

# The Old Train Station News

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Newsletter #90

June 2016

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## Extending a Hand: The Antigonish Movement

Perhaps the most marvelous aspect of Nova Scotia is its undeniable sense of community. Our connection to this land and our fellow people who inhabit it is as much a part of the atmosphere here as the fog in the early morning, or the salt on the sea breeze. A Nova Scotian's livelihood is wholly intertwined with that of her or his neighbours. Even beyond the general friendliness and sociability of the people who live here (especially noticeable to someone who has come from another province), this part of the world also was the birthplace of an adult education program and social movement that sought to bring up all of society by helping individuals to take charge of their destinies: the Antigonish Movement. Beginning from the locus of St. Francis Xavier University as well as the inspiration of educators like Rev. Moses M. Coady and Father Jimmy Tompkins, this movement would come to embody what I believe to be so special about Nova Scotia in my experience; the things that I've absorbed the most from my time in Nova Scotia all have parallels in the history of the Antigonish Movement. It was (and continues to be) an expression of care and love for the dignity and beauty of every person in this community of ours, a way of expanding our minds and hearts, and path to freedom and self-reliance.

"St. F. X. has always been known for an interest in the people of its constituency. Its founders and their successors have never been satisfied that only a few leaders should receive higher education. This sincere sympathy with the people on farms, in mines and in factories, and the liberal attitude of our educators toward the aspirations of all the people, "ST. F. X." were really the fertile soil that nourished the roots of the present-day movement." – Rev. Moses M. Coady

In order for society to change for the better, each individual member has to be educated and able to reach their fullest potential. In the 1920's in Nova Scotia, there was a worry that adult education was unfortunately moving toward being a means of professionalization rather than liberation, of superficial accreditation above applicable knowledge (a worry that, in my mind, has in most cases not diminished in the slightest). Moses M. Coady, inspired by fervour of Father Jimmy Tompkins, set up the Extension Department at St. FX as a way to change the university from an elitist institution into the vehicle of social change, available to all people. Not only was Nova Scotia suffering from serious economic difficulties at this time, but also this suffering was exacerbated by this ineffective and exclusive system of education: those people who drive the economy through production were not served by the university system, and those who did go through university did not help the declining economy. As Reverend Coady notes in his book *Masters of Their Own Destiny*, "our elementary and secondary

education did not prepare for life. Our colleges were too much concerned with the education of people for the professions.”

But how could this issue, and the economic hardships that arose from it, be solved? Coady developed the Extension department at St. FX as a means of remedying this. St. FX’s Extension department reached out to the people in the community who were previously neglected by the academy. By educating the people in the primary industries, the workers, farmers, fishermen, and miners, the people most intimately connected with our fundamental wellbeing who tap into the life force of the Earth so that society can thrive, all of society could benefit. The underlying philosophy is that educational empowerment must be planted at the foundations of human society: economy is the fertile soil from which sprouts culture, art, and all higher human pursuits. You need to eat to be able to nourish and grow your soul. And the economy is run by these primary-industry, rural citizens. By “teaching people to fish” in this way, rather than simply feeding them, they are made capable of self-empowerment.

The movement was structured around a system of mutual co-operation, working from the individual up to build a society in which everyone could flourish. This process began, in the various rural fishing and farming towns of Nova Scotia, with a mass meeting. These meetings were organized by an enterprising leader who was “not a teacher, but rather a secretary of the group, whose business it was to round up the people, to see that they got the literature and that they attended the meetings”, in Moses Coady’s words. These organizers were not some higher authority instructing the people on how to properly live their lives; they simply brought everyone together to let everyone discuss what was most draining and troubling in their lives, with the intention of finding solutions for these issues through education on economic principles and collaborative action. After the initial meeting, everyone would break into smaller ‘kitchen study clubs’ (so named because they were so distilled in number that their constituents could gather in the home of just one member) which would read the literature and learn how best to take back control of their means of production. The method worked, too: because each person involved was allowed to learn individually in a small group, they all gained a personal and experiential understanding of the ideas that they never could have if they had been talked at by a lecturer. This system, which so democratically affirmed and nourished the human dignity of each individual within it, naturally led to the establishment of what we often see in Nova Scotia today: community co-operatives and credit unions, enterprises in which all users are at the same time owners.

