

Best Practice

Dysart History Book Committee

CONTACT

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THE PRACTICE

The Rural Municipality of Lipton #217 nominated the Dysart History Book Committee for its work in writing a Municipal History Book. The committee felt there was a need to preserve the stories of the people in writing of the Village of Dysart and surrounding rural municipalities. Our book captures a moment in time, so that time is not forgotten or lost and that is what made it the best choice.

THE PROCESS

A poster was put up asking for volunteers to be part of a committee to be put together the history book. After a couple of months, phone calls were made to individuals that the implementer thought would be interested and a group of 8 women said yes. The group met and decided to undertake the project of compiling and publishing a history book for the Village of Dysart and surrounding municipalities. They met for the first six months around kitchen tables and then it became apparent a work space would be needed. The Village of Dysart has provided an office space free of charge to the Dysart History Book Committee for the past two years. The meetings were held at least once a month.

The committee began consulting with other groups in surrounding communities who had done similar projects. They met with and chose a publisher, decided on a format, the number of pages that would be needed and set a price. At this point they began working on advertising, applying for grants and fundraising so the group would have some working money. They fundraised by serving lunches at funerals and auctions. Several of the local businesses provided financial support and two members of the committee co-signed a line of credit to get the project started. They applied for several grants, however they were not as forthcoming as the group would have liked and they only received one \$500 grant. The group set up advertising booths at various trade shows, sent out brochures and appeared on the CTV Community Events program twice. They also pre-sold copies of the history book.

The group began the collection of stories from the residents, former residents, community groups and the municipalities which will make up the history book. Each of these stories was typed by the volunteers. The stories were then formatted and sent through four levels of editing. This required thousands and thousands of volunteer hours and the commitment and professionalism was to be commended and admired. Along with the stories came photographs that captured people's histories – some sent as many as 30 photos to be included with their stories. This added even more hours to the process as the committee had to eliminate photos and select the ones they

wanted to use. In the development stage, a set number of photos were chosen and we had to work within the limits otherwise the cost for publishing changed drastically.

The book was collaborated and sent to the publisher. This is the stage that the committee is at now. A group of three committee members will travel to the publishing company south of Winnipeg over the next month to do the final edit and the book will finally be ready to print. The plan is to have it ready for distribution in July of 2010.

THE RESULTS

The result will be a book of stories and history of the Village of Dysart and the surrounding Municipalities. With hard work and dedication from the committee they feel the efforts were very worth while to capture our local history. A community changes over time, but most always feel their home town is "home" and love to share their histories with their own families. The book will be made available to the public in the Library in the Village of Dysart, both municipal offices and in the Dysart Museum.

The book captures 340 stories of families who lived and worked in the area of Dysart. For a village with a population of 197 that is a remarkable achievement. There have been 240 books presold. Since the book has not been published yet, final sales are pending however 240 presold books is a tremendous accomplishment. The final measure, that is still pending, is whether or not the History Book Committee will break even financially. This is approximately a \$30,000 project to produce a book like this and it looks like they will achieve this goal as well.

LESSONS LEARNED

Take only hard copies of pictures because it became very difficult to organize both hard copied and digital pictures. Be sure to follow up on all entries sent to the publisher. Consistent communication makes the process much smoother. Be sure to have a clear leader, one who is willing to dedicate the time to the communication process and also have a couple of people who are knowledgeable with computers if you are accepting electric stories (via email).