

NOVA SCOTIA

Open to the world



All for one

Co-operation pays off for lifestyle retailers

PLUS: Spotlight on the film industry

- Dianne Kelderman: community builder
- Training for disaster
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Snap SHOTS



SANDOR FIZLI

Brian Perry: "Nova Scotia has such a rich sailing history, culture, and maritime way of life."

New golden age

The wind shrieks like a banshee, filling the sails and bowing the ship into the icy brine. Every thread in the canvas clenches to withstand the onslaught, harnessing the awesome power of the force eight gale. Blasts of salt spray erupt over the schooner as she knifes through the unrelenting North Atlantic, leaving all challengers to marvel in her wake.

Although the golden age of sail has

passed, the legend of the *Bluenose* still lives on around the world, epitomizing Nova Scotia's rich maritime heritage. Brian Perry, the president of Bedford, N.S.-based Force 8 Sails, recognized that historic craftsmanship demanded of Nova Scotian shipbuilders and sail makers when he launched a line of sailcloth accessories last year that leverages the maritime tradition.

The company produces an assortment of bags, bean bag chairs, shower curtains, and dog beds that are all hand-stitched with nylon sailcloth by local craftspeople. All of the products have a nautical theme and official sailing insignia.

The inspiration for Force 8 Sails (www.force8sails.com) came to Perry in early 2007 while he was living in London, England, during a three-year stint abroad, and he noticed the amount of high-end sailing accessories and clothing lines flourishing there. "It hit

Snap SHOTS

me that Nova Scotia has such a rich sailing history, culture, and maritime way of life,” he says. “And to my knowledge, nobody was really trying to capitalize on that.”

Perry set his idea into motion by sourcing suppliers, designing patterns, and creating a product line in England, all while planning to return to Halifax. He and his wife, Kellie, arrived in Nova Scotia in June of 2007 and hit the ground running. In late January Force 8 Sails, which officially launched last August, attracted interest and orders from buyers at the Canadian Gift and Tableware Association’s Trade Show in Toronto, where its products were exposed to sailing and yachting markets around

“Our market is North American locations that are nautically inclined and mostly coastally located, with a sailing lifestyle”

— Brain Perry, Force 8 Sails

North America. “Our market is North American locations that are nautically inclined and mostly coastally located,” says Perry, “with a sailing lifestyle.”

Sue Bourinot, the owner of The Teazer, a popular gift shop in Mahone

Bay, N.S., started carrying the Force 8 Sails product line in November; she predicts a bright future for the company in its home province. “The line appealed to me because it’s Nova Scotia-made and high quality,” she says. “Our customers love it because it’s unique.”

A self-described serial entrepreneur, Perry is undaunted by venturing into uncharted waters. “I’ve been involved in dozens of different businesses in different industries over the last 25 years,” he says. “If I see a good opportunity, I like to try and take advantage of it.” He is planning a successful voyage for Force 8 Sails, one that will hopefully be reminiscent of Nova Scotia’s golden era.

— JOE FITZGERALD

From start to finish

Sometimes the journey is less about where you’re headed and more about how you’ll get there. Clinical Logistics Inc. (CLI) is a company that specializes in exactly that—getting critical medical samples from Point A (collection) to Point B (analysis). A Dartmouth, N.S.–based company, CLI (www.clinicallogistics.net) acts as a catalyst to the clinical trial process for testing pharmaceutical drugs.

Clinical trials help pharmaceutical companies determine how well a particular drug works in humans. This process is often urgent, and delays can increase the time it takes for a drug to enter the market. CLI increases the efficiency of the process by providing supplies like sample containers, coolers, and labels. After the samples are collected, the company oversees the logistics of getting them from their point of collection to their point of analysis.

Professional accountants Raymond Mah and Aka Char are CLI’s co-founders; both possess master’s degrees in business administration from Dalhousie University. Their company has been headquartered in Nova Scotia for the past four years, but its operations are conducted almost entirely outside of Canada. CLI’s clientele consists mainly of large American pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies. In 2001 the company was launched in North Carolina, when it purchased an existing firm there. “We could have stayed in North Carolina,” says Mah, who travelled regularly between North Carolina and Nova Scotia during the first few years of the company’s operations, “but home is here.”

Because Mah and Char wanted to be near their families, they decided against commuting on a regular basis. The partners are hands-on managers and therefore didn’t want to delegate their daily overseeing and managerial duties from afar. Their straightforward approach appears to be working. “Where we add value is not by

re-creating the wheel, but by fine-tuning processes and eliminating inefficiencies,” says Mah. “Comprehensive instructions, well-organized supplies, and ongoing site support results in less error in the samples collected and a higher percentage of samples collected being sent for analysis. For a clinical trial to collect relevant analysis data, samples must be collected at specific times from a patient. Mistakes on our part can impact the success of the trial. This reality drives us to 100% perfection every time.”

Mah isn’t exaggerating; CLI maintains a flawless record in servicing its clients. This young company has benefited from the help of InNOVAcorp, a Halifax-based organization that helps young companies that show great potential to succeed in the global marketplace. “Clinical Logistics, through its work with large multinational companies, helps put Nova Scotia on the map,” says Dan MacDonald, the president and CEO of InNOVAcorp.

CLI entered the Nova Scotia market at a time when the province was developing its biotechnology sector. The company has many international contacts, especially in the United States, and Mah believes they can provide a bridge to help the industry grow and prosper within the province. “The team is collaborative,” says MacDonald. “They built their business on high-quality work, their services are exported globally, and they are open to constructive input.”

Instead of getting mired in the daily aspects of running CLI, Mah and his colleagues keep the bigger picture in mind. “We want to help patients who are participating in clinical trials,” he says. “We work with a lot of oncology studies, so patients are often participating as a final effort to sustain life or to help [medical experts learn about their particular cancer]. It’s important for us to do everything we can to provide efficiency.” — SHANNON LONG



Artist Christie Chaplin-Saunders: "The mussel shell presents an interesting and functional form."



by 25% over the past six years, Chaplin-Saunders realized that if she wanted to continue expanding, she would need a new studio. After several tense moments and delays, and the financing of nearly \$300,000, she moved out of the dark basement of her 130-year-old home in Chester, N.S., and into a bright, airy, 2,000 square-foot building she had built nearby on the outskirts of town. In June of 2006, she opened her new studio and boutique space.

The new studio is part of the Atlantic Économusée Network, an organization that works with artisan businesses to develop a unique retail experience in which customers meet the artists and watch them work, then have an opportunity to purchase the handcrafts. Since opening Chaplin-Saunders, a mother of two teenagers, has been pushing U.S. sales. Back in 2001 she started selling south of the border, and now the American market comprises more than half of her wholesale business. She wants that figure to increase; the Nova Scotia government, through its Industries Growth Program, provided funds for her to attend a well-respected craft trade show in Philadelphia in mid-February.

In 2005 Chaplin-Saunders' product designs were recognized with an Atlantic Canada Craft Awards for Excellence bestowed by the Atlantic Crafts Trade Show organization. Last year she received a regional Export Achievement Award from the Lunenburg Queens Regional Development Agency. "I'm very much engaged by what I'm doing," she notes. "I am privileged to be creative, be a voice for artistic culture, and have much joy and respect for the work I do." — **ALLISON LAWLOR**

She sells seashells

From her award-winning studio on Nova Scotia's picturesque seashore, Christie Chaplin-Saunders creates and sells colourful ceramic seashells. Artifacts in Clay (www.artifactsns.com) is a production pottery studio that specializes in functional crafts inspired by forms found in the sea. While she may get her inspiration from the ocean, Chaplin-Saunders has little time to scour the beach collecting shells or sit idly watching the waves lap against the shore.

To keep up with orders, the artist and entrepreneur has five full-time employees who make several products. One of the most popular is a bowl that resembles an oversized sea urchin; last year they produced more than 500 of them. "I think the sea urchins are so well received because they are visually stimulating, yet they express repeat patterns," says Chaplin-Saunders. "They also allow us to differentiate each piece

in terms of the colouring and the brush work that we can do."

A graduate of several art colleges, including Halifax's former Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (now NSCAD University), Chaplin-Saunders made her first mussel-shell bowl in 1984. By the late 1990s, her focus was producing seashell bowls. "I was really interested in form," she says. "That mussel shell presented an interesting and functional form." Initially, she shaped the shell bowls by making clay slabs with a rolling pin, then slumping the slabs in plaster forms. It was a slow process so, wanting to be more efficient, she hired a local metal fabricator to make a 15-tonne press for her to form clay, which she then turns into colourful textured bowls. "We're in the cultural industry using industrial techniques," she says of the process.

