



## *The Beacon*

Special Edition: 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the St. F.X. Extension Department

Volume 9 • Issue 2

*The Beacon* is an information bulletin for StFXAUT Members

---

### **In Celebration of 90 Years of Service: Some History of the St. F.X. Extension Department, 1928-2018**

by Kathleen M. MacKenzie, Archivist, St. F.X.

---

Confederation in 1867 had changed the mercantile coastal economy of the Atlantic provinces to an internally driven industrial one. The establishment of the railroad directed the economy inward with the creation of new industries. Central Canada flourished. The 1870s brought a recession to the Atlantic region and it became increasingly difficult to scratch out a living on a farm or in the fishery. From Confederation to the 1930s Atlantic Canada's population decreased by 600,000.

Many young men and women left for new adventures in central Canada and the American eastern seaboard. As a result the traditional primary industries such as farming and fishing were greatly affected. Life in the traditional industries was difficult and it was far more exciting for a young woman to take up duties as a domestic in a wealthy American household in Boston than to be a wife or a daughter of a farmer or fisherman in Nova Scotia. In the late 1880s, coal began to be mined in Cape Breton and eastern Nova Scotia on a large scale basis. Steel making also began in the region in the early 1900s. To seek work many rural people migrated to the growing industrial towns of Glace Bay, New Waterford, Sydney Mines, and Sydney, in Cape Breton County, as well as to Stellarton and Westville in Pictou County. Migration from rural areas such as Antigonish and Inverness Counties, left many farms vacant and a large number of bachelors. The local Roman Catholic clergy, many who had grown up in agricultural regions were dismayed at the economic and social dislocation. Immigration from various parts of Europe did not offset the population decline. With industrialization came a new way of life and a whole new set of economic and social problems.

Many priests of the Diocese of Antigonish, especially those who taught at St. F.X., had been educated at European seminaries and universities. Upon completion of their studies they brought home new and inventive ideas with them. Rev. James J. ("Jimmy") Tompkins, for example, who was a professor and vice rector of St. F.X. became familiar with university extension programs

while attending the meeting of commonwealth universities of the British Empire in 1912 in England. There Tompkins became familiar with the extension work of the University of Wisconsin, and later of Scottish and Irish universities. Rev. Dr. Hugh MacPherson (“Little Doc Hugh”), a professor at St. F.X., had also studied in Europe, and had also been a provincial government agricultural representative. As early as 1912, he worked with local farmers experimenting with a fertilizer purchasing cooperative, a wool producers’ cooperative, and later, in 1915, a wool grading station. In 1918 Tompkins initiated a “*For the People*” series of articles in *The Antigonish Casket*. He invited various authors to discuss the rural and economic problems of the region and wrote some of the articles as well.

The following year, the Scottish Catholic Society of Canada was founded. Clergy and laity involved with this organization were also concerned with rural problems and set about finding solutions to them. In 1920, Tompkins wrote a pamphlet entitled, *For the People*, which called on the University to undertake extension work. In January 1921, 50 men and one woman (ages 17-57) came to St. F.X. for a six-week period. Most were farmers, fishermen, and industrial workers. The University faculty taught participants English, history, mathematics, public speaking, and agriculture. It was the first experiment in adult education where the University brought education to the people in a non-traditional sense. Additional People’s Schools took place in 1922-1924 in Antigonish and Glace Bay.



Reverend Dr. Moses M. Coady (1928-1952);  
Courtesy: St. F.X. Archives

In 1923, the Diocese of Antigonish began to hold rural conferences where they discussed the social and economic problems of the area. Diocesan clergy presented papers and passed motions to prod the provincial government to take action. Laity was also invited to these conferences. At the 1925 rural conference, Rev. Dr. Moses M. Coady, a professor of education at St. F.X., noted that the University should direct farming study clubs and later, Tompkins spoke of the plight of the local fishermen. They advocated the use of adult education as the best means to pull the people out of their difficulties. They began to discuss techniques such as study clubs, which would be the central technique for adult education. In 1928, the conference passed a resolution calling for the establishment of a committee to formulate a policy on adult education. The Scottish Catholic Society of Canada voted at its annual conference to raise \$100,000 for educational purposes. Yet it was the St. F.X. Alumni Association which made a motion at its meeting for the St. F.X. Board of Governors

to establish a formalized university extension program with a full-time dedicated person at the helm. It had threatened to establish its own organization and Bishop James Morrison did not wish to see this type of work controlled outside the University. At the 27 November 1928 Board of Governors meeting, the St. F.X. Extension Department was established. Rev. Dr. Moses M.

