fresh eggs, and hope to use their horses for riding lessons at some point, but for now they are busy travelling the Maritimes with their prize-winning rabbits, and preparing for the next step of their endeavour.

To see the full article visit:

<http://www.trurodaily.com/News/Local/2014-08-15/article-3836405/More-hobby-farms-cropping-up-in-rural-areas/1>

## Young people offer opinions on embracing, improving the community

Original article by: Monique Chiasson

This week, about 25 people between the ages of 18 and 29 who are living here or studying at Dal AC or the Nova Scotia Community College in Truro gathered to discuss issues that are important to local youth.



"We like the size of the town and having a voice," said Hingley, an international food business student at Dal AC and the organizer of the youth engagement event.

Ideas to improve the community include having a space for younger people to congregate and offering more night life options, she said.

Kathleen Kevany, professor in business and social sciences at Dal AC, was one of three adults who attended the session.

"From the energy of these people, we need to be doing this more often," said Kevany. "We need to see more youth-oriented initiatives and opportunities (to make) the community the best it could be."

Kevany said some of the benefits mentioned at the gathering were students appreciated the cost of living here, the area's viability, safety and quality of life, and the "receptiveness of returning to the area after studying" elsewhere.

Hingley said an organizers' meeting will soon be held and it's hoped another public engagement meeting will be held within a couple of months.

"I hope people will take action. We want to share our ideas with the county, town, NSCC and Dal AC in a formal report," Hingley said.

"I'd like to see the youth come together every few months and as a youth organization. We are the future of the town and we'd like the opportunity to voice our opinions," she said.

For more information on this story visit:

<http://www.trurodaily.com/News/Local/2015-02-13/article-4043292/Young-people-offer-opinions-on-embracing,-improving-the-community/1>

## Rural Communities Foundation NS Annual General Meeting

May 27, 2015  
NSCC Truro Campus  
Davis Hall, Salon "C"  
1:00 - 3:00 pm

All Are Welcome!

## Bras d'Or Lakes Collaborative Environmental Planning Initiative

Article by: Shelley Porter



The Bras d'Or Lakes Collaborative Environmental Planning Initiative, "CEPI", has been working to facilitate land-use and other management planning in the Bras d'Or Lakes watershed for over a decade. The CEPI is committed to being guided by the principle of "Two-Eyed Seeing", meaning combining traditional Mi'kmaq ways of knowing with scientific approaches in caring for the environment. Key to this stewardship strategy is having the guidance of Mi'kmaq Elders. To this end, the CEPI has maintained an Elders Council, to which it reports on activities and from which it solicits input. Early in the life of the Elders Council, the members asked to have Mi'kmaq youth present at their meetings and workshops, in order to pass on vital environmental and cultural knowledge from Elders to those who would hold that knowledge in the next generations. Presently there are 15 Elders and 5 Youth on the Council, representing all the Mi'kmaq communities of Unama'ki (Cape Breton).

Most recently, the CEPI hosted an Elders/Youth Council meeting directed at helping the Bras d'Or Lakes Biosphere Reserve Association [BLBRA] with its "Walking Around the Bras d'Or" trail project. Dr. Cheryl Bartlett, former Chair of

Integrative Science at Cape Breton University [CBU], facilitated the meeting. Dr. Bartlett has played a key role in the trail project's development, as the project is a fitting extension to her past work with Elders at CBU. Two-Eyed Seeing has already been integrated into the project, with the assistance of Mi'kmaq Elders Albert and Murdena Marshall, who contributed a glyph describing the vision of the trail. The BLBRA has held meetings in various communities around the watershed to map traditional and potential routes for trails. The Elders and Youth at the meeting gave support to the idea, and had some additional comments and information about the natural history of the area. The CEPI and the BLBRA are looking forward to working with the Mi'kmaq Elder and Youth and all interested people

around the Bras d'Or watershed to develop an active transportation route that showcases the unique natural and human features of this beautiful ecosystem.

For more information about the Bras d'Or Lakes CEPI visit:  
[www.brasdorcepi.ca](http://www.brasdorcepi.ca)  
or like us on Facebook at  
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Bras-dOr-Lakes-CEPI/231737366878777?ref=bookmarks>

## Struggling to put books on the shelves

Original article by: Robert Devet

Shiny new libraries, especially of the flagship variety, appear not just in downtown Halifax, but also in Antigonish, New Glasgow, and many other Nova Scotia towns. But all is not well in library land.

Insufficient operational funding is making it more and more difficult to keep the shelves stocked, or to pay the workers who stock those shelves.

Over the last decade provincial funding has remained mostly stagnant, while costs continue to rise and demand escalates. Some regions have even seen their funding reduced.

