

Lieutenant Governor Community Spirit Award Entry Form

Community Name: Town of Berwick and Surrounding Areas

Key Contact Person for Award Submission: Jill Easson

Email address: jeasson@town.berwick.ns.ca

Daytime and Evening phone numbers: 902-670-2914

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

1. Berwick and Area's Community Organizations
2. Town of Berwick : e-Government
3. Kings Mutual Century Centre Committee
4. Western Kings Memorial Health Society
5. Berwick and Area Economic Development Advisory Committee
6. Berwick Recreation Department
7. Berwick Gala Days Committee
8. Berwick United Church Camp
9. New Berwick and District Volunteer Fire Department
10. Berwick Farmers' Market Cooperative
11. 2nd Berwick Scout Group
12. Berwick and District School
13. Oaklawn Farm Zoo



Introduction

The following stories exemplify the essential and supporting criteria required for the Nova Scotia Lieutenant Governor's Community Spirit Award, as they pertain to the Town of Berwick and its surrounding rural areas in Kings County, Nova Scotia. Rather than have one individual compile all stories, we engaged our local community and requested that each story be authored by someone involved with the related topic. The end result is a document involving thirteen stories of community spirit, proudly authored by eleven different individuals.

The Town of Berwick, Nova Scotia's fastest-growing town according to the 2006 census, is also the Apple Capital of Nova Scotia. It is unique in that its town limits do not represent the boundaries of its community. Rather, the people within the town and its surrounding geographic hamlets – Somerset, Aylesford, Cambridge, Waterville, Windermere, Morrystown, and the list goes on – comprise this unique rural community. Volunteer organizations, community groups, schools, businesses, municipal employees, youth groups, and churches include representation from all areas of the region as well.

The remainder of this application first addresses the supporting statistical criteria requested by award organizers. The data is then followed by our collection of short stories. We hope that you will enjoy learning about Berwick and its surrounding areas!

Supporting Statistical Data

Community Initiatives:

This list is not exhaustive: The Berwick Farmers' Market Cooperative, the Kings Mutual Century Centre, the new Berwick & District Volunteer Fire Department, Gala Days, the United Church Camp, and the Western Kings Memorial Health Society are all examples of self-generated community initiatives that are described in the following stories.

Community Events:

Our community events are very well attended, with a prime example being the Grand Opening of the Kings Mutual Century Centre in October of 2010. On opening night, two local hockey teams took to the ice. Every chair was full, every bit of standing room around the walking track was occupied, and kids' noses were pressed to the glass!

Programs for Children, Teens, and Seniors:

Some of the children's programs offered in our community include Moms and Tots and Tots' Story Time. For teens, there are a wide-range of sports teams, teen dances, and after-school programs. The Library also holds Wii nights and special nights for youth throughout the month. The town offers meeting space at no cost to the local Seniors Auxiliary, which meets weekly for a wide-range of activities. There are also locally-offered fitness classes for each of these age groups.

Community Voter Turnout:

This is explained in the e-Government story below.

Volunteer Agencies:

Again, this is by no means an exhaustive list. Local volunteer groups include Berwick Gala Days, Berwick and Area Economic Development Advisory Committee, Kings Mutual Century Centre Committee (and several sub-committees within), Berwick and District Community Association, Berwick and District Volunteer Fire Department, United Church Camp Committee, Western Kings Memorial Health Society's

Board of Directors, Berwick & District Lions Club, Rebekkahs, Masons, Western Kings Board of Trade, Berwick Legion, Apple Capital Museum, numerous church auxiliaries, local Guiding and Scouting clubs, coaches of several sport teams, and many more!

COMMUNITY SPIRIT STORIES

Berwick and Area's Community Organizations

By Don Clarke - Town Councillor, Member of the Berwick & District Lions Club and the Western Kings Board of Trade

Berwick and its surrounding areas were settled in the early 1800s. The community is marked by a longstanding history of participation in volunteer groups including athletic clubs, fraternal organizations, service clubs, churches, and other auxiliary groups. The area is unique in that the longevity of many of these organizations actually span longer than the town's existence (the town was incorporated in 1923, making it one of the youngest towns in Nova Scotia).

