

## School review process

# Province introduces legislation

by Jim Morrow

The legislation introduced on April 27th to improve the school review process by increasing the opportunity for community engagement and clarifying the circumstances under which a school must be reviewed was welcome news to the Middle River School Advisory Council

For the second time in four years, Middle River Consolidated School has dodged the possibility of being closed.

Amendments to the Education Act will, if passed, ensure that any school under consideration for closure is reviewed. The only exception will be when a school will be replaced by another public school with little or no change to the student population.

"Middle River is not breathing a sigh of relief," said Kate Oland a member of the Middle River School Advisory Council. "The review document we received indicated to us that:

"The Board is still making the assumption that small, rural schools are cost-ineffective which is a major assumption, not always borne out by the actual numbers.

"Boards are still hampered by the fact that they are only able to consider their own finances - not the overall impact on the community's development, and something we want the Province to change.

"There is built-in pressure on Boards to prove 'due diligence', and

see *Rural*, page Six

## County volunteers recognized



Victoria County's 28th Annual Volunteer Recognition Night was held in MacKenzie Hall, at the Gaelic College, St. Ann's on Tuesday, April 20th. This year's recipients are: Front row Christine MacEachern, Ruth Schneider, Sharon "FX" MacNeil, Millie Campbell, Joanne Fitzgerald, Eugene "Slick" Osmond, Sylvia Nicholson. Back row - John Roberts, Ralph Hanam, Billy Joe Robinson, John MacIntosh, Ross MacLeod, Donna MacGregor, Sharon Proctor, Nina Connors, Evan Bonaparte, and Murdock Morrison. Well done one and all!

## Top of the Island prime example

# Using social media for C.B.'s tourism industry's advantage

by Jim Morrow

Cape Breton's first social media conference drew upon the best and brightest in the field to inform participants how the new approach to marketing is efficient, fast and relatively inexpensive.

Victoria County's Municipal Broadband Committee Chairman, Paul MacNeil, reminded participants that, "Victoria County is well known for its innovation from Alexander Graham Bell's legacy to being the most connected rural community in North America."

Conference organizer Tom Wilson said that the tourism sector is seeing the benefits from using social media to attract and maintain customers.

Mary Tulle CEO of Destination Cape Breton agrees saying that, "social marketing and e-marketing will educate our customers so that they will come here and put us back on top as the number one destination in the world."

Social media is comprised of internet programs such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Blogs which can be used to raise awareness worldwide of local products and services.

The Top of the Island marketing initiative is a case in point. Encompassing 85% of all organizations and business in communities from Neil's Harbour to Meat Cove, the Top of the Island marketing campaign uses Facebook and Twitter to expand their reach

beyond the traditional modes of print media such as the Nova Scotia Doers and Dreamers Guide, newsletters and e-mails.

Amy MacKinnon, a member of Victoria County's Social Media Project explained that the Top of the Island project started four years ago and with encouragement from Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation and the Tourism Industry of Nova Scotia they did a website review for Top of the Island members.

With a new look and a stronger sense of community, they launched their new media campaign in March and within one week contacts were up 52%.

see *Social*, page three

## Annual general meeting

# Stewardship Society reflects on initiatives

by Jim Morrow

The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society (BSS) held its 13th Annual General meeting on April 17th at Alexander Graham Bell National Historic Site.

A membership organization of committed individuals, the Bras d'Or Stewardship Society promotes accountable and responsible stewardship of the Bras d'Or Lake and its watershed.

Society Chairman Pat Bates pointed out that BSS, "operates within a cluster of organizations and agencies wherein each has established a specific mission or mandate for its existence, yet have all come together in a spirit of

cooperation under the umbrella of the Bras d'Or Lake Collaborative Environmental Planning Initiative (CEPI).

"The Collaborative Environmental Planning Initiative has, among other tasks, been drafting a "State of the Bras d'Or Report intended, when completed, to describe the condition of the important physical characteristics of the Lake and Watershed."

Mr. Bates was pleased to highlight some of the initiatives the Society has undertaken and noted that 2010 is the year the Sewage from Boats Regulation becomes effective. The regulations

see *Stewardship*, page two

## Ingonish tourism steering committee's

# Communications Day inspires community

by Jim Morrow

The Ingonish Tourism Steering Committee held its 4th Annual Community Communication day on April 14th.

Chair of the Ingonish Tourism Steering Committee, Donald Jardine was pleased with the day's activities.

"Our speakers were informative and the turn out was excellent," Mr. Jardine said.

One of the highlights of the day was the unveiling of the new Ingonish Tourism and Community website called ExperienceIngonish.com. Designed by icon communications in Sydney the Steering Committee hopes to see the

site up and functioning early in May.

Mr. Jardine said the website will include close to 90% of the goods and services offered in the area.

Michelle Sears from Tourism Nova Scotia was on hand to give a presentation on the Province's new website NovaScotia.com.

Mr. Jardine said he was impressed with the new genealogical aspect in the province's website.

"By entering in your surname the map will show you where in Nova Scotia your ancestors lived," he said.

Updates were given on various projects see 3.2%, page three