

School Advisory Council
Study Committee
Response to
School Review Impact Assessment Report
September 2009



Dear South Shore Regional School Board Members,

On March 26, 2008, the South Shore Regional School Board decided that the Big Tancook Island Elementary School should be taken through the formal School Review Process. Our School Advisory Council has put together the following information and responses to the **School Review Impact Assessment** as we continue on through this review.

Among our biggest concerns is the safety of our elementary aged children having to travel to school in Chester on the ferry in the event of our school closing. In the spring of 2009 a study was completed by school board Consultant Dr. Jim Gunn and his recommendation was that our elementary students should **not** have to travel on the ferry to go to school. We had two meetings with Dr. Gunn and he seriously considered our thoughts and worries and his reported recommendations were fair and honest. However, there were still some "What if..." questions that the school board had and it was therefore decided that the Big Tancook Island Elementary School would continue on through the rest of the review process.

The school building itself has been well maintained and is in no need of any upgrades or repairs and it has been established that the cost of operating our school is not an issue. Our enrolment is low but climbing and has the potential to climb further based on several factors, including this review ending with our school remaining open. The Big Tancook Island Elementary School also has the potential to provide to the community, as well as other schools, a learning co-op where all age groups can reconnect and benefit from their time spent together.

We believe that our school sets a tremendous example and that the education received by our youngsters in this type of school environment is second to none. We have included testimonials from various sources in this report which speak to the benefits of this learning environment. To satisfy one of the school board's "What if" questions we have also included letters from the parents stating that none of them plan to move from the island, reducing the number of students attending the school. The parents are fishers and local small business owners who would not be able to easily find work elsewhere if they moved off the island.

What we wish to convey to the school board is basically that we are a unique school in a unique situation and therefore our school needs to be looked at from a completely different angle than other small schools. Certain alternatives or solutions to problems that may work for mainland schools are not an option for us on a small island that's a one-hour ferry ride away. Consolidation is much more difficult when you're separated from the next school by seven miles of ocean and a ferry with a set schedule.

We hope that the information provided in this report will allow everyone to see what a truly wonderful small school we have as well as demonstrate the terrible position we all will be in if closure is the decided fate. We also believe, and have discussed in this report, that to lose our school would eventually result in the collapse of our entire community; if the school closes, parents will be forced to move away so their children can safely attend school somewhere else. These parents are the heart of local businesses and organizations on the island and without them the future of the island will be uncertain.

This report has provided us with the opportunity to discuss our school in detail, openly and honestly. Hopefully the Big Tancook Island Elementary School will receive careful consideration before the final decision of this review is made.

Thank you,
Hillary Dionne
School Advisory Council Chair

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Hillary Dionne". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the printed name and title.

Tancook Island Elementary School

Mission Statement

Our school is an inclusive community where everyone works together to provide a positive learning environment.

We are dedicated to creating opportunities to enhance academic, social and working skills in order to provide quality education.

Our school modifies the curriculum to meet individual differences so that all students will be challenged to reach their full potential.

Big Tancook Island Elementary School
Impact Assessment Report

~Responses~

Compiled by the SAC Study Committee

Elizabeth Sutherland

S. Vidto

Bonny Cross

Hillary Dionne

Dina Levy

Bonny Cross

Part I: Enrolment History & Projection:

History

2001/1	2001/2	2002/3	2003/4	2004/5	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9
9	9	6	7	6	4	4	3	5

Projection

2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
5	8	8	6	6

(Impact Assessment Report)

As Dr. Gunn states in his report:

As shown in the above tables, the enrolment of BTES dropped to a low of 3 in 2007/8 and is expected to be 5 to 8 over the next 5 years. Although the Enrolment is extremely low, it appears to be fairly stable until 2014.

Response:

The projected enrolment is based on the number of families presently living on Big Tancook Island, who have children registered in school and who have pre-schoolers who will be attending the school when they reach the eligible age.

B. General Population Patterns and Projections (past, present, next 5 years)

As Dr. Gunn states in his report:

Based on a discussion with the Principal of BTES and the parents of the students presently attending the school, there is no reason to expect a significant increase or decrease in the general population of Big Tancook Island in the foreseeable future.

Response:

There are other families who have expressed interest in moving to the island so their children can have the benefit of the small school multiage education that is offered at Big Tancook Island Elementary. Other families on the mainland and some who are temporary residents during the summer have also expressed an interest in taking up permanent residence on the Island. However, as noted in Dr. Gunn's report, moving here for some is contingent upon high speed internet being made available to the island. The availability of high speed internet is contingent on the Provincial Government's mandate. It should also be noted that even though wireless internet is available, there are dead areas on the island, which does not make this a feasible option.

C. Proposed Development in the Region:

As stated in Dr. Gunn's report:

In checking with the Planning Department of the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg, although no specific population trend data is available for the Island, no new developments or plans have been reported that might significantly alter the population.

Part II: Facility

A. Physical Condition of the School

As Dr. Gunn states in his report:

In October of 2003, the MacDonnell group completed a "Building Condition Study" of Big Tancook School. As stated in the Conclusions and Recommendations, "The overall condition of the school is fair to good except for specific items identified". The report goes on to say that generally, the building interior is durable and well maintained and can be expected to be serviceable for several years or indefinitely provided life-cycle maintenance items are addressed".

Since 2003, the Board has addressed the specific maintenance items and the building needs no major upgrades. Within the next 5 to 10 years, the exterior should be painted.

Response

As stated, the building condition is good and requires no capital upgrades.

B. Maintenance and Operation Costs

As stated in Dr. Gunn's report:

The operating costs are covered fully by the revenue from the Department of Education.

C. Facility Utilization (including excess space)

As stated in Dr. Gunn's report:

Both classrooms are used equally for instruction. In the one that contains the school library and art materials most of the language arts instruction occurs. The other classroom contains the computer centre (5 laptops, 2 desktops), LCD projector with screen, TV and math centre. Also it

contains the piano which volunteers use for music classes. There is also a smartboard located in this classroom.

There is a community centre next to the school. It is used by the school for physical education classes and other activities which require a large floor space or the use of the kitchen facilities, e.g. the annual Christmas concert, the Halloween party, etc.

D. Extent of community use of the school facility in the past year:

As stated, the Community Centre is located adjacent to the school. It is more feasible for the community to use this facility as the school contains valuable resources, confidential records, money and extensive technology that could be at risk of damage without appropriate supervision by Department of Education staff.

However, the school has been used extensively for the following activities:

- Exploratories are already offered (CAMS students come out twice a year) and this could be expanded.
- Secondary students come to the school to access high speed internet after regular school hours to work on school projects since high speed internet is not available on the island.
- After hour special courses are offered (e.g. sign language) for the benefit of the entire community.

Other benefits to the SSRSB:

The school offers a unique opportunity for individuals interested in developing their leadership skills either on their own or as part of the leadership cohort. Because this is a teaching principalship, experiences could be offered to those individuals to mentor with the current principal/teacher.

Also due to declining enrolment, many schools in the region are moving to combined and multiage classes. BTI offers a well established model of successful multiage programming. Benefits would be realized in the following areas:

- Academic
- Cultural
- Social
- Emotional
- Technological.

The students in this enriched setting have opportunities only made available to them due to the small student population which offers valuable life skills and supports the attainment of the Essential Graduation Learning. An example of this would be the Community PowerPoint Presentations.

E. Alternatives available to the community for school facility usage:

It must be noted that community usage must not interrupt the regular operation of the school day. However, there are some options that would enhance the educational program and experience for the students of the school and extend the use of the facility to support the community:

- High school students could be offered co-op programs at the school in the area of classroom teaching, teaching assistant, technology and outdoor education.
- Seniors could be invited to provide oral and pictorial history of the island which would bring the seniors out of their homes and provide an opportunity for interaction between the students and the seniors.
- Computer courses could be offered to the people in the community.

F. Property Service, Staff Allocation and Operational Efficiencies:

As stated in Dr. Gunn's report:

The closure of Big Tancook Island School would result in financial savings in terms of not having to operate the facility and pay staff salaries, but these would be offset by the loss of revenue for operating a small school. In other words, no financial efficiencies on the operational side should be expected by the closure.

Likewise, no capital savings should be expected over the next 5 years or so because the facility is in good shape.

G. Operational and capital requirements for status quo:

As stated, the building condition is good and requires no capital upgrades. The operating costs are covered fully by the revenue from the Department of Education.

Part III: PSP & Staffing

A. Ability to Deliver Public School Program (PSP)

As stated in Dr. Gunn's report,

There is no evidence to be concerned about the educational program that is being offered now because the students do very well when they go on to Chester and Area Middle School.

Additional Comments:

The students of Big Tancook Island Elementary are taught basic French by the teacher and music and art classes are provided by community volunteers. There has not been a student in need of Reading Recovery (or any sort of extra reading help) for at least 10 years, and maybe this is thanks to the amount of one-on-one time the teacher can spend with students. If a child is having difficulties reading, the teacher is able to spend extra time helping them.

Due to the teacher/student ratios at BTI, the children benefit from a high degree of one to one individualized instruction and assessment. Students not only achieve but, in some cases, exceed the outcomes of the PSP as noted by past achievements on the provincial assessment.

As noted in Mr. Burke's letter (the principal of Chester Area Middle School), BTI students regularly achieve at a superior level academically and are recognized in their accomplishments through public recognition at Award Ceremonies each term.

Also, students have gone on to achieve at some of the highest standards recognized in the province including the Lieutenant Governor's Award.

C. Extra-Curricular Activities

The students of Tancook Island Elementary School enjoy the advantage of a varied and strong extra-curricular activity program; a program in which every child participates which includes activities that are not available on the mainland. These activities offer cultural, social, nature, artistic and historical opportunities. Also, because of the high level of community support and commitment, the principal-teacher is able to draw on numerous volunteers to help offer the following activities:

- World Travel Presentations
- Art Classes
- Cross Country Skiing Program – depending on weather conditions
- Hiking Excursions
- Neptune Excursions
- Ross Farm Excursions
- Oaklawn Farms Excursions
- Guest Speakers such as: RCMP, Retired Registered Nurse, Veterinarian

As well, the Christmas Concert offers every child the opportunity to: speak publicly, sing, and perform in skits for approximately 1.5 hours. They develop necessary presentation skills early in life that build a strong foundation which they carry with them throughout their lives.

C. Efficiencies in staffing:

It is recognized that when another principal/teacher is recruited for this unique situation, the successful candidate may not have the qualifications to teach the specialist subjects. If that is the case, the school board has the infrastructure in place to provide the necessary support and professional development required for the attainment of the competencies. These infrastructures include: French and literacy/technology mentors and consultants, other consultants from the Board and Department of Education as well as specialized professional development opportunities. If these infrastructures were not in place then families would have to recognize that outcomes in certain areas may not be met.

Part IV: Geographic Isolation

As stated in Dr. Gunn's report:

...that the School Board take the concerns of the parents regarding the issues around the geographic isolation very seriously and "must have considerable weight as a mitigating factor". When looking at alternatives to operating an up-to-date, 2 room school for a small number of students it must be noted that if this school was located on the mainland, there would be alternatives available such as driving to another school in the district.

It should also be noted, that the majority of the students' parents' families have lived on this island for generations. The parents' livelihood is directly linked to this island and they have a vested interest in the school remaining open.

Part V: Transportation:

Transportation by ferry is 50 minutes (under perfect weather conditions, which includes one stop at Little Tancook. With embarkation, disembarkation time and the bus ride from the ferry terminal to and from the school, the total travel time for students is approximately 90 minutes under perfect conditions.

Other issues that merit consideration:

- The ferry is a passenger and freight vessel which presents a high level of risk for physical injury during the loading and unloading of freight during the embarkation and disembarkation of passengers.

- The ferry runs in any and all weather conditions which presents a high level of risk of sea sickness and fear, in some very dangerous sea conditions.
- The ferry is also the emergency transportation for the island and is sometimes recalled to the island. This could potentially leave small children waiting on the wharf or on the ferry for considerable amounts of time.
- The ferry has also been called further out to sea on rescue missions, which could cause significant delays for children either waiting on the wharf or riding the ferry.
- In the case of a medical emergency while a child is attending school on the mainland, there would be a significant delay for the parents to reach their child because they would have to wait for the regularly scheduled ferry run.
- Due to the limited ferry schedule (e.g. there are no scheduled evening runs through the week) adjustments to scheduled events (concerts, parent-teacher conferences, etc) at CDS would have to be made to accommodate the parents of BTI.

Part VI: Impact on the Community

The impact of the closure of Big Tancook Island Elementary School would be devastating. The parents of the children currently enrolled in the school are active members of various community organizations. One of these organizations provides a vital service to the residents of Tancook Island. These services include:

- The Emergency Response Association which includes Medical First Responders trained through the 911 Emergency Health Services System.
- The Community Recreation Association which provides numerous activities for every member of the community.
- Post Office staff
- The Harbour Authority Committee
- The Baptist Church.

Local businesses would also be negatively affected, resulting in closure, as many are operated by the island parents. Also, many of the families have a parent who is a fisher and would have to remain on the island to fish. This could result in the splitting of families who may be forced to separate for the children to access education on the mainland. As this is the area designated for them to fish, fishers may be forced to look for alternative employment with no other job-related skills. This would place further stress on the family unit and on government agencies to provide the necessary support.

Part VII: Responses to the "What Ifs" Contained in Dr. Gunn's Report

It should be noted that these "what ifs" could both devastate the community or enhance it, for example: What if the population of Tancook Island were to increase in the future?

The What Ifs:

- What if only 2 families on the island have children of elementary school age and one of the families wants to send their child to Chester District Elementary School?
- What if a completely new set of families agree that hiring an adult supervisor to travel with the young children on the ferry to CDES is the better option?
- What if another principal-teacher has to be recruited and no one qualified to teach French, Music and the other specialist programs can be found?

In the first two scenarios, if a school exists on Tancook Island and families would like their children to attend another school with the SSRSB, they would be required to follow the protocols for requesting a transfer. It would be a highly unusual case that would warrant an approved transfer to a school on the mainland when one considers the very real risks and limited options of transportation of that student as noted in Dr. Gunn's report. It was also noted that the ferry schedule does not coincide with the school day at Chester District Elementary, and that the length of the day would put students at a disadvantage with their classmates who do not have to endure the same daily schedule or the rigors of the lengthy ferry ride. This does not support the closure of the school.

For the response to scenario 3, please reference the Efficiencies in Staffing Response.

Headings not covered

- Municipal or provincial infrastructure plans
- Educational benefits of attending another school
- Impact on Receiving School
- Capital Plans
- If consolidation would result in closure

We hope that this report has allowed everyone a candid view of the Tancook Island Elementary School, its students and parents, and the island community.

