

## **River John Friends of the Library Society . . . lessons to be learned**

CLA 2002 - Recent history of the River John Branch of the Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library has been one of progress, expansion and community support. The small library first opened in 1986. With 700 registered borrowers and 1200 items borrowed a month it was one of the most actively used branch libraries in the region.

In 1997 a committee was formed to apply for Community Access Program (CAP) funding. This core group of active and committed volunteers partnered with the Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library. They obtained CAP and other funding, installed three public access computers, provided volunteer support for training, expanded the hours of library service and created a community website.

By 1998 they were looking for more space to house expanding services, and it became clear it wasn't feasible to renovate the present library. The CAP Committee, together with community volunteers, the municipal council and regional library staff formed the Friends in 2000.

Plans for the new River John Library and Innovation Centre were drawn up and the \$400,000 project received some grant funding for capital and labour from CAP, the regional library, the local regional development authority and Industry Canada.

Betty Zong, the Friends Treasurer outlined their plan of action. Project costs, quotes on building supplies, cost of labour and the need to negotiate a 65% mortgage amortized over 15 years were included. The municipality's commitment to a 15 year lease was a key factor in obtaining the mortgage, and a local credit union approached the Friends and provided the mortgage at a preferred interest rate.

A business plan provided data on the need for the project, the purpose of the Friends, the committee membership, and building management details. Financial data and statements outlined income and expenses. Supporting data included the building plans, cost analysis and other supporting documentation.

### **Tips**

- The broad objective seemed very difficult, but we took it one step at a time.
- If you have to raise business donations it is best if you take a clergyman with you!
- Get charitable number early. Business community is not interested unless there is a receipt. you'll get the G.S.T. rebate on all purchases if you have the number.
- It is easier to raise money before the building is up.

They broke ground in October 2000, and opened the library April 7, 2001. The project, from formation of the Friends to completion, took 11 months. The Friends own the building and lease it to the municipality.

Friends fundraising projects included      \$50,318  
Letter writing campaign – residents

(current, former and summer) and corporate citizens	
Friends memberships	\$ 191
Friends fish pond, tee shirt sales and silent auction (at Trans Canada Relay 2000)	\$ 2740
Catered salmon dinner during River John Festival Days	\$ 2048
Corporate donation – Bank of Nova Scotia	\$10,000
River John Clan Ball Tournament	\$ 1026
River John Picture Book CD	\$ 887
Avon Christmas ornaments	\$ 160
Surplus construction tools and equipment	\$ 2163
River John Lions Club – bottle drive	\$ 2773

\* Speakers for this session included Janice Gill, Betty Zong, Ronnie Bailey and Rev. Don Sutherland Librarian Eric Stackhouse was also present for the session, and his article in Feliciter ( Issue #2, 2001 pp. 87-89) provided additional detail including this list of fundraising projects.

\*\* *Excerpt from FOCAL Point newsletter Summer 2002.*