



THE BLUE HERON

The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society

P.O. Box 158, Baddeck, Nova Scotia B0E 1B0

VOLUME 9

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NO. 1

This issue of Blue Heron Newsletter is the eighteenth issued in the Society's short life. We have included, once again, the most recent issue Uni'maki Newsletter as well as a printing of the MacKinnon's Harbor Survival Association's fall 2006 newsletter. Jim Crawford has provided an update on the Bras d'Or oyster fishery. Pat Bates reviews issues in his progress report. These are examples of local entities working in the best interests of the Bras d'Or Lakes and its watershed. We hope that you find the contents worthwhile and interesting.

The recent national liberal political party leadership campaign witnessed the coming of age of environmental issues. On behalf of Canadians across the country global warming, stewardship of our forest resources, the unacceptable declines of fish stocks and waste management strategies have come into their own as topics for spirited political debate. There is an ever-growing certainty that the environment will be the preeminent catalyst in shaping voter

response at election time at all levels of government: federal, provincial and municipal. People know that the environment must come first if we are to survive.

Solving environmental issues requires a consultative process amongst various levels of government. Often there is a feeling that the public is left out. Legislation is past and regulations imposed. However, it is through the efforts of environmental groups who act on behalf of local environmental interests that lead the way to constructive solutions to local environmental problems.

Since the inception of The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society in 1997 perhaps the major success has been the consultation and collaboration efforts with the three levels of government, the First Nations and individuals who are interested in maintaining the ecological integrity of the Bras d'Or Lakes and its watershed. The issues become somewhat repetitious as focus on water quality, sewage management, shoreline scarification, building set backs regulations, land sub-division concerns, shellfish protection and shorefront preservation are always on the table for debate.

Building a public awareness of the existing and potential threats to the Bras d'Or Lakes and its watershed is an accretive process. Often the process is a reactive one when something catastrophic is threatened or occurs. The key, however, is to be proactive in building a long term vision of how we, the local residents and increasing number of seasonal residents, would like to plan and participate in the future safeguarding of the existing natural capital.

The greatest danger to the stewardship of the Bras d'Or Lakes and its watershed is apathy and

the sentiment that public input cannot make a difference. This undermines creating the long-term vision, which must look 25-50 years out into the future especially given the uncertainties regarding global warming. The positive aspect of projecting into the future is that both government at all levels and the voters have the power to bring about change. The bottom line is mustering the will power to affect the changes that will serve the best interests of all. We all are responsible.

NOTICE

**THE ANNUAL
GENERAL MEETING OF THE
SOCIETY WILL BE HELD ON
SATURDAY, MARCH 24, 2007
AT THE
ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL
MUSEUM
AT 2:00 PM.
ALL MEMBERS ARE INVITED
TO ATTEND AS WELL AS
INTERESTED CITIZENS WHO
ARE CONCERNED WITH THE
FUTURE STEWARDSHIP OF
THE BRAS D'OR LAKES.**

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"Our goal is to protect, conserve and restore the Bras d'Or Lakes"



NEWS ITEMS:

NEW ESKASONI CHIEF:

Recently Charlie Denis has been elected the new chief of the Eskasoni First Nations Community. Over many years, Charlie has focused attention on the Bras d'Or Lakes and its watershed through the work of the Eskasoni Fish and Wildlife Commission.

Charlie has worked cooperatively with many groups to further both scientific knowledge and habitat stewardship. We wish Charlie nothing but the best in the challenges he faces in his new and important role as band chief.

HABITAT RESTITUTION:

In the spring of 2006, a private land owner was found guilty of infilling a wet land and pond on a property situated on Baddeck Bay. The owner has been ordered to restore the property to its former state and pay a fine of \$3,000.00. The fine has been awarded to the Society. The Society is working on a plan to use this money to educate the public about shoreline and habitat protection.