Coady was appointed the first director of the St. F.X. Extension Department in 1928, a position he held until his retirement in 1952.

Rev. Dr. Moses M. Coady did not start the official work of the St. F.X. Extension Department until September 1930. He was asked to organize the Maritime and Magdalen Islands fishermen. The first year of the work he toured Canada and the US to observe and study extension work at various universities. Former inspector of schools, Angus Bernard (“A.B.”) MacDonald, was later hired as assistant director. Rev. Jimmy Tompkins and Rev. Hugh MacPherson came on as consultants. The Department had a very small budget of \$10,535. Coady, with a great deal of energy and passion, and a fire in his belly, set out all guns blazing. He had a great passion for the preservation of rural life and felt that he had a plan to make men “masters of their own destiny”. By the middle of the 1930s, Coady had completed work with the Maritime fishermen. The first mass meeting, held in association with the provincial Department of Agriculture, was held at West Bay Road, Inverness County. Coady referred to this meeting as “the opening gun of the new work”. The Extension Department Library Service was established and books and other types of publications were sent out for discussion by study clubs. Pamphlets were written and distributed on cooperative principles and the industrial revolution. In the first year, 175 study clubs, on various topics, were established. Study club members held rallies once a month. Shipping and livestock clubs were formed and an agricultural conference was held at St. F.X. The work took off with great impetus, force, and success. There were limited resources and limited staff.

The work continued primarily in rural agricultural development, the fisheries, and labour education. Hoping to also develop community leaders, the Extension Department aided in the creation of cooperative societies (primarily stores), credit unions, and fishing cooperatives. From 1931-1932, 173 study clubs met on a regular basis with 1,500 members. Study programs were established in the coal mining regions of Glace Bay and an economic conference was held in Sydney where coal miners attended, and a rural and industrial conference was held at St. F.X. The Carnegie Corporation of New York made a donation of \$35,000 to St. F.X. over a five-year period. In 1933, former communist member, Alexander S. (“A.S.”) MacIntyre was hired to supervise the work of the new Glace Bay office. Later, a women’s division under Sister Marie Michael MacKinnon, CSM, was established to study homemaking problems, handicrafts, health, and rural recreation. An Extension School for Leaders was established with 85 participants and the first credit union in English speaking Canada was established in 1933 in Reserve Mines, Cape Breton, where Tompkins was the parish priest. That year, George Boyle was hired to edit *The Extension Bulletin*, a bi-monthly newspaper published to provide study clubs with general material for study and discussion. Thousands of copies were distributed. It was researched, written, and distributed by Extension staff and covered virtually every topic. The Extension Department ceased publication of *The Extension Bulletin* in 1939 and formed a relationship with other cooperators and produced a new newspaper, *The Maritime Co-operator*.

By 1934, Extension Department staff reported that they had addressed 500 meetings comprising of 25,000 persons, and the following year, Coady noted that 800 study clubs had been established in the region. The work was growing into new fields such as the development of cooperative sawmills at St. Andrews and South West Margaree for example, lobster canning cooperatives, public speaking contests, and the establishment of local libraries. In 1936, the

Extension Department opened an office in Shippigan, NB with a fieldworker to deal with fishery interests. That same year, the St. Andrews Co-operative Society Ltd., St. Andrews, Antigonish County, initiated a cooperative medical plan to cover hospital treatment and also included a plan for 50% reduction in x-ray and laboratory fees. The following year, in 1937, the Nova Scotia Credit Union League was formed with 12,000 members and, by 1938, the Extension Department had helped to establish 140 credit unions with 25,000 members and \$550,000 in assets.

In 1937, the Extension Department hired American cooperator Mary Arnold to guide the establishment of a cooperative housing project for miners in Reserve Mines. This would be the first such experiment of cooperative housing in North America. Study clubs were held on a regular basis whereby the men studied how to plan, finance, and build 11 new houses which they would own. They were no longer forced to rent and live in dilapidated coal company houses. The following year, Tompkinsville opened. In 1939, three more cooperative housing groups were created in Dominion, Glace Bay, and Sydney areas. The number of cooperative housing projects continued to grow well into the 1960s.