And that's a blow. Provincial funding for libraries in rural Nova Scotia represents 70 to 75 per cent of library budgets. Municipalities and fundraising efforts make up the remainder.

The Halifax Regional Library gets most of its money from the municipality.



But in many Nova Scotia communities and towns insufficient provincial funding is bringing libraries close to the breaking point, librarians say.

"Last year we didn't replace our technical services librarian. Now that position is shared among four other workers, so you don't see an immediate impact, but everyone is having to do more," Eric Stackhouse tells the Halifax Media Co-op. Stackhouse is the Chief Librarian at the Pictou-Antigonish Public Library.

Over the years the collections budget has decreased while with an increasing user base and the arrival of costly e-books, DVDs and audio books expectations are becoming ever more difficult to meet, she says.

"We're struggling to keep our services going, we are at the bare minimum," MacDougall adds.

A report issued in the summer of 2013 by the Library Boards Association of Nova Scotia (LBANS) echoes these concerns and predicts a grim future for Nova Scotia libraries outside of HRM. It warns of cuts to staff hours, positions, and book budgets if government doesn't act.

"Salaries and benefits are not keeping pace with other sectors and libraries. Upcoming cuts would include branch hours, cuts to programs and little or no cost of living increases for staff with significant impact on morale," a section in the report on the Cape Breton Regional Library warns.

Meanwhile, local libraries play a vital role in many people's lives. There are well over 300,000 public library members in the province and close to 4 million library visits per year.

People go to the library in droves, and not just to borrow books. Libraries offer literacy programs, provide public access to the internet, and often library staff assist people with filling out government forms.

"Whether you have 400 people come to your branch or 375 makes no difference, it still costs just as much money to run," MacDougall explains.

Discussions are under way with the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage about this change, writes departmental spokesperson Glenn Friel in an email to the Halifax media Co-op. But these discussions have not yet concluded.

And forget about any budget increase in 2015, says Stackhouse, who participates in the ongoing discussions with government.

"We are being told by the government to do it with the same amount of money (in 2015). Next year is not going to be easy and we will have to make some very hard decisions in terms of what services we can continue to offer," he says.

"We should be promoting literacy province-wide. That should be a priority for government," she says.

"It's an economic driver. It impacts people's health, the economy. If we celebrate it and promote it all our communities will be better off."

To see full article visit:

<http://halifax.mediacoop.ca/story/struggling-put-books-shelves/32797>

## Mapping the future of Nova Scotia's natural resources

Original article by: Atlantic Farm Focus

Nova Scotia Community College's Kingstec Campus is partnering with the Perennia Innovation Centre and the NS Grape Growers



*The second issue of Rural at Heart was compiled for The Rural Communities Foundation of Nova Scotia by Deborah Lewis (Halifax), Emily Neily (Truro) & JeanMarie MacMillan (Big Pond)*

Association to establish a learning vineyard and winery applied-research facility that will enable students to acquire specialized knowledge that will contribute to the sector's development.

The project is one of two ventures pairing NSCC with the province's \$196 million wine industry and selected natural resource sectors to optimize growth opportunities through innovative hands-on research.

On Feb 13 the federal government contributed \$425,000 to support the initiatives through ACOA's Innovative Communities Fund.

NSCC's Middleton Campus is also testing the potential of new topo-bathymetric LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) mapping technology for applications in NS's agriculture, forestry and aquaculture sectors.

Using aircraft-mounted lasers, detailed topographic scans of farmland, forest and

the submerged coastal seafloors of oceans and lakes are providing information that assists in areas such as sustainable harvesting, aquatic vegetation health, and storm surge prediction. These areas have traditionally not been mapped in great detail due to the high cost of conventional aerial photos and boat-launched echo sounders.

"These projects represent unique offerings for Canada's post-secondary educational landscape," said NSCC Kingstec Campus Principal Isabel Madeira-Voss. "NSCC is the only academic institution in Canada to own its own bathymetric LiDAR equipment, and is one of only a

handful of educational institutions across the country to offer a learning vineyard to its students. Both represent exceptional learning resources which, in turn, can inspire economic development opportunities."

For more information on this article visit:

<http://www.atlanticfarmfocus.ca/Agriculture/2015-02-19/article-4049249/Mapping-the-future-of-Nova-Scotias-natural-resources/1>

## Shifting focus towards rural communities

Original article by: Jacob Boon



March 11 to 14, Dalhousie's school of planning hosted its annual SHIFT planning conference. This year, the focus was on the challenges and opportunities facing rural communities in Nova Scotia. Masters student and organizer Eliza Jackson took some time to speak with The Coast about what SHIFT was planning.