Watching her business grow annually



On the rise

Philip O'Brien loves working in the fast-paced and evolving IT industry. Collaborating with universities, companies like IT Interactive are bringing awareness to opportunities in the field and attracting top talent

"My parents always wanted me to be a doctor," says Philip O'Brien. But when he and his family discovered what the IT industry had to offer young people, they knew an equally impressive career was on the horizon. Today the 25-year-old is a software engineer with Halifax-based IT Interactive Services Inc. (www.itinteractiveservices.com), but like many young people, in high school O'Brien was uncertain of the career he wanted to pursue.

Raised in Lanse au Loup, a rural fishing community in Newfoundland and Labrador, O'Brien was in his second year of junior high before he was introduced to his first computer program in 1996. What began as a fascination with computer science soon evolved into a hobby, a passion, and, eventually, his career. If his own exploration into the industry didn't convince him of his career path, his post-secondary education at Memorial University of Newfoundland and Dalhousie University did.

By participating in research teams and networking events, and through collaboration with Dalhousie University (www.dal.ca) faculty and staff, O'Brien learned more about the IT industry and about the career he could pursue in Nova Scotia. It also showed him how the industry is often misunderstood. "Being 'nerdy' doesn't always get you a job," explains O'Brien. The concept that only one personality type can excel in IT is history. O'Brien says it's a large industry that touches all sectors so it requires more skills, not just computer programming and software development.

For O'Brien, getting the job he wanted at IT Interactive required much more than satisfying the stereotype and getting an A grade. "I've always believed that it's what you do in the classroom that gets you the degree," he says, "but it's what you do outside of it that gets you the job." His



Philip O'Brien: "People don't have to go out West to find an exciting career."

PAUL DARRROW

enthusiasm for IT continues to grow as he is exposed to new technologies at IT Interactive and given the opportunity as the company's representative to share its cutting-edge products and services throughout Western Canada and Europe.

IT Interactive is widely known for its people-friendly search platform GenieKnows.com, which improves the quality of search results and quickly connects users to the information they need. It provides it through three specialized GenieKnows.com sites, including popular search communities such as health, games, and local business information for Canada and the U.S. A competitor of billion-dollar IT giants such as Google, this niche IT provider is at the forefront of "web search," a process of improving the quality of search results through targeted keywords.

Since joining IT Interactive in 2006, O'Brien has used many of the skills he learned in university to help with the development of the company's leading-edge products and services. His ability to contribute to IT Interactive's rapid growth is proof that a university education is a valuable investment. It is also a clear

example of university faculty and the IT industry collaborating and adapting to ensure all students receive the appropriate education to find the right jobs. IT Interactive and Dalhousie University have come together on the development of a computer application that models relationships and information exchange within networked communities. Through funding from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) and IT Interactive, the project will provide a variety of tools, including the ability to analyze a user's patterns and relationships within online communities. Through this analysis, the user can be matched up with more refined and accurate information.

Mark Harper, IT Interactive's vice-president of strategic relations, values the partnerships formed with university faculties across the province and hopes these connections will make a difference in attracting more fresh young minds to Nova Scotia's IT programs. "There needs to be a stronger belief in the vitality of Atlantic Canada's IT industry. When you are working in Nova Scotia, the opportunities are self-evident," says Harper. "IT Interactive is on the pulse of the community here, but there must be continued commitment to prove its viability to young people and encourage a career path in IT."

O'Brien's parents couldn't be more proud of his achievements—and he's more than content in his career. "I've got a passion for it," he says. With that comes a message to young people who, like O'Brien, are initially unsure of the IT opportunities out there: "If I can get the message out that people don't have to go out West to find an exciting career, then I have done my job," he says. "There are loads of IT jobs here, but the right people need to get out there and claim them."

— MARY-ELEANOR WALKER



The natural

When she's not jumping out of planes, Dianne Kelderman is a champion of community development

Dianne Kelderman keeps her feet firmly planted on the ground, but in her spare time she likes to have her head in the clouds. Above the clouds, actually: sky-diving is one of Kelderman's hobbies. It's the intensity and contrasts of the experience that she finds so compelling. There's the adrenaline rush as the airplane reaches 5,000 feet and she steps out onto the wing, then the plummeting free fall followed by the final tranquil descent.

"I like to push the limits," says the 42-year-old president of Atlantic Economics and the CEO of the Nova Scotia Co-operative Council (www.nasco-opcouncil.ca), the provincial development arm of the co-op and credit union system. "Sky-diving is the most thrilling and peaceful experience. You fall so quickly, you're not even really aware it's happening. Once the parachute opens, you're in a calm, absolutely idyllic environment."

Over the past decade, Kelderman has sky-dived with her step son, Adam, but her husband, John, and other friends and colleagues have refused to join in her exhilarating leaps over Nova Scotia. She doesn't mind; the well-known business-woman has other more pedestrian hobbies too, among them collecting fine wines and shoes. "I love shoes," she admits, laughing. "I have about 94 pairs. Perhaps my shoe collection reveals my creative side."

In addition, Kelderman has always loved to travel. One of her most memorable experiences occurred in 1995, when she joined a Canadian co-operative and credit union mission to India, where she spent a month in New Delhi, Agra, and Bhopal. "That trip gave me an even greater passion for my work," she says. "I realized building communities, creating business, and giving people hope is important. I brought back a greater appreciation of where we live, the opportunities we

have, and even the political environment."

Originally from Newfoundland, Kelderman currently lives in Truro. She holds several post graduate degrees including a Masters in Economics from Southern New Hampshire Graduate School of Business. Boosting her region's economic prospects has been her focus for the past 15 years. Her many achievements include co-authoring and initiating a \$33-million small business financing program now available in rural Nova Scotian communities. She also designed and manages a \$1-million short-term equity fund available to business start-ups and expansions.

Dan MacDonald is the president and CEO of InNOVAcorp (www.innovacorp.ca), a provincial government body that helps high-potential local companies with mentoring, incubation, and investment. "Dianne brings the right kind of people together and drives toward success," says MacDonald. "She's a natural leader."

Economic development expert

Kelderman believes the region's economic prospects are boosted by the business community's commitment and enthusiasm, and by government policies that support innovation as well as traditional engines of growth, such as co-ops and credit unions. She praises the work of InNOVAcorp and such programs as Community Economic Development Investment Funds (CEDIF) which allow Nova Scotians to invest in local businesses and then tuck a 30% non-refundable provincial tax credit into their retirement plan. "We export \$600 million a year out of Nova Scotia in retirement savings plan money," says Kelderman. "CEDIF programs enable Nova Scotians to invest in themselves and keep capital and resources at home."



SCOTT MUNN

“This region is on the cusp of some pretty important opportunities and our public policies must be in line, encouraging innovation and calculated risk”

— Dianne Kelderman

The Credit Union’s Small Business Loan Program is a partnership with the province that provides financing to ventures in high-risk areas. In four years the program has distributed over \$24 million in loans to businesses across a wide range of sectors. Loan losses have been lower than 1.07%. “Seventy per cent of the \$24 million has gone to businesses in rural areas, showing that Nova Scotia has the ideas, entrepreneurial spirit, and finance strategies to succeed,” says Kelderman.

The fact that co-op and credit union leaders tend to be younger than in the past is also helping to fuel growth. “Young leaders are out-of-the-box thinkers, keen to invest in their own communities,” says Kelderman. “This region is on the cusp of some pretty important opportunities and our public policies must be in line, encouraging innovation and calculated risk.”

Naturally, there are also challenges that need to be addressed. “The rural economy has its own set, including degrading infrastructure and a lack of access to high-quality services,” says Kelderman. “Out-migration is still a huge issue, especially for young people. Business taxes are some of the highest in the country. It’s a public policy that needs to be looked at.”

A great deal of inter-provincial activity goes on among the four Atlantic provinces, and the provincial Chambers of Commerce and other bodies work closely together. Kelderman would like to see even more collaboration and reduced duplication and bureaucracy; for example, one securities commission for Atlantic Canada instead of four. “Despite challenges, there is a tremendous optimism in the local business community here,” she says.

— CAROL MOREIRA

Ahead of the tide



NOVA SCOTIA TOURISM, CULTURE AND HERITAGE

Minas Basin Pulp and Power has been working sustainably for almost a century. Harnessing tidal power is another innovation from a company with a long-standing commitment to the environment

Standing on the cliffs above Cape Split and looking down at the channel below, one can see why the Minas Channel is one of the most amazing spots on the planet. Twice a day, billions of tonnes of seawater pour through the channel. Bordered on three sides by the province of Nova Scotia, the channel, and the Minas Basin, it represents the province's greatest untapped resource. Regulated by the moon's gravitational pull, the energy flow is more constant and predictable than wind power. The big question has always been how to tap into this vast source of energy without disrupting the basin's delicate ecosystem.

