



The Millet & District Historical Society Board 2006.

L to R: Back Row, Linda Weber, Eleanor Pydde, Barb Linaker, Bill Kemp, Pat Thorkman, Jean Scott, Barb Currie, Louise Reist, Audrey Senetza. **Front Row,** Tracey Leavitt, Ellen Kemp, Margaret Mullin, Jo Moonen.

Based on a research plan developed by consultant Lawrie Knight-Steinbach, historian Kathryn Ivany was hired to complete a series of oral history interviews with Jean Scott. Other interviews were conducted with the Board of Directors, present and former staff, and current and former volunteers. Other community and society members were used as comparative and corroborating witnesses. The questions for those interviews were drawn from research undertaken in the minutes of the Millet and District Historical Society and other documents found in their archives. Other research undertaken highlighted how the Millet and District Museum and Archives fit into the broader community of Alberta's cultural institutions.

While the archival documents give the progression of events and projects which made up the history of the Society, the Board felt that the personal reflections and experiences of planning, organizing and carrying them out, was more important for the Society to review and internalize. The oral interviews were planned to bring out the nature and values of the individuals who had a guiding hand in how the Historical Society grew, developed and interacted with other organizations within the community. The evaluation at the end of the research process sought to identify both those qualities which make a great volunteer and the way in which they can be recruited, trained and maintained. They hoped it would provide information to help the Society plan for continuity, change, and to develop successors to those founding members.

The question sets for the oral interviews with Jean Scott were, therefore, focused on her recollections of how the Historical Society operated. While the first interview gave attention to gathering biographical information, it helped establish Jean's character, her connection to the community and why the Society became important to her. The second and third interviews worked through the major projects of the Historical Society in the first ten to fifteen years. These projects were quite diverse – publishing a book, building a seniors lodge and starting an exhibit room for the interpretation of local history – yet they fit the needs and interests of a group of people over that stretch of time. In the fourth and fifth interviews Jean Scott talked about what she valued about the Society and how she thought it worked. In part, she showed that the Historical Society was successful because it managed to adapt to the changing interests of its constituents while employing the same operational strategy to achieve the new goals.

In each case Jean Scott recalled that the Historical Society set a very clear and achievable goal. The current president of the Society, Bill Kemp, stated in the interview with the Board that he remains active in the Millet and District Historical Society because he has a real sense of the purpose of the organization. While the Society may face challenges in obtaining funding and recruiting volunteers, those who are involved remain committed because they understand at a fundamental level the importance of preserving the history of their community and providing the museum and archives services to those who are now, and who may in the future be, interested in learning about Millet.