Thirty-three new workers were commissioned by Extension in 1938 to undertake fisheries fieldwork. Funded by the federal fisheries department, the work extended into all of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and the Magdalen Islands. In 1938-1939, a central library with ten branches opened in industrial Cape Breton and the provincial government enacted Nova Scotia's first library legislation which permitted municipalities to levy a tax for the promotion of library developments. By this time, there were 42 new cooperative stores, several new cooperative saw mills, study clubs were studying cooperative burial programs, and a socialized health centre was established at Johnstown and Big Pond. Those employed by Extension had great passion for their work. Coady continued on with a great deal of speaking and traveling. By 1938, he was forced to slow down and rest. During this time he put his philosophy and ideas to paper and his book, *Masters of Their Own Destiny*, was published in 1939. From 1930 to 1942, 7000 study clubs with 75,000 participants had been organized in eastern Canada. By 1943, there were 400 credit unions in the Maritime provinces with 70,000 members with assets of \$4,250,000. Atlantic Broadcasters Ltd. and CJFX Radio were established in Antigonish that same year to help get the message out further. Regular programs on rural and industrial problems, with panel discussions, were broadcasted. Some of the programs were *Life in these Maritimes*, *Farmers Radio Forum*, *Labour School of the Air*, *The People's School*, and *This is Your Library*. Weekly study bulletins were created and distributed to the study clubs in preparation of the aired programs.

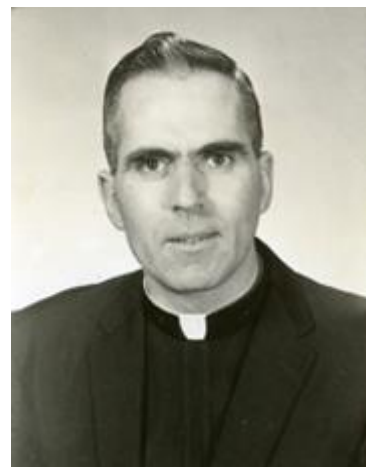


Reverend Michael J. MacKinnon  
(1952-1958);

Courtesy: St. F.X. Archives

In 1952, Coady was forced to resign the position of Extension director due to ill health and Rev. Michael J. MacKinnon was appointed to the position. The Extension Department had accomplished a great deal. Study clubs, short courses, workshops, and annual conferences continued. Work was still strong in the fishery, credit unions, cooperative housing, cooperative production and marketing, and labour education. St. F.X. celebrated its centenary in 1953 and

the Extension Department celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary with special convocations and honorary degrees granted to a large number of cooperators. That same year it established a land settlement program and sponsored over 50 Dutch families to settle in the area. Two years later, in 1955, it began to use television, as it had radio, to get the message out further. That year *The People's School* TV series began. The following year, the Extension Department helped to establish Eastern Co-operative Services. It was an amalgamation of the Sydney and Antigonish ventures. In 1957, Extension helped with a development program on Cape Breton Mi'kmaq reserves. MacKinnon left the position as director in 1958 to become Executive Vice President of St. F.X. and Rev. John Allan Gillis was appointed director. Coady died in July 1959 after suffering from heart trouble and cancer for a number of years. It seemed as if his death marked the end of an era.



Reverend Dr. Joseph N. MacNeil  
(1961-1969);  
Courtesy: St. F.X. Archives



Reverend John Allan Gillis (1958-1961);  
Courtesy: St. F.X. Archives

By 1960, it appeared as if less emphasis was placed upon the traditional work of consumer cooperatives and credit unions. By this time, Extension had a 12 full-time staff (including one director and two associate directors) and 14 fieldworkers working in the Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and New Brunswick fisheries. The Cape Breton coal mines were beginning to shut down and the Extension Department became heavily involved with the difficulties of the Cape Breton economy and labour. Rev. Dr. Joseph N. MacNeil, the director at that time, wrote to Prime Minister Diefenbaker in the hopes that he could prevent a major socio-economic disaster from occurring. Later, in 1967, Extension helped to rally support behind the *Parade of Concern*. In Sydney, 20,000 concerned citizens marched in protest after the Black Friday announcement which declared that the Sydney steel plant was to close permanently. The Extension Department continued to lobby the provincial government to keep the steel plant open for an additional five years.

