

## History of NCCC

The initial inspiration to build the curling club in Pugwash arose when a group of committed curlers decided to participate in a fund raising bonspiel in St Andrews, Antigonish County in February, 2005. As they watched the fun unfold in a 3-sheet facility, that was built by the players themselves in the St Andrews community, they looked at each other and exclaimed “We can do this in Pugwash”

### Phase 1: Research and Planning

The action started with John and Nellie Van de Wiel, and Clarence and Hazel Felderhof deciding they would do research on the practicality of a 3- sheet rink in the village of Pugwash. Over a six-month period, they travelled to several Nova Scotia communities that included St Andrews, Baddeck, and Shelburne, and also to Summerside in Prince Edward Island. The input, especially from the two clubs that had built their own 3-sheet rink, was extremely helpful and encouraging. The positive impact that these curling facilities had brought to each community, including the enthusiasm of the club members, was apparent.

St Andrews club offered their structural building plans for our use, should we decide to proceed. This offer was quickly accepted and was agreed to by the engineer who had produced these plans... free of charge for the St Andrews club. The members from the St. Andrews’ club spoke positively about the process they had gone through in building their rink. Photos of the construction of the rink at St Andrews were provided which gave us additional impetus to go down this path of the unknown. They emphasized that during the building process there was no lack of volunteer labour. Their experience of continued member participation over the years was also encouraging. One comment, from Baddeck, that still rings in our ears was, “We volunteers are always smiling and laughing when we open the doors in the beginning of the season and also smiling when we close the doors at the end of the season”.

Statistics were obtained in regards to the population base that is required to support a 3-sheet curling rink. The percentage of population participation rate varies from 1% - 5%, depending upon whether it is urban or rural, or Eastern Canada or Western Canada. We estimated that our population base reached from Malagash to Northport, and from Wentworth to Oxford...a population guesstimate of 5000 people. A conservative 2.5 % rural participation rate suggested a potential of 125 members. The 20/21 membership list for Northumberland Community Curling Club shows that we have 129 members and associates which speaks well of the initial estimate.

Six months of research led to our first, well-advertised, public meeting. It was held at the Northumberland Links Golf Club. Thirty to forty people showed up, proving that there was a positive community response to the idea of building a curling rink. Some attendees immediately offered to help in this project. Notable was a couple in their mid-seventies. They proved to be invaluable workers in the project. Encouraged with this positive response, two more public meetings were held. During one of these meetings an audience member stood up and said that he was from the Amherst

curling club, and proposed that people of Pugwash, interested in curling, could consider hiring a bus to take them to Amherst to play at their club. This offer was politely rejected. We were already reasonably sure that Pugwash could accomplish the project.

### **Phase II: Steering Committee**

The next step was to compose a Steering Committee. This was readily achieved. It consisted of eight members, Chair, John Van de Wiel, Secretary, Hazel Felderhof, Treasurer, Richard Gray and five non-executive members, Allison Gillis, Norval Benjamin, Marinus Kouwenberg, Alice Power and Clarence Felderhof. They met weekly, deciding on steps to take, and reporting on their progress at the next meeting.

### **Phase III Local Financial Support**

It became clear that our first goal was to raise money. We felt that we must ensure that we had local financial support before proceeding with requests of financial support from various levels of government viz. the Village Commission, the Municipal Council and the specific Provincial and Federal Departments. We decided to set out in four pairs of canvassing agents in order to solicit private citizens, and businesses, big and small, for pledges of \$2000 or more. To prepare for and help with our calls we wrote and printed a booklet stating our goals. This booklet contained the format of club operations, the projected operating annual budget and the estimation of the building costs. In addition we felt, that if we were to be successful, we must show that our Steering Committee was itself committed to the project. We decided to “put our money where our mouth was”. Pledges from the Steering Committee totaled \$32,000! We could now confidently approach potential community “investors” for this project. We knew we needed significant financial contribution from those whom we were to visit. It worked! The experience of the local response was heart-warming. Individuals and businesses responded enthusiastically with a total pledging, including the amount from the Steering Committee, of \$195,000. Except for one reduction, one hundred percent of the pledges were honoured.