Those groups that have surpassed a 100-year anniversary include the Rebekahs, the Board of Trade, the Berwick Register newspaper, the United Church Campgrounds, as well as the Baptist, Anglican, and United (Methodist) churches. Additionally, the local Lions Club, Legion, Masonic Lodge, and the curling club all span a life of over fifty years.

These groups have contributed endlessly to the community through enthusiastic volunteerism. They have provided numerous venues where individuals of all ages belong and serve the greater community. Furthermore, these groups honour age-old traditions while adapting to today's needs, so that they continue to be sustainable as the years pass by. The community organizations are also welcoming to newcomers, making Berwick and area a great place to live.

As time passes, the need for new organizations inevitably grows. One of the town's younger community groups includes the Berwick and District Community Association. This band of volunteers oversees the governance and operations of the Kings Mutual Century Centre. Berwick also established a volunteer group in the 1990s to oversee and operate its Apple Capital Museum. The museum tells the tale of Berwick and area's strong economic ties (both past and present) to the apple and agricultural industries. Town Hall also oversees several special-interest committees that include volunteers, overseeing such areas as planning, economic development, police services, and recreation.

Town of Berwick: E-Government

By Bob Ashley - Chief Administrative Officer for the Town of Berwick

Communities are all about connecting people. Early on, Berwick seized upon the Internet's opportunities to improve connections not only between citizens, but between the people and their local government. Among the 55 municipalities of Nova Scotia, Berwick is an acknowledged leader, one of only three municipalities to hold electronic municipal and school board elections in 2008. Further, the use of social media by governments is quickly becoming commonplace, but Berwick was the first in Nova Scotia to launch and manage a successful Facebook presence in 2008.

In 2008, e-Voting offered quick and convenient access to many citizens who might otherwise remain unconnected with the election. Many seniors voted by phone or by the internet from the comfort of their own home, whenever they felt like it, 24/7, over a period of a week. Likewise, the disabled now had instant, unencumbered access. The e-Voting process also plugged into a younger demographic entirely at ease with mobile connectivity. Further, some voters who could not be in town on election day voted from wherever they happened to be – in Truro, New Jersey, Saskatoon, or North Bay among others.

Historically, voter turnout for municipal elections is not inspiring, with 20% to 30% being a predictable range. Berwick's participation in 2008, however, reached 55% – the second highest for towns in Nova Scotia!

Berwick's Facebook presence is nothing short of astounding. The town's population is 2,454 and our Facebook subscription is nearly 1,700 people (70%)! No other municipality in Nova Scotia even comes close. Granted, quite a few of the people subscribing are not residents of Berwick, but many in that group hold onto Berwick connections – with relatives, friends or colleagues in other parts of the Province or Canada, in the U.S., the British Isles, the Netherlands and Australia. The town also maintains a Twitter feed.



Kings Mutual Century Centre Committee

By Cindy Easson - Member of the Kings Mutual Century Centre's Grand Opening Committee

The Kings Mutual Century Centre (KMCC) is a state of the art recreational facility that was built through a decade of planning and fundraising by local volunteers. In 2000, community members decided that the aging Berwick Arena was in need of replacement. These individuals formed the Apple Dome Committee, and they worked together over the following decade to make a community dream come true.

That same year, the Apple Dome Committee completed an assessment to find that not only did Berwick and area need a new arena, but it would also benefit from a new curling rink, library, fitness centre, pool, and Lions Hall. Architects were hired and the cost estimate came in at \$15-17 million. As the dream grew momentum, more volunteers joined in the cause. The committee decided that this was actually going to happen, but they wanted to complete this project debt-free – a major feat.