In 1962, the Stora Kopparberg pulp mill was opened at Port Tupper and the forestry industry began to be viewed as more valuable. During this time, the Extension Department continued to help with the formation of the Nova Scotia Woodlot Owners Association. It continued with its traditional work and also conducted research. In 1961-1962, it presented a brief on the fishing industry on the Guysborough shore to the Minister of Trade and Industry, as well as a brief on the promotion of credit unions to the Royal Commission on Banking and Finance, and undertook an educational-economics survey of three African Nova Scotian communities in Antigonish and Guysborough Counties. It continued with work in community development, established a TV series for fishermen, conducted the Atlantic Trade Unions Summer School at St. F.X., and continued with labour classes in various communities in Cape Breton and mainland Nova Scotia.



Reverend George Topshee (1969-1982);  
Courtesy: St. F.X. Archives

In cooperation with the UNB forestry school, Extension established a two-year course in forestry at St.F.X., held annual fisheries schools at St. F.X. and Pictou, Nova Scotia, continued short courses for cooperative managers and directors, and undertook leadership training for First Nations on Cape Breton reserves. In 1964-1965, it cooperated with Atlantic Rural Development Agencies (ARDA) on several development projects. It prepared a study guide for woodlot owners to familiarize them with the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Prices of Pulpwood and Forest Products, it undertook a resource allocation study of First Nations reserves, held a meeting of elected First Nations chiefs and councilors from seven reserves, and helped to publish *The Micmac News* from the Sydney Extension office. It produced studies and surveys on the fishing industry, cooperative housing, First Nations reserves, regional government, community development, the handicraft industry, the Cape Breton economy, prepared educational

material and proposals/policies for woodlot owners, helped organize Christmas tree producers, and supervised the work of the X-Project which embarked on tutoring youth in First Nations and African Nova Scotia communities.



Dr. Teresa MacNeil (1982-1993);  
Courtesy: St. F.X. Archives

In 1969, Rev. Dr. MacNeil was appointed Bishop of Saint John, NB and Rev. George Topshee became director of Extension. In 1971, the Atlantic Region Labour Education Centre (ARLEC) was established. It brought people involved with the union movement to St. F.X. to learn how to be effective union leaders. It was sponsored by government agencies and the Federation of Labour. The standard study club method of learning was used to analyze broader economic, sociological, and political issues of the day. By the 1970s, over fishing had led to a decrease in market prices and Canada established a 200-mile limit. The Extension Department conducted research and produced numerous studies and educational films related to coastal fishing communities. As well, it produced educational materials to help the Nova Scotia Woodlot Owners Association to lobby the provincial government for the creation of a pulpwood marketing act. It also developed research and helped develop Strait of Canso industries, monitored and lobbied government to be more environmentally

conscious, aided in the organization of the Cape Breton Environmental Association and the Strait Area Interdisciplinary Research Association, helped Melford residents obtain a reasonable price for expropriated lands, piloted TV programs via cable TV, worked with the Seton Foundation from the Sydney Office to build new homes for people living on low-income, encouraged cooperative garden projects, and offered nutrition, housing, and community development advice to First Nations and African Nova Scotians.

The early 1980s brought a serious economic recession and there was no lack of work to be undertaken by the Extension Department. Fieldworkers began to tackle issues of unemployment and underdevelopment. Extension formed advisory committees in Cape Breton, Inverness, and Richmond counties. It was still involved with ARLEC, fisheries seminars, housing cooperatives, and the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program. With the appointment of Teresa MacNeil as director in 1982, the continuing education program became part of Extension. This would involve diploma and degree adult education programs as well as non-degree continuing education programs. Religious education became part of the continuing education program. Lenten sessions were held and a five-course certificate program for parish religious educators was established in 1984. Sister Peggy Butts, CND, prepared lessons on social justice issues for a leaders guide for a ten-week leadership training program. In 1980, a Nova Scotia Senior Citizens Secretariat was created. Extension established programs to meet senior citizens' needs and, in 1985, it undertook a pilot project entitled Grandparents in the Classroom whereby 25 senior citizens participated in a project with Tracadie students.