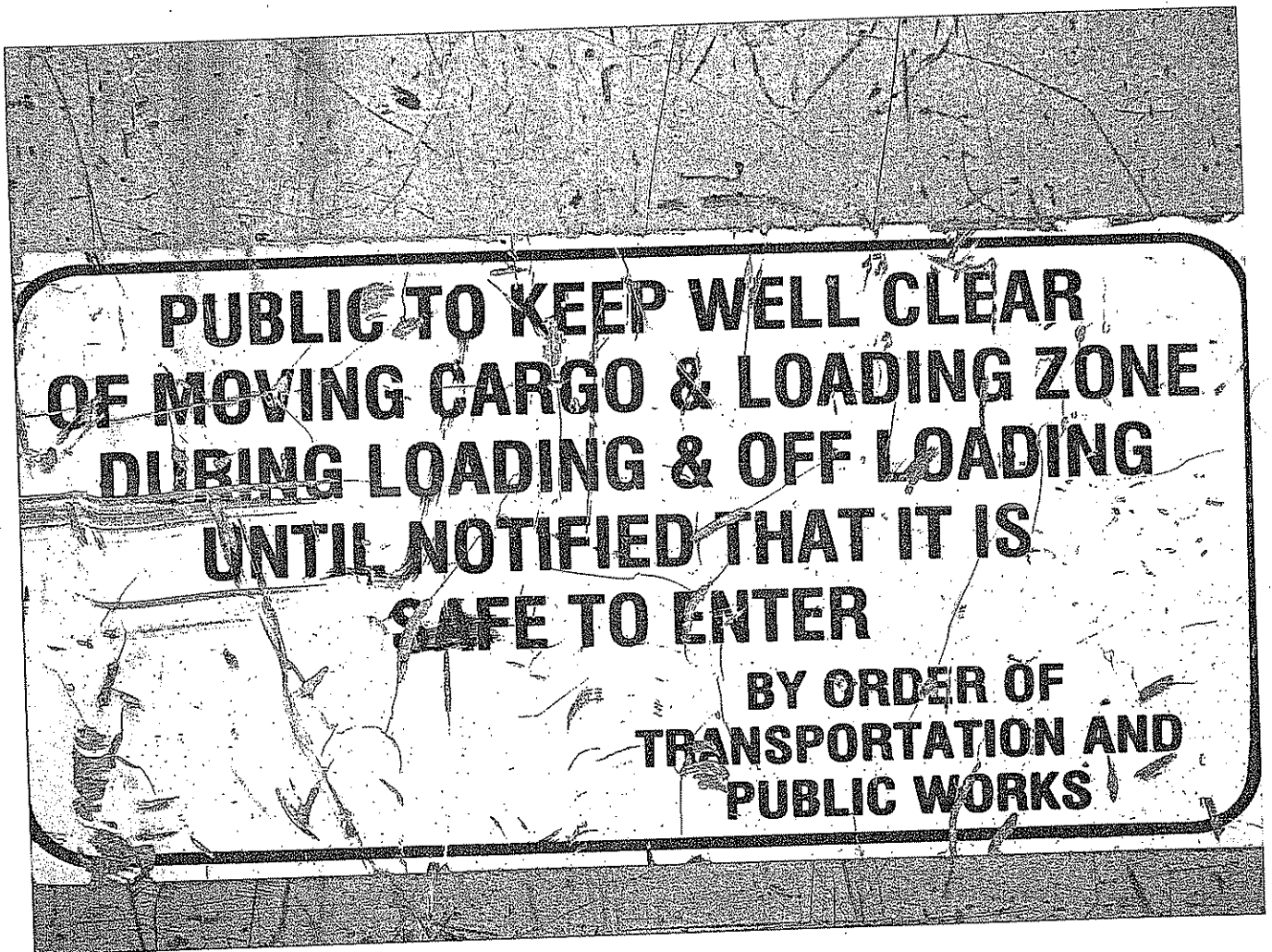
We are proud of every child who has ever been educated here. Each of them has been given something special to carry with them throughout life. These children leave this school with an excellent educational foundation and a remarkable set of life skills.

To lose our school would be tragic on so many levels. Our small school is literally the heart of our community and we hope the information in this report has portrayed this.

Thank you.

The Dangers of the Tancook Island Ferry and Wharves

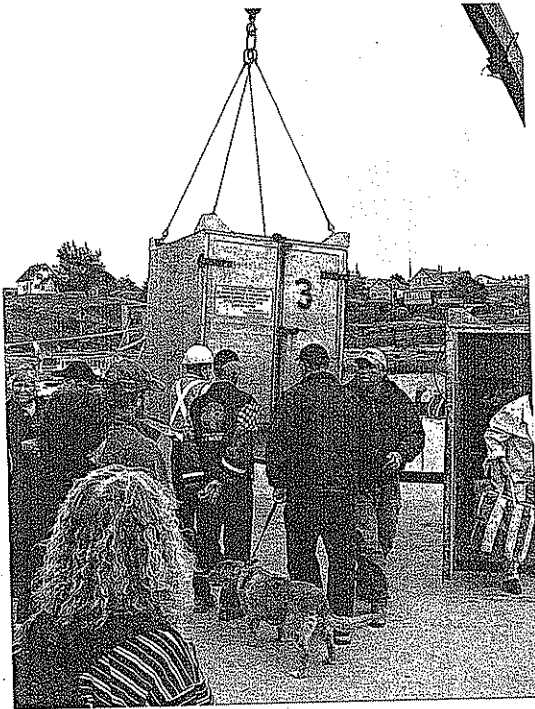
This next section of our report offers a glimpse of some of the dangers associated with travel on the ferry. Small children are not aware of many of these dangers and are not experienced or old enough to use good judgement in potentially dangerous situations.



This sign, located on the front door of each of the ferry's "freight boxes", has been banged and scratched up during the loading and off-loading of freight on the Tancook Island ferry. These freight boxes will be shown and explained in the next several photos.

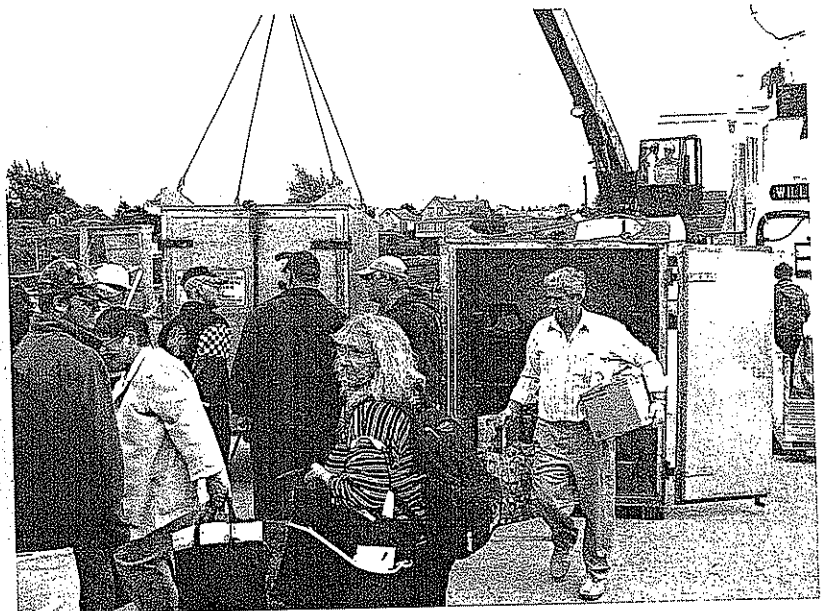
The following are photos of the Tancook Island Ferry and wharf taken during the loading and off-loading of freight on a typical afternoon school run (3:40 trip from Chester).

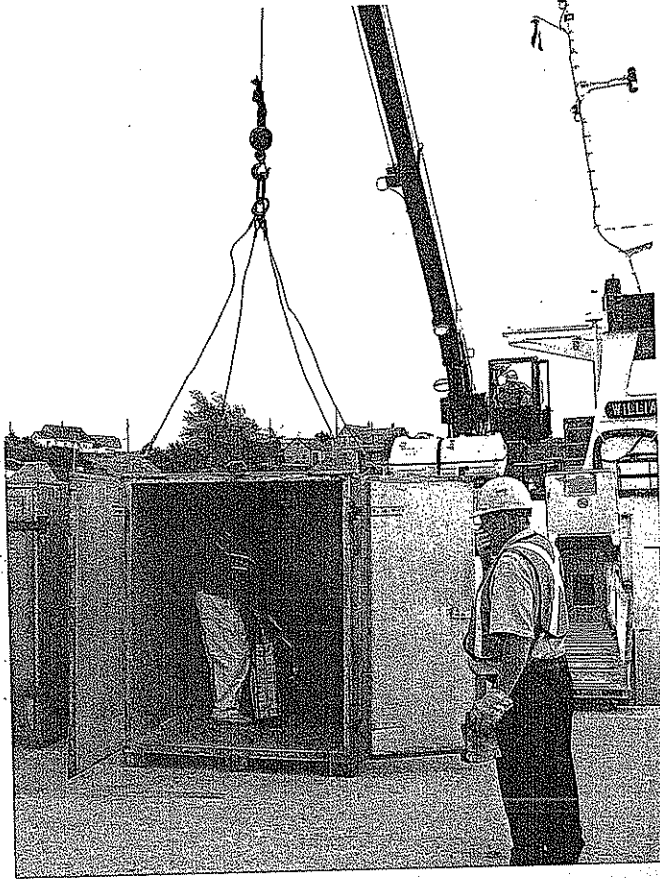
There are four large metal freight containers that are hoisted on and off the back deck of the ferry and onto the wharves. Passengers use these "freight boxes" to transport items to and from the island.



In this photo, one freight box is being lowered onto the wharf while passengers unload another.

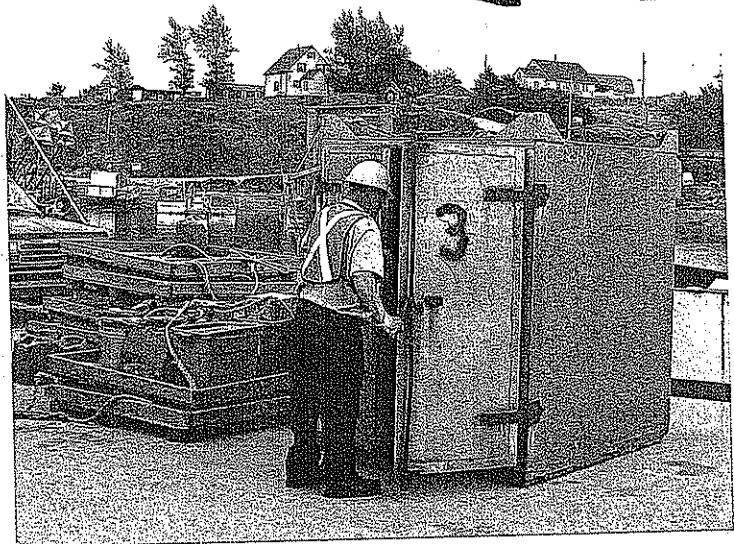
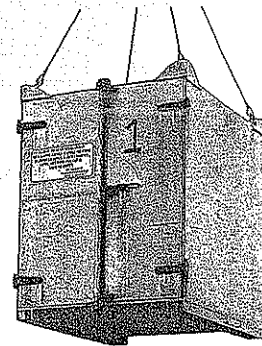
There are always lots of people around the freight boxes, collecting their belongings and loading them into their vehicles.

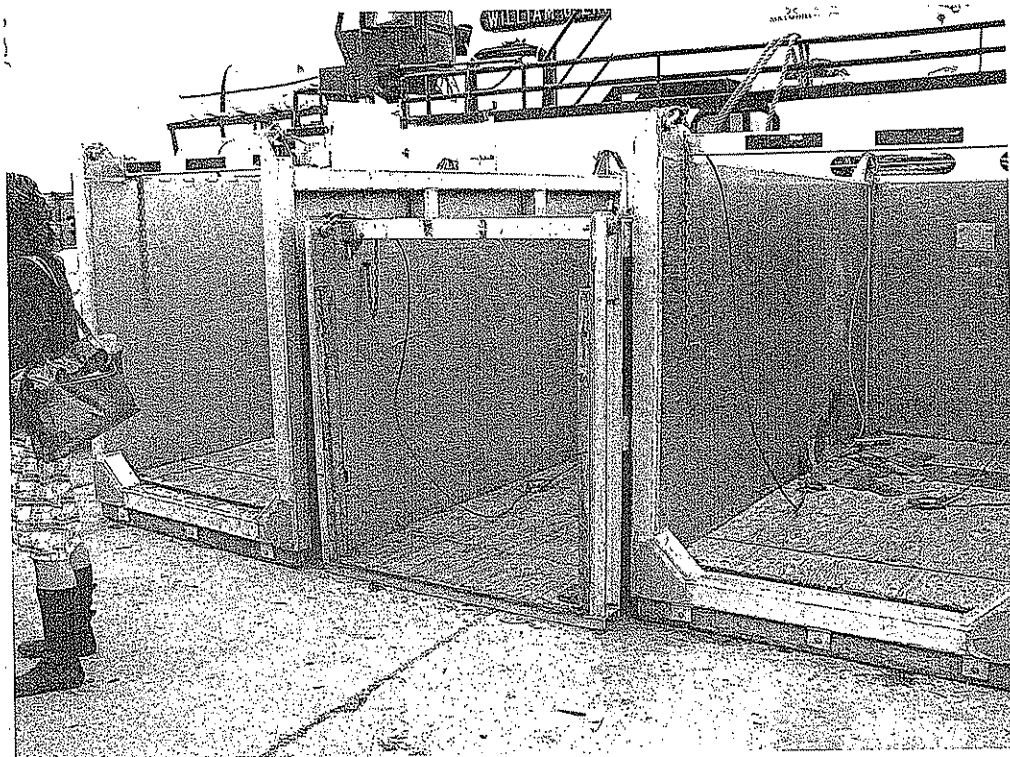




This freight box is almost empty and the winch on the ferry is ready to hoist it up.

Now, the empty freight box is being hoisted onto the back deck of the ferry while the crew checks to see if the remaining box is ready to go.



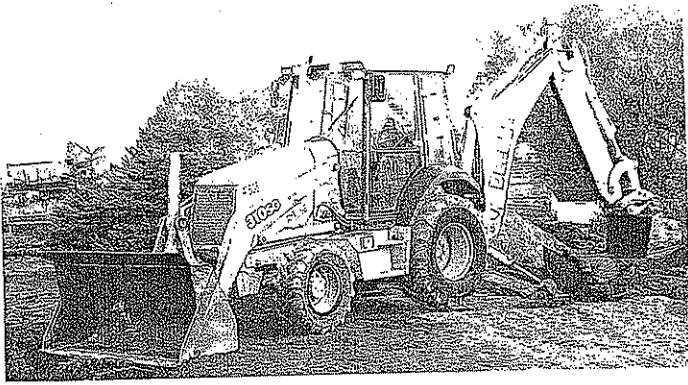


As well as freight boxes, there are open containers that carry things like large animals (cattle, horses & sheep), firewood by the cord, and even mattresses and furniture...basically the things that are too big or inappropriate to put in a freight box. Old roofing shingles are also taken off the island in these containers.

