

# Community Radio: Where art thou?

By Scott FLEMMING

A meeting was held on Tuesday, October 29 for those interested in being involved in a community radio station. Said group, about thirty strong, was a hodgepodge ranging from the inexperienced inquisitive layman, to the residual CBC personnel who happened to be in the vicinity after hours when the meeting took place.

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The premise was this: people are in need of a medium of extensive scope and free of guidelines. Some concerns of the gatherers were that the local entity that is Charlottetown was not being represented in a meaningful way. As most people know, the genre of music available is quite limited, and the news is sometimes more national than local on the current stations.

The group was rich with talented members. Richie Bulger, a technician chiefly responsible for setting up the hardware used in the broadcasting of the ECMA's was enthusiastic about the community radio project. The aforementioned parties from CBC (including Matthew Rainnie, Perry Williams and program manager Craig Mackie) obviously have much experience in programming and hosting. Many others have aptitudes in business and music, and all had great ideas.

Another group which has been formed for about 6 months has been making their way towards a community radio station in their own right. They have experience in implementation and operation of the equipment and are even now experimenting with internet radio. Their interests are Island wide and think maybe several community radio stations can be somehow intertwined.

After much discussion about what the plan of action could be in



**CIMN circa 1981: Close to community radio**

order to get a station up and running technically and fiscally, it was suggested that the area of foremost importance was the programming. If there is a will, there is a way to acquire funds and run administrative operations, but what is the good of having a radio station if there is nothing of worth to program? Indeed, these details would have to be worked out first. Luckily, a facility through which this is all possible manifested itself in the form of one of the collective's unused office space and his equipment capable of broadcasting information to a modest number of listeners over the internet. The plan is to do as much refining as possible employing the internet before attempting to move on to "real" radio. Real may mean in this sense, "regulated."

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The internet insofar is not regulated, and therefore it is easy to release music, talk, and information with no finite trial period, or quota for Canadian content (or otherwise) that

the CRTC (Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission) may impose. That being said, this gives the very real atmosphere and serves as the "dry run" that is needed in order to eventually step up to the arguably more accessible medium of the airwaves. (Since the target audience is the community, then the radio is more abundant than that of a high quality computer, especially in a vehicle.)

An important resource that was invited to the meeting was a representative from Industry Canada - a

group which is responsible for initiating the technical aspect of a new radio station. He informed the group that it was relatively simple to get a licence; all that is needed for a low-wattage transmitter is to fill out an application and obtain a frequency. Fifty watts is the norm for a neophyte Community station, and seems ideal for Charlottetown as it could cover a 7-10 km radius if the placement is on a building or tower of suitable elevation.

The ease with which a permit can be obtained from Industry Canada is eclipsed with the relatively long waiting period that the CRTC is infamous for. The CRTC concerns itself with regulating and supervising all aspects of the Canadian broadcasting system. But, this board is delayed by its bureaucracy and it takes months for an application to be approved.

Notwithstanding all of the details, the fact is there is a wide range of talented and ambitious folk that wish to get involved in community radio. For this to work many volunteers are needed, and although the numbers in attendance at this preliminary meeting were not insignificant, they could stand to be larger. If you are interested in such a project as this, visit [www.RadioOnTheIsland.org](http://www.RadioOnTheIsland.org) for further information, or email Peter Rukavina at [peter@rukavina.net](mailto:peter@rukavina.net).

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Community Connector Fair**

**Thursday November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2002  
11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.**

**UPEI Student Centre**

**Over 30 community and student organizations will be on hand to share information on how you can volunteer and get involved!**

**A great way to gain valuable experience and connect with the community.**