The Movement was so successful in Eastern Nova Scotia and Cape Breton that its light soon spread through the Maritimes and Canada, and eventually throughout North America and across Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia in the form of the Coady International Institute. The entire movement is hinged upon a ground-up development of society, which uses education to establish the dignity of each Individual and in turn allows the larger whole to flourish. It is about joining hands, not being dragged up by someone else, or danced helplessly in a direction which one does not fully understand by some invisible puppetmaster. The Antigonish Movement respects that all people are capable of realizing their full potential if they work together and educate themselves, and that the economic working of society need not be an inscrutable and unwieldy mystery.

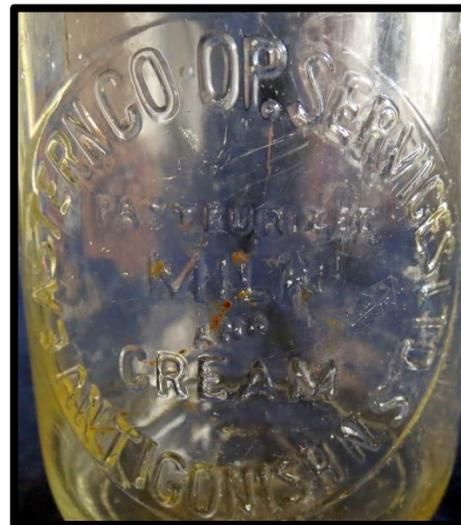
The essential facets of this movement reflect the most striking lessons that I’ve learned in my time in the Maritimes: even the most magnificent rainforests must naturally grow from the tiniest seed. The most intricate and complicated and grandiose elements of our civilization are fed by the simplest human

activities, from the basics, from producing food and the essentials of life. It is supremely arrogant to suggest that people like farmers and fishers are from a lower grade of person than the educated aristocrat (the people who frequently exploit these roots of all human existence for their own gain); and one of the most wonderful things one can do in life is to enlighten people from all walks of life to the highest possible degree. I've come to understand that, just as the monuments of high culture grow from the primordial humility of the Earth, all social changes in the outer world begin within the deepest core of our individual souls. If we allow ourselves the space to come to realizations about the nature of the world (a process commonly referred to as 'education'), then we can see more clearly how to act in the world that brings out the inherent value and beauty of our fellow people. The Antigonish Movement expresses what I love about the Maritimes: its atmosphere of compassion toward others, of showing love for one's community through sharing all of the lessons one learns, and of respecting the dignity of all people.

by Aidan Hassell

## Recent Acquisitions

- We received two dioramas made by Robert Thompson, one of carpentry and the other of farming in Cloverville, from **Peggy Thompson of Antigonish**.
- **Eileen and Stewart Grant** donated an old milk bottle from Eastern Co-op Services Ltd dug up at the old town dump site.
- **Mary Hurst, West River**, donated seven ceramic sculptures of the 'Miners Series'. The casts for this collection were created by Mother St. Philip of Mount St. Bernard. After leaving Antigonish for Sydney Mines she formed the Mad Potters group, who sought to capture in clay the daily lives of that town's miners. Here we see the pit pony and the young boy dressing in his father's mining gear.



- **Yvonne Lefort, New Zealand** has donated copies of the **Regional Times** from the '70s (high school newspaper)
- **Bob and Joyce Pembroke**, from **Dartmouth**, added to our collection of materials on Sadie MacIsaac with a trunk from the First World War.
- We received a music stand from **Sheila Redden in Cape George**.
- **Dorothy Ostewig, of Goshen**, donated several books including classics and religious from her collection.