BOATING NUMBERS:

It has been reported that the boat traffic numbers declined in 2006 on the Bras d'Or Lakes. This decline may be attributable to the increase of fuel pricing as boat owners elected to stay closer to home. There were several foreign mega-yacht powerboats on the Bras d'Or this past summer. Demographics also have a role in determining boating activity. Boating has become more expensive in terms of new boat purchasing and maintenance, operating and repairs.

NEW NATURE RESERVE:

In September 2006, a celebration was held at St. Francis Xavier University regarding the selection of

a number of ecologically significant properties in Nova Scotia that have been designated as 'nature reserves' under the Special Places Act. One such property was the 175-acre Birch Point Property located on the westerly side of the entrance to the Washabuck River. This property is also protected by a forever-wild conservation easement held by the Nova Scotia Nature Trust.

This property protects almost three kilometers of shoreline. To get the 'nature reserve' designation required certain amendments to existing legislation. Now that these new amendments are in place the process for a private landowner to seek 'nature reserve' designation has been made easier.

SOCIETY BUSINESS ITEMS:

MEMBERSHIP:

Society memberships are the key to the success of the Society. Being membership based provides the economic support to allow the Society to do its work. Since the organization of the Society in 1997, the annual membership numbers have varied from over 200 to around 120. During the last four years there has been an incremental decline in our annual membership numbers. The Society needs public membership support to continue its work.

FINANCIAL NEEDS:

To carry out the Society's work, we rely on annual membership fees. The schedule of fees is available on the final page of the bi-annual Newsletters. The greatest cost is the printing and mail out the two issues of The Blue Heron. A web site is maintained and the Society sponsors radio pieces about the Bras d'Or Lakes during

the summer.

Because all work is carried out on a volunteer basis by board members, the Society does not incur administrative costs. Prudent management of Society funds has allowed the Society to be self-sufficient. We are determined to go forward as an independent self-sustaining non-profit entity.

BOARD RECRUITMENT:

The Society is dependant on its board of directors for leadership and carry out the work determined to be in the best interests of protecting, conserving and restoring The Bras d'Or Lakes and its watershed. All current board members are committed to the Society's mandate. We encourage any interested individual to apply for board membership. Board members are both elected and appointed as need be. It is not easy to find dedicated individuals who are willing to volunteer their time to fulfill the goals of the Society and attend board meetings.

CELEBRATING TENTH ANNIVERSARY:

In August 2007, The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society will celebrate its 10th anniversary. Currently, the board is working on an appropriate event to celebrate ten years of work focused on maintaining the ecological integrity of the Bras d'Or Lakes. It is hoped that in about July 2007 Blue Heron details regarding an appropriate celebration will be announced.

The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society is interested in contributions from our members. If you have something to contribute to the Newsletter or would like to work with the society's board, please let us know. The society is an all volunteer organization that welcomes input from individuals interested in promoting the conservation, protection and restoration of the Bras d'Or Lakes and its watershed.

Shell Fish Report

by Jim Crawford

Good News:

There will be no new shellfish closures in the Bras d'Or Lakes for 2007.

This announcement came during the bi-annual meeting of the Nova Scotia Shellfish Working Group. The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society has been a participant in this group since the late 1990s.

The water quality of shellfish growing areas is a fundamental focus of this group. Testing of the Bras d'Or Lakes is divided into three sectors with each sector being tested on a three-year rotation. In 2006 Environment Canada was able to test almost all of the lake because of additional manpower. The result of no new closures after testing the majority of the lake is indeed good news. Perhaps it is the start of a new trend!

Bad News:

During the meeting in November, it was revealed that the Department of Fisheries & Oceans Science Division detected the MSX parasite in oyster through DNA profiling. The area these oysters came from was the end of South Denys Basin (Lewis Island). This area was always a bountiful site for oysters. If the parasite invades the region, it will further the demise of the once thriving oyster fishery in the Bras d'Or Lakes. The big question is will it ever be illegal to discharge ballast water in the Bras d'Or Lakes. Indeed, to get the dumping of ballast water ruled illegal would be a worthy goal for the Society to work towards.