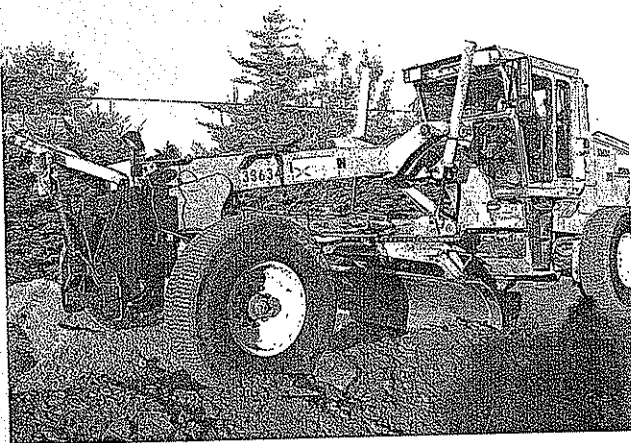


There are also pallets which are used for transporting lumber and building materials, gasoline and propane tanks, and numerous other goods that are heavy or dangerous.





Not only do garbage trucks and oil trucks drive on and off the wharf. There is occasionally other heavy machinery coming to and from the island to maintain our roads.



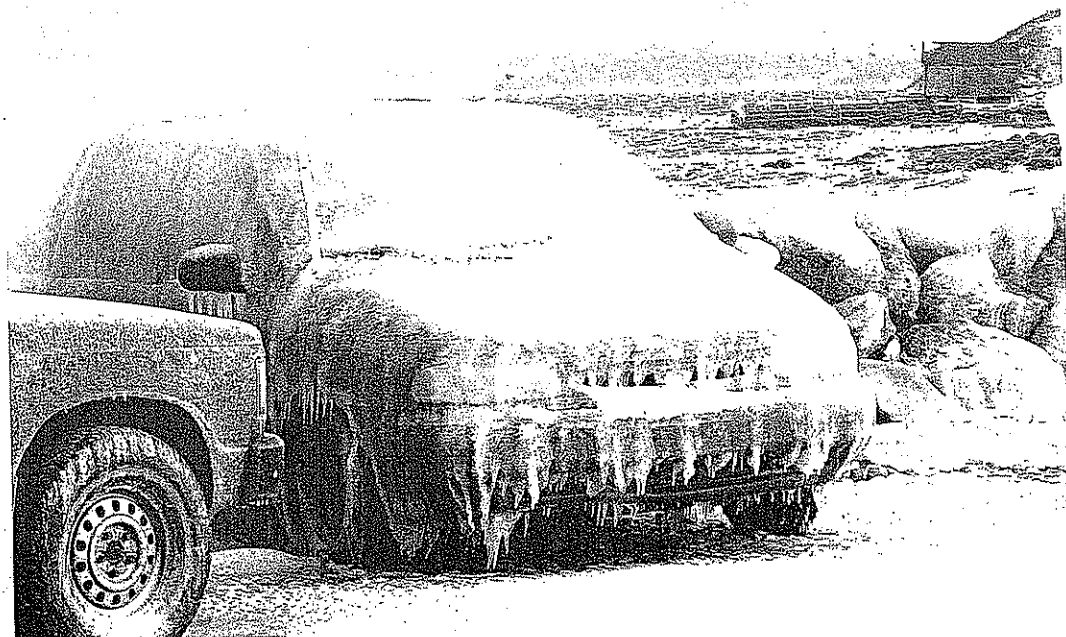
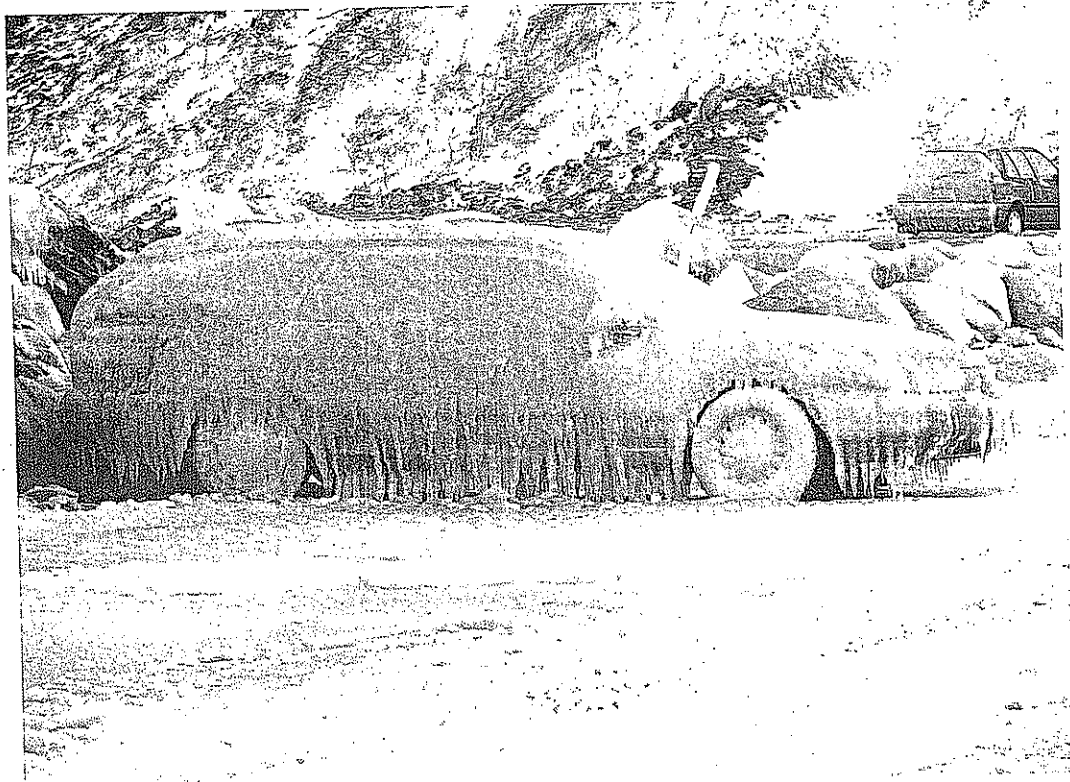
It would be hard for the drivers to see small children if they darted out in front of or behind these vehicles on a busy wharf.



In the winter the seas are often quite rough and the ferry rolls and tosses on the waves. In this photo you can see that the waves splash over the bow of the ferry and hit the windows of the wheelhouse.

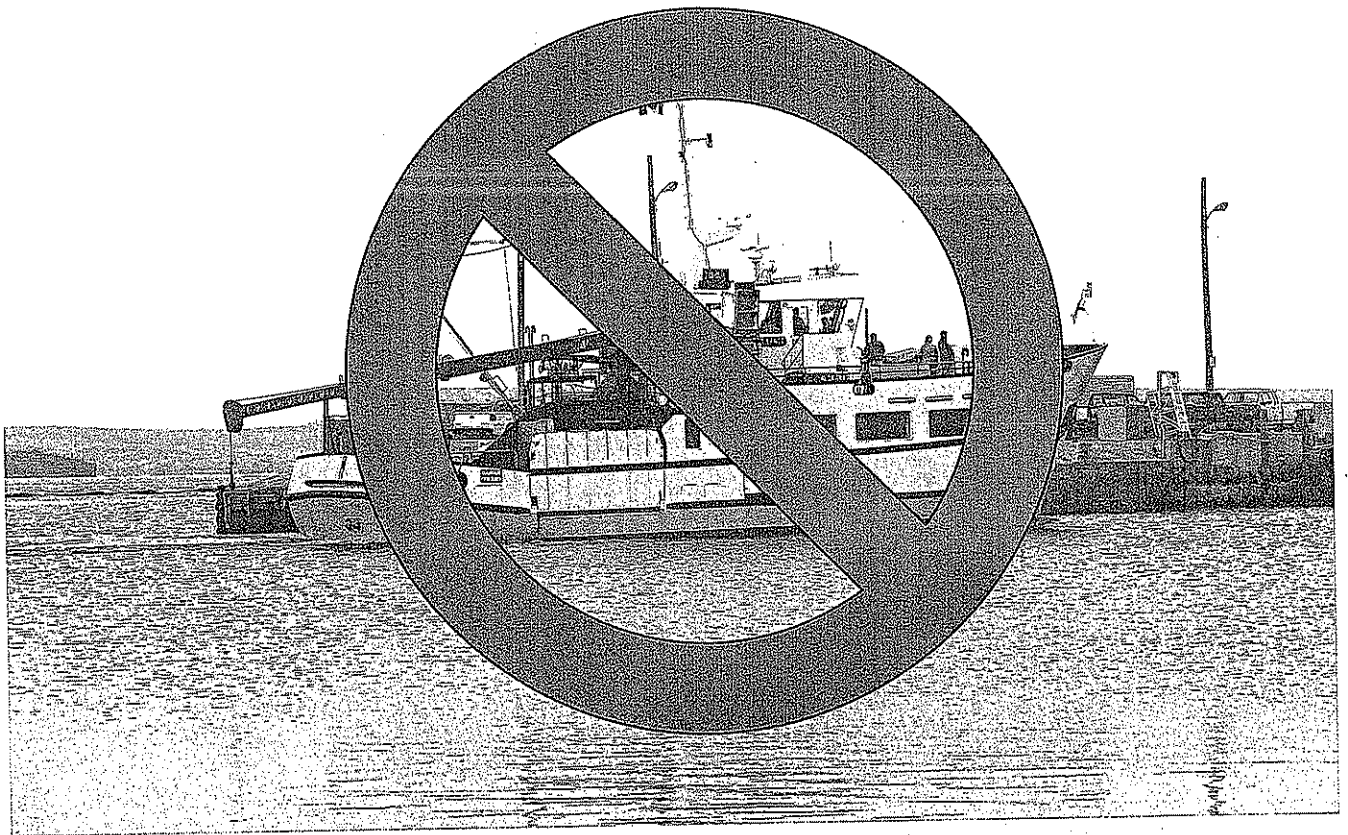


These photos show what happens to vehicles in parking spaces on and around the wharves during windy winter days. The waves break against the wharves and the salt spray coats everything with thick layers of ice. It is treacherous to walk on the wharves when it's like this.



Small children, even accompanied by an adult, can be quick moving and unassuming. They are at great risk on the ferry and wharves and this is one of our biggest concerns. Our children must be able to safely attend school.

Traveling on the ferry exposes them to too many dangerous situations.



Testimonials

Included in this section are letters from:

- John Burke, principal of Chester Area Middle School
- The SSRSB Operations Department
- The SSRSB Coordinator for Assessment and Technology
- Various other sources

These letters are testimonials that support our small island school and the type of education our youngsters receive here.



CHESTER AREA MIDDLE SCHOOL
P.O. Box 440, 204 Duke Street
Chester, N.S. B0J 1J0
Ph. (902) 275-2720 Fax. (902) 275-2730

January 23, 2009

To Whom It May Concern,

I have had the experience of receiving Tancook Island students into Chester Area Middle School for the past six years. It is my pleasure to write this letter attesting to the calibre of these students and their educational experience at Tancook's elementary school.

Common sense would lead us to believe that schooling in a small, insular environment leads to a limited educational experience and diminished opportunity to excel at higher levels. However, the lived experience of Tancook Island students at Chester Area Middle School demonstrates otherwise. Our Tancook students come to us with enthusiasm, love of learning and the tools necessary to do well. They regularly achieve at a superior level academically and are recognized in their accomplishments through public recognition at awards ceremonies each term. This small group of eager learners are engaged in their learning, dedicated in their efforts, responsible in their approach to school life and they are excellent examples for our student body.

I congratulate Big Tancook Island Elementary School and Ms. Elizabeth Sutherland on this excellent work.

Sincerely,

John V. Burke
Principal, CAMS

Elizabeth Sutherland
Principal, Big Tancook Elementary School
36 School St
Big Tancook Island, NS B0J 3G0

September 8, 2009

Dear Ms. Sutherland:

I am writing in response to your inquiry about the condition of Big Tancook School.

The school is an older wood frame building originally constructed in the 1950's. It has had various upgrades over the years including:

- New T-Bar ceilings and light fixtures approximately 1990
- Roof re-shingled approximately 1998
- New electric furnace approximately 2003
- Exterior re-painting approximately 2005
- New vinyl floor tiles throughout 2007

The building is not in need of any major repairs at the moment. It will require an exterior re-painting in 2-3 years and a new roof in approximately 10 years.

Sincerely,



Barry Butler
Director of Operations

September 17, 2009

To Whom It May Concern

RE: Big Tancook Elementary

As the Coordinator for Assessment and Technology for the South Shore Regional School Board, I have had the pleasure of working with the teacher and students at this school on many occasions. I have found Big Tancook Elementary School (BTES) to have a technology rich environment that supports teaching and learning. This school has included in its technology inventory: seven laptops, several desktop computers with multimedia capabilities, video and still cameras, two LCD projectors, a smart board and laser printers. In addition, this school is wireless. This affords laptop users the ability to work anywhere within the wireless range.

The students at BTES have been engaged by their teacher in a variety of technology integration projects. These projects have included:

- creating a school web page that was recognized in by a national magazine
- entering the S-Video Festival with an original student created production that was shown at Empire Theatres in Bridgewater
- using technology to support and extend classroom learning.

The Information Communication and Technology outcomes are met through integration with other curricular areas. Students at this school are exposed to technology as a productivity tool, understand the basic operations of the technology in their school, use the technology they have for communication purposes, are exposed to social and ethical issues in the appropriate use of technology and are given the opportunity to use the technology that they have for research, problem solving and decision making.

Sincerely,

Sue Taylor-Foley

To Whom It May Concern:

Hi my name is Brenda and I have two boys named Todd 17 who is in final year at Forest Heights and hopes to go on to Aircraft Maintenance Engineering and Trevor 13 who is in grade 8 at Cams. They both attended Big Tancook Island Elementary for 6 years. In those 6 years they have learned so much from Elizabeth Sutherland (Ms. S). She is a good teacher and she makes the kids feel like they can come to her for any reason. The school on the Island has been wonderful because if the school had not been here the children would have had to go to Chester, which is a 35 min ferry ride, each way. At times the ferry can get very rough and scary when you look out the windows and all you see is water on both sides. That could be very upsetting to a young child. The school is like being at home. It is very relaxing but still it has rules that need to be followed and the kids seem to do that right from the start. Both of my boys loved the school but has now moved on. Teachers from Cams have always commented on how well behaved the kids from Tancook are. They are also very respectful to the teachers. I am glad to have had the school there for my children and I hope it remains open for the children to come as it is a big asset to the community and to their families. If you have any questions please email me or phone me.

