

## EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

**Johnny Reid Sings "People Like You" at Portauisque Community Centre Opening**

By Linda Harrington

There were only a handful of people who knew a surprise guest was coming to the opening of the Portauisque Community Centre on Friday, May 31st and one of those people was local singer Allison Frances-Merzbach. She had been practicing weeks ahead to perform Johnny Reid's song "People Like You" at the opening and soon realized she was not going to be able to emotionally get through the song. She decided to reach out to Johnny Reid's manager, to see if by some far chance, he may be able to come to Portauisque. Allison was amazed to find out yes indeed, Johnny Reid would be coming.

Those who knew were able to keep it a secret until the last minute when Allison got up on the stage to sing and announced there had been a change in the program. The crowd was in shock as Johnny Reid himself walked out with his guitar and asked Allison to join him.

It was back in April, 2020 at his home in Nashville, Tennessee where Jonny Reid received the terrible news of the mass shooting in Nova Scotia. He was shocked and devastated for the people of Nova Scotia and felt it was an absolute tragedy. He says he immediately knew he wanted to celebrate the good people. "I sat that night and wrote these words," he says, "And the reason for the song was to celebrate the good people, because I don't feel we get enough of that."

Johnny Reid had been performing throughout the province since 1995 and says he never had a tour on the East Coast without dates in Nova Scotia, as he always feels

very much at home here. He went on to say it was a joy for him to explain his relationship with the people he had met in Nova Scotia. "I had never met anybody in Nova Scotia that didn't treat people the right way, so I wanted to make sure people who heard the song would understand what people in Nova Scotia are really like. I wanted the lyrics to speak about some of the people and characters I've met through the years and to celebrate them."

He didn't realize how much the song was going to resonate and help other people the way it did. "The big thing is to try and help other people with the gifts we are given. My gift was music and to be able to just write a song and help other people is amazing."

The only place Johnny wishes to perform "People Like You" is in Nova Scotia. "It is a very personal song for me, it speaks for itself." Although he says he did recently oblige a group on a cruise in Spain and sang it for them, as some in the group were very much affected by the tragedy.

Johnny says he felt it was an honour to be invited up to sing at the opening of the Portauisque Community Centre. "What an honour to be asked to come up and be a part of the community where this took place. It is a very emotional time, as I am sure it is for everybody."

It was healing for him to see the other side of such sad times. "Take a look at the community here today, with everyone smiling, laughing, sharing food, sharing stories and sharing time with each other. I wanted to celebrate this and was happy to be able to come."



The covered back area will be a welcome location for the weekly farmer's markets and other outdoor events.



The Honourable Arthur J. LeBlanc, Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia.



Andrew MacDonald, Portauisque Community Centre President and emcee for the opening event.



The Honourable Tim Houston, Premier of Nova Scotia.



Erin MacKinnon, resident of Portauisque for over twenty years gave a very emotional speech about what the new Community Centre means for her.



MP Dr. Stephen Ellis, Johnny Reid, Heather Leggate and Kevin Bushey.



The Honourable Sean Fraser, Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities.



Makayla Merzbach, Allison Francis-Merzbach, Johnny Reid, Bjorn Merzbach, Natasha Tobin-Bejarano. Everyone thought Allison, Makayla and Natasha were going to perform "People Like You" at the opening but they were keeping a surprise!



Allison Francis-Merzbach joins Johnny Reid on stage to sing the song "People Like You", he wrote for the people of Nova Scotia.



Colchester Mayor Christine Blair



D&D Catering Staff, who prepared all the lovely food for the event, posed for a photo with Johnny Reid.



Warmly  
Delivered

Propane | Oil | Service | Installation



CONTACT US FOR YOUR  
HOME COMFORT NEEDS.  
902.895.4429

**Wilson's**  
Heating  
wilsonsheating.ca

**WORKING  
FOR YOU**

AT HOME AND IN OTTAWA

**MP STEPHEN ELLIS**

Member of Parliament for Cumberland-Colchester  
Shadow Minister of Health



**DO YOU NEED ASSISTANCE  
WITH A FEDERAL PROGRAM?**

**WE CAN HELP!**

- Citizenship and Immigration
- Service Canada
- Canada Pension Plan
- Passports
- Disability Pension Plan
- Canada Revenue Agency
- Veterans Affairs
- Employment Insurance

Contact Information:

stephen.ellis@parl.gc.ca

Truro Office: 902-895-2863

Amherst Office: 902-667-8679

SIGN UP for my E-Newsletter:

www.drstephenellismp.com