That is about to change. In January Nova Scotia premier Rodney MacDonald announced that Minas Basin Pulp and

Power Company Ltd. (www.minas.ns.ca), a homegrown energy company based in Hantsport, N.S., with more than eight decades of experience, had been chosen to build a \$12-million demonstration tidal power facility on the Minas Basin. It will include a research laboratory, underwater transmission lines, and equipment that will feed power into the Nova Scotia grid. When completed, it will test three kinds of prototype turbines, including ones provided by Minas Basin and its partner, UEK Hydrokinetic Turbine.

If the project works the way its proponents hope, it may be the most significant innovation to Nova Scotia's power grid since...well, since Minas Basin's last big innovation in energy development.

That was in 1937, when Minas Basin founder R.A. Jodrey used state-of-the-art

technology to build the province's first hollow core dam, one of the first in North America. Jodrey's goal was to harness the power of the St. Croix River to provide energy to run his Hantsport pulp-and-paper mill.

That history of innovation certainly played on the provincial government's mind, but it may be Minas Basin's record as an environmental steward that has played the biggest part in making its case in getting the go-ahead for the tidal power demonstration project. The Minas Basin/Bay of Fundy system is an environmentally sensitive region, a place where endangered right whales and millions of shorebirds come every year to fatten themselves up before epic migrations, and where massive intertidal zones create one of the most unique ecosystems on the planet.

Environmental sensitivity is one of Minas Basin's core strengths. The list of the company's environmental accomplishments is a long one. More than a decade ago, it installed equipment to remove effluent that previously flowed into the Bay of Fundy, but rather than divert the rejects to a landfill, company engineers figured out a way to pump it back into the factory process and add it to the paperboard they were manufacturing. The company has also been developing technology that traps factory waste heat before it exits into the atmosphere, sending it back into the system to reheat the papermaking process.

Its recent project utilizing waste heat to reduce its oil consumption was a first for any pulp facility in North America. And despite the fact that Minas Basin still uses 70-year-old turbines, the power it produces has received Ecologo certification from the federal government, one of only a handful of power-generating facilities in the country to do so. Minas Basin also trades carbon credits on the Chicago Climate Exchange. But the most impressive accomplishment of all may

be the fact that the company doesn't cut down a single tree to make its paperboard products; it's one of very few papermakers in the world that can make that claim.

Instead, Minas Basin produces 70,000 metric tonnes of paperboard every year using only recycled fibre as a raw material, a process that preserves 1.5 million Nova Scotian trees annually and diverts 135,000 cubic metres of waste products away from local landfills, while keeping about 270,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas carbon out of the environment. "We use only post-consumer waste," says Minas Basin president and COO Scott Travers. "That's an important distinction. It means we're using only paper diverted from landfills."

Travers, who has a great personal passion for environmental issues, says that the key to success in environmental stewardship lies in staying firmly focused on the company's bottom line. "What we're trying to do is embrace all of the environmental opportunities," he says, "because they are opportunities." That approach seems to be working. Many of Minas Basin's initiatives have increased profits. Adding waste product to the paper mix has led to a stronger, higher-quality product, and the heat-recovery system is expected to pay for itself in about two years. At the same time, Minas Basin's customer base has jumped from three to around 100 since the plant expanded in 1996. The expansion saw a tripling in production capacity, a doubling in the workforce, and growth in the customer base from a handful of clients to more than 100.

"We're carrying on a culture that was established in 1927, when R.A. Jodrey founded this company," says Travers. "He was focused on renewable energy and sustainability long before it was fashionable. On the energy side and on the process side, we have always had a strong environmental commitment, and it has had a positive financial impact on our company." —**TOM MASON**

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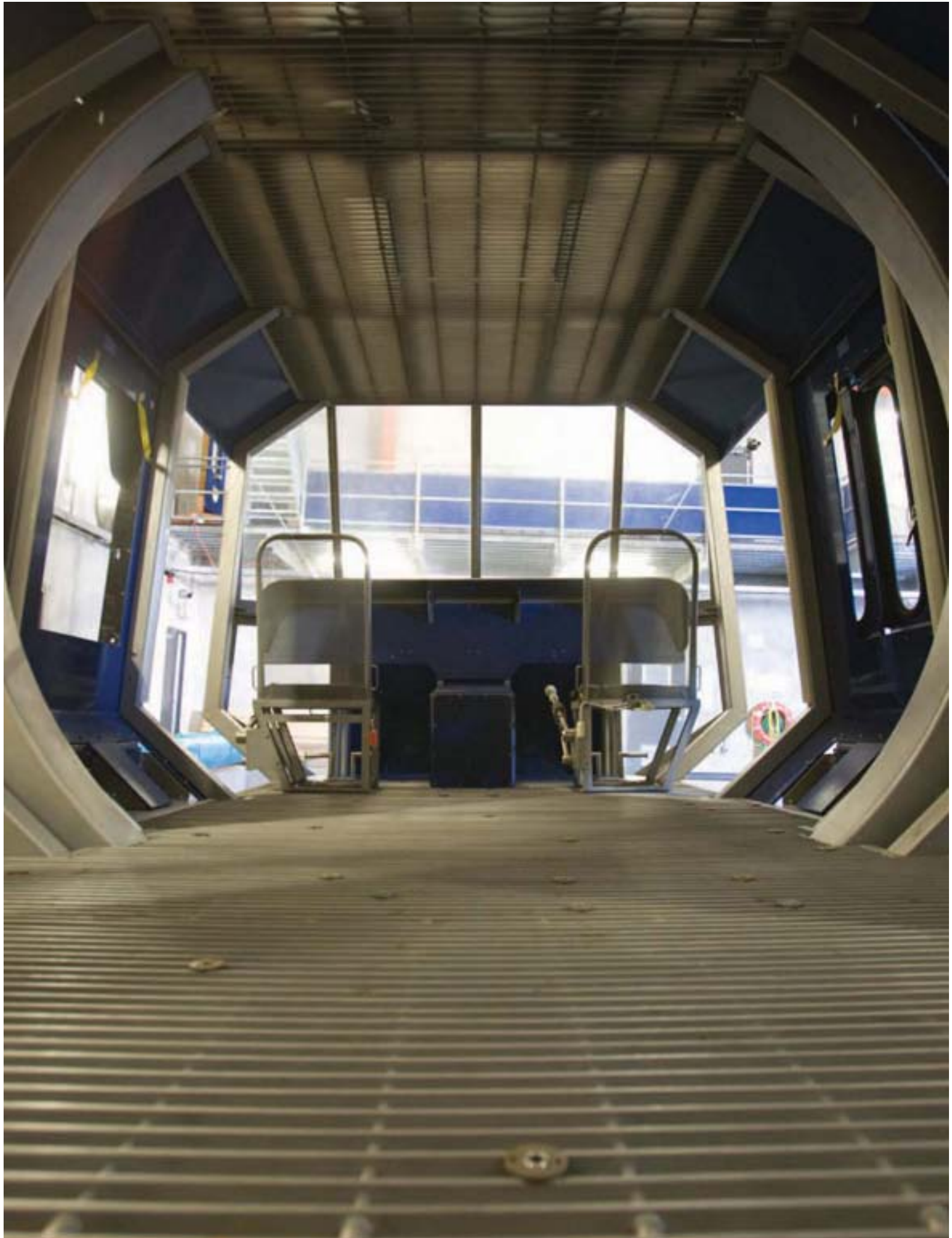
Setting the standard

Survival Systems creates, sets, and maintains safety-training standards around the world in an effort to teach survival procedures and, ultimately, save lives

by MIREILLE E. LEBLANC

In 1981 Albert Bohemier walked away from a helicopter crash in Labrador. He attributes his survival to the intensive training he had received as a pilot of Sea King helicopters during his career with the Canadian armed forces.

Seeing a market need for more training opportunities, he founded Survival Systems Ltd. in 1982; today the company has clients in more than 20 countries. Bohemier estimates that more than one million people have benefited from Survival Systems' training over the years, whether through the company itself or through a client that uses one of its Modular Escape Training Simulators (METS).





Safety in numbers: Albert Bohemier is passionate about passing on his survival-training expertise to others.

SANDOR FIZLI

Huge waves and 123-kilometre-an-hour winds slam into the helicopter simulator, which is lowered into the swirling water while torrential rain and lightning reduce visibility. Passengers will only have a few seconds to escape. Will they survive?

Survival Systems is “in the business of saving lives.” That quote perfectly illustrates what the company and its founder are all about. “Our goal is to enhance and preserve workers’ lives through safety education, training technologies, and applied research and development,” says Bohemier.

