

# St. John Valley Senior College Profile

The St. John River Valley and the Fish River Chain of Lakes provide the geographic boundaries of our Senior College. This 20- by 70-mile swath of land includes two river valleys that house some 15 close-knit communities that make up our constituency. New Brunswick, Canada and the St. John River combine to make up nearly all the 70-mile northern border, a unique piece of land with a culturally diverse population and ripe with curiosity, camaraderie, caring and community. Our St. John Valley Senior College Board of Directors includes at least one resident from seven of these towns. These connections help us keep a finger on the pulse of what our organization and curriculums should look like.

***“The mission of the Senior College shall be to provide stimulating learning opportunities and special activities developed primarily for people 50 years of age or older.”***

In 2007 a committee was formed to investigate the possibility of starting a Senior College in the St. John Valley. The Committee met with representatives of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute and the Maine Senior College Network. They discussed the potential size of the population which would be served, the different communities that would be served, and the types of courses that might be offered.

In 2008 the St. John Valley Senior College was founded as a cooperative endeavor of the Fort Kent Senior Center Club (Council), MSAD 27 Adult and Community Education Program (MSAD 27), and the University of Maine at Fort Kent (UMFK). The bylaws were originated and ratified by the three organizations in February 2008 and the first classes were offered in the spring of that year.

The St. John Valley Senior College is governed by a Board of Directors currently consisting of 15 members plus liaisons from the Council, MSAD 27, and UMFK. We have regularly scheduled meetings seven times annually. There are also several

committees which are responsible for developing the curriculum, recruiting instructors, scheduling classes, enrolling members, and publicizing the college.

Our Senior College conducts two terms. The Spring term begins the second week of March and ends the second week of June. The Fall term starts the second week of September and ends the second week of December. Within each term, between 10 and 15 classes are offered. These classes are delivered in live, Zoom, and hybrid formats with an academic approach, as field experiences, trips, workshops and more.

The curriculum committee asks all board members to submit class ideas throughout the year. It also surveys our students for ideas. These are added to an on-going list which we use to create our next set of classes. We then use the seven categories set forth in the OLLI Policy and Procedures manual to ensure diversity. Our Spring '26 classes will fall under six of the seven categories or clusters suggested.

Over the past five years we have been experiencing a steady growth in membership, registration, and attendance. In 2025, we offered 22 classes with an average attendance of 29 students.

For our members over 80, tuition is free. For those who are 50-79, the tuition is \$15.00 per semester to attend all classes. For those who are under 50, the cost is \$15.00 per class as long as the class has adequate seating.

In closing, any successes we have achieved are directly related to a completely volunteer Board of Directors who are intimately plugged into their individual communities. Our students are passionate about learning and will respond to a wide variety of topics. They sign up for academic classes, technology classes, field experiences, trips, "How To" classes and more. What they love most is learning something new in tandem with their friends and neighbors.

Click here for a more sensory approach to the St. John Valley Senior College.

<https://youtu.be/RnsKFiOJwMw>.



## Top photo: 2008 Board of Directors

(Front L-R: Fernande Cyr, Pat Dow; 1<sup>st</sup> row L-R: Edletraut Thiele, Scott Voisine, Burnette Bowker, Bern Michaud, Marie Theriault, Betty Pecoraro, Venette King, "Arms" Labbe, Greta Martin; Back row: Ron Thibodeau, Lucien Theriault, Fern Charette, Peter Caron)

## Bottom photo: 2025 Board of Director

Front L-R: Don Murray, Laura Audibert, Dona Saucier, Tammy Wortman, Stacey Cyr; 2nd row, Don Raymond, Doug Clapp, Nancy Raymond, Lisa Roy, Sandra San Antonio, Norma Brogan, Alain Ouellette, Roland Wortman, Andrew Birden; Linda Daigle, Don Lebel, Lester Michaud