Over the next decade, fundraising reached a fever pitch, with community participation in annual golf tournaments, dinners, auctions, ticket sales, sports fundraisers, and even door-to-door campaigns. Next to the Federal and Provincial governments, corporate sponsors were the biggest contributors to the project. After

the Kings Mutual Insurance Company (headquartered in Berwick) donated \$1 million to the project, many other local businesses embraced the dream as well, and the committee had enough funds to forge ahead with construction. Furthermore, a large plot of land was donated by brothers who were long time residents and businessmen in town.

The first phase of the KMCC, consisting of the arena and Lions Hall, officially opened in October 2010, debt-free. Construction of the second phase, consisting of the aforementioned amenities, is expected to begin in the near future. The KMCC is also governed and operated by another group of local volunteers – the Berwick and District Community Association.



Western Kings Memorial Health Society

By Hartt MacKinlay - Manager of the Western Kings Memorial Health Society

In 1922, the citizens of Western Kings County had a vision. As a result of this vision and a load of commitment, they built the first hospital between Windsor and Yarmouth. There were three additional builds over the next sixty years, resulting in a modern 60 bed hospital that the community was proud of.

In 1995, the government restructured Nova Scotia's health care delivery. The result was the closure of several hospitals in the province. Berwick and area was not immune. Once again the community upheld its vision and commitment. Residents held a "Town Hall meeting" with 1,200 people present – almost half of Berwick's current population! The consensus from the meeting was for the hospital board to do whatever it could to preserve health care services for the area. As a result, the Western Kings Memorial Health Society was formed in October 1996. This volunteer Board of Directors took over ownership of the former hospital.

The building is now fully occupied and represents a true community success. It houses regional offices for the Annapolis Valley Regional School Board, four family physicians, a dentist, a dental surgeon, VON Adult Day Care centre, an Emergency Medical Services base and the Annapolis Valley District Health Authority. Health services available include a walk in clinic, specimen collection, diagnostic imaging, physiotherapy, public health services, a dialysis unit, a dietician, mental health services and addiction services. This provides a broad selection of services without the necessity of travel for many citizens in the community.

The Society has also been able to provide financial stability to the facility and has supported several community programs including Active Kids-Healthy Kids, VON, Our Health Our Community, and a mammography van. It is a partner in the Western Kings Board of Trade and the Berwick and Area Economic Development Advisory Committee.

Berwick and Area Economic Development Advisory Committee

By Mike Trinacty - Chair of the Berwick and Area Economic Development Advisory Committee and Town Councillor

In early 2007, officials from the Western Kings Board of trade and the Town of Berwick met to discuss the economic development needs of the community. The Kings Regional Development Authority provided support in creating a unique plan to address the economic requirements of the town and also the surrounding area. It was agreed that not only was a strategy necessary, but also a creative and dedicated group of people to implement the plan.

Individuals from various sectors were identified to populate the committee and develop a strategy. The people responded and in a short time, representatives from agriculture, retail, health, manufacturing, professional services and local government were at the table. This group created goals that centred on developing a healthy community, ensuring positive experiences in town, beautifying the streets, increasing commercial and industrial diversification, and supporting local organizations. The committee secured funding for a coordinator and implemented a three-year plan. With success in each area and greater interest from the community at large, a restructuring was required.

The Economic Development Advisory Committee was recently reshaped to include representatives of organizations in the community interested in partnering on broader community and economic development. The committee now includes a very diverse group of agencies including the Town of Berwick, County of Kings, Western Kings Board of Trade, Western Kings Memorial Health Society, Kings Mutual Century Centre and the Kings Regional Development Authority. These groups all contribute to the budget to support a coordinator and have recently completed a strategic plan to address the next three years, to mid-2013. This unique set of partners are enthusiastic and dedicated in supporting a vision that Berwick and area will thrive as a vibrant, healthy community with unique opportunities to live, work, play and do business!

