

Miramichi Rotary Pond Hockey Tournament named Best Winter Festival in Canada

“The Miramichi Rotary Pond Hockey Tournament is a fun, family oriented event which truly celebrates our hockey culture” stated Shelley Clark. Clark accepted the Winter Festival Criteria Award on behalf of the Pond Hockey Committee at the 2008-2009 WinterLights Celebrations Awards Ceremonies in Prince George, BC on February 21st. This was the first year for the Individual Winter Festival Criteria Award which was sponsored by the National Capital Commission.

Clark is Vice Chair of the Miramichi WinterLights Committee, which is the winter program of Communities in Bloom. The group is also responsible for helping the city reach the Winners Circle in its second year of competition. “The community spirit created by this event is phenomenal. This award truly belongs to the Rotary Club of Newcastle and the many volunteers. Without them, this event would never take place.” Clark added.

The award recognizes the winter festival that best meets the following criteria.

- Meets the WinterLights Celebrations mandate of “celebrating winter activities through decorative, cultural and spiritual programs, with the objective of creating attractions for tourism from within Canada and abroad.
- Engages stakeholders from all sectors.
- Has demonstrated plans for sustainability and growth, including plans to ensure ongoing improved environmental conscientiousness.
- Demonstrates positive economic impact, and
- Creates community spirit.

The application submitted outlined the scope of programming for the festival, including identifying the target audiences, success of the festival to meet objectives such as attendance and revenues generated, the effectiveness of marketing and promotion efforts and feedback from participants.

Geri Mahoney, Chairperson of the Miramichi Rotary Pond Hockey Tournament Committee, was pleased with the results. “The Rotary Club of Newcastle is honored to receive this award. The club's members plus over 100 local volunteers work tirelessly each year to organize this tournament. It is a true community event, and this national recognition is a tribute to the whole Miramichi community.”

Troy Cardinal, of the Hoyt Central Mechanical team, in expressing his thanks to the organizers of this year's tournament stated “We had a great time and look forward to next year. It was a very well run event, the people were friendly and the other teams played hard and fair. It was good times had by all.”

The Miramichi Rotary Pond Hockey Tournament is a fund raising project of the Rotary Club of Newcastle. Funds raised to date have supported the Club's commitment to the cost of the French Fort Cove Eco Centre displays which tell the story of the area's history and ecology for educational and environmental purposes. The Club will make the final payment for its share of the funding for the Eco Centre displays this year. The Community Service Committee will be meeting to develop a strategic plan for future initiatives with a focus on community, hunger and literacy.