The Coast: Why this rural topic? Do you feel Nova Scotia's rural communities are in jeopardy?

It was kind of a combination of factors. It was definitely spurred by the release of the Ivany Report, and the trends presented in the report in terms of population decline and possible economic decline. That was something we wanted to look at. But also, there was just a lot of interest within our group to look at rural planning. Mostly because it's not something that's always on the forefront when people talk about planning. The past conference topics have been largely urban, so I think we wanted to change gears up a bit and focus more on the rural aspect.

We keep hearing about Nova Scotia's rural towns facing tough economic hardships. Is that part of what you'll be looking at?

It's part of that. The Ivany Report lays out what the challenges are that the rural communities are facing. So, that's kind of been laid out for people. What we wanted to focus on were more the opportunities that communities could explore in order to mitigate the projections that have been made for rural communities in Nova Scotia. Where there're opportunities for changing transformations.

What's Halifax's role as an urban centre in addressing these rural issues?

Well, we wanted to focus more on the rural context because within Nova Scotia there's a lot of discussion, a lot more focus on Halifax. But Halifax is really important to these rural communities because it does offer employment opportunities, as well as opportunities for retail and that kind of thing. It does serve as the larger economic centre for the province.

It seems like it'll be a largely urban crowd, looking at rural issues. Are you reaching out to people in those rural areas to speak at these events?

Definitely, yeah. We wanted to do a Pecha Kucha in Halifax and then do one in a rural community—so somewhere like Wolfville—and then have those run simultaneously. We want to have, either at the Pecha Kucha or as panelists, we want to look at having people speak who are working in these rural communities or working for these rural communities.

Everyone's still working on finding solutions to these issues, but what do you think will be the fix? Or is it too late to fix any of these problems?

I don't think it is too late. But I think it will depend on the communities. That's something that Ivany talks about in his report. There's a lot of responsibility on the communities to band together and make those changes for themselves. I don't think that it is impossible to turn it around, but I think it's important, these communities are still focusing on more traditional economic activities but also maybe looking forward for different or more opportunities in order to transform their current economic situation.

To view original article visit:  
<http://www.thecoast.ca/halifax/shifting-focus-towards-rural-communities/Content?oid=4517324>



## Province to spend up to \$400,000 on post-Ivany talks with Nova Scotians

Original article by: Michael Gorman

The province will spend upwards of \$400,000 on citizen engagement efforts related to the Ivany report.

Engage Nova Scotia, a registered charity, will get \$200,000 from the government, along with its promise to match private-sector funding up to an additional \$200,000. The work is intended to complement the efforts of the oneNS Coalition, which is tasked with developing a plan to implement the Ivany goals.

"Engage Nova Scotia is committed to helping facilitate this unprecedented opportunity for Nova Scotians to take a fresh look at who we are, where we want to go and how we're going to get there," Engage chairwoman Ramona Lumpkin said in a news release.

The core group of the organization includes chief engagement officer Danny Graham, managing director Nancy Watson, director of strategic relationships Dan O'Rourke, senior adviser Susan Szpakowski and engagement specialist Isabel Chender.

Graham, a former leader of the provincial Liberal party who advised Premier Stephen McNeil immediately following the 2013 election, said the group came together even before the Ivany report was created. That document cited Engage for its efforts to get people involved in their communities.

"The Ivany report said that we need to continue to engage people, we need to become more self-reliant and we're helping to facilitate that kind of thing happening," said Graham.

Plans for this year include a symposium to discuss the intersection of attitude and the economy, and a community well-being survey to give a snapshot of how the province is doing relative to other

jurisdictions and within individual communities. The results would be updated every four years.

If things go well, there will need to be more funding, which Graham hopes will come from the private sector.

"An important element of this is that this be supported by more than just ... government," he said. "We're in a new paradigm where government can't fix all of the problems we have."

The majority of the money will go to projects and initiatives, with a small amount designated for some part-time staff and contract work. Watson and O'Rourke are seconded from their jobs in government.

Tory Leader Jamie Baillie, who vice-chairs the oneNS Coalition with acting NDP leader Maureen MacDonald, objected to government inserting itself into the process.

MacDonald said the funding is too much, considering the premier's recent talk of restraint.

"If we were a province that was flush with cash and we had money to spend on all kinds of things, perhaps it would be something that we could put on the list."

McNeil said government made the decision because the coalition's work will wrap up in December when its 10-year plan is complete.

"The consultation that Ivany did was really the basis of the report and then the recommendation was we needed an organization like Engage to be able to continue that conversation in communities."

Government support first started with the former NDP government and, since forming, the group meets regularly with all parties, so any suggestion of partisanship is misplaced, Graham said.