Thank you

Brenda Boutilier

Brenda Boutilier

(902)228-2441

weinhofer@ns.sympatico.ca

Why Big Tancook Island Elementary School Should Not Close:

I have been a full-time resident of Big Tancook Island for 46 of my 51 years. My elementary school years were spent here on Tancook and my high school years in Chester. My children also attended Big Tancook Elementary, Chester Middle and Forest Heights schools so I feel I have a sense of the trials and tribulations of island living and schooling.

School enrolments in our schools have been going down for years and Big Tancook Elementary is in the same position as the rest.

In my opinion, if there were to be a debate on sending our elementary students to Chester by ferry to attend school there, I would feverishly oppose that idea. Sending elementary children by Tancook ferry is neither an ideal situation nor something to be studied lightly. A summer ferry ride, supervised, can be a great experience. Take an elementary child in windy, freezing conditions, on a wharf and boat frozen with ice and you can soon have a dangerous situation. Add to that, the traffic of a congested wharf and the ferry loading and unloading of its cargo, and the situation becomes worse.

Seasickness is another problem to be addressed. When our children get sick once the ferry has left the wharf, there is no returning home. Whether it is seasickness or another illness, we cannot attend to a sick child who is on the mainland.

A problem I experienced as a parent while my children attended mainland schools was that when school was cancelled, for whatever reason, no consideration was given to Tancook students as to where and how they were to spend the rest of the day. Tancook ferry schedule was not at the top of the priority list when school was cancelled.

The ferry schedule is another conflict. It would be very difficult to set up a schedule to satisfy all schools involved. I do not believe the mainland schools would change their whole schedule to accommodate a handful of

Tancook students.

Anyone looking at the schooling of Big Tancook children can understand we have a unique situation here. Although we have but 3 students this year, we do project enrolments to increase in the coming years.

Big Tancook Elementary School should really be looked at differently because we are in such a unique situation.

When it comes to the taking of these children from the island, I would be in the front line of opposition.

Bonny Cross

Reasons to keep the Big Tancook Island Elementary School open

The Big Tancook Island Elementary School is one of our islands greatest assets. Our children are our future and I believe that getting a good, solid, positive start to education is incredibly important today. The benefits of commencing the academic portion of their lives in the learning environment the island children experience now are immeasurable. I truly believe we are lucky to have our small school and I hope that the School Board and all the officials who make decisions about school closures and consolidations will recognize that ours is a special situation. Eliminating our elementary school or altering the way it operates would be detrimental to our children as well as our community.

Big Tancook Island offers its residents a unique way of life in a close-knit community where everyone knows everyone on a first name basis. We look out for each other and are a prime example of the phrase "it takes a village to raise a child". The general feeling is 'my neighbours children are my children, too'.

Our elementary school has a wonderful, dedicated, dependable teacher who has been teaching here for 25 years. Elizabeth Sutherland, or "Ms. S." as she is affectionately known by all, has literally interacted with her past and present students from the time they were born and has known some of the parents since they were teenagers. She is loved and trusted here on our island and has proven to be a tremendous educator over the years.

There are not many elementary schools that can offer or provide what ours does. Our children do not have to deal with issues such as drugs, alcohol or violence in their school, being bullied, or being stalked or abducted from the schoolyard. These are just a few major problems experienced in other schools that we haven't ever had to worry about here. It's great peace of mind for everyone.

As well, the small classroom atmosphere is relaxed and friendly and is very conducive to learning. In bigger schools with larger classrooms there is often nervousness, stress and upset during the first days or weeks of school as children are introduced to new people and situations. Here, the children have grown up together and already know the teacher and they are eager to commence school in September.

Small classrooms offer the students more one-on-one with the teacher and as a result the children are really able to grasp and understand what is being taught. We have even had some island students who excelled so much when they graduated to middle school and high school that they were exempt from some of their exams.

We have only three students in our island school for the 2007/2008 school year, but enrollment is increasing to five, possibly six for 2008/2009, and potentially eight by 2010. Some of our islands part-time residents who have elementary aged children see the benefits of having their children schooled here and are actually planning to move here full-time just so their children will get this educational experience.

If our little school were closed down, our elementary aged children would have to travel on the ferry to and from Chester every day as well as on a bus to get to school. Children this young would have to be chaperoned on the ferry. As a parent of elementary aged children, I am not comfortable with this situation. The Tancook Island school provides education up to and including grade five. Our children start traveling to school in Chester for grade six. At this age they are more mature and independent and are capable of commuting unassisted.

All in all, the children that begin their education here in our little island school have a positive attitude toward learning, a worry-free and happy academic environment in which they thrive, and they benefit immensely from having a terrific teacher who genuinely cares about them and the education they get.

I truly hope that the above mentioned, together with the thoughts and feelings of the other parents with children in the Big Tancook Island Elementary School will be considered if the future of our school is ever in question. In our case, with our unique island situation, I honestly believe that losing our school would be a tragic event with tremendously sad consequences.

Sincerely,

Hillary Dionne

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Hillary Dionne". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the printed name "Hillary Dionne".

November 9, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

My husband and I bought a home on Tancook Island in 1991. We are parents and grandparents and both had careers in Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency Service. We were exposed to the public school system in all aspects of our personal and professional lives within Halifax Regional Municipality and often discussed the pros and cons of island education compared to city education.

Even though we do not have children attending Tancook Island School, as members of a close knit small community, we see and experience the positive influence the school has on island life. Schools are an integral part of any community but even more so on an island. The children are known and their activities are supported by everyone on the island. For example, the school concert is an anticipated social community event with standing room only in which the students perform for over an hour and a half. In the city, my husband and I often rushed to school concerts to see our children and grandchildren perform for no more than 5 minutes and there was no socialization between the parents and students. It took them a long time to overcome being timid with self expression and speaking in a group environment. However, the children on Tancook are given the opportunity to gain exceptional presentation skills, from the beginning of their school life, which increases their self esteem and ability to inter-relate. Skills that are required to excel in today's work world. They are exposed to curriculum at higher grade levels which expands their minds and develops curiosity. They know of no barriers because they are not placed within a certain level. They develop a unique relationship with their teacher and learn respect for authority.

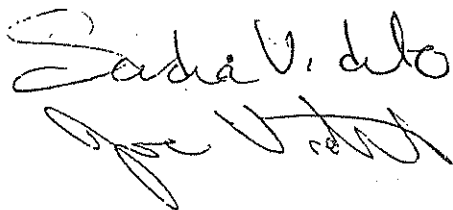
They say it takes a village to raise a child and Tancook Island is our village not Chester, not Chester Basin, not any other place. This is where the support systems are for the children if school is cancelled, if a child becomes sick, if a child needs someone familiar and a safe place. Their developmental school years should be within their community not within someone else's community. The community helps develop their identity and gives them a safe and secure environment. When the time is right, the children from Tancook have always assimilated into the school system - the time is not right at age 5.

Our children have to travel an hour on a government ferry going to and coming from school and under whose guidance and protection. Then what happens to them on the other side?

Children educated on Tancook Island do miss extra circular activities. Do they miss these activities? If you asked them, probably not, because the school environment here introduces them to the same skills they would take away from extra circular activities, such as appreciation for the arts, learning to get along with others through group activities and fund raising for social causes. In their school environment, they know no prejudice, they see no differences, they are accepting and open. What a wonderful basis for character development and in becoming a socially responsible individual.

It is a fact that the number of students attending Tancook School has been on the decline but it will increase over the next few years. Numbers should not be the deciding factor in the viability of our school but rather the needs of the present and future students, the caliber of the students taught in one of the few remaining one room school houses and the way of life of this island. Our unique situation requires unique solutions. The remaining pre-school children may be the last students to be educated on the island but they should have the opportunity to be educated within the safe supportive environment of their own community.

Yours truly,

The block contains two handwritten signatures. The top signature is in cursive and appears to read 'Sandra V. Lobo'. The bottom signature is also in cursive and is less legible, possibly reading 'Joe V. Lobo'.

7 February 2008

Dear Dr. Gunn and Lunenburg County School Board:

As parents of previous students and grandparents of a current student at Big Tancook Island Elementary School, we were stressed to hear that closure of the School could be a possibility. To us this is a definite deterrent to the community and the excellent education that the students are receiving.

The safety factor of students under the age of 12 years having to be transported daily on the ferry is a major concern. Young children need constant supervision on the ferry and inclement weather plays a vital role.

We believe that the children are getting a superb education from Ms. Sutherland and feel that any interruption in the current policies would be counter-productive. The graduates of our school over recent years have proven the fact that their education has been outstanding.

We urge you to greatly consider aborting the closure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David & Martha Farrar". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid.

David and Martha Farrar

----- Original Message ----- From: "Tessa Mendel" <tessamendel@yahoo.ca>
To: <zackrhiannon@ns.sympatico.ca>
Sent: Wednesday, March 05, 2008 9:23 PM
Subject: Big Tancook School

[Hide Quoted Text]

Re: Tancook Elementary School



This is just to confirm that my family and I are intending to live in our house on Tancook on a year-long basis starting in the fall of 2010, when my youngest child will be 5 years old. This will mean that we will have two children (a five year old and an eight year old) attending Tancook Elementary School beginning in the 2010/2011 school year and continuing on through their elementary school years.


Please contact me if you need any further information.
Sincerely,
Tessa Mendel
(902) 423-6525
tessamendel@yahoo.ca
2473 Agricola St.
Halifax B3K 4

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3/6/2008

November 26, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter because I have two grandchildren living on Tancook Island, one in Grade 1 and one who will start in September 2008. Following are some things I want to say about the wonderful school and the exceptionally devoted teacher, Miss Sutherland.

We all know how vitally important it is for children to receive a solid foundation in the first years of their education and those fortunate enough to go to school on Tancook Island are getting an impressive start. Last year when our grandson, Zachary Dionne was in Grade Primary, he participated along with the other three students, to put on a brilliant Christmas Concert. It is difficult to believe that four children, two in Grade Primary, one in Grade Three and one in Grade Five, could possibly entertain for almost two hours. But indeed that is what those youngsters did and received a standing ovation from the large audience, many of whom had taken the ferry from the mainland for that purpose only and returning to the mainland after the concert.

I don't know about where you live but in all the communities around where I live Christmas concerts are not what they used to be if they have them at all! The children of Tancook Island School know what it means to participate and be part of a team. They got the job done impressively. It is incredible the amount of memorization it took for them to pull off that concert. Truly one would have to be there to believe it!

My husband and I also had the privilege of attending a PowerPoint presentation at the Tancook Island School earlier this year. Each individual student had to stand before a large crowd and introduce themselves, and along with their PowerPoint CD do an oral presentation. We were so proud of Zachary's flawless performance; I'm not sure that I would have had the poise and confidence that he showed. All of the student's public speaking was phenomenal!

These wonderful events happen because of the hard work and devotion of a wonderful teacher and being able to go to school where they live. The importance of having a school on Tancook Island should not be underestimated.

These children will grow up and do great things!

Please do all that you can to keep this school open.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alice E. Dionne". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Alice E. Dionne

Rev. Renee Clark

P.O. Box 86

Freeport, NS B0V 1B0

March 9th, 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

I feel compelled to write this letter after reading in the Chronicle Herald that the Tancook Island Elementary School is slated for review and possible closure. For almost four years, from early 2003 to late 2006, I served as the pastor on the Island, and while doing so I gained intimate familiarity with the community and its needs. Besides working with the children in afterschool programming and getting to know them and their families while working in the community, I also lived in the parsonage, which backs onto the school property, so I had ample opportunity to observe the daily life of the school.

Though small, the Tancook Island Elementary School provides the children who attend with a quality of education unparalleled anywhere else I've seen. Because the class size is so small, the children receive personal attention that would simply not be possible in a conventional setting. Because the class is composed of children in various grades, they have the opportunity to learn from one another and at their own pace while still accomplishing the objectives for their grade level. The children miss nothing – gym classes are held in the Recreation Centre across the road from the school, music instruction is enhanced by parent volunteers, and they are taught French in accordance with the curriculum. The school is located in an ideal area to help the children develop an appreciation for nature, and the children also benefit from such unique features as the school mascot, a cat named Spanky. The building itself is a perfect size and is in an ideal location. It is well equipped with all conveniences including highspeed internet access. These children are not deprived in any way, and I believe their education has benefited rather than suffered for their situation. Their teacher, Elizabeth Sutherland, has many years of experience teaching in this type of environment and has truly learned to maximize the benefits of the one room school.

It cannot be said strongly enough that any change that would require young children to travel daily on the ferry has potentially tragic consequences. The Government Wharf on Big Tancook Island is a working fishing wharf, with constant traffic of vehicles, boats, and other machinery. This traffic peaks during the morning and afternoon sailings; the situation of the Government Wharf in Chester is similar. The gangway for the regular ferry can be precarious depending on winds and tides, and the ramp system used with the relief ferry is even more so. For a small child without parental supervision embarking and disembarking would become accidents waiting to happen. Both also involve heavy machinery as freight is transferred along with passengers. The crossing is long (lengthening the school day to 8:10am – 4:15pm, far too long for a small child) and also unsupervised as the ferry crew must be concerned with the operation of the vessel and not supervision of unaccompanied small children. It cannot be discounted that ferry travel in and of itself carries inherent risks, particularly as this is open water. It is a necessary evil for these conditions to be imposed on the older children in Middle School and High School, but to expect that children as young as five should travel in this way is unacceptable.

When I heard the news of the review, the first phrase that came to my mind was "If it ain't broke, don't fix it". Closure of the Big Tancook Elementary School is in the best interests of neither the children nor the community, and I implore those who have been entrusted with reducing expenditures for the School

Board to investigate other options to accomplish that objective.

You would be welcome to contact me at 902-839-2038 or renee.clark@ns.sympatico.ca should you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Rev. Renee Clark

Former resident of Big Tancook Island, and firm supporter of the Big Tancook Elementary School

To whom it may concern:

My name is Katie Baker. I am the mother of Megan Baker who is now in grade three and Dylan Baker who is currently in grade one.

At present time there are only three children attending Big Tancook Island Elementary School. I felt it important to mention that the enrolment will be increasing. Next year there will be a possible three more students in attendance, putting the enrolment up to six for the 2007-2008 school year. That will remain the same for the 2008-2009 school year. My daughter will be leaving the following year when another child (Jacob Levy) will be coming in. The enrolment will remain at six again.

Big Tancook Elementary is a special situation. This school needs to be looked at differently than the other schools. The children, at such a young age, do not have the ability to make safe judgement calls. Take for example, when the ferry is loading freight. It is not safe to walk under the cargo boxes when they are being hoisted on and off the ferry. There is traffic moving all the time. The children would be there without parents or any other supervision. They also have the risk of falling over the side of the wharf. Older children are mature enough to make these decisions. The younger ones are not.

What am I supposed to do if my children get sick or hurt? I do not have emergency contacts on the mainland. If they get hurt or sick they would want me there just as much as I would want to be there for them.

One of my children gets seasick. Am I supposed to send him on the ferry when it is rough? He doesn't just feel sick. He actually does vomit. He would need to clean that up and change his clothes before getting on the bus.

