



Lindsay Butland, the 25-year-old owner of Crooked Creek Convenience.

(Janet Wallace Photos)

Convenience to community

Lindsay Butland puts her mark on local store

by Janet Wallace

The new sign announcing “Crooked Creek Convenience Store” was the first clue that the little Kwik-Way convenience store had a new owner. The second was a smaller sign, “Gluten-free products available.” Now this was definitely new.

When I entered the store, I first saw what I had expected – milk, soft drinks, fireworks, and candy. But then I saw organic milk and soymilk in the cooler, local beef in the freezer, and even Goose tongue greens. On the counter, there was a petition about a moratorium on seismic testing for fracking.

Let me back up. Crooked Creek Convenience is in the Village of Riverside-Albert, New Brunswick. The store is about halfway between Moncton and Alma (the entrance to Fundy National Park.) There

aren’t many farmers in the area. The few organic growers around sell their products at the farmers’ markets, next to fudge, squares, and pies. Gluten-free, organic, soy, and even locally-produced are not what you expect around here, particularly in a convenience store with a retail space of only 25 by 65 feet.

“I want the place to have a country feeling,” says the owner, Lindsay Butland. I’m surprised such a young woman has bought the store. While many of her peers are leaving the area to move to Toronto or the oil patch, Butland works to strengthen her ties to the community. She will celebrate the second anniversary of owning Crooked Creek Convenience in November 2013.

LOCAL MIRACLE

The store is located in an economically

depressed area of the province: in June 2013, the area’s unemployment rate was 16.5 percent. The idea that anyone would buy a store in the area is surprising; the fact that it was a 23-year-old woman is remarkable. The best part is that the store has become successful.

Butland appreciates the connection between a business and a rural community. She doesn’t feel the local people are just customers – they are her family, her friends, and her community. In the same way they support the store, the store supports the village and surrounding area.

FRIEND OF THE SCHOOL

On a sunny day in June, all the students of Riverside Consolidated School stood in line on the lawn next to the store. They sang along with the grade three-and-four

teacher as they waited for Butland to serve them ice cream.

A few minutes earlier, the students sat on the store's deck and dooryard while a teacher read a book aloud. They were gathered there for the opening of the Little Free Library (see page 40). Butland thought the library would fit in well with the store.

"I noticed a lot of people come here when the bookmobile is here. I thought it would be good to have books here at other times." The bookmobile stops outside the store for a half-hour once every three weeks.

For the Little Free Library's opening, all 50 students of Riverside Consolidated walked a kilometer from the school to the store. "We want to support the store," says the school principal, Barry Snider, "because Lindsay has been good to us. She raised money for the school after digital cameras and other high-tech equipment were stolen."

"I felt badly for the kids," Butland says. "They had raised the money themselves through bottle drives and penny drives and their own hard work. So I started to raise money in the store through 50/50 draws. It wasn't much for people to give, just a dollar here and there, but it was something to help the kids and the community."

FIGHTING GOOD FIGHTS

Besides fundraising for many community groups, the checkout at Crooked Creek serves as a venue to learn about protests



For the launch of the Little Free Library, the students of Riverside Consolidated School listened to a book being read aloud by the grade five teacher.

against fracking. Butland provides leaflets about the environmental consequences of fracking and posts notices about upcoming events. Often there is a petition on the counter asking the New Brunswick government for a moratorium on shale gas development.

"I love fishing, hunting, and living off the land," she adds. "And fracking is so much the opposite of all that. It can destroy our environment. I don't push my views

on anyone. I just print off the facts and let them decide for themselves." She also has three copies of the DVD Gasland, which she lends out for free.

"My mother says I should keep my views on the down-low, but I think the more noise I can make, the more noise we can all make. We have to do something. The government and oil companies are forcing this down our throats.

"I really enjoy Albert County the way it



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is,” says Butland. “I feel we should be protecting the land and water for the next generation.”

Butland has lived almost all her life in Albert County. Before buying the store, she worked on the lobster boats, but suffered from seasickness. She wanted to find another way to make a living but still stay in the area. She had already worked in a couple of convenience stores, and thought that maybe this was the business for her.

Butland approached the former owner of the corner store and asked if he was willing to sell—he was. Not only that, he had put the store on the market just the day before. Timing was on her side, but financing was another story. For a young woman with no money to her name and little experience, it was a challenge. The former owner was patient, she said, and waited until she could find the money. After several months, Butland, then 23 years old, owned the store.

A FAMILY ENTERPRISE

Butland’s family supports the business in many ways. Her mother helps with the bookkeeping and her sister works at the till. Her grandmother plants flowers around the deck and picnic tables. Her father and uncles have helped with the

renovations. Most importantly, Butland’s mother bought the parcel of the land adjoining the store and, in doing so, reduced the sale price of the store.

Joanne Butland has started a new business in a building next to her daughter’s store. She runs Crooked Creek Adventures, a kayak, canoe, and bike rental.



Lindsay Butland serves ice cream to the whole student body (all 50 of them) of Riverside Consolidated.

The business takes advantage of the location – Crooked Creek is alongside the store and the TransCanada Trail is across the road. Joanne’s business brings more people to the store.

