

Doing the math

WHAT ARE WE TO MAKE of the 2006 Census figures? Do they confirm what we've already sensed just by driving down our streets and roads? Or can the numbers be trusted?

When the 2001 Census figures were released, Dysart et al Reeve Murray Fearrey reacted with horror. Statistics Canada said that Dysart's population had dropped a whopping 8.5 per cent. Not only did this figure contradict evidence that more and more people were moving to the municipality, but the huge decrease in population would also correlate into a decrease in provincial and federal funding. With fewer people living here the municipality would require less money – or so the argument goes.

It turns out that Stats Can had drawn the municipality's borders incorrectly, giving some of Dysart's population to a neighbouring municipality. A mistake was made.

echo

editorial

martha perkins

This time around, Census indicates that Dysart's population is up by an overwhelming 12.2 per cent. Is this 12.2 per cent above the incorrect figure of 2001 or 12.2 per

cent above the modified amount? It's almost impossible to find out. But the answer does have a bearing on all the other statistics because it would have driven up the county average as well.

Playing the numbers game has its drawbacks but it is fascinating nonetheless. Census figures give us a snapshot of where we are every five years. They're a gauge of what's happening; just don't accept them as the rule.

Meanwhile, anecdotal evidence is that the municipality is growing. In 2001 we could joke that Haliburton village was so small that it had the only three-coloured traffic light in an 80 km radius. Now you have to go through three sets of lights just to cross the village, and Minden can "boast" of three sets of its own. (We still know we're in a small town, however, by the fact that our New Year's Baby has yet to be born. Believe us, we keep checking with the hospital.)

There are indeed more people living here, and apart from the accompanying increase in traffic, their presence has been most welcome. Most seem to be early retirees who can't wait to get out of the city. Most are probably cottagers who were already familiar with what the county has to offer, but a surprising number are people who are new to the Highlands.

So many of our organizations and service clubs have benefitted from their presence. They have added much to our community and are among its proudest citizens. They know how blessed they are to be here.

Forever in our memories

Steve Hill, the curator of the Haliburton Highlands Museum, has a remarkable memory. Yesterday he phoned us when he realized that Creighton Feir would have been celebrating his 80th birthday on March 19.

Newcomers to the Highlands may have noticed that the masthead on this page includes "Forever in our memories: Creighton Feir" in our list of staff. For many of us "oldtimers", Creighton was the *Echo*. He embodied its spirit. He was the paper's former owner and then its advertising manager. He knew everyone and had a heart as big as his smile. Whether you were a drunk or a duke you got the same welcome when you walked into his office. Whether you were born here or a recent arrival, he valued your contributions to the community.

It will always remain a tragedy that he died at the young age of 66. We lost such a friend and mentor. So Happy Birthday, Creighton. You will indeed be forever in our memories.