"There's nothing about it that's related to partisan politics in any way, shape or form."

To view original article visit:  
<http://thechronicleherald.ca/novascotia/1268988-province-to-spend-up-to-400000-on-post-ivany-talks-with-nova-scotians>

## \$356,000 Per Day to Bus Students

Original Article By Maurice Rees

An AIMS research report, "Education on Wheels", shows student transportation costs are rising steadily across maritime Canada, even as student enrollment declines, and provincial Governments, in the region are missing opportunities to achieve cost and energy efficiency based on 200 day school year its costing 356000 per day to bus Nova Scotia's 20,423 students.

The authors Paul W Bennet, founding director of Schoolhouse Consulting and adjunct professor of Education, St. Mary's University and Derek M. Gillis, independent research consultant specializing in sustainable transportation research and program development, demonstrate high spending on managing the school bus fleet absorbs scarce resources that would be better spent in the region's classrooms.

It's time, they claim, to cease the opportunities for cost and energy efficiencies, including merging management systems, computerizing root scheduling, and adopting school-level active transportation plans. The report reveals Nova Scotia student transportation costs have increases by 11 percent from \$64.2 million to \$71.2 million at a time when overall P-12 enrollment shrunk by 8.3 percent.

The Chignecto-Central Regional School Board is typical of "Education on Wheels" with 16,800 (82.3%) of its 20,423 students in the 2013/14 school year riding the busses each school day. Four of the provinces other regional boards bus from 85-96 percent of their students to school each day. Closing other smaller, mainly rural schools and bussing more students each year to larger primary to grade 8 consolidated schools or primary to grade 12 Regional Education Centers only results in more students on busses and on longer bus runs, adding to the associated costs of fuel and maintenance.

Recently, the Town and County of Antigonish have taken up the cause. Working together, the two municipalities launched their own Antigonish Community Transit Service on September 15, 2014, and also submitted a resolution to the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities (UNSM) proposing school busses be made available for the use of public transportation services. The Antigonish Municipal resolution was discussed and accepted at the annual UNSM fall conference in November 2014 (Community Transit-NS 2014).

Article originally from: <http://www.theshorelinejournal.com/>

## One Nova Scotia Coalition in Sydney to foster entrepreneurial spirit among youth

Original article by: Chris Shannon

Joella Foulds and Rankin MacSween want to turn the idea of job creation by government on its side. The two Cape Breton members of the One Nova Scotia Coalition are in Sydney this week with other members of the panel to look at innovative ways of fostering an entrepreneurial spirit among youth.

"Jobs and job creation is about somebody else out there is responsible and 'I'm going to get that job and do what that guy tells me to do.' Work is what is happening in this building," said Foulds as she gestures to the space around her at the New Dawn Centre for Social Innovation.

The former Holy Angels High School has been transformed into an incubator for several small business startups, community groups and service-based organizations.

"People are creating something. They're creating a business for themselves, they're creating a meaningful activity that brings them income."

MacSween, president of New Dawn Enterprises, said the public has relied on government to support jobs through the resource economy — coal mining, fishery and forestry — with little focus placed on entrepreneurship.

"There's this whole mystery associated with entrepreneurship. And entrepreneurs can be encouraged, nurtured, educated and trained. We know that intuitively," he said.

"We're on our way to beginning to try to figure out how to encourage and inspire people to create work for themselves, and wealth on behalf of this community."

To view full article visit:  
<http://newdawn.ca/one-nova-scotia-coalition-sydney-foster-entrepreneurial-spirit-among-youth/>

## Experience Musquodoboit Valley!



Nova Scotia is promoted as Canada's ocean playground. Because Musquodoboit Valley is inland, their playground is an area that's rich with things other than dories, lobster traps and seagulls. Instead, they host festivals and celebrate great outdoor adventures and so much more... Explore Musquodoboit Valley's 714 square kilometres! Visitors are thrilled with the pristine lakes, natural forests and scenic landscapes as they experience the natural beauty of our Valley.

The 2015 Musquodoboit Valley Community Showcase & Job Fair is being held on April 18th from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Musquodoboit Valley Education Centre. This event is a one of a kind opportunity to meet local businesses, community groups, health providers and artists/crafters as well as to learn about ongoing community projects and available jobs in the Musquodoboit Valley at our trade show. There will be free recreation classes, speakers on various health topics, as well as, the Clay Cafe and library programming for the kids. The day will conclude with a volunteer recognition presentation to honour the many volunteers in our community who make such a wonderful contribution to the area.

Provided by: Cathy Leslie



All donations to RCFNS are tax deductible!