In 1983, the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Martha provided funding for programs dealing with rural women. Sister Michelle MacDougall, CSM, worked with rural women on a regular basis and created a newsletter, *Making Connections*. The following year, Extension aided in the establishment of a transition house for battered women from eastern Nova Scotia, and through the New Glasgow office, was involved with New Glasgow's Tearmann Society for Battered Women. The Extension Department created slide show presentations to educate the public on this very important social issue. It also worked with Community Development Cooperatives (CDC) through worker cooperatives and community economic development organizations. It supplied educational resources and advice to groups wishing to start cooperative housing organizations in Antigonish, New Glasgow, Pictou, Truro, Bible Hill, and Amherst. In affiliation with the Seton Foundation, it provided affordable housing options by helping to renovate houses for people in the lower income bracket. Extension also offered a four-day fisheries residential leadership school in Sydney in 1981, proposed an Atlantic Fisheries License Review Board to supervise the process of enacting new fishing regulations and acted as a central point of contact for the United Maritime Fishermen. In 1984, it created a 30-minute slide show presentation for small woodlot owners to discuss the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Forestry. That same year, it established the Topshee Memorial Conference in memory of Rev. George Topshee, former director. Its mandate was to gather academics and community-minded participants together to discuss and try to resolve the regional concerns of the time. The Topshee Conference was reminiscent of the rural and industrial conferences held by Extension in the past.

Teresa MacNeil resigned the position of Director of Extension in 1993 and Tom Webb became director. The St. F.X. administration wished that the Extension Department would concentrate on continuing education, training and development, and general extension work. Extension's Master

of Education program brought in much-needed financial resources. A post-RN, Bachelor of Science degree in nursing was established in 1993 when the province wished nurses to update their credentials. Two years later, the Colloquium on the Past & Future was undertaken to look at Extension's program for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In the early 1990s, Extension began to work with people living close to the eastern terminus of the Maritimes & Northeast Pipeline in Goldboro, Guysborough County. In 1999, it worked with the grassroots Bayview Marine Service Cooperative to help it take advantage of the opportunities available in gas exploration, as well as to help it deal with the ramifications of the Sable Offshore Energy Project. Extension collaborated with the St. F.X. Enterprise Development Centre by training staff, supervised both the contract development and tendering process, and monitored environmental procedures. In the New Glasgow office, Peggy Mahon helped develop the Pictou County Second Stage Housing Society which provided protection and affordable housing for women and children leaving a transition house, and offered advice in the construction of six new housing units. With the cooperation of the Transition House Association of NS and the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Martha, the New Glasgow office helped to provide training for transition house workers, a training needs assessment, undertook research for a spousal homicide study, created a report which formed the basis for the Department of Justice's *Framework for Action*, worked with women's organizations for action in reference to violence against women, hosted a community-based development conference to develop action plans, worked with women living on low incomes, helped them to conduct research, and encouraged them to establish child care services in their homes to help provide much needed additional income.



Mr. Tom Webb (1993-1999);  
Courtesy: St. F.X. Extension Department

In 1992, Extension established the Coastal Communities Network (CCN) to bring fishermen and small processors together. This collaboration offered support and provided a forum for people to be heard. In 1996, it established a skill training program and, in collaboration with the Maritime Fishermen's Union, the Eastern Fishermen's Protection Association, and the South West Nova Fixed Gear Association, it urged the federal government to provide financial support for those working in the fishing industry. It also introduced The Atlantic Groundfish Strategy (TAGS) to deliver financial assistance and labour market adjustment programs. Through HRDC and ACOA, Extension established the Initiating the Development of Enterprising Activities (IDEA) project. It hosted venture forums and fairs. In 1997, 300 people attended ten IDEA workshops. The following year, Extension sponsored a scallop enhancement venture forum and encouraged craft producers to sell their creations in larger markets. With the establishment of Regional Development Authority organizations (RDAs), people were encouraged to establish small scale projects which would compensate for losses in traditional primary industries. Extension was involved with this by training staff in Antigonish, Guysborough, Strait Highlands, Halifax, and industrial Cape Breton.