Berwick Recreation Department

By Carol Boylan-Hartling - Recreation and Community Development Programming Assistant for the Town of Berwick

The Berwick Recreation Department plans events throughout the year, including a Sports Hall of Fame Induction and Recognition, Canada Day Celebrations, a Town Wide Yardsale, a Haunted House and Santa Claus Celebrations. All of these events bring the community's people out to celebrate.

Every June for the past 12 years, local sports heroes and youth are celebrated at an event which attracts as many as 400 people. To date, the Sports Hall of Fame has inducted 27 Athletes, 12 Builders, 26 Teams as well as 3 individuals in the "Special Recognition" category. All memorabilia and plaques recognizing the individuals will be on display at our new recreation facility, The Kings Mutual Century Centre.

The last Saturday of July has been the annual date for the Town Wide Yardsale for the past 10 years. Several businesses and over 40 homes register for the event, with many more having sales on that day and during the entire weekend. Great food is also involved with specials at local restaurants and barbeques by local community groups.

In October, The Berwick Recreation Department has presented a Haunted House for the past 8 years which is open to the public and has attracted at many as 1,000 people. Youth volunteers in the community take part in the event which continues to grow in popularity every year. Funds raised are donated back to community groups.

The Santa Claus Weekend in late November kicks off the holiday season and is full of fun! In 2010, the town celebrated the 30th Anniversary of Santa Claus Celebrations in Berwick. Several blocks of the town's main street was lined with people watching the Magical Santa Claus Parade, held on a Saturday evening. Other events included a tree lighting ceremony, Santa Breakfast, craft sales, barbeques, free skates and wagon rides.

Berwick Gala Days Committee

By Carol Boylan-Hartling - Recreation and Community Development Programming Assistant for the Town of Berwick

The first "Gala Day" was held on September 2, 1945, in the Town of Berwick. This event was sponsored by the Berwick Amateur Athletic Association to improve Rainforth Park. The event continues to be primarily held at Rainforth Park and has expanded to a three day event, now called Gala Days. The festival attracts approximately 7,000 people annually.

The longstanding success of Gala Days is attributed to the many volunteers from the community at large. Volunteers plan the festival all year long, and operate each event as it takes place throughout the weekend. In 1945, the first Gala Days program included such events as horse pulling, a tug of war, a street parade, women's softball, men's baseball, a United Church supper and a street dance to end the day. Current events include children's activities, a midway fair, horse and ox pulls, various strength competitions and races, parades, fireworks, a craft fair, a dance, a woodsman competition, eating contests, horse and car shows, and the crowning of a Gala Day Queen.

The volunteer committee's tireless efforts, along with support from the town's Recreation Department, have allowed Gala Days to become a coveted festival. All funds raised go back to support youth activities in Berwick and its surrounding areas.

Berwick United Church Camp

By Cindy Easson - Past Accommodations Chair and Annual Attendee of Berwick United Church Camp

Berwick United Church Camp is a unique community of Christian followers who have gathered each summer for 138 years. The camp is nestled within a twenty-three acre hemlock forest in Berwick, where people from near and far come to practice their faith in Christianity and live amongst worshippers. The camp was founded in 1872, and has been active every year since. The ongoing commitment of the camp's community – preachers, worshippers, volunteers, and local residents – is the foundation of its longevity. The camp is comprised of many buildings including a dining hall, an indoor and outdoor pavilion, a children's temple, youth centre, dormitories, and over a hundred cottages.

Each summer, approximately 1,000 campers from Canada, the USA, and abroad gather for ten days to worship, eat, and sing in this unique setting. Although the camp operates under the United Church of Canada, it invites Evangelists from around the world to lead so that its services are inclusive and broadening in nature. For the past 40 years, Atlantic Christian Ashram has also held a six day camp for approximately 800 people here.

