

Lieutenant Governor Community Spirit Award Entry Form

Thank you for taking the time to tell your community's stories and what makes it so special.

- Please fill out the following information and then continue to complete your nomination by adding extra pages to this word document so that it will arrive in one single attachment.
- Please save your file by community name.
- All entries should be in Microsoft Word format and, if appropriate, in video format (avi or mpg only) as a second attachment.

All completed entry forms and submissions must be emailed to [submissions](#) **Lieutenant Governor Community Spirit Award Entry Form**

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- **All completed entry forms and submissions must be emailed to submissions@communityspiritaward.ca by midnight, January 31, 2010.**

Community Name: Morristown

Key Contact Person for Award Submission: Lawrence Tupper

Email address: ltupper@kohltech.com

Daytime phone number: 222-2395

Evening phone number: 798-0525

Names of Groups within the community who have joined together to put forward this nomination:

1. Morristown 77's softball team
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

By submitting your nomination you are agreeing to allow the Lieutenant Governor's Community Spirit Award to post your stories on the Award's website and to share these stories online with the Award's media partners.

Communities are often shaped by particular events, as well as residents, not to mention geography and geology. There are some rare occasions however when communities are shaped and often become best known by the spirit of its residents. This can be in the form of events, teamwork, community projects all of which carried out by citizens, with the support of the community and local business.

I have been fortunate enough to grow up in a community where this type of spirit has existed and particularly fortunate to watch it grow and be a part of it.

Our story starts in Morristown, a small farming community in the Annapolis valley in the mid Nineteen –Seventies . A group of young men ; many of whom rushed through their chores on their family farms; gathered on many a warm summer evening to match skills with other youths from neighboring communities in a game of softball. It was here that a long traditional of softball in the community was born. It did not matter your skill level or experience, as long as you were from the small farming community you could find your turn at bat, and at the end of the night, win or lose, it was done as a group. For a small community our boys handled themselves admirably against much larger villages and towns and no doubt with a few additions could have beaten many of those teams, but if it meant sitting one of the local boys out, then it was not deemed worth it.

Glendon Harris, a long time player, and owner of the local garage eventually donated land behind the garage for a softball field. This field was built and maintained for many years by these players. During summers all of the local youth could be seen on the field enjoying it. Eventually another player “Ted Palmer” hung up his jersey, and started a youth organization which, at its peak carried 5 teams and over 75 players, including many young ladies from the communities. I remember one of the 1st girls to play, she came from Lake Paul and always had her hair in a ponytail. She played in those early years in a boys league on a highly competitive team and she proved a valuable asset, and a very determined player.

By this time neighboring communities Lake Paul and Lake George had become actively involved in the sport and the community as well. By the mid Nineteen Nineties, a jersey bearing the Morristown name assured the sportsmanship and passion of those original founding players. This era also marked a second generation of players on the mens team who would pick up the torch and carry it into a new era . This group was led by Leonard Amero (a youthful original) and Jeff Robar (future husband of Glendon Harris' daughter). It was Jeff who suffered the team through one of its roughest periods as the original players slowly hung up their jerseys and younger ones came on board.

His patience would pay off with the teams first ever league championship in the early Nineties, as these younger players such as Jim Amero and Shawn Gates started to hit their prime. Sadly the next season the league folded and the team was forced to start playing out of the eastern part of the valley where the nearest league was. The team would never again play on the original field.

The team would continue to take on new players and for the first time some faces from outside the community (though all with a unique tie to it) would come aboard in the

shape of Sean Skinner (who ironically married that young girl with the blonde ponytail) Sean Kinsman and the grandson of one of those original players, Richard Weihers. And the team would again win league titles and tournaments.

Eventually the team began playing in tournaments abroad and adopted the name the Morrystown 77's. This and our trademark purple jerseys became know throughout eastern Canada as we carried our unique team culture with us. People could not believe how well we got a long with each other and how well we knew each other on the field. This happens when you bat behind the same guy in the batting order for 18 straight years. We were always known for never quitting, a tenacious quality that came hard earned which we referred to as "purple heart".

The team also began to travel to PEI each summer establishing a great relationship with a team from there known as Carpenters Inc. where they took part in a charity softball tournament in support of one of their former teammates young daughter who was orphaned as a result of a tragic car accident involving her parents. The team that wears the purple jerseys are affectionately referred to as "Nova Scotia" by many residents of Kensington Pei.

The coming of a new century brought great struggles as the failure of fastball brought teams into the league who where not willing to play by the time honored orthodox pitching rules. We read of similar struggles throughout Canada in Orthodox softball, which in most cases brought the league and sport to an end.. After several years of trying to work with all parties, the Morrystown team got together and wrote a pitching rule to resolve the problem and started a new league which remains in place to this day, one of the few leagues left in Eastern Canada. (The rule has since been adopted by Softball Canada for Eastern Canadian Championships, Softball Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia School Athletic Federation)

Through 3 leagues and over thirty years the team has survived and yet its biggest struggles lay waiting. Like so many communities, ours suffered greatly from out migration in the early years of the 21st century. While our team grew and flourished, the lack of youth in the Annapolis Valley saw the teams in our league fold one after another. In 2006 we were faced with having no league, no team, no ball. So we split up and formed teams on our own in the hope we could once again play together. After three years of being separated we agreed to start a club team to play abroad and take one more crack at a provincial and eastern Canadian championship, and have at least one more opportunity to play together. In the fall of 2009 we won a bronze on the back of our two Lake Paul pitchers Jeff Robar and Cole Joudrey. Imagine 2 guys from a community of 50 or 60 impacting an Eastern Canadian Championship that way.

2009 marked the first season there was no youth softball in Morrystown, sadly while there where organizers and lots of players, they had noone to play against.

Through out the years the farmers of community graciously lent their machinery to mow fields, dig holes for fenceposts and local business where always quick to sponsor teams. Even as the 77's embark on their reunion a local farmer sponsored the team and the community club vigorously supported the team in a fundraising Halloween dance that had the old community hall near capacity.

It is possible to put a group of guys on the field from the 77's that would represent over 150 years of playing experience. We have long asserted we are the oldest continually run softball team in Nova Scotia and to the best of our knowledge understand this to be a fact.

Another unique characteristic of this team is that statistics are largely in tact throughout the 30 plus years , directly back to the first game in 1977. While there are a few omissions, and some considerations to make over the years, each player in each year has been accounted for in detail in what we call “The Purple Book”.

Recently some long time players have reflected upon some of the highly successful teams(teams) from other communities over the years and compared it to the wealth of experiences we have acquired through the spirit of our group and we have concluded that this experience is much more than a team playing a sport. It has been an anchor for many players, an opportunity to be “included”, and most importantly it has brought all of us together in a way that would otherwise not have been possible, and at a time when such organizations are becoming fewer. I do hope you will give us careful consideration for the Lieutenant Governor’s Community Spirit Award.

Respectfully submitted,

Lawrence Tupper

- [@communityspiritaward.ca](http://communityspiritaward.ca) by midnight, January 31, 2010.

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