In 1996, the Extension Department created a certificate program in community-based development and also collaborated with the Nova Scotia Community College to develop its own certificate. The following year, the St. F.X. Enterprise Development Centre (XEDC) was established. In 1999, funding was received from the International Development Research Centre and Henry P. Kendell Foundation to establish the Centre for Community-Based Resource Management (CCBRM). John Kearney was hired to provide training in community development skills. A certificate in community-based natural resources management was introduced in 2001. One of the major initiatives of the Extension Department during this time was support for the organization of the Guysborough County Women's Fishery Enhancement Association and a report, *Women Working Together & Making a Difference*, was produced from this project. Further work in the fishery was undertaken at the Bay of Fundy Marine Resources Centre at Cornwallis, NS and at St. Andrews, NB. Working with fish harvesters who had historical knowledge of the fishing grounds a guide of ground fish stocks in the Bay of Fundy was produced in 2002. Extension also partnered with the Marine Resources Centre and the Ecology Action Centre of Halifax to identify new markets for seafood raised in artificial fish farms. The CCBRM also focused on the forestry sector and produced a feasibility study on the forest industry of NS. In 2004, it worked on conservation issues with Grade 6 students of H.M. MacDonald Elementary School in Maryvale, NS.

Extension became involved with community-based financing. It produced the *Atlantic Micro-Credit Socio-Economic Impact Study* which examined the benefits of four micro-enterprise development programs. With the support of the Sisters of Charity, the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Martha, and the Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame (CND), it established the Cape Breton Women's Self-Employment Program in November 2002. The main purpose of this program was to support socially and economically disadvantaged women, offer counselling and training, as well as mentoring. In 2003-2004, the Extension Department created strategic plans for three Community Business Development Corporations (CBDC) in Nova Scotia and later, facilitated processes for provincial associations of CBDC in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador. As well, it also completed a strategic review of the Strait of Canso Super Port Corporation and facilitated a Canso and Area strategic planning process.



Dr. Roger Wehrell (2001-2006);  
Courtesy: St. F.X. Extension Department

In the winter of 2001, Extension signed an agreement with the Pictou Landing First Nation and First Nations Forestry Association in Nova Scotia. Working with the St. F.X. Aquatic Resources Program, the Extension Department helped to enhance the 1000-acre forest habitat by providing educational resources to promote more sustainable harvest methods. It also facilitated a workshop for the First Nations and provincial woodlot owners. CCBRM fieldworkers also worked with these groups to develop a strategic plan. Through the 2002 Learning & Innovations Institute, the Extension Department helped to promote cooperation amongst First Nations people



Mr. William Radford (2007-2009);  
Courtesy: St. F.X. Extension Department

and fisher groups in Nova Scotia. On behalf of the Coady International Institute, it also created and delivered a three-week leadership development certificate program entitled Indigenous Women in Community Leadership Program. In 2011-2012 it offered training programs in customer service at Paqtnkek and, four years later, helped five young entrepreneurs establish an ice cream business there.

By 2000, the original Sydney office had fallen in to disrepair. St. F.X. made arrangements for the Seton Foundation to take over the building. It had shared the space with the Extension Department since the 1970s. In the fall of 2004, the Father John Capstick Centre was dedicated and the Sydney office was closed in 2008. In June of 2009, the Extension Department moved into the newly renovated historic St. F.X. buildings with the Coady International Institute. Phil Davidson became director in 2010. Extension worked with others to host six

People's Schools discussing the six main principles of the Antigonish Movement. This pilot project took place at Bethany, the Motherhouse of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Martha and the Marie Michael Library. A Rural Leadership Development forum was held also which brought together many community leaders. Extension worked with the small rural communities of Little Narrows, Pomquet, and Heatherton on various community issues. In 2010, it helped to develop a three-year strategic plan for the C@P Society (Community Access Program) of Cape Breton County. After the release of the 2014 Ivany Report, which recommended that the province should invest twice the amount of money in to Nova Scotia universities for research, the St. F.X. Innovation & Enterprise Centre was formed to replace XECD after it had lost ACOA funding. Its purpose was to create new knowledge-based companies in the region. As well, the Wallace Family Internship Program was established to provide summer employment for St. F.X students who had a new enterprise idea or a new venture to investigate. In 2016, the Centre for Employment Innovation (CEI) was established. Its purpose is to conduct research, provide leadership, foster best practices, and encourage collaboration in the delivery of employment services across Nova Scotia. In spring 2017, it established the New Opportunities for Work Program (NOW) to aid the underrepresented population in the workforce. It has thus far connected 104 work places with 180 people. Extension staff has also been recently involved with the 4-H Leadership Development Conference. It also collaborated with the Antigonish Affordable Housing Society (AAHS) to co-sponsor a



Dr. Phil Davidson (2010-2018);  
Courtesy: St. F.X. Extension Department

People's School on Affordable Housing. In 2018, the EXT Society was also established to foster a variety of internal and external community engagement opportunities for StFX students.