To do that, Survival Systems (www.survivalsystemsgroup.com), based in Dartmouth, N.S., has developed a realistic approach to a wide range of safety-training products and services to replicate helicopters and aircraft configurations for its military and civilians clients.

For example, a worst-case scenario is being reproduced in the 14-foot-deep pool at the company’s training theatre. Huge waves and 123-kilometre-an-hour winds

slam into the helicopter simulator, which is lowered into the swirling water while torrential rain and lightning reduce visibility. Passengers will only have a few precious seconds to escape the helicopter before it sinks underwater inverted. Will they survive?

Bohemier believes they will, if they possess the three elements of his safety triangle: knowledge of potential hazards, knowledge of procedures, and the appropriate equipment. Grabbing a piece of paper and a pen from his desk, he draws the triangle, adding simulators next to equipment and survival next to procedures. “Just because you have safety equipment in place doesn’t mean you will be safe when disaster strikes,” says Bohemier. “You have to make sure you know the

procedures and how to use the equipment.”

He sketches another triangle to illustrate Survival Systems’ strategic mission with such phrases as client retention, R&D, and simulation technology. “Our goal is to create, set and maintain training standards worldwide, and to survive in business,” he says. “You always have to retain your clients and give them an added value while reducing costs to be efficient. We will continue to strive to be the best in the world.”

While being interviewed for this article, he dug in his briefcase to extract a well-used laminated sheet of paper that he shows to all of his clients. Highlighted in bright yellow is one of the values at the core of Survival Systems: “To be fair and absolutely honest in all our dealings.” He



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Training partnerships

EduNova is a Halifax-based, non-profit association of education and training providers. With a mandate to develop international markets for Nova Scotia's education and training sectors, EduNova works with its members to identify partners in countries around the world.

In late January Mark Parent, Nova Scotia's environment minister, officially opened a new EduNova office in Abu Dhabi, in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

"Nova Scotia has internationally recognized academic institutions, world-class training programs, and experts in a variety of fields," said Parent at the opening ceremony. "Through EduNova, Nova Scotia is taking steps to share our knowledge in education, management, and training with its UAE partners."

One of those members is Dartmouth, N.S.-based Survival Systems Training Ltd., a spin-off of Survival Systems Ltd. and an EduNova partner since September of 2007. Survival Systems Training develops training programs and instructional training techniques, including search and rescue, drills and emergency preparation and response, helicopter safety, and practical sea survival. It has worked with the Canadian and American Coast Guards, Transport Canada, Environment Canada, and the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers.

"We will be using the new international office to support us in our goal of transferring technology from Nova Scotia to the UAE," says Peter Gibbs, the president of Survival Systems Training. "Our plan is to set up a turnkey safety-training school, which covers the UAE military [army, navy, and air force], as well as training for the offshore oil and gas industry. This is a large-scale project that will need the combined



Through EduNova, Nova Scotia is sharing its knowledge in education, management, and training with the opening of its Abu Dhabi office.

skills of Survival Systems Training and EduNova."

The EduNova Abu Dhabi office is the organization's first overseas base. "The new office signals to our Gulf clients that we are open to doing business there and that we have a strong commitment to the region," says Ava Czapalay, EduNova's CEO. "Our hope is to identify education and training opportunities for our members and firmly establish Nova Scotia's reputation in the Gulf region as a quality provider of education and training. Survival Systems Training has a unique and high-quality training program that complements other EduNova members, and it also appeals to consumers outside EduNova's traditional client base."

Partners in the EduNova Gulf office include Nova Scotia universities, the Nova Scotia Community College, the Nova Scotia International Student Program, Nova Scotia Business Inc., and both the provincial and federal governments. — HEATHER MACLEAN

admits that taking such an approach may not result in the largest profit margins (some of the company's global competitors claim they can offer the same simulator at half the price). "We don't compromise security and quality," says Bohemier. "After 25 years, I can't see a way to make our products inexpensively and still save lives."

To guide Bohemier in his quest for high standards, the walls of his office are full of inspirational quotes about visions and values. One of his favourites comes from Louis Giguere: "Objects testify to the spirit of an era, and express humanity. The ones that do so more eloquently should be set apart from the rest." Bohemier applies it to his company's mission: "Worded differently it means to me that our actions, i.e., training delivery and our simulators, testify to the safety spirit

of an era and express the passion and commitment of our people to our clients."

One such client is PT Samson Tiara, a safety-and-survival-training firm in Indonesia. "Survival Systems provided us with the equipment, instructor, and knowledge required to set up the training here," says David Donaldson, PT Samson Tiara's managing director and co-owner. "We were under-funded and, without Albert's assistance in arranging a loan in Canada, we would not have been able to get going. We are what we are today due in large part to Albert believing in us and getting us started."

Bohemier relays another story: In 1993, almost a decade after he had launched Survival Systems, he was in the pool teaching a group of military personnel crash-survival skills. A man approached poolside and extended his hand. Bohemier wiped water away from his

eyes before shaking the fellow's hand. "Thank you for saving my life," said the man, a former student who had been in a crash and who credited his survival to Bohemier's instruction. "Moments like that are humbling," he says.

After a quarter-century at the helm, Bohemier is thinking about stepping down. "I'm 58, and I'm looking at how we can go through my succession and leave the business to the next generation," he says. "The organization has the means, the people, and the ability to take the business even further."

While it may be true that Survival Systems will survive with someone else in charge, its employees and clients will feel a void. "Albert is intense in his belief that it is his life's mission to do everything he can to save lives," says Donaldson. "His enthusiasm is infectious, his energy is amazing. He's one of a kind." ■

Nova Scotian boatbuilders have evolved by adopting new technologies and adapting to a changing economy

21ST-CENTURY BOAT BUILDING

by Robert Martin



Boat-building is an ancient craft in Nova Scotia, dating back to the 18th century when the British navy first used the province's stands of pines for replacement spars on their warships. But today's British navy no longer looks anything like it did during the age of wooden ships and iron men, and neither does Nova Scotia's boat-building industry.

The only constant is the continuing tradition of designing and constructing boats that can bring sailors safely home through winter gales in icy waters. Quality runs deep, and Nova Scotian boatbuilders have never hesitated to use the latest in design and technology to make their crafts stronger, lighter, faster, and more efficient. As times and markets have changed, they have also learned to turn their hands to many different types of boats.

A perfect example is d'Eon Boatbuilding Ltd. (www.deonboatbuilding.com) located in Middle West Pubnico, N.S., a family-owned business started in 1921 by Edmund d'Entremont, who began building traditional wooden fishing boats in the summers to complement winter-time fishing. When Camille d'Eon took over after his father retired in 1951, he switched to constructing pleasure boats to satisfy a post-war demand for sturdy wooden cruising boats during an era of cheap gasoline. Today, d'Eon Boatbuilding is primarily a custom finisher of boats, working from fibreglass hulls of local designs such as the Cape Islander. The company employs between 18 and 25 people and can work on up to three hulls at once.

BEYOND FISHING

In Meteghan River on the province's French Shore, A.F. Theriault & Son Ltd. (www.aftheriault.com) also is developing new boat-building designs. In 2005 it produced its first eight-metre-long military-patrol craft prototype, which combines speed and stealth for harbour patrols in the wake of 9/11. A.F. Theriault's R&D department produced a craft called the *Mongoose* to demonstrate the company's capabilities with composite materials such as the ceramic-reinforced plastic panels needed to keep the hull from disintegrating while pounding through rough seas at high speeds.

The *Mongoose* was only a demonstrator, intended to show off the accomplishments of its research-and-design department in taking high-tech to the high seas. A.F. Theriault, with its 125 to 150 employees, is the largest privately owned boatyard in Atlantic Canada and the only one with an in-house R&D department.

The company has had success in winning military contracts to build unmanned target boats called Hammerheads. These radio-controlled crafts are intended to simulate drug runners or terrorists, such as the 2000 suicide bombers of the *USS Cole*, by being small, fast, and manoeuvrable.

Building such security vessels might seem unlikely on the picturesque shoreline of peaceful St. Mary's Bay in the Municipality of Clare, but versatility has been the watchword of the business since Augustine Theriault started the company in 1938 to repair traditional wooden vessels. Over the years, the yard has produced more than 450 boats, some as big as a 50-metre-long coastal freighter vessel, in a variety of materials, including wood, steel, fibreglass, and aluminum, as well as space-age composites.

"We are always experimenting," says Augustine's son Russell Theriault, the vice-president of new construction. "We want to learn how to build boats that are lighter, better, and stronger."