When the kids go to school here, they are not exposed to many of the bad things that go on at the other schools. There is no fear of bullies or racism. They are not exposed to lice, chicken pox and what ever else that goes around the school. There is less chance of them getting sick. There are not many days that any of the children are absent from school on the island.

The kids have an excellent multi-age learning environment taking place here. They learn well from one another. This one room schoolhouse is an excellent learning atmosphere for the children. It also teaches them to play with children of all ages as well.

The children are polite. They respect their teachers and elders. Even the Christmas concerts that the children put on are amazing. In my school, our class got to sing one song as a group. We didn't have to do anything else. I liked that because I was shy. I couldn't get up in front of people. I still can't. Now our children don't just get up and sing. No, they put on skits. For them to do what they do at their age is unbelievable. They are confident enough to stand in front of a building full of people to do this. For three children to put on a concert roughly 1 hour and a half long is something to see. They get a large amount of community support. They hold a must see concert.

What would happen for class trips? The ferry only leaves at certain times. They wouldn't be able to go unless there was some place for them to stay on the mainland or unless they can be guaranteed to catch that last ferry. Then what if they don't catch that ferry? What about early school closures? Who will be watching our children until the ferry leaves in a case such as that? I don't want a bus dropping my children off at the wharf and leaving them there. The ferry is not there at all times.

As I understand it, the Chester Elementary school goes in at 8:00 am. The same busses are used for the Forest Heights students. The Elementary children are picked up around 7:00 am so the school starts at 8:00 am leaving those same busses available for a second run for the Forest Heights students to catch the later busses. The children will then get out of school at 2:00 pm. The ferry does not leave Chester until 3:40 pm. Where are the children supposed to go then? Is there going to be someone hired to look after them?

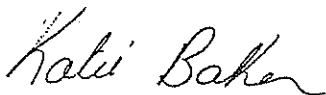
Changing the ferry schedule is not an option. People rely on that 6:10 am ferry for work. As it is now, the children would have to get up at 5:00 am every morning to catch the 6:10 am ferry. Then the children would be in Chester at 7:10 am. That is too much to ask of our children. That should not be an option!

Now I suppose the Chester school could change their schedule and have classes not go in until 9:00 am. Of course, the ferry is sometimes late so our children would be late for school often. Then the school could get out at 3:00 pm. And I also suppose the school board could hire a second set of busses to pick up the Forest Heights students. Seeing as the other busses will be in use because of the new school hours. That would work for some of the concerns. No, I think the school should just remain open. It would be a much cheaper route and less stressful.

If this school closes, you will also be condemning our community. No young people will want to move to an area without a school. And the young that are already living here will have to move away if they are able. If no one wants to move here and the population of island residents continues to decline, we may lose our ferry altogether. This is our livelihoods involved. We can't just pick up and move. We live off of the fishing industry or what is left of it. Please do not close this school and condemn everyone that lives here! Thank you for taking the time to read this and hear my concerns. I pray you do the right thing.

Sincerely,

Katie Baker
Parent



My name is Hillary Dionne and I am a resident of Big Tancook Island. I was recently elected chair person of the school advisory council and I would like to take this opportunity to tell you a bit about myself and to express some opinions that I share with everyone who has ever experienced any aspect of our wonderful little elementary school.

My family moved to Tancook Island from Massachusetts in June of 1978 seeking better quality of life and a safer and more enriched school system for my younger brother and me. To this day my family agrees that this was the best life-changing decision we ever made and we've never had a single regret.

I attended Big Tancook Island Elementary School from September 1978 until June of 1981, for grades 3 through 6. What a marvelous educational opportunity this was for me and for the other students who have been fortunate enough to experience learning in our islands small school.

In fact, this part of my childhood had such a positive effect on me that when my husband and I started a family in the year 2000, we also made the same decision my parents made all those years ago. Opting for better quality of life for our new family, we both resigned from good jobs in the city and moved to Big Tancook Island. Our hopes were to provide our son, now seven years old, and our daughter, now four, with a rich and wonderful start in life. We have not been disappointed with the sacrifices we made to make living here possible. The outcome so far is that both of our children are thriving in every aspect of life.

Educationally, my son and the other students in our little school are making remarkable progress, often exceeding their required goals. Based on my own experiences here, I understand why this is possible and I truly hope that my daughter will have the same opportunities starting school here in 2008. My biggest fear is that our elementary school will be closed eventually, maybe even in the near future, and I know without any doubt that this would be an absolute travesty.

I also know that the other residents of Tancook Island, as well as many non-residents, feel the same way I do about the possibility of our school being closed. For some time now we have been collecting letters from anyone and everyone who feels that losing our island school would be tragic to our children, our community and the spirit of island life. You cannot live without a heart, and our school is essentially the heart of our community.

All parents, past, present and future that I have spoken to are pleased with the programs being offered in our school. As an example, students from grades primary through 5 in the Tancook Island Elementary School are learning computer skills and doing public Power Point presentations. It is remarkable to see a five year old stand up in front of an audience and present with such confidence and self-esteem and they obviously have the skills to use a sophisticated computer program.

We don't feel that our island students are 'missing out' on anything. We have no organized sports, but we have regular gym activities which include all age groups. We have volunteers who give music lessons, organize class photos, help with school concerts and chaperone school trips on the ferry.

The learning environment provided to our students is friendly and relaxed and we've never had any serious problems such as bullying or drugs and alcohol in our school. The children grow up together and are friends regardless of age differences and they respect each other and work as a team no matter what they are doing. This nurtures confidence, happiness and a sense of belonging which will benefit these children for the rest of their lives.

As well, our school teacher, Elizabeth Sutherland started teaching here in 1982 and since then she has been an instrumental part of our lives and our children's lives. She has known and interacted with many of her students since they were infants and when the island children start school there is no anxiety or stress because they already know their teacher and classmates very well. There is never any negativity attached to the transition from being at home to starting school.

Because of the small number of students in our school, each child gets sufficient one-on-one time with the teacher. This enables them to grasp concepts easily, fully understand what is being taught, and if a student needs a bit of extra help they get it and aren't left behind. We feel that the advantages of small classrooms far outweigh the disadvantages. Our children are not socially inadequate in any way and they certainly have respect for their teacher and peers. And although our school is down to three students this year, next year we will be up to five, possibly six. Enrollment will essentially be doubling, but we will still have the benefits of a small classroom.

Another great worry we will all have if our school closes is the fact that our youngsters will have to endure difficult transport to and from a mainland school on the ferry. The ferry schedule does not suit for elementary children to get to the Chester District School on time and they will be let out of school about an hour and a half before the ferry's afternoon school run returns home. These children are too young to travel unchaperoned and could potentially be in harms way on the ferry or government wharves, especially when there is vehicular traffic or when freight is being moved.

Then there is the possibility of our children becoming sick at school and needing a parent, as they often do at such a young age. I am not alone when I say that being unable to get to my son or daughter when they need me is unacceptable.

As far as using our school building for things other than educating our children, we do have several ideas. One suggestion, which would be of great importance to our island, is to open the school occasionally for the purpose of allowing the community access to high speed internet. The school has high speed internet and the rest of the island does not.

Another suggestion involves the use of the school piano. Someone in the community might like to offer piano lessons and would be able to do so at the school.

As well, our school has a wealth of books that would make a great lending library. We wouldn't have to travel off the island to borrow and return books. The islands middle school-aged and high school-aged students would be able to use any reference books or even high speed internet for projects and papers. Other community members would be able to do research, find answers to questions or just borrow books for their own enjoyment or that of their pre-school aged children.

Our little island community is unique in many ways, including being geographically more isolated than other communities of similar size. I sincerely hope that this fact will not be overlooked and will, instead, be seriously considered if our school is ever in jeopardy of being closed. We are a unique situation and we have to be looked at separately when it comes to making critical decisions.

I have only mentioned a few of the important and pertinent concerns that we, as a community, would like to express. The letters we have collected touch on so many more issues and they are all sincere and heart-felt messages. If our school is shut down while there is still even one student in attendance, there will be an outraged and heart-broken community. Of this I am certain. The closing of the Big Tancook Island Elementary School would truly be a terrible mistake to make.

On behalf of the students, parents and other community members, both on and off this island, thank you for reading these thoughts and ideas and for taking them into consideration.

Sincerely,
Hillary Dionne

February 4, 2008

Dear To whom it may concern,

I have been informed that the Big Tancook Island Elementary school is once again on the chopping block for closure. As a fellow student I would like to take the time to share my experience of being taught in the little one room school house.

Big Tancook Island Elementary School is not just a classroom to students it's a tight knit family. The education received there is like no other, I received the best one on one education. The older children have the opportunity to help out with the younger kids. Having to travel on a ferry everyday is a challenge. We experience rough weather and I myself missed a lot of time my grade 12 year due to bad weather which affected my grades. I could not imagine putting that stress on a five year old. The first years of a Child's education should be memorable, and they should have the opportunity to receive an education in their own community. Every year the students put on an old fashioned Christmas Concert where they put on Plays, The Nativity and sing Christmas Carols. This year marked my 17th Christmas concert. It's apart of our community's Christmas tradition.

Tancook is a beautiful place, I consider it one of the safest places on earth and definitely the best place to raise a family. Unfortunately the population of our community is declining and younger generations are moving away. If the school is taken away there will be nothing for us to come back to. I would love my future children to experience the education I received. Please take this into consideration when making your decision because the safety of these children should be more important then dollar signs.

Sincerely,

Alicia Cross

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Alicia Cross', written over the printed name.

111 Southeast Cove Road
PO Box 67
Tanook Island NS B0J 3G0

February 6, 2008

Dr. Gunn:

My name is Marina Stevens. I wish I could be at the school, to show my support, but i'm at work, in the Post Office.

I've lived on Tanook Island all my life. I was taught in the school and my daughter, Rhonda, was taught there as well.

I'm writing this letter to express my deepest concern, over the possible closure of our school.

The school is a valuable asset to our Community. It contains so much history and holds great memories from our childhood years. I had hoped and still continue to hope, that the rest of the Island children, get a chance to fulfill their childhood years being taught in this one room School house. Being taught this way creates a very close knit bond, a trust, a togetherness, that i'm sure you don't find in larger schools. It's a unique experience that you carry with you, through your entire life.

The students receive excellent education and we are very fortunate to have a teacher as dedicated to the school and our students, as Elizabeth Sutherland,

We have a very unique situation here, with regards to the ferry, I remember travelling, on the ferry, to Chester school. Back then, we didn't leave the Island until we finished grade six. I remember how tired I was, by the time I got home. I can only imagine, what it would be like for a five year old child. There are days when it's extremely windy, going across the bay to Chester and unfortunately, school doesn't get cancelled because of the wind!

When making your decision, I ask that you keep in mind, that the enrollment will rise in September with the addition of two new primary students and more to follow. Also, to give a lot of thought, to the safety and well being of these little children, if they have to travel on the ferry.

The students deserve to get the best education possible and they're getting that, here on the Island.

I hope in doing this review, you see that we need to keep our school open. The students here deserve nothing less!

Thank you for your time,
Marina Stevens

Reasons why Big Tancook Island Elementary School should be kept open:

As the mother of two past students who attended Big Tancook Island Elementary School, I have viewed first-hand the advantages of having small children enrolled in the multi-age learning environment that our school offers.

No large class learning could have compared to the solid foundation they received with the one-on-one teaching from our small island school. My boys learned not only from the teacher, but also by silently ingesting knowledge that was being taught to older students. As my boys grew older, they also learned patience and toleration for the younger students, something that seems to be missing from larger schools. In a larger school, students tend to play only with children their own age. In our small school, the children all play together, encouraging the older children to look out for the younger ones. I have noticed that this foundation continues throughout high school.

Being transferred to a school off the island brings its own set of concerns for island parents. Although my children were well prepared to face grade six in a larger school, I would not have relished sending them at the age of five. Both of my boys suffered from motion sickness when they were young. I cannot imagine how they would have coped having to travel on the ferry during rough weather, then having to hop on a bus, even for a short distance. By the time they reached grade six, they were able to recognize the early signs of motion sickness and knew how to best cope with it, which meant standing out back on the ferry in the cool air. Standing outside on the back of the ferry in rough weather is not an option for a five-year-old.

Another concern for island parents of children going to Chester school and another that I have experienced first-hand is the problem of reaching your child in case of accident or illness. Mainland children can be picked up and taken home if they are sick. Island children have the option of spending the rest of the day in school or, if the illness is caught early enough, they can be sent home on the 10:30 am ferry. The latter option means an hour-long ferry trip alone, something my children have had to do on more than one occasion, but again, an option that is not satisfactory for a young child.

School cancellations due to inclement weather are also a concern for parents of island students. When school is cancelled and the island students cannot get home, they are allowed to remain in the school until the ferry leaves. If elementary school students were to remain in the school, they would need to be supervised and not left to fend for themselves.

Sending young children from an island to a mainland school, with a ferry for transportation, is a special situation and needs to be examined differently than other situations. Sending very young children on a ferry brings its own set of

problems. Children that young are not able to look out for dangers such as the loading and unloading of ferry freight, wharf traffic and ferry safety.

Bus schedules are another problem when considering sending elementary school students from Tancook to Chester. The ferry times and bus schedules do not match. Elementary school goes in at 8 am; the ferry arrives at 8:50 am. Elementary school students are released at 2 pm and the ferry does not leave until 3:40 pm. The same buses are used to transport elementary and then middle and high school students, so some of the Tancook students would be left waiting with a lot of time on their hands.

The elementary school continues to be a big part of our community with its yearly Christmas concert and to see it close would be like losing a piece of the community's heart. It is for these reasons, and the fact that the enrolment will be increasing over the next few years, that I would like to see our school remain open and I hope your recommendations will reflect that.

Sincerely,


Rosa Cross

Attachment to my letter regarding Tancook Island Elementary School

With regards to the study being done on whether to close small rural schools, I have noticed that emphasis is put on the amount of specialized education the children are receiving. On this note, I wish to elaborate on the kind of education my sons received at Big Tancook Island Elementary School.

Both of my sons, now 17 and 19 years old, were strong academically in math, but weaker when it came to English. From the time they started school, this was recognized and they were taught accordingly, being challenged mathematically and being helped with the language arts when needed. I am convinced they received what they needed because they were educated in a small, rural school. If they had been enrolled in a large class, I am sure they would have been "lost in the shuffle" and would not have been as prepared for the rest of their education as what they were. When my boys entered grade 6 in Chester Area Middle School, they were quite surprised that many of their fellow classmates had not even learned their timetables. Is "specialized training" more important than these fundamentals. I felt my sons were not lacking in French or music. These are subjects they had little interest in and I am quite sure they would have learned less in a larger class because they would not have received the attention that they did. With a small class in a rural school, the class seems to be taught at a pace so that all students learn, not just the brighter ones who can pick up the subject quickly.