Lindsay Butland has made a number of changes, which should help the economic viability of the Crooked Creek Convenience and also help the community. For example, she added a deck with a ramp, “To make it easier for the older clients, especially in the winter.”

She has also added a coffee station. The store now has “regulars” who stand inside or outside on the deck to talk about the community. She also started selling hunting and fishing licenses, and worms for bait. She has expanded the hours of the store, particularly during the beginning of the deer and duck season, and has hired three staff.

Unlike many convenience stores, Crooked Creek has local food for sale. The freezer contains frozen lobster and scallops from Alma, next to beef and pork from the local butcher, Arnold Glendenning of ANCM meats. “People love the meat, especially the bacon,” Butland says. “And Arnold labels the packages so people know where it’s from.”

Little Free Library

“It is the smallest library that you will ever visit,” reads the press release for the opening of the library in Riverside-Albert. “It looks like a birdhouse, but when you look inside you will find a variety of books for readers of all ages.”

The Little Free Library is simply a collection of books people can borrow on their own terms. The name may say “little” but the library is actually tiny; it’s just a shelf of 20 to 30 books in a glass-fronted box. There are no library cards, due dates, or late fees. Part of an international program, all Little Free Libraries are in public places, usually outside, and are accessible 24 hours a day. The libraries are situated in areas that are not well served by regional library programs.

Readers can pick up books and simply return them whenever they are finished reading. Or people can take a

book from the library and donate another book. Volunteers monitor the collection to ensure the collection always contains books for all ages.

As for concerns over theft, “How can you steal a free book?” asks Carole Murphy, community engagement coordinator, Anglophone East School District. Vandalism is another issue that has been raised, but supporters of the Little Free Library hope that the location’s highly visible location will help keep it safe.

The Riverside-Albert Little Free Library is supported by the Anglophone East School District of New Brunswick. It is the seventh Little Free Library to open in Atlantic Canada. For more information and to see a map of the libraries, visit the Little Free Libraries link at AtlanticFarmer.com.

Butland also sells fiddleheads, Goose tongue greens, and other seasonal delicacies. She wants to sell more local vegetables but needs to find a farmer who can provide a consistent supply. With every product she buys from a local producer, she helps another local business.

In trying to meet the needs of the whole community, Butland brings in organic milk, soymilk, lactose-free milk, and gluten-free products once she recognizes



"Nightcrawlers for sale," "Gluten-free products available," and "No fracking" notices are posted above the till. At Crooked Creek Convenience Store in Riverside-Albert, N.B., Lindsay Butland offers a wide range of services, including bringing in special orders and providing information about anti-fracking demonstrations.

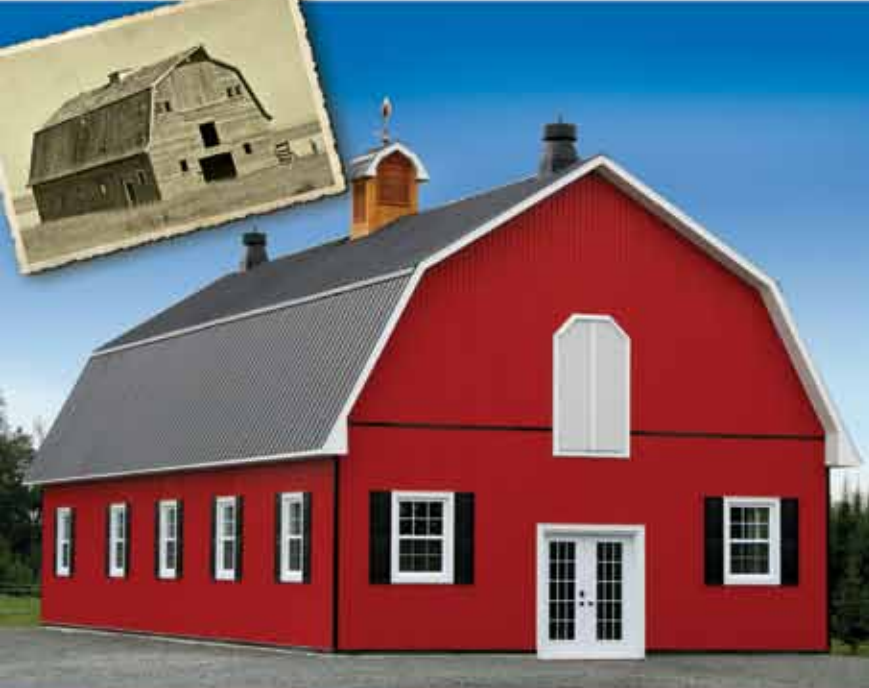
a need for these. "There's not much to choose from around here if you can't have gluten," she says. "So I carry some products. It means a lot to people when I bring in special orders.

"I get to help people," she adds, "These little things make the job worthwhile. And I like the challenge of the business."

While we talk, a customer comes in and says, "It's really nice to see so many people here." I agree.

(Janet Wallace likes to support small businesses near her home in Albert County, N.B.)

**"Dad always said,
'You get what you pay for'."**




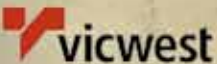
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