In addition to holding church services, the camp also offers concerts, bible studies, playgrounds, art and music classes, yoga, and free time to its participants. Individuals return time and again to participate in a spiritual retreat that has taken place for nearly 140 years. In the past, the camp was only open to those who purchased a ticket for entry. Today, however, the camp is able to sustain itself through collections and donations, and has opened its gates to all. Many participants reside at the camp while it is in session.

However, many from Berwick and its surrounding areas come and go as they wish, so that they may also be members of this unique community.

New Berwick and District Volunteer Fire Department

By Bob Ashley - Chief Administrative Officer for the Town of Berwick - and Dianne Ashton – Executive Secretary, Volunteer Fire Fighter, and Chair of the Hall Rental Committee for the Berwick and District Volunteer Fire Department

In 2008, a new facility that houses the Berwick and District Volunteer Fire Department was constructed. This building exemplifies the collaborative intensity of our community spirit. This proud department has attracted curious regional visitors as well as national attention for its technical innovations, its many green features, and its model of successful cooperation. The trade publication, *Fire Fighting in Canada*, featured our team of champion builders in its August 2010 article, *Green Machine*.

A diverse collection of citizens came together from Berwick’s Town Council, the County of Kings, the Berwick and District Fire Commission, and more than 50 volunteer fire fighters. Donations from engaged citizens and businesses added generous support. Critical in-kind contributions of labour, equipment, and skills also came from the local contractor and sub-trade firms who built the hall.

Our leadership did not come in the form of one heroic champion but rather through a network of distributed leadership. The community, in essence, led itself and everyone involved was a champion. The result? A state-of-the-art fire hall which both embodies and signifies our community’s deep sense of civic pride.

Today, the department houses not only our volunteer firefighters, but also a Hall Rental Committee and a Fire Department Auxiliary. The Hall Rental Committee books the hall portion of the building for banquets, luncheons, weddings, and dances while the Fire Department Auxiliary provides event catering services and contributes refreshments to fire fighters during fire calls. The Fire Hall is consistently busy, underlining the community’s support for the new department. Moreover, the Auxiliary and fire fighters often work together to conduct community fundraisers for new fire equipment, as well as private fundraisers for individuals in need.



Berwick Farmers’ Market Cooperative

By Carol Tobin - Founder and Organizer of the Berwick Farmers’ Market Cooperative

Public markets are as old as commerce itself. Six thousand years ago, they played a prominent role in the development of the economies and communities of Mesopotamia. There, farmers would market their produce, engaging in commerce and in the building of relationships. People of this century are rediscovering the benefits of public markets: the superior taste and ecological soundness of locally produced food, the social interaction fostered by open-air markets, and the economic leg up markets provide smaller scale farms and producers.

The founders of Berwick Farmers' Market Cooperative recognized the opportunity to help their community's local producers compete in a global marketplace, and so with the moral and material support of the town, set up in Berwick's Town Hall Park in 2009. All their endeavours are grounded in a love of responsibly grown food and artisanal products, and the knowledge that public markets benefit producers, consumers, and communities in equal measure. And in an increasingly homogenous world, they provide a distinctly local public place where people from many walks of life gather from early spring as soon as the first greens are available to mid-autumn, to participate in an ancient tradition, much as they did in the Berwick of 150 years ago.

The members of Berwick Farmers' Market Cooperative are as intent on creating a consistent and remarkable social gathering space for families and individuals as much as they are in making sure that folks producing amazingly good stuff can continue to grow it, produce it, and sell it. So in 2010, with the ongoing support of the town, they moved the Market to Centennial Park to take advantage of the town's bandshell and avenue to enhance the conditions for both vendors and the community. Great things spring from simple ideas and Berwick Farmers' Market Cooperative is no exception.

2nd Berwick Scout Group

By Jim Jotcham - Scouting Leader

With 84 registered members, Scouting is alive and well in Berwick and surrounding areas! The 2nd Berwick Scout Group, comprised of adults and youth, offers service to the community, to surrounding areas, and to the world.

