

AFRICVILLE NEWSLETTER

Africville Genealogy Society

January, 2010

A Church Museum to Tell Africville's Stories

In 2005, with considerable input from members of the Africville community, the Africville Genealogy Society developed a three year strategic plan that affirmed the following priorities:

- commemorating the spirit of the community through construction of a replica of Seaview Church to serve as a museum;
- celebrating Africville's history through construction of an interpretive centre.

Since then, the Africville Genealogy Society has proceeded with the implementation of that strategic plan. Most people will recall the detailed business planning that was done in 2005-06.

The final business plan, which was based on extensive consultations with the Africville community, was approved at a community meeting and presented by the AGS at information sessions in the tent at the Annual Picnic.

We know that many people in the Africville community have been anxious and frustrated that very little seems to have been happening since the completion of the feasibility study/business plan.

We've waited so long to see our community recognized and honoured that it's understandable people are feeling impatient. But much hard work has been continuing toward our dream.

Today, after many meetings, and consultation with all levels of government, we believe we are closer than ever to seeing a Church Museum standing on the old site in Africville.

This newsletter is intended to bring community members up to date on the progress we've made. We hope it answers your questions.

The Church will be built first

In the fall of 2009, in consultation with the federal and provincial governments and HRM, we realized that we would be able to get funding to construct the church museum now, while it would take a number of years to raise the funds to build the interpretive centre.

As a result, the decision was made to move forward with the construction of the church museum first. This will allow us to establish a visible memorial and to begin to tell the story of Africville through exhibits and artifacts.

The same consultants who prepared the 2005/06 business plan and feasibility study for the project have been hired to revise and update the plan to reflect the change in the phasing. They will also assist with creating the Africville Heritage Trust, which will govern the church museum; and they will help to develop architectural plans for the church museum and to design the exhibits that will be in it.

We are still going to work toward building the larger interpretive centre, which will allow us to tell the story of Africville fully and provide a community gathering space. This will take more time, so we are now looking at the Interpretive Centre as phase two of the project.

The Africville Heritage Trust: a new organization

The 2006 business plan recommended the creation of a new organization – then called the Africville Community Trust, now called the Africville Heritage Trust – to manage the church museum and future interpretive centre. This recommendation was based on clear direction from the community that a new organization, with diverse membership, would be required for this purpose.

The Africville Heritage Trust will be established to get the Church Museum up and running and oversee its operations once it's built. In the longer term the Trust will be responsible for planning for the interpretive centre.

The Trust Board will consist of a combination of representatives from the Africville community, as

well as people from the broader community with range of skills in planning and managing non-profit facilities.

When the church museum is built, the Africville Heritage Trust will turn its attention to planning for the next part of the project: the interpretive centre. Until the interpretive centre is completed, exhibits will be housed in the church museum, to ensure that visitors and our own young people can learn about the history and the strength of the Africville community.

The Africville Genealogy Society will continue to organize the annual picnic, and to research and cherish the history of Africville.

What happens next?

The Africville Genealogy Society has continued to seek a settlement with HRM that will allow us to own the property where the church museum and the interpretive centre will stand. Currently, HRM is considering the details of their offer to us. When we receive that offer, the Africville Genealogy Society Board will review it, and, if it is acceptable, meet with community members to consider it and make a decision.

Meanwhile, work will soon be underway on the site to prepare for construction of the church museum.

Work is also underway to design the exhibits that will be in the church museum. The exhibits will represent the themes of *Life in Africville*; *The community uprooted*; and *Africville's Legacy*.

For more information:
Check the AGS Website at:
www.africville.ca

Call Irvine Carvery
