

EDITORIAL

NORTH RENFREW TIMES

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Reflection & anticipation

The start of a new year is the logical time to look back and reflect on the year gone by and look with anticipation to the new year ahead. In many ways it is a relief to close the book on 2009. The prolonged shutdown of NRU and the announced sale of the Candu Reactor Division combine to create uncertainty over the future of Chalk River Labs. The fortunes of Deep River are still intimately connected to the continued viability of AECL, albeit not as much as in the past. The forestry industry was hard hit this past year with plant closures resulting in many jobs lost throughout the Valley.

The discontinuation of Ottawa Valley Rail spells the end of trains in the Ottawa Valley. Passenger rail disappeared many years ago but now the freight trains are also extinct. Hopefully Greyhound will continue to provide at least some level of service locally; we have reason to be nervous with the cancelling of a number of routes in Northern Ontario.

Development within the town of Deep River remains stagnant. There is no sign of much needed housing for seniors and with only a few homes remaining vacant on Cockcroft Crescent, no new houses are available for prospective residents.

To top off this litany of bad news is the impending closure of Morison School. The community itself seems divided on whether the consolidation of students in Mackenzie will allow the high school to remain open for the foreseeable future, but regardless of public opinion the school board is determined to close Morison by September 2011.

The year was not without its high points. Notably the Riverbank Project, spearheaded by Bill Bishop and his band of hard working and dedicated volunteers, completely transformed the campus and waterfront. The geese have been banished and the campus field can once again be enjoyed by soccer and rugby players of all ages. It is safe to walk by Centennial Rock without squishing through a sea of goose poop! The walkway is complete and we look forward to the completion of the terrace and gazebo in time for Summerfest in August. The success of this project is proof yet again what we can achieve as a community if we work together: expert leadership, town support, many volunteers and monetary donations combining to realize a vision.

Town council moved ahead in 2009 with much needed repairs to the pool and the arena. Grumbings about "do we need a pool, do we need an arena," or "is one more worthy than the other" are not productive. Both the pool and the arena contribute greatly to our quality of life and need to be maintained; if lost they will never be reopened. The most used recreation facility in town, the Deep River Library, has increased its hours of operation to the public, now open 11-5, 7-9 Monday to Friday and 10-3 on Saturday.

The expansion of electronic services at the Deep River Hospital benefits residents of the entire area. Electronic consultations cut down on travel, reducing both the stress and cost of a visit to a specialist.

The announcement that CFB Petawawa will be home to the Chinook Helicopter division is welcome news throughout the Valley. It is estimated that an additional 450 personnel will be moving to the area and millions of dollars in construction will be necessary to house and support both the troops and equipment. If Deep River is to capitalize on this influx town council must welcome and start encouraging developers to provide new homes for incoming families and work to overcome some residents' fears of the effects of increased development. We need more families to call Deep River home to ensure our level of services, which includes our schools and facilities and stores.

Let's meet the challenges of the upcoming year head-on: the NRU restart, proposed Chalk River reorganization, anticipated school amalgamation, seniors' housing (potential reinvention for Morison, perhaps) and increased development. Happy New Year!

KM



Local potter Carol Grant works on the wheel in her home studio in Deep River.

Out of your comfort zone

BY CAROL GRANT

Local potter Carol Grant was a participant at the Medalta International Artists in Residence program last summer in Medicine Hat, Alberta. The residency concept creates an opportunity for ceramists, who for the most part work individually, to enter a community atmosphere and work with like-minded artists.

The following is a partial account of her experience.

The interesting history of the city

of Medicine Hat explains why this location is home to the international ceramics program today.

Medicine Hat began as a community on the CPR rail line and in 1904 a very large pocket of natural gas was discovered below the town.

Medicine Hat's industrial economy developed on the basis of the availability of cheap energy. Natural gas was the principal guarantee of the city's importance and prosperity.

The sheer abundance allowed the city extravagances, the most famous of which was that the streetlights of Medicine Hat stayed

lit day and night, as it was cheaper to keep them burning than to pay someone to turn them off and on.

The boom began in 1905 when many mills and factories sprang up. Medicine Hat's other natural advantage for the clay products industry was, of course, the available supply of clay.

For centuries, the South Saskatchewan River deposited alluvial silt along its banks, creating rich deposits of high quality clay. And natural gas provided reliable consistent heat at the high temperatures needed for firing kilns.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Majority opposed to board's plan

Public school board staff recently conducted consultation sessions in Deep River with two selected audiences and one public audience, to help the board answer the question: "What is the best functional model of K-12 programming for the community of Deep River, recognizing that we have to reduce spaces and have \$4.8 million to spend?"

Two sheets were handed out to members of each audience, with spaces to comment on two options. At the end of each session the two sheets were collected for review by board staff.

The two options were specified on the handout sheets as follows:

Option #1 - K-12 programming at the existing Mackenzie High School/Keys Public School Site.

(Translation: Move Morison students to the Mackenzie/Keys building and playground.)

Option #2 - Right-size Morison Public School and close a section of Mackenzie/Keys complex.

(Translation: Reduce student spaces in Morison to match enrolment, and down-size Mackenzie.)

The two sheets, designated Option #1 and Option #2, had spaces for hand-written comments on three specified topics under sub-headings "Program" and "Community Use", but no spaces designated "Preferred Option" or "Other Option".

Consequently Children First, an independent group of local parents, grandparents and taxpayers, offered North Renfrew Times readers an opportunity to vote on one of the two board options, or a third option which the reader could specify.

Up to December 31, 82 ballots were received with the following results:

Option #1 - 9 votes

Option #2 - 54 votes

Other Option - 19 votes.

Morison parents identified themselves on the ballots and cast no votes for Option #1, 18 votes for Option #2 and 8 votes for Other Option.

Many interesting and useful comments were attached to the ballots, and they will be reported at a later date.

In a summary report of the three

Deep River consultation meetings, prepared by public board staff, it was concluded that:

"The school council, community representatives and students favoured the K-12 site as the most viable option. Although Morison School Council clearly prefers to keep their school as it is, they appeared to recognize that a K-12 option would be the most logical from a programming/facility perspective."

Members of the public school board did not speak at any of the Deep River consultation meetings, but accepted the staff recommendation and voted in favour of Option #1 on October 26.

Their plan is to move Morison students to Mackenzie High School as of September 2011.

As noted above, the NRT reader survey resulted in nine out of 82 votes for Option #1.

Ballots are still available at the NRT office, and will be accepted for another week.

John Hilborn, on behalf of Children First

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