The A.F. Theriault yard is currently building a 25-metre-long by 10-metre-wide cruising catamaran for a client in Florida. Russell describes the cat, built of carbon-infused panels for minimum weight with



A.F. Theriault launched the *Fundy Viper*, a high-tech fishing boat made from composite core stress panels.

"We're always experimenting. We want to learn how to build boats that are lighter, better, and stronger" — Russell Theriault

maximum strength, as "a monster boat. It will cost about \$5.5 million by the time it's finished this summer." The yard has built four six-by-17-metre cats for a European company that uses them as service tenders for its offshore windmills in England and the Netherlands. The power company has ordered four more of the aluminum boats, in a larger 18-metre version. A.F. Theriault recently constructed two new pilot boats for the Atlantic Pilotage Authority in Newfoundland, and is building a \$3-million, 20-metre fire boat for Portland, Maine.

Although A.F. Theriault's regular work as a builder of commercial fishing boats has lessened since the decline of the fishing industry, it still builds a few. Even in this traditional area, the yard is experimenting. After seeing the big catamarans being built in the yard, local fishermen asked A.F. Theriault to build a fishing boat out of the same material. "We've been using composites for the decks and superstructures on lobster boats," says Russell. "They're stronger, lighter, maintenance-free, fire-

retardant, and provide better insulation." Several years ago the company came out with the *Fundy Viper*, its first composite boat equipped to catch lobsters and scallops.

TRAINING IS KEY

Training has become an increasingly significant part of boat-building in Nova Scotia, in part because the industry has moved from traditional wood crafts passed down from father to son, who built beautiful but sturdy wooden boats, to computer-based technologies that influence everything from hull design to the inclusion of an astonishing array of electronic gear. Fog and foul weather are much less likely to be a problem thanks to radar, sonar, global positioning systems, and radio. But putting them all together to work reliably in an often hostile marine environment takes skill and knowledge, and companies such as Chéticamp Boatbuilders Ltd. (www.cheticampboatbuilders.com) have been instrumental in technology in the industry. "We were involved in designing

Made to order

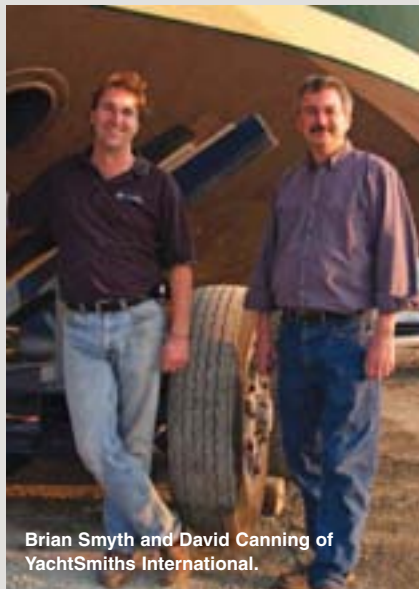


High life on the high seas: Custom cabinetry in one of YachtSmiths' luxury yachts.

“YachtSmiths International is a model of what boatbuilders have to do these days to survive and grow,” says Tim Edwards, the executive director of the Nova Scotia Boatbuilders Association (NSBA), of the Dartmouth, N.S.-based custom boatbuilder. “YachtSmiths is constantly improving in terms of diversifying from building new boats to servicing existing boats.”

The company's innovative approach has allowed it to continue capturing orders when many other custom boat-building yards across North America are shutting down. While many yards advertise that they do custom work, the fact is that they offer slight modifications to stock boats that they build, sort of like offering optional leather seats in a new car. YachtSmiths International Inc. (www.yachtsmiths.com) works from plans provided by the owner's designer, so that everything from stem to stern is custom made.

During a tour of YachtSmith's facilities, CEO and business partner David Canning points out that while they do have a few moulds, such as the Cabot 36 cruising sailboat, YachtSmiths' bread and butter is custom builds. In the carpentry shop, for example, woodworking specialist Mike Hartland shows off several wooden portholes he is making for a 15.5-metre motor yacht. This is not just decorative moulding to hide a commercial porthole; these are scratch-built units, each constructed from eight pieces of teak held together with hidden biscuit joints and then faired to be completely circular.



Brian Smyth and David Canning of YachtSmiths International.

It's that kind of fearless approach to challenges and YachtSmiths' ability to work creatively in both composite steel and aluminum that have customers lining up, “The company is very innovative,” says Chip Dickison, NSBA's training co-ordinator. “When they decided that it was too expensive to hire trucks to launch their boats, Brian Smyth designed and built his own launcher.”

Smyth is YachtSmiths's other partner and a Dalhousie University-trained engineer who is working part-time on his PhD in engineering. Canning says that other yards have been in touch about buying launchers, and that building and selling them may become a sideline, if there's time between commissions. Smyth is also a provincially certified boatbuilder and an enthusiastic supporter of the apprenticeship program, sponsored jointly by NSBA and the Nova Scotia Community College, and a mentor to three apprentices who are currently at YachtSmiths.

Canning has applied another innovation to the business side of YachtSmiths. Instead of collecting large lump sums from clients at agreed-upon stages of construction, he bills for labour and materials every two weeks. The system not only helps stabilize the company's cash flow but it also helps clients manage their cash needs and gives them more regular updates on construction progress.

Canning is unique in the boat-building business because his background is in banking; a former vice-president of Credit Union Atlantic, in 2000 he wrote the business plan for the original owner of YachtSmiths, who was so impressed that he hired Canning to run the company. “Then he decided he'd rather build luxury houses,” says Canning, “so in 2002 Brian and I bought the business, and the rest is history.”

YachtSmiths has built nine luxury custom yachts over 13.5 metres in length during its five-year history, plus a few smaller production yachts such as the Cabot 36 and the Gaski, an Icelandic design. Canning views YachtSmiths' market as baby boomers who have made their money, are experienced sailors, and want something specially tailored for them to enjoy while they're still active. The boomers know what they want, he says, including the next boat in the stocks: a unique junk-rigged schooner, which is scheduled to start construction soon. “Eighty-six percent of our business is from the eastern seaboard of the U.S.,” says Canning. “For our customers, boating is a passion.” — R.M.

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4. How many employees are in your organization? (please check one)

- 1-10 11-25 26-50 51-100
- 101-500 501-1000 over 1000

5. Which best describes your job function? (please check one)

- Owner/Executive Management Senior Management
- Departmental Management Marketing Management
- Other (please specify) _____

6. The budget you manage is: (please check one)

- Under \$500,000 \$500,001 - \$1,000,000
- \$1,000,001 - \$10,000,000 Greater than \$10,000,000

7. The primary function of your business is: (please check as many as apply)

- Service Importing Manufacturing Exporting

8. Does your company plan to: (please check one)

- Expand facilities within the next 3 years?
- Open new facilities within the next 3 years?

9. Were you born in Nova Scotia?

- Yes No

10. Did you attend university or community college in Nova Scotia?

- Yes No

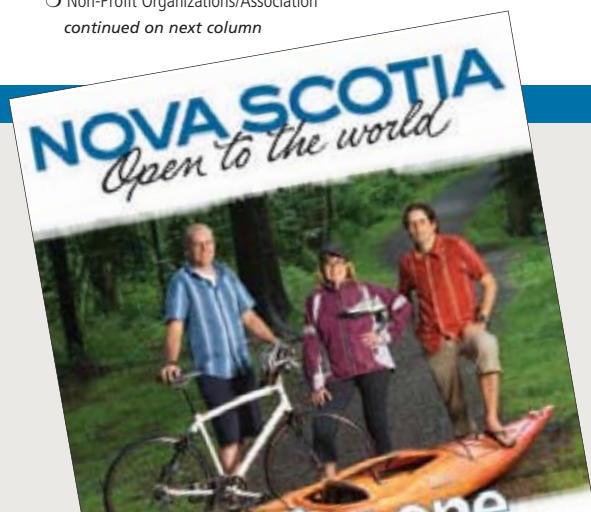
11. Have you ever worked in Nova Scotia?

- Yes No

12. If you do not live in Nova Scotia, are you currently doing business here?

- Yes No

continued on next column



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Open to the World Spring 2008

Published by *Atlantic Progress Publishing Limited*
 1660 Hollis Street, Penthouse Suite 1201, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 1V7
 Tel: (902) 494-0999 Email: open@progresscorp.com

a marine electrical handbook with NSBA,” says Bruno Gaudet, one of the company owners.

The Nova Scotia Boatbuilders Association (NSBA), representing 41 builders in the province, has created a Boatbuilder Apprenticeship Program that does 90% to 95% of training on the job, with the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC; www.nsc.ca) filling in the gaps. Among other things, budding boatbuilders were taught the NSBA’s marine electrical occupational standards in the electrical program that Chéticamp Boatbuilders helped develop. Once apprentices have demonstrated their competence at specific

appears to be fibreglass.