The establishment of the St. F.X. Extension Department was born out of a need to help the people of eastern Nova Scotia to become masters of their own destiny. Through the introduction of mass meetings, study clubs, short courses, workshops, seminars, and conferences much had been accomplished to deal with the economic problems of the traditional sectors of fishing and farming. Cooperative societies, cooperative stores, fishing cooperatives, producer and marketing cooperative organizations, and credit unions were tools which helped pull the people out of economic despair. The work further progressed with the development of housing cooperatives, People's Schools, and labour schools. It has been noted that The Antigonish Movement reached its height around the 1940s-1950s. Much discussion has also taken place regarding the success of the Movement. With the introduction of various government programs, the Extension Department was forced to leave its traditional work behind and become inventive seeking new ways and techniques to accomplish its work. In this economic climate, it appears as if much work can still be undertaken and accomplished by the Extension Department, especially in terms of affordable housing, poverty reduction, employment creation, the environment, forestry, wind energy, as well as with First Nations and African Nova Scotian community development.



**A People's School on Housing Needs:  
From Research to Action**

*Learn how to build your  
community research  
capacity to support your  
housing goals*

with  
**Catherine Leviten-Reid**  
Cape Breton University

**Fred Deveaux**  
Cape Breton Community  
Housing Association

**Peggy Vassallo**  
Health Promoter, Public Health

9:30 AM – 3:30 PM (lunch provided)  
**Saturday, May 11, 2019**  
Port Hawkesbury Civic Centre

To register see  
"2019 Registration" at  
[www.stfxextension.ca](http://www.stfxextension.ca)

Please register by May 3  
(numbers are limited)  
For more information, call 902-867-5130

**ext.** ST. FRANCIS XAVIER UNIVERSITY  
Extension Department

Offered in partnership with the Strait  
Richmond Housing Group and  
the Antigonish Affordable Housing Society.

## **Press Release: People's School a Success** (May 21, 2019)

On May 11<sup>th</sup>, more than fifty-five people from across Nova Scotia participated in a People's School about researching housing needs in their communities. Co-hosted by the Extension Department at StFX, the Antigonish Affordable Housing Society (AAHS), and the Strait Richmond Housing Group, the People's School brought together community groups and concerned citizens, as well as service providers, elected officials, and researchers/educators.

The aim of the People's School was to provide an opportunity for participants to learn from each other and from researchers about how communities could gather information about their specific housing needs.

Participants had high praise for the gathering and the approach used by organizers and resource people — Dr. Catherine Leviten-Reid, Fred Deveaux and Peggy Vassallo — to share information and experiences. They also appreciated the chance to network with others who are trying to address the lack of affordable, accessible and appropriate housing in their communities.

On their evaluation forms, participants identified their most significant learning. This included:

- Hearing directly from Catherine, Fred and Peggy and about some of the key pieces needed for a needs assessment. Talking to other passionate people and getting energized that change is possible!
- Connecting with a different spectrum of people working on social issues from academic as well as service providers.
- How we can use research to connect with community and other service providers.

The Mayor of Port Hawkesbury, Brenda Chisholm-Beaton, said, “The day was definitely an investment in the future of our communities. The People's School created a collaborative forum to explore housing opportunities and the crucial stages of research to move projects forward. Accessible and affordable quality housing changes lives and improves communities.”

Colleen Cameron, Chair of the Antigonish Affordable Housing Society, added, “The People's School brought folks together from a broad range of communities who shared a common goal – meeting housing needs in their communities. Coming together and hearing each other's stories will help us all move forward together.”

Since it was created in 1928, the Extension Department has hosted numerous People's Schools on different topics including health, the economy and the Antigonish Movement.

Extension staff will document the proceedings and the ideas generated during the People's School and will post the summary on its website: [www.stfxextension.ca](http://www.stfxextension.ca).