- **Corey Hartling of New Glasgow** gave the museum an assortment of historic books, ephemera, and photos.
- **John Crispo** came in from **Monastery** to give us a copy of a photograph depicting the Monastery Railway Station building.
- **Ann Camozzi** donated book entitled "Scotland Farewell: People of the Hector"

## Visitors to the Museum



Left: Newlyweds Meg and Chris Zuger of Ottawa visit Antigonish. She is a direct descendant of Timothy Hierlihy.  
 Right: Students Daniel MacGregor and Liam Cogger welcome Sandi Stewart, Advisory Assistant with the Association of Nova Scotia Museums.

## Announcements

### **Upcoming Events:**

Last Ceilidh of the season Thursday, Sept 1 featuring Karen Beaton, Fiddle; Margaret MacDonald, Piano and Vocals; Fr Andrew Boyd, Vocals. 7:30pm Admission \$8.00

### **Guest Speakers:**

Andrew Murray

Topic: An Artist's Inspiration

Sep 12th, 7:00pm

Telling Tales

An opportunity to share stories and enjoy a cup of tea together!

Oct 15th, 11:00am

Karin Fleuren

"An Immigration Story: Nine Moves in Twelve Years"

Nov 14th, 7:00pm



Left: Reid and Debra Sifen of Toronto are taken with the fire pumper on display! Right: Young Connor Overmars of Halifax joins his parents Chris and Carolyn Overmars on a recent visit to the Museum. They are looking over the dollhouse created by Connor's Gr. Grandfather the late Tony van Gestel of Antigonish Landing.

## Heritage Association of Antigonish

Donation in Memory of Mary Janet MacDonald-Cormier by Angus MacGillivray

### Williams Point Memorial Park Donations

- Angus MacGillivray – Platinum Patron
- Brenda and Matthew Mattie – Gold Patron
- MacGillivray Fuels – Gold Patron
- Bernadette and Richard Lancaster – Silver Patron
- Janie Teasdale – Silver Patron

Thank You

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Barrister, Solicitor & Notary Public

33 Greening Drive  
Antigonish, NS B2G 1R1

Tel. (902) 863-4805  
Fax (902) 863-8086  
jim@macandmac.ca

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## Message from the Chair – Heritage Association of Antigonish

(Working today to preserve yesterday for tomorrow.)

The Heritage Association's summer employees finish their employment this month. Daniel has been working hard on the memories project and Neil Gillis has been working hard on a Special Research Project relating to St Anne's church at Summerside. I would like to say a special thanks to Daniel and Neil for their dedication and hard work. Furthermore, I want to wish them all the best with their studies.



***Sandra Perro of BC Left donated photos of the 1959 St. Anne's Day Walk in Summerside to Neil our summer student.***

The Heritage Association of Antigonish's five-year Strategic Plan concludes in 2016. It is safe to state that we have seen the organization grow and prosper over this short number of years. The leadership of the Association recognizes the importance of having a clear action plan for the upcoming years. To that end we have started a renewal process where we will review our mandate and purpose. We held a symposium/workshop on August 13, 2016: the session used the ABCD process (Asset Based Community Development) which was facilitated by Gord Cunningham and Brianne Peters from St FX University. This first step in this process has assessed how strong our Association is and has identified many possible networking opportunities. We will keep you posted on developments as we move forward. A special thank you to Gord and Brianne for their assistance with this process.

As we move into the Fall I am certain that there are readers that would like to get involved with our Association. New blood brings new ideas and energy to an organization. If you want to take on a leadership role in our Association please email the undersigned or speak with Jocelyn Gillis at the Museum.

In closing it would be fantastic to see some young people taking on a leadership role in our Association!

Until next, Take Care and God Bless.

Angus MacGillivray, BBA FCPA-FCGA [angus.macgillivray@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:angus.macgillivray@ns.sympatico.ca)