

# Northeast Winnipeg gets new historical society



Photo by Ryan Crocker

Ruth Wright (left), Cathy Phillipson and Jim Smith hope northeast Winnipeg's new historical society will be a hit with residents.

## East Kildonan

BY RYAN CROCKER

STAFF REPORTER

ryan.crocker@canstarnews.com

An East Kildonan-based seniors organization is hoping to preserve the history of the region before it is irretrievably lost.

Members of the Good Neighbours Active Living Centre recently announced plans to establish the Nor'east Historical Society. The aim of the society will be to record and preserve the history of East Kildonan as well as North Kildonan and Elmwood.

Good Neighbours detailed its plans for the society at a June 9 public meeting at Bronx Park Community Centre. The meeting was attended by historical committee members Ruth Wright, Cathy Phillipson, and amateur historian Jim Smith.

Smith said that more has to be done to preserve the area's history because so much of it has already been lost.

"The oldest house from this part of the city is now in the St. Norbert Heritage Park. It has no reason to be there at all," he said, adding an even older house was burned decades ago to allow firefighters to practice their techniques.

Wright said many people don't realize the historical importance of the area and that information needs to be shared with a larger audience.

Smith said northeast Winnipeg was settled much earlier than many other areas of the city. He said the history of the three neighbourhoods isn't well known — even by the people who live there.

"For example, how many residents of Elmwood know the neighbourhood was historically part of East Kildonan?" Smith

said, noting it is named for the Elmwood Cemetery, one of the first non-denominational cemeteries in the province.

"Before the cemetery was built in 1902, there was no mention of the name Elmwood. It was known as the Louise Bridge District or, sometimes, as Kildonan Village."

Wright said sharing the history of the region with more people will have practical benefits. She noted recent flooding in North Kildonan and said some of the affected properties were built where creeks once flowed.

The society's long-term plans include publishing a history of the three northeast neighbourhoods and establishing a museum for the region.

The group's immediate goal is to preserve the personal stories of area residents, according to Wright.

"These stories are out there and we just have to gather them and record them before they are lost," she said.

"We've got a history to be proud of and it's important to let people know what life was like here and why it is the way it is today."

Wright said the society plans to approach area schools, including Miles Macdonell Collegiate, to discuss the possibility of having students meet with seniors to interview them and record their stories.

"Grandparents used to share these stories but we're so busy these days it just doesn't happen," she said.

In the meantime, society members are encouraging area residents to record the stories of seniors they know and bring them to the group's next meeting. The meeting will be held Sept. 8, beginning at 7 p.m. at the Bronx Park Community Centre.