### **Phase III Government Financial Support**

The next step entailed approaching the governments’ public purse. Members of the Steering Committee organized meetings with each level of government to present our project, emphasizing the importance of their involvement. The basis that we presented to them for their involvement was that this project would strengthen the financial, social, recreational and health fabric of the community. The Village granted \$15,000, the Municipality \$115,000, and the Provincial Agency of Sports and Recreation provided \$235,000. The Provincial contribution was strongly recommended by both the Regional representative of the Provincial Sports Agency, Jim Campbell, and our MLA, Ernie Fage. Our first presentation to the Municipal Council had been unsuccessful. Subsequently two members of

our Steering Committee met several councillors on an individual basis at their homes. This allowed us to address their individual concerns which had previously predisposed them to cast a negative vote. The second presentation to the Council was overwhelmingly favourable, resulting in a 12 to 1 positive vote for the project. Unfortunately the Federal Govt., through ACOA, although initially positive turned a cold shoulder, one week after MP Bill Casey voted “No” on the passing of the Federal annual budget. This negative vote was the decision MP Casey made because of an unsettled dispute between the Province of Nova Scotia and the Federal Government concerning the allocation plan of offshore oil and gas royalties. It was our opinion that the PMO, or a similar political authority, had passed on a message to avoid any funding for a project in Casey’s riding. Prior to this vote the CEO and a Director of ACOA had shown up in person to visit us in Pugwash and appeared to be very interested. When questioned on their final decision it was determined by them that we were not eligible because we were not a commercial entity.

#### **Phase IV: Physical Action**

Having achieved significant financial support, after eighteen months of fundraising, we activated Phase 4 which meant moving from talk to physical action. We chose our building site after considering four locations, one after the other, and finally ended up where we started, on New Pugwash Road near the elementary school and high school. We bought our land from Willem Schouten. Our engineering plans for the structure of the building were altered somewhat from the St. Andrews plan in regards to the entrance location, and a change from a low flat ceiling to a pitched ceiling. The latter was changed in order to better accommodate the voluminous vocal noise of our future players. The proverbial “spade in the ground” was enacted in May, 2007 when Bernie Tuttle cleared and levelled the land. In early June, 2007 many phone calls were made for volunteers to participate in the actual building venture. The response was phenomenal: 10-15 people showed up on the first day and continued to come throughout the summer and fall until the project was completed in December. They, men and women alike, put their many talents to work, planning, purchasing, measuring, sawing, hammering, and painting. Some of the major components of the rink construction were carried out by paid contractors. These included pouring of the concrete foundation and rink floor, installing the pipes under the concrete floor, the placement of the trusses, the construction of the asphalt roof, applying the gyp rock for the ceiling, and the installation of the ice plant. As the work progressed, over the six month period, the number of volunteers increased to 20-25 participants. Each day after working hard we would proceed to the Legion for a well-deserved beer. The only exception to this was Friday, because on that day, the beer was brought to us by generous contributors.

#### **Phase V: Troubleshooting**

By mid- December the rink was completed...we thought. The first players on the ice were a group of women. Unfortunately the building inspector showed up that day and declared that we were on the ice illegally. The final safety inspection had not yet been executed. We were presented with a letter

outlining 17 steps that needed to be taken in order to fulfil the requirements for passing the grade of public safety. This included the replacement of the double glazed windows, which had been donated by Amherst “Go Glass”. These huge windows, that separate the lounge from the ice-surface, were suddenly required to be “internally cross-wired windows” in order to ensure safety for the viewing audience in the lounge. We immediately contested this opinion during a special emergency meeting at the municipal level, which included the Warden, Keith Hunter, the chief building inspector and the assistant building inspector who had written the safety orders. We addressed all seventeen items and determined that, except for one item, none of them endangered the players or the viewing audience. It was agreed that the small items could be dealt with during the current playing season. The only significant concern, that was a temporary sticking point during the deliberations, was the replacement of the glass viewing wall. We reminded the assistant inspector that we had dealt with this issue before we proceeded with the construction phase, and that he had previously agreed to its installation. We indicated that this discussion included the approval by our supervising engineer, George Brandys. Our meeting ended on a happy note for us when the temporary halt was terminated. We haven’t stopped curling since, other than at the end of one season, when curling ended abruptly because of ice machine failure.