“When I started about 27 years ago it was all wooden boats, but it must be 15 years since we’ve built one,” says Chéticamp’s Gaudet. “In fact, we burned all the moulds. They were taking up too much space.” The firm, which employs eight to 15 people and specializes in commercial fishing vessels in the nine-metre to 14-metre range, is known in the industry as a finisher. It buys fibreglass hulls from other Nova Scotian companies and finishes them to the owner’s specifications. It also repairs and stores boats and operates a retail outlet that sells marine and fishing supplies.

Dalhousie University (www.dal.ca). “We built the first mould in ’95,” he says. “It was 14 by five metres and it tested well, but we wanted it to go a little faster.” The brothers increased the design to 14 by seven, and that model became a modern classic with fishermen. A key feature is hard “chines,” or angled underwater edges that provide greater stability and a little more speed, plus keep down spray.

The brothers are also expanding into the pleasure-boat market, but it’s been difficult to penetrate. “From Newfoundland to Florida we’re known as commercial boat-builders,” says Neil, “but pleasure boaters don’t know who LeBlanc Brothers is.”

Training has become a significant part of boat-building in Nova Scotia, because the industry has moved from traditional wood crafts passed down from generation to generation to computer-based technologies

tasks and have satisfied credit requirements, they’re eligible for the province of Nova Scotia’s Boat Builder Certificate of Qualification.

Textbooks on the many aspects of boat-building are hard to find; as a result, the NSBA has a licensing agreement with New Zealand to use their textbooks, says Tim Edwards, NSBA’s executive director. He adds that workbooks on composite materials are almost constantly updated because of rapid developments in that field.

In a related program, NSCC has partnered with Composites Atlantic Ltd. (CAL; www.compositesatlantic.com) to create a composites fabricator technician program to train students to build high-tech parts for boats and the aerospace industry. The co-op program includes classroom time at NSCC’s Lunenburg campus in Bridgewater, N.S., and on the floor at CAL. While CAL is an aeronautics company, up to 95% of all boats built in the Maritimes are made from composite materials, and Edwards expects that boatbuilders will be happy to hire graduates of the composites program. In fact, the new traditional material for boat-building

Because fishing is seasonal, it’s common for workers in small communities to be skilled in several different trades. For example, LeBlanc Brothers Boatbuilders (www.leblancboats.com) in Lower Wedgeport, N.S., started as LeBlanc Builders Construction Ltd., with Leo, Neil, and Kevin LeBlanc building everything from houses and barns to wharves and boats. However, it is in boats that the brothers have built their international reputation for both quality construction and technological innovation. The quality comes from experience.

“I’ve been building boats since I was 14,” says Neil. “All sorts of boats in wood and fibreglass, from working skiffs to 17-metre pleasure boats.” The innovation is spurred on by constant competition with the sea, a tough opponent that inspires a desire to be just a little bit safer and faster.

The company has built 100 fishing vessels to date, 74 of which have been the 14-metre design created by the brothers. Neil says that they had the original design tank-tested at Halifax’s former Technical University of Nova Scotia, now part of

The LeBlancs are working to change that by developing a niche as custom builders of high-end yachts. They are currently working on a 15-by-seven-metre motor yacht this spring, which is based on their 15-metre fishing-vessel hull. In addition, they have developed a line of small pleasure crafts ranging from five to eight metres in length that can be ordered in a variety of finish conditions, everything from bare hull to completed boat. The company currently exports about 10% of its products to the U.S.

And the brothers continue to innovate. The company has a project in development called a tunnel jet, in which a boat’s keel is replaced by a concave tunnel shape where the propeller is located. “It acts like a jet and is 10% easier on fuel,” says Neil. “It’s like a reverse keel; it eliminates some depth and reduces weight as well.”

With such innovative work taking place, it appears that before long, the only thing that will remain traditional in Nova Scotian boat-building is the appearance of the topsides of the boat and the quality of the craftsmanship. ■

Come together

A cluster of Halifax merchants are working together to encourage customers to shop locally, promote an active lifestyle, and give back to the community

by SEAN MCCARROLL

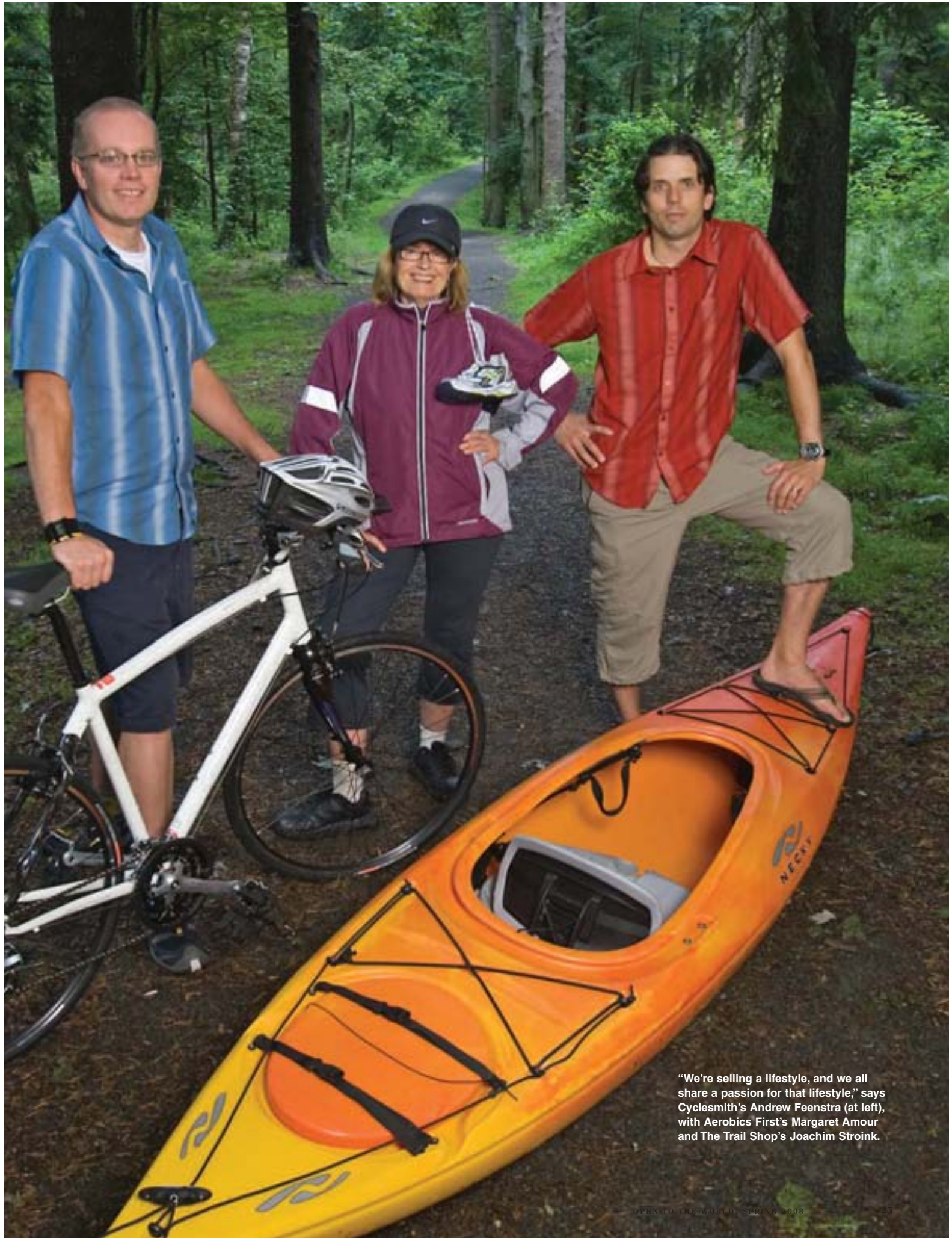
Margaret Armour first produced *Starting Line*, a lifestyle magazine supporting active outdoor living in Nova Scotia, in 2005 to celebrate her store's 25th anniversary. "The magazine became the catalyst for the partnership we have now," says Armour, the owner of Aerobics First in Halifax. "My intention was to involve the other small businesses on Quinpool Road by encouraging them to advertise in the magazine."

The partnership Armour is referring to has been formed between Aerobics First (www.aerobicsfirst.com), The Trail Shop (www.trailshop.com), and Cyclesmith (<http://cyclesmith.ca>), three locally owned small businesses in the city's eclectic Quinpool Road shopping district. The stores are working collaboratively to encourage customers to shop locally, promote outdoor/active living, and support the community surrounding their location.