Another point I have noticed with small schools is that it seems there is less of a discipline problem. I have heard it remarked by many of the teachers in Chester Area Middle School that they could recognize the children coming from Tancook Elementary because they were so well behaved. I could be wrong, but I would be very interested in seeing the outcome of a study done on whether the students in high school with discipline problems were those schooled in small rural schools or in schools with large class sizes.

Sincerely,


Rosa Cross

Dear, To whom it may concern,

In response to the closure of Big Tancook Island School I would like to share a few of my thoughts and concerns. I am a former student and I have to say that being taught by Ms. Sutherland and in the small school has had a very important impact on my life. Starting school is a very big step, but my experience was memorable by the one on one support, the positive, safe environment and the devoted teacher who goes out of her way for her students.

With the closure of the school five year olds will have to be put in larger classes with children they don't know and meet new friends. That is a very big change for a child. The children will have to travel on a ferry everyday. Which no child enjoys traveling on the ferry and especially when it is rough, sometimes even rough enough the ferry doesn't even make its daily runs. The children will have to deal with being late for school and also snow cancellations during the middle of the day, as it has happened before. Children can't just wonder around Chester by themselves. The safety of these children will definitely be a concern to consider.

Tancook is one of the safest places I know and if I was a parent I would want my child to be taught by the same teacher and in the same school as I was. Tancook is a special place and there is not much left there, and with taking the school away there would be even less.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Emily Cross".

Emily Cross

To Whom It May Concern:

The foundation for education is very important. I have two daughters, one now 22 years and one 18 years. I feel very fortunate to have had their early education completed at Big Tancook Elementary School.

Safety would be one of many concerns in sending children age 5 off the island for their elementary years. It is a 50 minute crossing in ideal conditions. Who would be responsible for the safety of these children getting on and off the ferry? What about the loading of freight? Children that young cannot judge when it is safe to board the ferry. What if the child gets seasick or scared in 100km. winds? Also in case of medical issues how could the parents get to the child?

Tancook Island Elementary School provides a wonderful learning centre with a wonderful teacher. The students lack nothing academically or socially. The future children of Tancook Island deserve to have the same opportunities that my children had. They have the right to a safe environment in which to attend school, namely Tancook Elementary.

Glenda Cross

November 4, 2007

To Whom It May Concern;

Although I am currently a resident of Toronto, I spent my entire childhood growing up on Tancook Island. While living there, I had the unique experience of attending the Big Tancook Elementary School from primary to grade six. Although it is a small school, it is definitely not without its benefits. I received a solid education there and continued to do well throughout high school and university.

An advantage of being able to attend a school on the Island, for both parents and students, was that at a young age I was able to avoid travelling on the ferry unattended. This is especially true during the winter months. I cannot imagine being a five year old child and having to travel on the ferry everyday, essentially by myself.

One of the biggest benefits however of attending Tancook Elementary School was the learning environment itself. It is unique in the sense that there is plenty of one on one time with the teacher. This can be attributed to the small class sizes. If a student is having difficulty in a particular area, the teacher is able to quickly realize the situation and is in the position to help the student work through their particular problem area. This way, students are less likely to fall behind the rest of the class. I firmly believe that this one on one time helps students develop a firm understanding of the fundamentals and allows them to build confidence in their abilities.

As adult I can now appreciate the quality of the education I received while attending Big Tancook Elementary School. I feel that being taught in this type of environment helped me achieve success throughout school. I am a graduate of Dalhousie's Commerce program and am currently working on my CGA designation. I work at a small multinational company in Toronto where I am a corporate accountant in the financial reporting and analysis department.

Sincerely,

Roxanne Mason

Christen Thomas
& Vincent Baker
P.O. Box 92
Big Tancook Island
Lunenburg Co., N.S.
B0J 3G0

Jan. 20, 2008

Re: Potential school closure, Tancook Island

To whom it may concern:

I am disappointed to hear about the possible school closure on Tancook Island and feel it would have negative effect on the population, history and culture that are already threatened. For me, it would mean having children would result in an unwelcome, nearly inevitable move to the mainland, or else the possibility of a broken family either living apart, or having such vastly different schedules that time together would be a rare occurrence. I am new to the island but my finace relies on the immediate waters for his livelihood as a fisher. His, an industry at risk, dependent on location of familiar "territory" of water for sustenance. Thus, a move for him to the mainland would be disaterous. And I, new to the island and wishing to stay, already facing the challenge of commuting for work, would be faced with additional conflict.

The school closure would make it extremely difficult to raise children on the island. Having them commute on their own by ferry daily would be worrisome and rife with complications. Immediate concerns about safety emerge, being alone and unsupervised and vulnerable to any changes in the bus or ferry schedule. Concerns about weather – school closures after making the trip, waiting outside in ice and snow, rough seas prompting seasickness aboard the ferry. Conflicts of schedule, such as participating in extra curricular activities, school trips that run after hpurs, and social events with classmate friends would make it impossible to manage due to the restricted ferry runs. The effect would be isolating on the child, removed from home, struggling for identity and an understanding of community.

School on the island eliminates these issues, and promotes community, enrichens the learning experience of the child who can focus on learning instead of how to get to and from school. The annual Christmas concert draws most of the island in celebration of learning and community. I am always impressed at the level of performance and the effort gone in to the event. The concert also represents the future of the island where new population is dwindling. It provides hope for the future on an island that is in many ways a microcosm for bigger things. I ask you to make an informed decision and seriously consider these and other concerns presented by this unique community.

Sincerely,

Christen Thomas
& Vincent Baker

January 24th, 2008

Re: Tancook Island Elementary School

In regards to the above topic, I would like to say that I had two daughters attend this school and they received the best education that could be found in any school.

If the school board is considering a possible closure of our island school, they should consider that we are an isolated island with the only means of transportation is the ferry (William G. Ernest), and that any student that will be attending the elementary school in Chester, will have to be up early, travel in all kinds of weather, and where the school in Chester goes in early and is left out early (before the ferry arrives in Chester), where would these students go and who would look after them.? Also, these students would be in primary and up level.

I know if I had a son/daughter that would be attending here on the island and the school was in for a possible closure, I would be very concerned over this matter.

I will thank you in advance in this matter, and please take a good look at where ~~we~~ live, before you consider closing us down.

Sincerely,



J. E. Heisler

Tancook Island
P.O.Box 39
Nova Scotia
B0J 3G0

November 12, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

As a former parent, Volunteer of the Big Tancook Elementary School. I have only positive things to say about this unique school. Both of my children attended this school and have been educated in it. They both have had the best education being in a small school. Not only are they still in touch with the school teacher and students they've become a close friend to the teacher Elizabeth. She has taught them the tools and skills about the importance of having to survive in today's society. They now have good working jobs.

It would be ashamed to ever see the school close. The small children left on the Island to attend the school would not benefit by traveling on the ferry daily. They would have no contact with the parents if schools were cancelled or due to illness. The ferry isn't like a bus. It is not always available for the children to return home. I couldn't see myself putting a five year old on it daily.

The little two room school house has been a part of Tancook's history for many Islander's. Their children and mine have had a real opportunity to receive such a great education. I only wish my grandchildren could attend this school and be taught by Elizabeth. What a great education they would receive!

Jane & Terry Clothier.

Jane Clothier


Angela M. Cross

6-22 Evans Avenue

Halifax, NS B3M 1C2

(902) 457-1610

AngelaCross02@yahoo.ca

January 27, 2008

I am an ex-student of Big Tancook Island Elementary School and I am writing this letter to support keeping this school open to continue to educate the children of Tancook Island. My name is Angela Cross and I grew up on Tancook. I will be graduating from Mount Saint Vincent University with a Bachelor of Business Administration degree with a major in Accounting in May 2008 and I will be beginning a new career as a CA student with Grant Thornton in the summer of 2008.

Thanks to the safe, secure learning environment that I was able to benefit from by attending the Tancook School at that early age, I was older and mature enough to handle the twice daily trip on the Tancook ferry to Chester to attend middle school. I do not feel that children of such a young age should be traveling on a public ferry every school day of the year. A trip on the Tancook ferry is very unsafe for small children to be traveling on, with dangers such as, freight being loaded and unloaded in locations where children could potentially be injured. Also in times when there is bad weather, which is most of the winter, students can suffer from seasickness, which is no fun no matter how old you are and cause them to be absent from school.

It would certainly be quite a journey for a five year old to make especially with the conflict between the Chester District school hours and the ferry schedule. As well as the health and safety issues involved for the students. I believe that Big Tancook Island Elementary School should remain open for as long as there are children to attend it.

Sincerely,

Angela Cross

Reasons to keep our Big Tancook Island Elementary School Open

I would like to introduce our family. My husband, Perry, grew up and attended school on this island. I moved here from the city nine years ago when I married Perry. Three years ago we were blessed with our son Jacob, who will be starting school in September 2009.

This school is a very important part of our community. I continually interact with the children who are presently attending and with those who have gone through our school. They have been instilled with the love of learning because of the unique environment provided in an one room school house. This school is one of the last one room school houses, which means our children are exposed to multi-level learning. The older children are interacting with and helping the younger children. I believe, that this is one of the reasons why, we as parents, do not have to worry about bullying. Also the children do not see any differences and this helps them when they attend school on the mainland to accept everyone. Some individuals, not islanders, bring forth the lack of opportunities for extra activities such as: basketball or track and field. But on the island, the children have the opportunity to participate in other group activities which give them the same skills they would be taught in organized sports. Then when they go to the mainland to school they have the opportunity to participate in these activities, at an age when they are better able to make the decision on which activity.

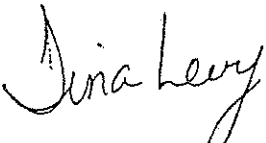
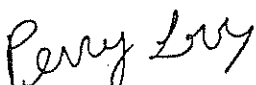
I truly do not want to send our son on a ferry boat at the age of 5 years old for 1 hour and then another hour to return home. What happens if my son gets sea sick? There would be no one on the ferry to look after him. Who would watch him to make sure he stays out of the way of freight being loaded on and off the ferry? The ferry crew have their own responsibilities and are not there to baby sit our children.

Jacob and the rest of the students would have to leave the island at 8 a.m. and would not return home until 4:15 p.m. That is a very long day for a 5 year old. At this time, the Chester Elementary School goes in at 8 a.m. and gets out at 2 p.m. That would mean that the Tancook students would be an hour late for school every day and at the end of the school day would have to wait somewhere for the ferry to leave an hour and a half later. What situations and to whom might they possibly be exposed during that time? I am sure the parents of students at Chester Elementary School make arrangements for their children before and after school within their community, but how can I do that when I do not live in Chester and all of my contacts are on Tancook Island? What if my son gets sick and needs to come home or he needs the attention of a doctor? How am I suppose to get to him? I am at least one hour ferry ride away and that is only if the ferry is due to leave from the Tancook side.

In closing, please don't look at our attendance numbers as a deciding factor, even though the attendance rate will be increasing. We have a very unique and rare situation here and our school is the focus of this family and of the community. The school is such an important part of our community that not only the present students but past students help our wonderful teacher Ms. Sutherland as much as possible. They volunteer their time to fund raise to help reduce the cost of running our school and to help teach skills (such as music).

Perry and I as parents of a future student are willing to do anything possible to keep this very important part of our son's future open and running for many years to come.

Sincerely;

 
Tina Levy & Perry Levy



To Whom It May Concern:

As a full time resident of Big Tancook Island I am very proud of our very rare small school. I take great pride telling people that there is a school on the island. There are those who don't believe a small school can offer the same level of education as a large one and they are right; it far exceeds that of mainland schools.

In a world of constant distractions and over crowding in the school systems, the near one on one attention that the students receive here on the island is unattainable on the mainland and should be protected as you would an endangered species.

All you have to do is witness the attendance at the Christmas concert to see what a huge role the school plays in life on the island. People go to the concerts that do not have children performing because we support our school. I am writing this letter because I support the school and I believe that the children on the island are so fortunate to have this type of education as should you.

The number of full-time residents on the island is dwindling but we have a post office and a school and we function as a community should. To take away the school would be to end an important part of the way of life on Big Tancook Island; that is for elementary students to go to school in the comfort and stable atmosphere that they are accustomed to and to get a start in their education that is far above that if they had to travel to the mainland at an early age. Which is another point, to send a child at such an early age on the ferry unaccompanied is not rational. The ferry can be at times very rough and to have children

without their parents is not safe and not a responsible thing to do. What will they do when they get out of school and the ferry departure is not until 3:40 pm? The ferry schedule as it is is in place because it works for all who use it and really can not be changed. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Scott Webber

This section is a collection of letters written by parents
to satisfy one of the school board's "What if..."
questions:

"What if one or two families moved away
unexpectedly...leaving only one or two students..."

Perry & Tina Levy
PO Box 35
Big Tancook Island, NS
B0J 3G0

March 11, 2008

Dear Mrs. Karen Kinley;

This is a letter about our concerns regarding the possible closure of Big Tancook Island Elementary School.

When we were reviewing Dr .Gunn's study, we were a little surprised by the scenario suggesting the possibility of any young, island families moving away, leaving our school with one or two children in attendance.

I do know that our family has no plans of moving off of this island. Perry is a commercial fisherman and makes his living here and I, too, have a small bookkeeping business on the island. We love Big Tancook and it is a wonderful place for our 3 ½ year old son, Jacob, to grow up. Just knowing that our son can go outside and play and be safe is a wonderful feeling. The island community allows us this freedom and peace of mind.

If our school closes, like most of the other parents, we will have to move off the island so Jacob will be able to travel to school safely and receive the same level of education as other students in Nova Scotia. If other young families have to move off the island for this reason, the whole community as we know it will be changed forever.

Tancook Island was an aging community but it has been changing and rejuvenating over the last several years. The younger families here on the island now make up most of our volunteer committees. If these younger families have to move, who will keep this community going? The older residents have given their time to these organizations and now it's the younger generation's turn. If the school closes, the younger families won't be here and no new families will choose to move to Big Tancook. Without a school, there is no future here.

In closing, I just want to thank you for taking the time to come out and meet with us and to hear our concerns about the future education and safety of our children here on Big Tancook Island.

Sincerely,

Perry and Tina Levy

To: S.S.R.S.B.

As the parents of two current students in Big Tancook

Island Elementary School, we felt it necessary to let the school board

know that we have no intention of moving off the island. The sea provides

our family with it's livelihood.

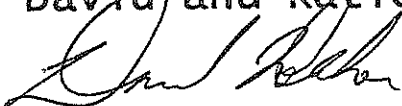
We are very pleased with our children's education on Tancook

and wish for it to continue. This will only happen if the school remains open.

All our family is here and we plan to stay.

Thank-you,

David and Katie Baker



Larry & Emie Cross
PO Box 22
Big Tancook Island, NS
B0J 3G0

March 11, 2008

Dear Mrs. Karen Kinley;

This is a letter about our concerns regarding the possible closure of Big Tancook Island Elementary School.

