

An interview with the publisher of the *The People's Photo Album*

-by John Gillis

Education has the power to change lives.

That fact was very evident during the evening of Thursday, April 4th, an occasion for a celebration of the launch of *The People's Photo Album* at Parkland seniors' home in Sydney.

The People's Photo Album documents and illustrates many of the people who were the "Unsung Heroes of the Antigonish Movement."

"*The People's Photo Album* is a cooperative and adult education project in its own right and has received a hugely enthusiastic response from the 150 plus contributors of photos and the many others who appear in the photos," said Dorothy Lander, publisher and editor of Harp Publishing.

Lander stated that the contributors dug into their family albums, scrapbooks, and smart phones to find pictures that illustrated cooperative interaction and art-making through generations of families and communities.

The People's Photo Album is a book that shows great care and attention to detail. Hopefully, it will spark further memories and discussions among those who see it.

The Oran had the opportunity to interview Dorothy Lander following the presentation at Parkland in Sydney.

What has been the overall response to date from the people who have seen the book?

They put their trust in us, which reinforced our own commitment to complete the project swiftly to be sure the oldest contributors would live to see it. The contributors felt a collective ownership for the project and were eager to hold the finished product in their hands. Sister Margaret MacDonell was among them, which is why we brought the album to her at Parkland Cape Breton.

Reproducing an art book with 800 plus photos is costly at \$250, so most could not afford the book to which they had contributed so much. This huge cost has roots in a basic principle of the Antigonish Movement. The movement in its early days directed its attention to the miners, farmers, fishermen, and teachers, who were denied a living wage. Many of them lived in substandard housing. Education and activism, so central to the movement, lifted them out of starvation wages and miserable living conditions. Today, artists are often the ones who struggle to make ends meet. John Graham-Pole and I as the writers, and those who contributed family photos were effectively putting shares into an artists' cooperative. Purchases of *The Album* paid the wages of visual artist Adam Tragakis, who created the "Kitchen Meeting" art on the back cover, that of graphic and digital artist Cathy Lin, who used self-publishing software to produce the page layout, and the costs of printing this coffee-table art book. These purchases also went to pay visual artist Anne Camozzi, who designed the HARP logo, videographer and web designer Denise Davies, who designed the HARP web page and created the film clips for social media and press releases. Denise is also in the process of creating a documentary film of *The Unsung Heroes of the Antigonish Movement*, which builds on *The Album* itself.

Ida (Gallant) Delaney, a bilingual fieldworker for Extension out of Glace Bay in the 1930s and 1940s, was perhaps the first to publicly acknowledge individual artists' contribution to the Antigonish Movement and to name them. In her gem of a book, *By Their Own Hands*, published in 1985, Ida names Sister Irene (Anselm) Doyle as artist-in-residence, the Martha who provided so many of the unsigned illustrations for the movement, including this gift from St.



Left is Clyde Nunn, first station master for CJFX, moderator for this 1950s panel on the program *Reach out, Teach Out*, part of the Extension Department's University of the Air program for farmers and fishermen. Dorothy Lander has not been able to identify the man second from the left. At the April 4th celebration, the publishers of *The People's Photo Album* learned from his daughter that the third man from the left and next to Allan J. MacEachen is Jimmy Nicholson. His daughter said he was district director of United Steelworkers Local 1064, and a good friend of Allan J. Far right is Allan J. MacEachen, then a St. FX economics professor.

FX to Pope Pius in 1950 that marked the first Marian Year in church history.

We also owe a debt of gratitude to the many organizations who donated *The People's Photo Album* to public venues, including 14 copies donated at the launch in December. We also delivered five copies at the April 4th celebration. The Cape Breton Regional Library purchased two for the Tompkins Memorial Library in Reserve Mines and the main library in North Sydney; Cape Breton University purchased two for its main library and Beaton Institute; Parkland Cape Breton purchased one for their residents' library.

The People's Photo Album is the first publication of HARP The People's Press (www.harppublishing.ca). Given the collective and cooperative genesis of *The People's Photo Album*, we have opted to donate the cost of shipping and packaging to a social justice organization whenever we can hand deliver *The Album*. Our first donation in 2018 went to Antigonish Affordable Housing - a pleasing generational symmetry, as its chair, Colleen Cameron, is the daughter of Zita (O'Hearn) Cameron, the typist, editor, and co-writer for Dr. Moses Coady's (1939) biography, *Masters of Their Own Destiny*.

You speak about the influence of the cooperative movement through the generations and it was evident in the book and presentation. Can you cite a few specific examples of how that tradition is alive today, either on campus, off campus, in the communities, or among our youth?

This historical photo project shows clearly that the social justice tradition of the Antigonish Movement threads through generations and is alive today on campus, off campus, in many Canadian communities and around the world.

At the celebration, we showed a selection of photos

drawn from the album of Dr. Teresa MacNeil in both personal and professional contexts. Teresa was director of Extension from 1982 to 1999 (and also Dorothy Lander's advisor for her MAdEd, the St. FX graduate program she founded in 1970). The photo page in the album includes Teresa taking an Extension Department short course in 1954. Dr. Moses Coady was an instructor. Her handwritten letter from her home in Johnstown appears in *The Album* and is a primer on lifelong learning. She tells how "she could barely reach the counter to deposit a tightly-held 25 cent piece in that cold little Credit Union next to the parish church" in Johnstown. Now in her 80s and long retired from St. FX, Teresa is still living the legacy of the Antigonish Movement outside institutional borders. She missed our Sydney celebration because she was in Halifax drumming up awareness and money for the Climate Change Adaptation Forum in June. She was instrumental in the cooperative, consultative process with leaders from First Nations, and three levels of government that led to the UNESCO designation of the Bras D'Or Lake as Canada's 16th Biosphere Preserve in June 2011. Teresa is currently working through Annie Johnson of Eskasoni and her leadership development program for youth to choose 10 youth representatives to attend the Forum on Climate Change Adaptation.

Early on in the celebration, I introduced Denise Davies, videographer for the event, by way of her own Antigonish Movement pedigree. Her father, Joe Chiasson, was assistant director of the Coady International Institute, hired by Director Father George Topshee in 1973. Before that, he had a stellar career in Cape Breton as the regional representative and later assistant director for the Nova Scotia Department of Adult Education. Joe wrote about this period and the leadership development program known as Folk Schools as "one of the best times. We worked in Mabou, Port Hood,

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