"Because our stores complement each other, it's the customer who ultimately wins," says Armour. "We are progressive business owners, and this partnership allows us the opportunity to cultivate exceptional customer service, which will hopefully lead to more

SANDOR FIZLI





"We're selling a lifestyle, and we all share a passion for that lifestyle," says Cyclesmith's Andrew Feenstra (at left), with Aerobics First's Margaret Amour and The Trail Shop's Joachim Stroink.

“We are different, but the differences are good. We can stimulate our creativity and innovative processes for ourselves, our customers, and our community. The customers benefit because we have more to offer and more opportunity to serve their needs” — Margaret Armour, Aerobics First

people shopping locally.”

The stores all cater to an active niche market; they offer specialized services and knowledge-based selling, and until early in 2006 had done so independently. There is a small amount of product cross-over among the businesses, but much less than one might expect. “We are creating a more interesting, more attractive street for shoppers,” says Armour. “The stores and businesses on Quinpool Road help keep Halifax vibrant and alive.”

So far this co-operative relationship has resulted in a huge sale held at the Halifax Forum, an employee-purchasing incentive program, and reduced costs on joint purchase orders. One noticeable derivative of the partnership is new biodegradable shopping bags inscribed with all three logos and used by each store. The reasons for the bags are threefold: the stores save money by placing a bulk order; the bags make customers aware of the partnership; and each store gains valuable marketing.

“I believe that if we stay open and willing to communicate with each other—true collaboration, so to speak—we will create new and improved ways of doing business, of hosting and staging community-based events, and therefore contributing to the community,” says Armour. “We are different, but the differences are good. We can stimulate our creativity and innovative processes for ourselves, our customers, and our community. The customers benefit because we have more to offer and more opportunity to serve their needs.”

Meeting customers’ needs is a constant challenge. The retail marketplace has

Where to get the goods

Each store has a very specific focus and is successful in its own right. **The Trail Shop** first opened its doors in 1968, and since then it has been selling the highest-quality outdoor gear available. **Aerobics First** has sold premium athletic footwear, apparel, and ski and snowboard equipment for 28 years. Over the past two decades, **Cyclesmith** has become one of Atlantic Canada’s premier bike stores.

Where product cross-over does exist, the businesses have made compromises. Aerobics First and The Trail Shop both carry specific and different types of footwear. Customers seeking hiking boots or trail runners will find what they’re looking for at The Trail Shop, but if they go searching for a good road or track running shoe, sales associates will refer them to Aerobics First. The same is true for products such as Oakley sunglasses, hydration systems, and GPS units.

The close relationship is a result of a few variables; location is a big factor (all are within walking distance on the same side of Quinpool Road), and their outdoor products complement each other. But above all, a shared commitment to customers and the community bridges the retailers. It’s a relationship that, says Aerobics First owner Margaret Armour, benefits both the businesses and their shoppers. She insists the reason for this new level of co-operation is straightforward: “We can accomplish more together than we can individually.” — **S.M.**

changed immensely in recent years, and it has become increasingly difficult to stay ahead of the curve. The Internet has become a big factor; a quick browse through eBay’s sporting goods category reveals tens of thousands of people trying to sell the latest and greatest outdoor gear. Plus, big-box stores offer a plethora of options for those looking for an inexpensive product that will merely get the job done.

In this industry, it’s important to understand the specific demands of the customer, which is one of the main ties that binds the three businesses. Customers of each store demand highly specialized gear and expect staff members to be educated about the products. “Ultimately, you can get good prices anywhere,” says Andrew Feenstra, one of Cyclesmith’s three co-owners. “The Internet is now one of our major competi-

tors, but you can’t always get the service or the knowledge from it.”

Feenstra says the secret to getting people to buy locally is to offer excellent customer service and give shoppers all of the information they need to make an informed purchase. “Some people come in with the notion that if you’re going to an independent retailer they’re more expensive, but that’s not necessarily the case,” he says. “You buy a good pair of boots, and they’ll last you a lifetime if you look after them. What’s that worth? If you compare price tag to price tag, it may be a little more expensive, but you’re not comparing apples to apples.”

In addition to selling quality merchandise, when it comes to believing in and using the products themselves, the owners, management, and staff at the stores don’t just talk the talk, they also walk the walk. “We’re all

By running the events, the three stores are not only developing a strong business network but they are also putting Quinpool Road back on the map as an outdoor retail destination

selling a lifestyle, and we all share a passion for that lifestyle,” says Feenstra. “Whether it’s biking, canoeing, kayaking, skiing, or running, we’re selling a healthy lifestyle.”

That passion is evident as you walk up the stairs to the second floor of The Trail Shop. The sales floor is a maze of tents and backpacks, sleeping bags and Thermarests, topographical maps, and hydration systems. In the back, the winter’s cross-country-ski section is quickly giving way to this summer’s paddling gear.

Joachim Stroink bought the business in 2005 and has made every effort to emphasize the importance of community involvement, reinvigorating the business with fresh ideas and a proactive approach to reach new markets. He is the driving force behind events such as the Scotia Paddlefest, a day-long kayak expo on Lake Banook in Dartmouth held in June, where people can try a variety of sea kayaks and canoes, free of charge. “The Trail Shop’s philosophy is to take the outdoors to the people,” he says. “That’s

what the other two stores try to do as well.”

All of the businesses stay active in the community promoting their own merchandise and the healthy lifestyles they’re selling. They sponsor numerous events, clubs, and competitions, including a trail running club, a youth running series, and a cycling club. Every four years, for four days in the spring, the businesses hold a sale at the Halifax Forum (the next one is slated for 2011).

Throughout the sale weekend, a steady stream of people crowd in and out of the venue, searching for bargains on everything from fully suspended mountain bikes, skis, and snowboards to technical clothing and hiking boots priced as low as \$30. It’s the ultimate garage sale that local outdoor enthusiasts eagerly anticipate. For The Trail Shop, Aerobics First, and Cyclesmith, it’s a chance to unload some inventory and offer customers something that, individually, they’ve never been able to provide before.

By running the events, the stores are not only developing a strong business network but they are also putting Quinpool Road back on the map as an outdoor retail destination. “What we’re doing is heightening the awareness of the street,” says Armour. “How people spend their money is a reflection of their value systems. Shopping sustainably and locally is representative of who you are as a person.”

“In a nutshell, we wouldn’t be able to compete against the changing marketplace and the powerhouses that are out there on our own,” says Stroink, pointing to big-box stores who are able to carry a little bit of everything. “And that on its own makes it hard. But with our passions, we are able to work together to drive business. What we have is the ability to offer specialized service. Big-box stores can’t do that. I know that if I send my customer to Aerobics First to get a pair of running shoes, they are going to get the same high-quality service that they would get here and at Cyclesmith.” ■

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READY FOR A CLOSE-UP

Coming through a recent rough patch, the film and TV industry is still doing good business in Nova Scotia. It speaks to a creative culture and a tenacious attitude, and it's connecting regional players to international partners

by Aimee Lorefice Mains



It has been 25 years since Michael and Paul Donovan launched Salter Street Films, the birthplace of the Halifax-made comedy hit *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*. “As native Nova Scotians, we were aware of the unusually rich cultural traditions that are so deeply rooted in this part of the country,” says Michael. “In this business, which is intensely competitive, those cultural roots have always given us an advantage.”

The Donovan brothers, along with actors, filmmakers, and writers in the province, have helped the Nova Scotia film industry evolve into a thriving business that not only illuminates the distinctive culture of the province but also brings in a consistent \$100 million to the economy every year.

The 2006-07 season was a tremendous success for film and TV on the East Coast. Halifax writer Chaz Thorne’s *Poor Boy’s Game* premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival to great acclaim. Halifax Film took its crew to Kigali, Rwanda, to shoot *Shake Hands with the Devil*, which was nominated for 12 Genie Awards, snagging one at the March 3 ceremony. “Because this film is so creatively ambitious,” says Michael Donovan, “and because it’s about an important and tragic moment in history, the recognition inherent in the Genie nominations is very meaningful.”

In total Nova Scotia filmmakers and the province reeled in \$136 million in production activity, the bulk of which was rendered by local production. More than 32 documentaries, TV specials, and film and animated productions were made during that season.

More than 32 documentaries, TV specials, and film and animated productions were made during the 2006-07 season.

FILM STILL COURTESY FILM NOVA SCOTIA



Halifax is a Canadian animation hub, even relative to its West Coast counterparts. The popular children's character Poko (pictured at left) is one of four Halifax Film-made animated TV series.