Progress To Report On Big Items

By Pat Bates

The year 2006 has been a period when the consolidated efforts of all agencies and citizens working to protect the Bras d'Or Lake have born fruit. While the effort to bring tighter control of sewage discharge into the Lake from cottages and residences continued, it was noted that reports for the year 2005 confirmed no additional areas in the Lake have been closed to shell fishing. This information reflects efforts coordinated by Environment Canada and the industry to preserve a healthy Lake for the oyster fishery. Some good news of particular interest has been the information released by the Federal Departments of Environment and Transport relating to three specific issues or areas of risk. In July, the Honourable Peter MacKay announced regulation that will begin the elimination of the discharge of sewage from pleasure craft into the Bras d'Or. This measure came about through the combined effort of all persons interested in the protection of the Lake.

Also of particular importance is the release of information by Transport Canada on two issues. The first is the putting in place of new and tighter regulation governing the practice of discharging ballast water from commercial vessels in certain areas of the Atlantic including the Bras d'Or Lake. This practice, heretofore, has provided opportunities for the transfer of so-called invasive species such as the green crab and MSX virus into the Bras d'Or. While ships require ballast to enable safe navigating, some controls such as the practice of ballast water handling has become essential. This action should offer increased protection. Also, in the final stages is new and tighter regulations respecting management and handling of

toxins, chemicals, pollutants and petroleum products of various types by commercial and fishing vessels. While these measures are of particular application to Canadian ocean waters, they are of specific interest to Section One and Canadian inland waters. These areas include most of the Great Lakes, Upper St. Lawrence River area, and the Bras d'Or Lake. These actions are undertaken by Transport Canada (Canadian Coast Guard) and usually follow an extended period of consultation with shipping firms and others affected. However, on balance, such acts mean progress is being made in protecting the Bras d'Or Lake and our environment is receiving the attention it deserves.

Our Congratulations to Charlie Joe:

A leader in the ongoing efforts to protect and Restore the Bras d'Or Lake has been elected as Chief of the Band Council of Eskasoni First Nation. Charlie Dennis, perhaps better known as Charlie Joe Dennis, was recognized by his community as a strong and committed community leader and a person who brings to his new position significant experience as former CEO of Eskasoni Fish & Wildlife Commission and current CEO of Unimaki Institute of Natural Resources.

Charlie enjoys a wide network of colleagues and associates in both local and in senior levels of government as well as with the private sector and NGOs. Widely respected in both aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities, he plans to continue in his role as CEO of UINR and a major player in conservation of the Bras d'Or Lakes.

The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society

Addresses and telephone numbers of the Board of Directors

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Bras d'Or Watch
 to report any observed acts, incidents and
 violations that threaten the integrity of
 Bras d'Or Lakes please call:

1 800 565 1633

Our Email: stewardship@baddeck.com

2007

BRAS D'OR STEWARDSHIP SOCIETY

- | | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|----------|--|
| MEMBER | <input type="checkbox"/> | \$15.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I am in favour of conserving and restoring the |
| FAMILY | <input type="checkbox"/> | \$25.00 | Bras d'Or Lake and watershed through |
| CONTRIBUTOR | <input type="checkbox"/> | \$50.00 | responsible stewardship. |
| SUPPORTER | <input type="checkbox"/> | \$100.00 | Name _____ |
| LIFETIME MEMBER | <input type="checkbox"/> | \$500.00 | Address _____ |

*Mail check or money order along with your name
 and address to:*

Bras d'Or Stewardship Society
P.O. Box 158
Baddeck, Nova Scotia, B0E 1B0

Phone _____

e-mail _____

Fax _____

McKinnon's Harbour Survival Association **Newsletter - Fall 2006**

*To the landowners, users, supporters and other stakeholders of McKinnon's Harbour
& the Bras d'Or Lakes, Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia:*

A) Channel Maintenance/Entrance to the Harbour

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in Baddeck provided us with an extended 2006 permit to place spoils (sand & gravel) on the south side of the channel. This permit was much like the original expired permit from DNR. Special thanks to Mr. David O'Connor and Mr. Blaise Landry for their cooperation in securing this temporary extended permit.