## **Phase VI: Governance**

The legal status of NCCC was formulated under the guidance and volunteered services of our local lawyer, Jerry Langille, of the Gulf Shore. NCCC was incorporated as a non-profit Society under the Societies Act of Nova Scotia on December 15, 2005. The operation of the club is under the direction of an elected Board with an executive component consisting of chair, secretary and treasurer and with a total of 8 – 12 members. The day by day operation is conducted through eleven working committees that carry out the many duties that are necessary to keep the NCCC functioning. Each committee has a representative who reports to the Board monthly. The committees are:

- Ice Match
- Ice Plant
- Advertising
- Bar
- Health & Safety
- House Maintenance
- Long Range Planning
- Publicity, Membership Information, Education (PIEM)
- Social
- Ways & Means

- Youth

Thanks to the Board and the Committees, the Northumberland Community Curling Club (NCCC) has had exceptional success in its first 13 years of operation. From the very beginning it had been determined by the Board to establish a sound financial format which would sustain the club, not only from year to year, but would also include a long range financial planning. A capital reserve account was introduced which accumulated \$8,500 for each year of operation of the club. This current and future financing has been achieved not only through membership fees but also by the 100% volunteer operation of the club, a successful 3D (Dinner, Dance and Draw) annual fundraising event, tremendous community advertising support, and the diminished operational costs that we were able to achieve when we convinced both the Municipal Council and Village Commission that we should be exempt from property taxes. The latter was agreed upon at the second presentation to Municipal Council, when Councillor Ron McNutt suggested that the County could accept this status if the club agreed to a memorandum of understanding (MOU). The MOU contained three conditions:

- (1) Maintain non-profit status
- (2) Maintain a 100% volunteer status and
- (3) Provide free services to the community.

We have adhered to these requests, including the free services to the community by providing coaching and ice time for residents at the Adult Residential Centre, coaching and ice time for the Little Rocks and the Juniors programs. In addition, the physical education teacher at Pugwash Elementary has frequently arranged for ice time to bring classes of students to NCCC to introduce them to the sport of curling. At the end of our regular curling season the ice has been made available to school classes and the public for free skating. Our facility is also available for meetings of non-profit community organizations.

Mid-way during the years of operation an additional program was introduced to ensure continuation of the club's viability. A "Learn to Curl" program was started which encouraged new members of the community to try their hand at curling. Every year, new curlers can attend a two hour session for \$80 for the eight weeks from late October until Christmas. The instruction is provided by active club members. When or if, the new curlers decide to join, the \$80 is applied to the introductory membership fee. This has successfully added new members to the club over the last eight years.

## **VII: Contributions and Fund Raisers**

The curling rink was built for a total cost of \$739,000, plus an underestimated 8,000 hours of volunteer labour, that included the volunteer over-sight of the construction by a local building contractor, Mike Cunningham, and the contributions by our ever concerned engineer, George Brandys from Halifax, whose bill of \$56,000 was cancelled in the form of a donation to the Club.

Discounts on materials by the various local suppliers also eased our financial burden, as well as the construction and installation of the kitchen cupboards donated by the Community College of Stellarton. Nevertheless, we were \$100,000 short of the funding requirements. The local bank would not furnish a mortgage because of our non-profit status. This \$100,000 shortfall in funding was resolved by a 0% interest rate mortgage, provided by members of the Steering Committee. After the first year of operation members of the club were invited to participate in shouldering some of the mortgage as an investment at 3%. One person opted to contribute at that time. The entire mortgage was completely paid off within a 3 year period. The money for repayment was raised through an annual fund raiser, the 3D event---Dinner, Dance and Draw. The Draw (lottery) provided a minimum prize of \$25,000 or a Ford truck. Additional money was raised as well by running an annual beer tent weekend in July during Harbour Fest. A sign at the entrance of the beer tent encouraged people to "drift in and sail out". This beer tent was run by club volunteers. Another fundraiser was the sponsorship of the curling stones by many individual community members, whose names are imprinted on the metal handle surface of the stones.

During the building of the curling rink in the fall of 2007 we asked Louise Cloutier, the art teacher of the Pugwash High School, for a logo design for our club. She presented the request to her class of students and a design competition was set up. Grade 12 student, Nathan MacLeod, created the inclusive logo that has adorned our building since its establishment.

## **Conclusion**

It is clearly evident that the underlying principle of volunteerism contributed to the success of the NCCC project. The 3T theme of donating in Time, Talent and/or Treasure was fully and enthusiastically adopted. This was recognized in the form of three major awards:

- The NS IKON Curling Award, for Excellence in the Sport of Curling for 2007/2008
- The NS Curling Award for The Organization of the Year 2007/2008
- Volunteer Group of the Year Award on behalf of the Province of NS, April 2008

Two plaques have been placed in the entrance hall of the club that list the contributors in two special categories: (1) Major financial contributors

- (2) (A) Significant financial contributors,
- (B) In-kind labour
- (C) Material contributions from businesses
- (D) Expert advice from professionals.

Despite this recognition, the plaques alone do not do justice to all the unnamed volunteers who contributed during the construction, and who participated, and still participate in the Club's past and current operation.