“There’s a great camaraderie in that everyone works together on their projects, and they really support their own in making smaller independent films”

The current season would be a different story, characterized by actors’ and writers’ strikes and a surging Canadian dollar—what Ann MacKenzie, the CEO of Film Nova Scotia, has called “a perfect storm of uncontrollable events.” However, the local film community, estimated to employ about 2,500, with roughly six active film crews, is no stranger to challenges and keeps chugging along.

LOCAL CELEBRITIES

Halifax-based Arcadia Entertainment is a good example of a company that found a niche and ran with it. Kick-starting its production career with a focus on filming shipwrecks, it has since grown into an ocean-documentary producer. “Halifax is part of our story. It’s part of who we are,” says president John Wesley Chisholm, a diver, sailor, and factual-television enthusiast. The result: the attention of major national and international broadcasters that have televised Arcadia programming in more than 140 countries.

While audiences may connect ocean themes with this part of the country, they also see humour as a trait inherent to the area. Comedy television is a fundamental part of TV and film production in Nova Scotia. The *Trailer Park Boys* television series, also based in Halifax and featuring Bubbles, Julian, and Ricky of the Sunnyvale Trailer Park, has generated a cult following since its 2001 release. Meanwhile, *Trailer Park Boys: The Movie* grossed an impressive \$1.3 million on its opening weekend in October of 2006, making it the highest-grossing English-language film in Canada.

Halifax Film has played a large role in the success of the film industry. Co-founded by Michael Donovan and Charles Bishop in 2004, the production company developed into a \$50-million enterprise in just four years, thanks in part to the success of its children’s-animation programming. A highly marketable export, animation comprises a fair chunk of made-in-Nova Scotia production.

In fact, Halifax is a Canadian animation hub, even relative to its West Coast counterparts. The popular children’s character Poko, a Halifax Film creation and Gemini winner, and the Alliance for Children and Television’s overall winner for 2007, is one of the company’s four Halifax-made animated TV series. While these programs travel well across cultural and language barriers (Poko airs in more than 50 countries), they also provide steady employment for digital artists and animators at home. Four programs provide lasting work for more than 200 local freelance artists; it’s a great prospect for Nova Scotia’s computer-animation graduates.

A deep pool of talent sustains the independent side of the film business in the province. Halifax writer/director Jeff Wheaton, instrumental in 2006 with the success of his short film, *The Lullaby of Mike Bossy*, which won the CBC/Film Nova Scotia Bridge Award for 2006-07, says the persistent energy in the local film community keeps him churning out ideas when times are tough. “There seems to be this never-ending excitement about someone’s project coming up,” he says. “We’re constantly overworked or underworked, but no one seems to ever give up.” The experience and resourcefulness of local talent has surprised guest producers. “There’s a certain tenacity with an East Coast attitude,” says Wheaton. “You’re constantly improvising with the resources you have. We have some very creative problem-solvers here.”

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

The support of such organizations as the Atlantic Filmmakers Cooperative (AFCOOP) and the Nova Scotia

Motion Picture Industry Association (NSMPIA) has been profound. For 30 years AFSCOOP has provided facilities, equipment, training, and financial assistance to established and up-and-coming filmmakers. It also offers an annual training program for emerging filmmakers called Film 5, in partnership with Film Nova Scotia, which helps four creative teams produce five-minute films. The NSMPIA was created as 2007 came to a close, born out of a need to promote industry interests and provide a membership-driven industry association like those found in competing film centres.

A welcome announcement was made at the opening of the 2007 Atlantic Film Festival in September, coinciding with the rising dollar and the looming Writers Guild of America strike. The province announced that it would increase the film tax credit to 50% from 35% and advance the rural filming bonus from 5% to 10%. MacKenzie says the rate hike was followed by near-immediate interest from producers; two films directly

resulted from the increase, and up to five series or movies began scouting the area.

Nova Scotia's attractive countryside is a further draw for filmmakers, both local and visiting. Its rural landscape of rolling hills, lakes, agricultural landscapes, and old urban setting suits the backdrop for a variety of film sets. The province transforms perfectly into a scene for a period piece such as 1997's *Titanic*, parts of which were filmed in Halifax, while the province's rugged and misty coastline was the ideal vista for *The Shipping News*, parts of which were filmed here in 2001.

Ultimately, the dedication of the film community will sustain the industry, says Tim Storey of the Directors Guild of Canada's Atlantic chapter: "There's a great camaraderie in that everyone works together on their projects, and they really support their own in making smaller independent films." ■

Inspired Beginnings

Original Scotsburn Creamery 1900

Commitment to quality, community and growth through partnership. These are the hallmarks of the Scotsburn Dairy story, where the company's deep roots as a producer-owned organization has fostered a century of growth and innovation.

Beginning with modest aspirations in 1900, when a group of area farmers came together to build a creamery to manufacture butter from locally produced cream; today Scotsburn Dairy's branded products are favourites throughout the region and their private label products supply markets right across Canada – helping to make it Atlantic Canada's #1 Dairy.

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Honest history

A provincial initiative called Democracy 250 is striking a balance between commemorating Nova Scotia's past, confronting the present, and changing the future

Nova Scotians can reflect with pride on how our small province created the conditions that make Canada one of the most admired and respected nations in the world. But hosting a celebration of this importance demands more of us than fireworks and floats; it also gives us an opportunity to start something here in our province, just as we did 250 years ago, that will evolve into something much bigger.

Let's start at the beginning. On Oct. 2, 1758, in a small wooden building that once stood on the corner of Argyle and Buckingham streets in Halifax, 22 elected men gathered to form Canada's first parliamentary democracy; seven of them represented jurisdictions that are now part of New England. It may come as no surprise that the first Act they passed was a tax. A duty of three pence a gallon was levied on imported rum and other liquor. Although new to politics, the astute group exempted all liquor manufactured in Great Britain and rum imported from "His Majesty's West Indies Plantation." A copy of this historic document can be viewed on the Democracy 250 website, at (www.democracy250.ca).

Honest history both celebrates the proud moments and acknowledges the shameful ones. One proud moment was when Simon d'Entremont became the first Acadian and Roman Catholic elected to the Legislature in 1836. When asked to take an oath against his religion, d'Entremont handed back the document and said, "I would rather swallow a dog-fish tail first than swear to that." Three years later he took his seat, without renouncing his beliefs, in the Chamber and remains a symbol of religious liberties.

Similar Nova Scotian moments came from the life's work of Joseph Howe. The newspaper owner was charged with libel

for publishing a letter criticizing the local government. The charges were intended to ruin him personally and financially, yet he opened his infamous six-hour speech by saying that he opted against having a lawyer defend him because "this cause ought to turn on no mere technicality or nice doctrine of law, but on those broad and simple principles of truth and justice."

On March 5, 1835, the day of Howe's acquittal, an article in *The Nova Scotian* eloquently declared "with a heart swelling with gratitude to the giver of all good and a tumult of feelings that nothing but the excitement of the last few days could have

that this monumental event came 198 years after parliamentary democracy first began. The website also honours Gladys Porter, the first woman elected to the Nova Scotia Legislature, and the Honourable Wayne Adams, the first African–Nova Scotian elected to the provincial legislature.

Good things have happened along the way because Nova Scotians got involved in their communities. They happened because people voted. Unfortunately, voter turnout has been dropping since the Second World War. In fact, in most elections less than 25% of people under the age of 25 show up

Nova Scotia's pioneering role in shaping our nation's democratic institutions has helped secure our current rights and freedoms

aroused, and which we should in vain attempt to describe, we announce to our numerous readers...the press of Nova Scotia is free."

As the birthplace of parliamentary democracy, as well as the birthplace of freedom of the press, responsible government in our country, and the first Supreme Court in North America, Nova Scotia's pioneering role in shaping our nation's democratic institutions has helped secure the rights and freedoms Canadians today embrace. But honest history doesn't focus only on our most well-known heroes; it also reminds us that democracy is supposed to empower all citizens. The Democracy 250 website honours June 7, 1956, when an amendment to the Indian Act recognized Canada's aboriginal people and the Inuit as Canadian citizens, reminding us

at the polls. As Canadians we embrace what others envy, yet more and more of us, particularly young people, are choosing not to exercise the one freedom that guarantees all others—the freedom to vote.

Democracy 250 is a year-long program that offers a wide range of events celebrating a proud Nova Scotia first and foremost. Beyond the celebrations, however, is the need to generate a robust discussion about democracy and all of its warts, in the hope of discovering ways to make it more relevant to Canadians now and in the future. — **JOHN HAMM** and **RUSSELL MACLELLAN**

Democracy 250 is a non-partisan body co-chaired by former Nova Scotia premiers John Hamm and Russell MacLellan. It is guided by a committee representing all parties and has received unanimous support from the Nova Scotia legislature.