



CULTURAL MOMENT FOR DECEMBER 15, 2025 CELEBRATES 10 YEARS OF 88.7 THE RIVER

As 2025 marks the tenth anniversary of 88.7 The River broadcasting from downtown Mount Forest, the station's journey reveals a story of vision, perseverance, and transformation.

The seeds were planted in June 2011, when a proposal at a Township of Wellington North Economic Development meeting set in motion the idea of a community radio station. Over the next two years, dedicated work behind the scenes led to the CRTC granting a license in September 2013, officially establishing Saugeen Community Radio Inc. The founding board — Dale Small, Shawn McLeod, John McGovern, Chris Byrnes, Tim Boggs, and chair John Tyson — appointed Rob Mattice as the first General Manager, setting the stage for what was to come.



The station's identity was initially in flux. It launched as "The Spark," but the community's involvement soon shaped its future. In late 2015, after a public contest, the station adopted the name "The River," suggested by Kameron Nicholson, who now hosts the weekday show "Mel's Diner." Broadcasting began from a temporary studio at Plume's Main Street Interiors, with a team of volunteers and contributors including by not limited to John Patrick, Bob and Jamie Radojcin, Axy Leighl, Betty Lou Roxburgh, Roslyn Fortier, Deedee Eurig, John Harada, Len Robinson, Eric McLeod, Chris Holden, Brian Campbell, Erin Keirs, and Murray Calder bringing a diverse range of programming to the airwaves.

The River's foundation was built on local engagement, but its true transformation began with the move to a permanent home on Main Street and the expansion of its team. Strategic hires in sales and administration, along with new programming, allowed the station to reflect the interests and needs of Mount Forest and its surrounding communities. The River became a fixture at local events, hosting festivals and fundraisers, and using its platform to amplify community initiatives.

Challenges were inevitable. Technical setbacks, the loss of key personalities, and changes in leadership tested the station's resilience. Each transition, however, brought new voices and perspectives. Programming evolved to meet changing audience interests, and partnerships with local businesses and organizations grew stronger. The

station's tagline shifted from "Your. Local. Radio." to "Local radio at its best!"—a reflection of its commitment to quality and relevance.

Over the years, The River's impact has become increasingly visible. Since July 2019, its on-air talent have served as master of ceremonies at the Mount Forest Fireworks Festival. The station is the title sponsor of the annual Wellington North Mayor's Charity Bonspiel and the Mount Forest Curling Club's Family Day Bonspiel, supports local sports teams, and presents the Chamber of Commerce's Citizen of the Year Award. Milestones have been celebrated, such as "Broadway Hits & Bits" reaching 300 episodes, and volunteers who are no longer with us, like the late John McGovern, have been honoured for their contributions.

Today, The River is more than a broadcaster—it is a catalyst for connection. With Chris Holden as General Manager, Gary Lizotte in sales, Eric McLeod in production, and a board of directors including Shawn McLeod (chair), Dale Small, Lynn Williamson, Bill Yelland, and Mike Wilson, the station remains driven by and for the community. Ten years on, 88.7 The River stands as a testament to the power of local voices and the enduring value of community radio.

Submitted by the Wellington North Cultural Roundtable