I have lived here my whole life, I am a commercial fisherman, and I make my living on the waters surrounding Big Tancook Island. My wife and I have no plans of moving off of this island. We have 2 small children. Hans, 5 years old, and will be starting school in September and Claudia who is 2 ½ years old. We want our children to attend school here on the island where I free that the teaching programs are excellent and where my small children can travel to school safely.

Sincerely

Larry & Emie Cross

March 11, 2008
Hillary Dionne
Big Tancook Island, NS
B0J 3G0

To South Shore Regional School Board,

Our island school was recently reviewed for possible closure and one of the worst case scenarios presented in Dr. Gunn's report was the possibility of one or more young families moving off the island resulting in a big decrease in our schools enrollment. This letter is to confirm that this is definitely not going to be the case in our family.

In the year 2000, my husband and I opted to leave good jobs in the city to move our family to Tancook so that we would have better quality of life. Part of the reason we made this life-changing decision was to allow our children the unique and wonderful experience of being schooled in the little two-room island schoolhouse that I attended.

We are thrilled with the education our seven year old son has been receiving in the Tancook Island Elementary School and we look forward to our daughter having the same opportunity when she starts school here this September.

The only foreseeable event that would give my family reason to move off Big Tancook would be the closing of the island school. We, like all other parents, want a quality education for our children. We also have to ensure that our children can safely attend school. With the island school open, both of these things are possible. If it closes, my family will have another life-changing decision made for us.

Sincerely,

Hillary Dionne

Christen Thomas
& Vincent Baker
P.O. Box 92
Big Tancook Island
Lunenburg Co., N.S.
B0J 3G0

Mar 9, 2008

Re: Potential school closure, Tancook Island

Dear Mrs Karen Kinley:

This is to follow up to the letter of concerns raised about children from Tancook attending elementary school on the mainland. I will not reiterate issues previously addressed but I want to confirm that my fiancé, who relies on the immediate waters for his livelihood as a fisher, and I, will not be even considering a move off-island providing that there is a school, as we do intend on having children in the future. I do not see that the population of the school will be dramatically decreasing in the near future based on our plans and knowing of other school-age children on the island.

Sincerely,

Christen Thomas
& Vincent Baker



STACEY COLWELL PHOTO

Sheena Heisler of Forest Heights Community School received the Lieutenant-Governor's Medal from the Honourable Mayann E. Francis at Liverpool Regional High School on June 5.



STACEY COLWELL PHOTO

Park View Education Centre's Maia Jørgensen received a Lieutenant-Governor's Medal from the Honourable Mayann E. Francis at Liverpool Regional High School on June 5.

Lieutenant-Governor's Medals awarded to Grade 11 students

By STACEY COLWELL
scollwell@southshorenova.ca

COUNTY — Nova Scotia's lieutenant-governor has personally honoured some of Lunenburg County's brightest and most selfless students.

Fourteen young men and women from seven South Shore Regional School Board schools — six from Lunenburg County — were awarded Lieutenant-Governor's Medals by the Honourable Mayann E. Francis during a ceremony at Liverpool Regional High School on June 5, and another received the honour at École de la Rive-Sud last month.

The awards are annually presented across the province, traditionally to a female and male from each high school, to Grade 11 students who best exemplify the qualities of leadership and service within their community while performing admirably in the classroom.

"With such qualities, today's recipients are not just role models for other youth. They are role models for us adults. These students have much to teach," said Ms Francis in her address to over 100 people at the Liverpool ceremony.

The lieutenant-governor said wherever she goes, she often brags about young Nova Scotians such as these award winners.

"I know I shouldn't brag, but like baseball great Dizzy Dean once said many years ago ... 'it ain't braggin' if you can back it,' and you can back it up. Your accomplishments allow me to tell people 'there is the future of Nova Scotia.'"

Still, she wondered how many of the recipients would still be living here in five years.

"The South Shore, like other areas of rural Nova Scotia, has seen too many young people leave and never return. The exodus continues as young people seek employment, education and adventure ... the steady stream has become an unsustainable flood.

"Our provincial and community leaders must find a way to offer you, our young people, an opportunity to stay here at home ... your community and your province need your talent and your energy and I'd encourage you to consider all of your options before you choose which direction you'll take on your life's journey. Maybe you'll find what you're looking for right here at home."

Ms Francis said these students set high standards and care about those around them.

"You demand lots from yourself and you give a lot as well — to your school and your community — so it's fitting we give something back to you as well. These Lieutenant-Governor's Medals are recognition of that giving and that achievement."

See southshorenova.ca for more coverage.

Below are biographies of Lunenburg County's 2008 recipients of the 2008 Lieutenant-Governor's Medals:

Douglas James Brenton, Bridgewater High School: Douglas maintains a high academic standing as a French immersion student; studies voice, piano and music theory; and participates as a member of the Bridgewater High School bands, South Shore Chorale, Nova Scotia Youth Choir, Nova Scotia Choral Federation committee, Nova Scotia School Athletic Federation and Bridgewater High School peer helpers. He also finds time to volunteer as a musical guest, event volunteer and fundraiser for a variety of organizations including Kids Help Phone, Canadian Cancer Society Relay for Life and the Holy Trinity Church.

Allison Pauline Rand, Bridgewater High School: Allison is a member of math league and maintains an average of 97 per cent. She has participated in mission trips to Bolivia and New York City and is an active member of her church by planning activities for the youth group as a youth executive as well as many other children's programs. Allison is currently employed as a program director and is leader of Global Adventures, a global mission group which teaches kids about missions monthly.

Kristopher Andreas Coolen, Forest Heights Community School: Kris is a competent student who has chosen to challenge himself with a number of advanced courses this year. He is an accomplished athlete who has held leadership roles on many of the sports teams at Forest Heights including basketball, soccer, volleyball and track. Kris has also mentored and instructed middle school students in various track and field events. In his community, Kris volunteers to help seniors with many tasks including running errands, snow shovelling and yardwork. He is also very generous with his time to help peers with school work and sports.

Sheena Lynn Heisler, Forest Heights Community School: Sheena Heisler is a dedicated student who is very active at school and in her local community. Academically, she has earned honour roll status in Grades 10 and 11. Sheena is involved in a variety of extracurricular activities, including student government as a home room representative, the fundraising committee, the book club, peer helpers and the Remembrance Day commemorative ceremony. In her community of Tancook, Sheena was involved in the island cleanup and she is a member of the Island Emergency Response Association. Helpful, respectful and engaged in learning, Sheena has been a fine ambassador for her school and community.

Nicole Byers, Lunenburg High School: Nicole is an honour student who enjoys playing sports and volunteering within her community. She is on the student council and on the provincial cabinet for the Nova Scotia Secondary School Students' Association. Nicole is currently working on achieving the Silver Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Shane Edmund Sabean, Lunenburg High School: Shane maintains a high academic standing and has received the citizenship award in Grades 6, 9 and 10. He has played on different sport teams and has aided his community and school in different events. For the past three years, Shane has arrived early to school to help prepare

breakfast for students who did not eat in the morning.

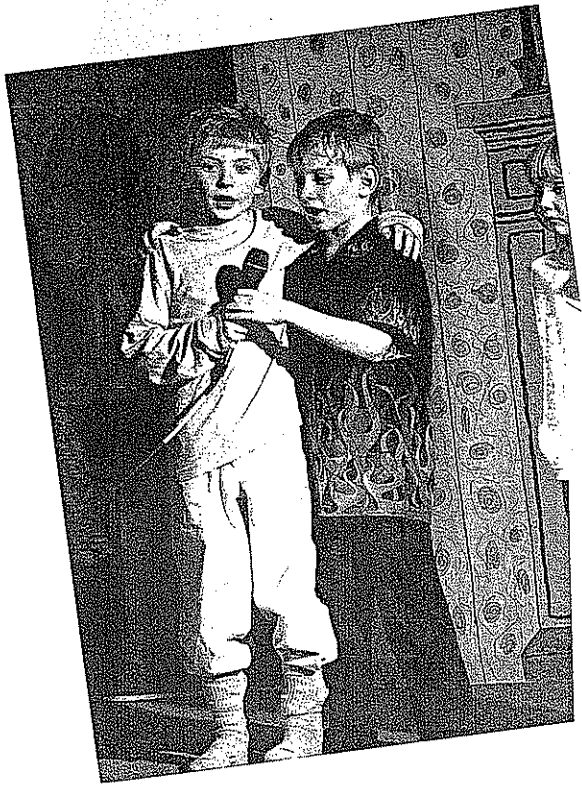
Maggie Alivia Oickle, New Germany Rural High School: Maggie is the co-president of the student council executive as well as class representative. She is also the school advisory council student representative and served on the junior prom committee and super saint committee. Maggie's representation of the school includes, but is not limited to, the Nova Scotia math competition, math league and the young women's conference. During her free time, Maggie volunteers at the Youth Health Centre and the Well Women's Clinic. She also participates in teaming oxen, drawing, painting and scrapbooking.

Lucas Mitchell Oickle, New Germany Rural High School: While Lucas maintains a 95.4 per cent average, he finds time for music, being accomplished at both clarinet and the saxophone. Lucas represented his school in the math league and at the Knowledge Festival. Lucas has been a member of the 4-H organization for over seven years and represented the Lunenburg County 4-H at their prince and has assisted in hosting county and club events.

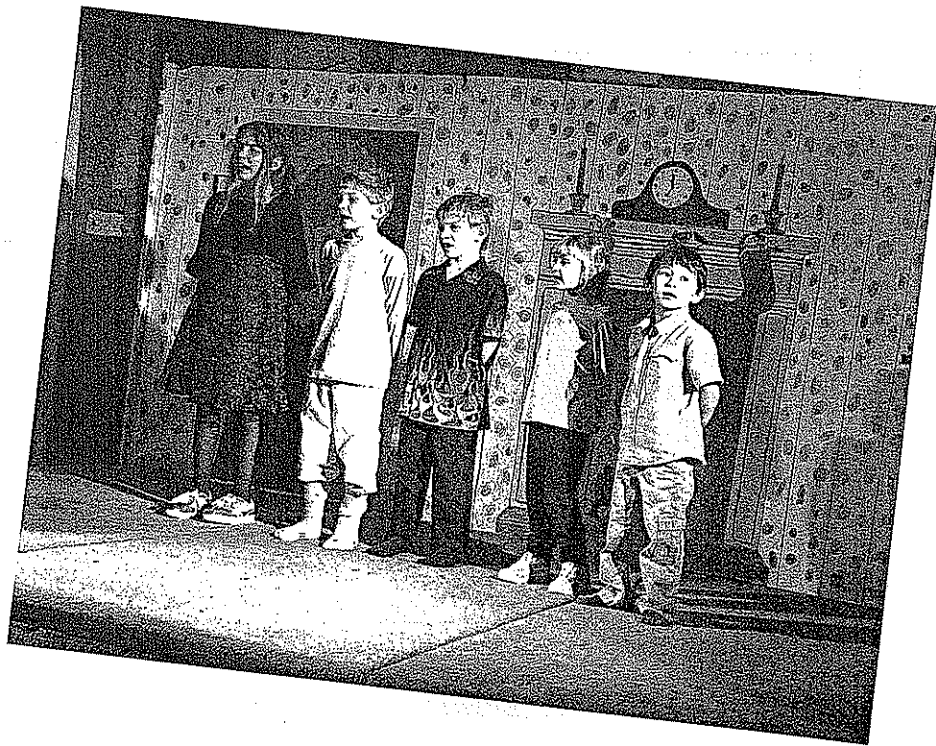
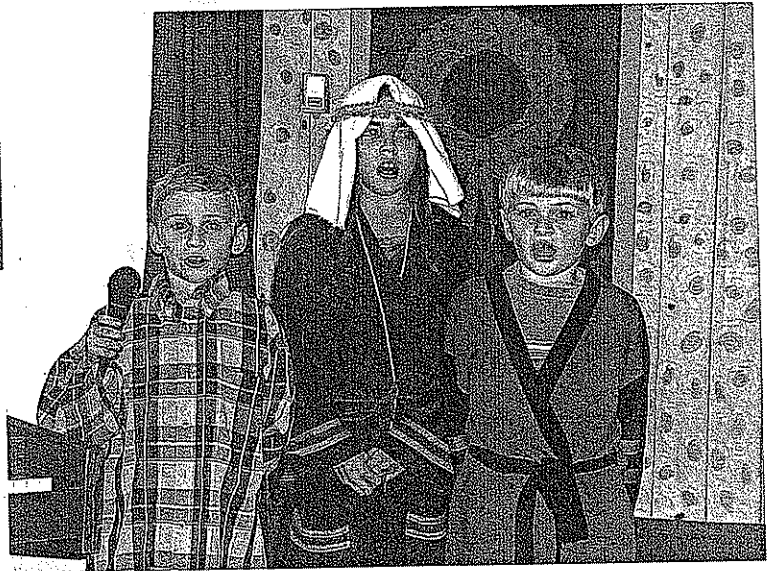
Alexander Edgar G. Baker, Park View Education Centre: Alex is a Bronze and Silver recipient of the Duke of Edinburgh Award. He has been actively involved in school life through athletics — including basketball and track and field — the arts through concert and jazz bands, as well as playing one of the lead roles in this year's musical production. Alex is an International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma candidate and as a student, has earned the respect of all of his teachers. He is also active in his community as a participant in local music festivals, hockey, church activities, sailing and lifeguarding. He is also a youth representative on the community health board. Alex has also travelled to Ottawa to participate in the Encounters with Canada program.

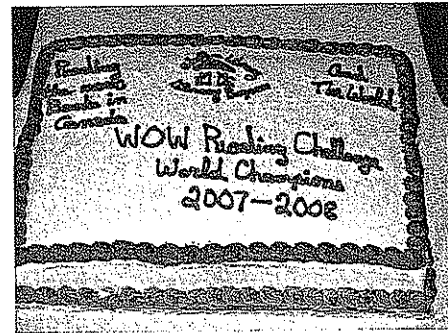
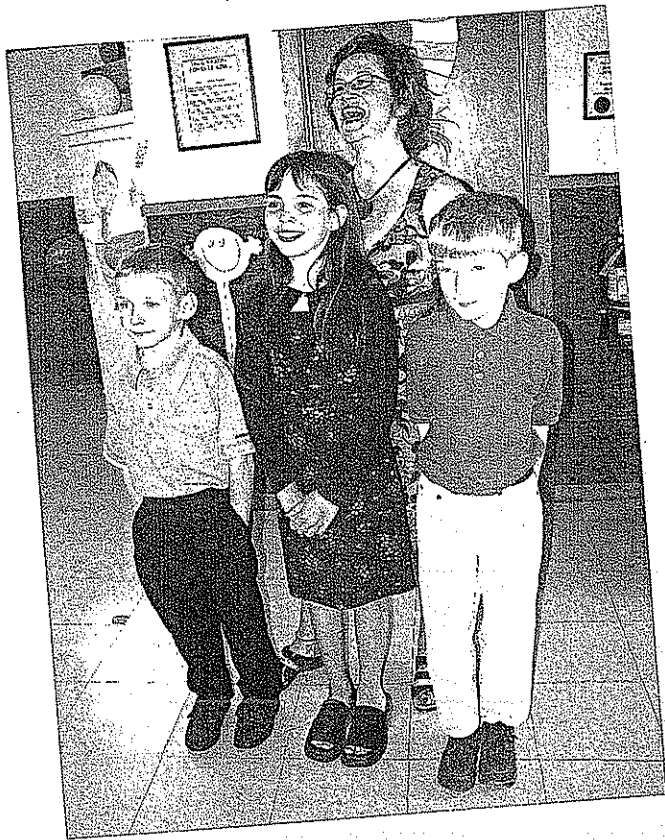
Maia Helme Jørgensen, Park View Education Centre: Maia is an IB diploma candidate who is very active in her school and community life. She participates in cross-country, soccer, basketball, badminton and track and field. She was the provincial pole vault champion in 2007. She has also been a music student for several years and always steals the show at the Lunenburg and District Music Festival with her musical theatre performances. She has also been actively involved with the student council and the Nova Scotia Secondary School Students' Association. She also volunteers with athletic and musical events in the school and community.