The Beavers (ages 5 to 7) begin with their motto: "Share, share, share". Whether it's cleaning up church grounds or sending cards to troops in Afghanistan, these youth learn early how fun it is to support their community.

The Cubs (ages 8-10) often collect items for the Food Bank and conduct town-wide garbage cleanups. Throughout Christmas, they carol at nearby nursing homes and gather shoe box gifts for The Samaritan's Purse. The Cubs recently collected pennies that they later donated to the Kings County SPCA.

The Scouts (ages 11-13) participate in a town wide clean-up with the Berwick Beautification committee and often assist the local food bank. Scouts have volunteered at town-sponsored events such as the Halloween Haunted House and Breakfast with Santa. They regularly support the Berwick and District Lions with fund-raising dinners for charitable causes.

The Scouts and Venturers regularly work together on projects. For example, both groups participate in the annual highway clean-up sponsored by the South Berwick Women's Institute. Last spring, the two groups worked together on a river clean-up with the Cornwallis Headwaters Society, and will do so again in 2011.

The Venturers (ages 14-17) offer service to county-wide events, performing security and first-aid for several large multi-group Scout camps. In addition, they run emergency first-aid stations for the annual Halifax SAR fund-raiser, an orienteering eco-challenge.

The motto for the Rovers (ages 18-26) is 'Service' and they volunteer as leaders to help the younger sections grow in Scouting.

Our whole group – from Beavers to Rovers – are proud to be able to offer service to Berwick and its surrounding areas.

Berwick and District School

By Jason Spinney - Berwick and District School Junior High Teacher

For the past seven years at the Berwick & District School, Grade Seven students have taken on a community-based project that teaches teamwork, responsibility and respect. The project empowers the students by giving them an opportunity to help others in need. In doing so, the students discover the role they play in their community and the impact that twelve and thirteen year olds can make on the lives of people living in our area. Each year the students, with the help of the Salvation Army, “adopt” an anonymous, less fortunate family at Christmas time. The students raise money through hot dog BBQs and school dances. That money is then used to purchase Christmas gifts, clothing, and food for the adopted family.

This project has been supported tremendously over the past seven years by the Town of Berwick and its businesses. From the local grocery stores that have hosted the BBQs to the newspapers that have printed the good news stories, this community-based project continues to be very successful. Historically, the town and the school have had a very close working relationship. While stressing the strength of community, the students and teachers of Berwick and District School, along with the Town of Berwick, have worked together to assist local food banks, less fortunate families, and several other worthwhile town projects over a number of years. The school and town continue to provide opportunities for our youth to become empowered. Encouraging active citizenship through community involvement is a high priority for both the school and town.

It is through projects such as these, that the staff of Berwick School hopes to instil in our students a sense of pride in our community, a love for our town, and a passion for helping others.

Oaklawn Farm Zoo

By Gail & Ron Rogerson - Owners and Operators of Oaklawn Zoo

School visits to Oaklawn Farm started in 1975 with the Berwick Nursery School being the first. By the early 1980s, word-of-mouth had made it a popular drop-in spot for many in the community. Our yard would fill with curious people on the weekends wanting to see our animals. Since our privacy was gone, we applied for Federal and Provincial certification and officially opened to the public in 1984.

Upon opening, we received our first big cats and monkeys from other zoos and we continued to grow. We are currently Nova Scotia’s only zoo. By working with endangered species, we house the largest collection of cats and primates in Atlantic Canada and we are one of the most visited tourist destinations in the province.

We have become a draw for the community and we encourage people to stay in the area to support the local economy. Admission is valid for the whole day, so people can come to the zoo and then go to the ocean, u-pick, shopping, and so on, and then return for the big cat feeding late in the day. We sell many season passes and have become a place where local people bring their company.

The zoo is self-supporting and employs over twenty people in the peak season. We opened to a demand and continue to benefit from word-of-mouth advertising.