Arielle Détraz, École de la Rive-Sud: Arielle is the perfect example of an excellent student — superior academic results, well-done assignments that are often quite original. Since her arrival in Grade 4, where she was very timid, she has evolved into a confident and radiant person. She continues to be kind towards others and is always respectful towards others and their diverse opinions. Arielle is always looking for opportunities to improve and succeed. She is a model to other students. She has a passion for theatre which has translated into the lead role in the school musical and participates in all school and board activities. From the beginning, she has always taken it upon herself to encourage and motivate younger children to appreciate the uniqueness of her school. She is perceived as a leader of the French language at École de la Rive-Sud.



Christmas Concert time





Big Tancook Elelmetary School

World Champions
of the 2007 - 2008

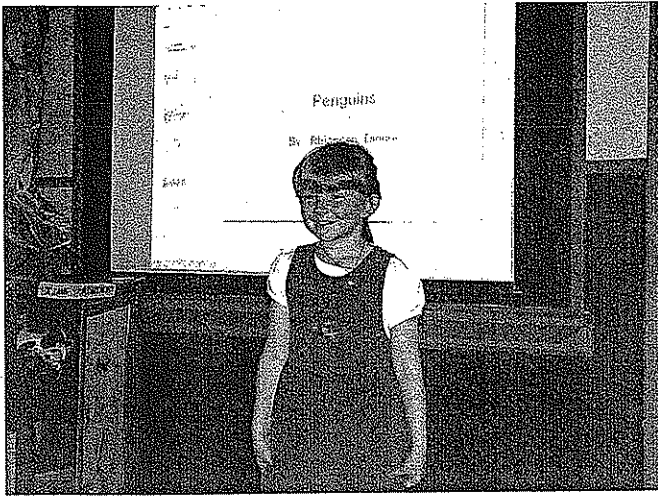
WOW Reading Challenge!



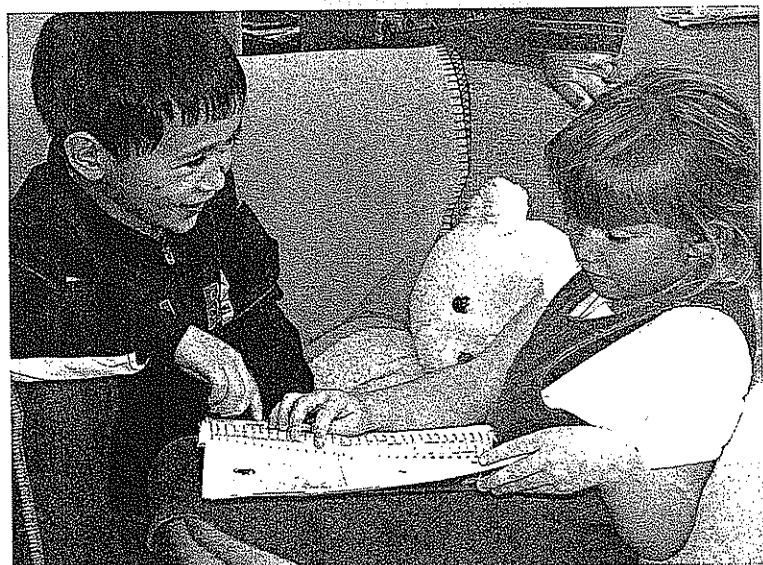
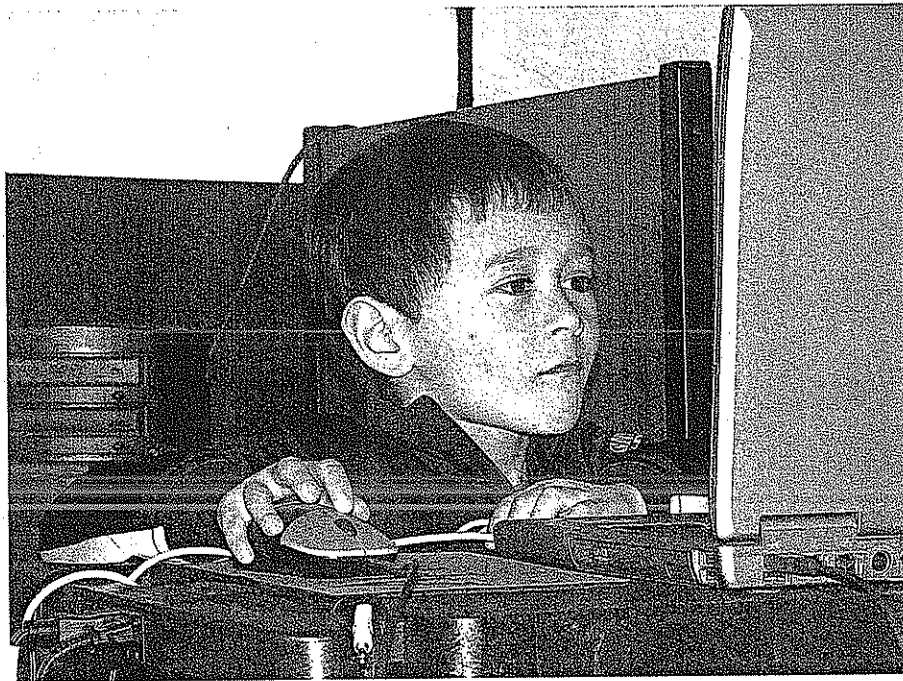


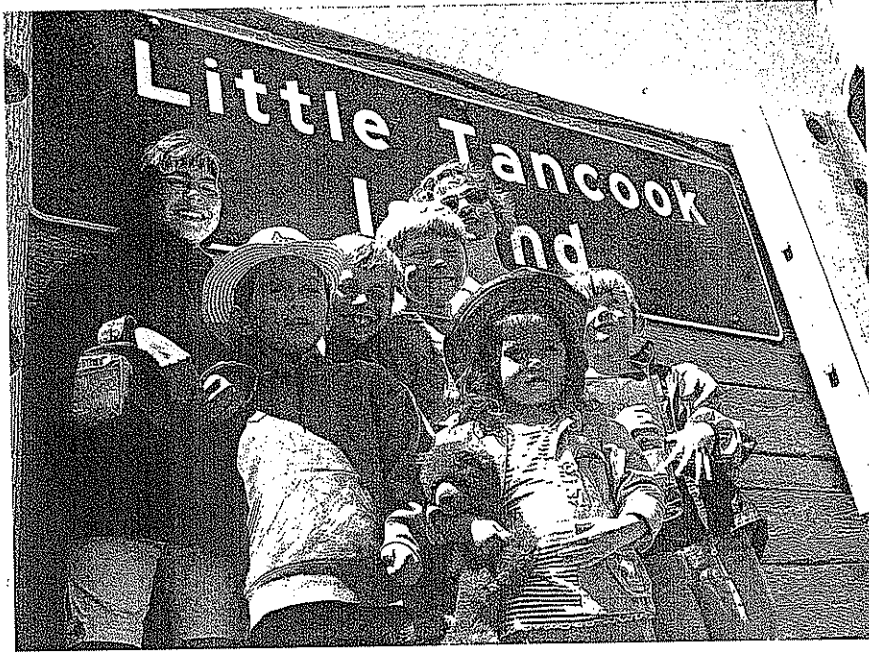
Halloween fun





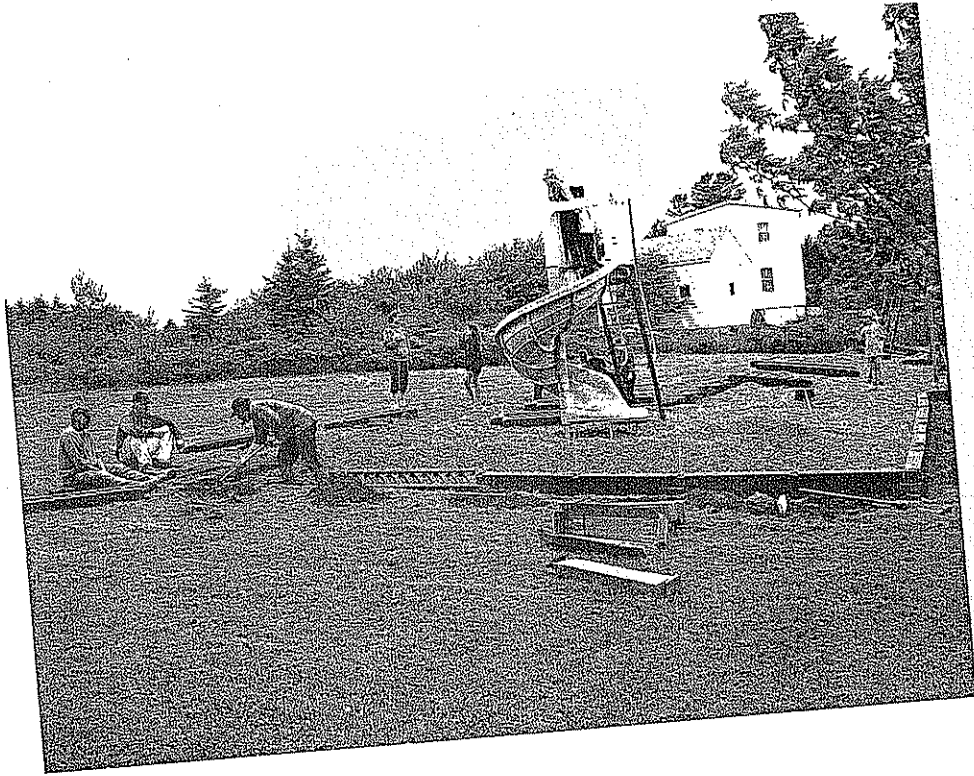
Power Point Presentation day





Field Trips

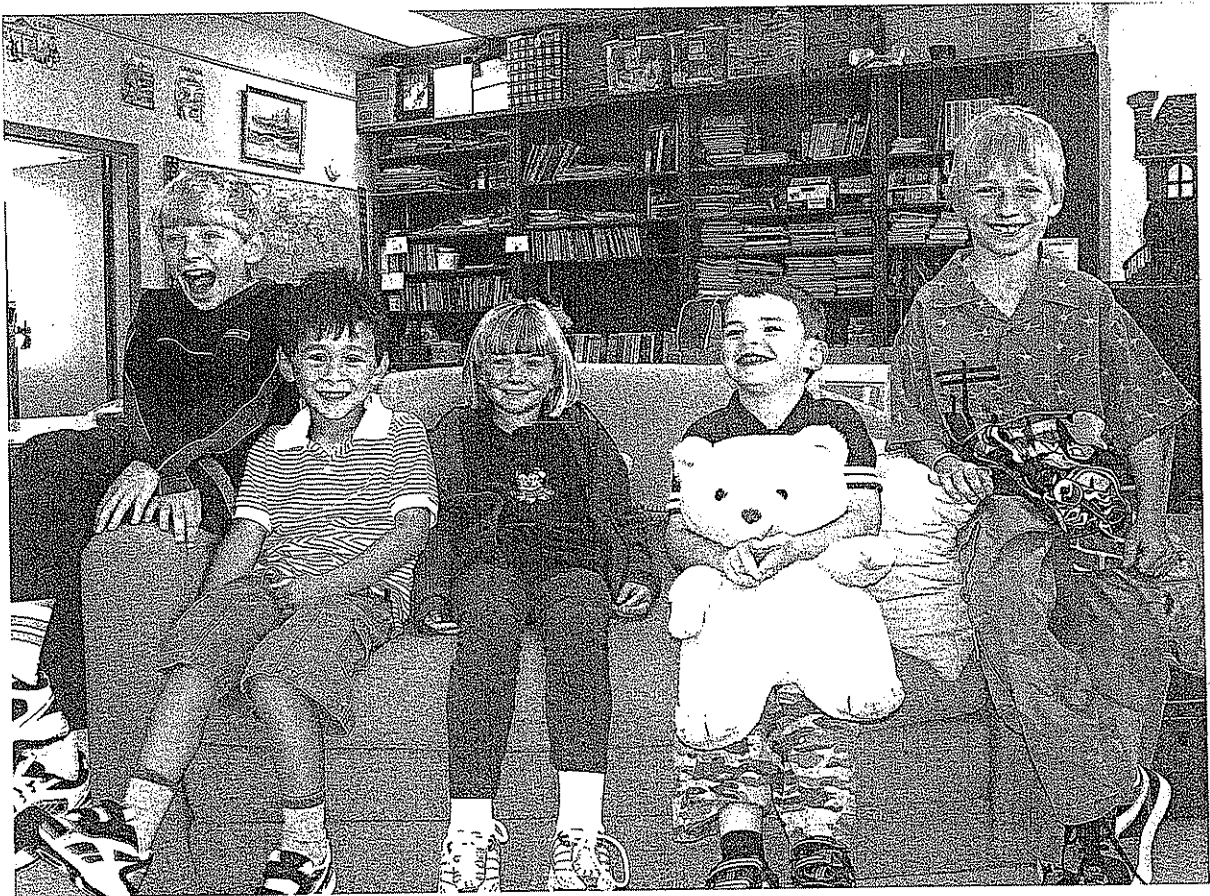




Parents and community
members replace the
playground border



Happy faces on the first day of school



This is a master copy of our report on CD.

There are 66 files (Adobe, Word and Power Point)
numbered 01 – 66 on the left hand side of each file.

This is the order in which our report was put together.

The Word file titled "05 responses to impact assessment-8 pgs"
actually contains 8 pages and these fit into our report between
"04 SAC signature page" and "06 ferry photos pg 1"

The Adobe files are scans of the pages in this report that were never
on computer file
(ie. photocopies of letters from community members).

If there is any trouble viewing this CD, please contact Hillary Dionne
e-mail: zackrhiannon@ns.sympatico.ca
phone: 228-2655