With the permit in hand, Bruno MacNeil and his associates began making arrangements to get the work done last winter past. Hazeldale Milling & Trucking was contracted. Planning also began to access the work site via the route used in the past to journey equipment. This involved shoring the coastline with timber westward from Red Point across the sand bar to the island south of the harbour entrance. The intention was to have Hazeldale Milling & Trucking travel an excavator on thick ice and wooden timbers. Unfortunately, the work could not take place, as there was not enough ice, the result of a mild winter.

Another route was discussed with a property owner. This route would provide us easy access, however, the Association was unable to guarantee there would not be any damage to the property when the contractor's excavator passed over it. This option was then no longer considered.

The final result of many late night telephone conversations, e-mails, faxes, meetings, long distance travelling and days of intensive labour preparing for a 2006 winter spoils removal from McKinnon's Harbour entrance by your executive simply could not take place for the reasons described above. Those involved changed their work schedules, surrendered days off & provided many volunteer hours towards this objective. Special thanks to Bruno MacNeil, David MacLellan, Tanya MacLean, Lawrence MacNeil, David O'Connor, Blaise Landry, Wayne MacKenzie & Pat Bates.

It is important to note that Hazeldale Milling & Trucking have made a down payment on a barge that will transport their equipment across the channel from north to south. This will provide an access to retrieve the spoils. The next permit from DNR will specify relocating these south side spoils to the north side of the entrance. We hope this work to take place in 2007.

B) Navigation Lights

There is one navigation light not working. We are to replace it with a proper functioning light next season.

C) Oyster Lease

The Association has worked with the Department of Aquaculture over the past few years with the intent of securing an oyster lease within McKinnon's Harbour. This lease is now active and is legally owned and operated by the Association. The sole purpose of this oyster lease is to provide revenue for the Association and thus the community. A donor provided the business plan, initial application fee and subsequent start-up costs. In the event the Association wishes to dissolve ownership, it is agreed by the executive, the donor has first rights to refusal on said lease.

The lease is identified as Aquaculture Site 1225 and signage is posted south side of McKinnon's Harbour, west of property owner Leonard MacLean's survey line. Lease buoys identifying the boundaries of this aquaculture site were placed in the McKinnon Harbour waters immediately prior to the 2006 commercial fishery. These buoys are to be removed when the commercial oyster-fishing season has ended.

Harvesting of lease #1225 was contracted to Jim Crawford and Associates. Mr. Jim Crawford lived up to his reputation as a profoundly honest, reliable & knowledgeable individual. He assisted the Association with a proposed business plan in the early stages of inception. My personal impression of Mr. Crawford is a man who values a handshake for what

it was once intended to be in years past. He was flawless in abidance to our contract and illustrated an old fashioned work ethic not commonly seen today.

D) Signage for Boaters

We need a new sign welcoming people and boaters to McKinnon's Harbour. Lawrence MacNeil provided the existing one with his carpentry & artistic skills; however, the hardships of weather and time are diminishing Lawrence's efforts. Do not be hesitant in contacting us for ideas on another.

E) Annual General Meeting

We need a general meeting with an agenda to elect interested persons on our executive. It is time to consider a new chairman. I (Charlie MacDonald) invite you to attend a future scheduled meeting where we can identify this individual. I prefer not to leave the Association, however, it is only proper we allow someone else take this position. Hopefully I can hold another role and continue to be involved with you.

F) Call for Support

As always our yearly letter closes with a solicitation for your support. It is you who truly makes McKinnon's Harbour possible. It is you who made it possible. We always ask for a volunteer donation of \$100.00 for property & boat owners with a \$50.00 recommended donation for boat owners only and or property owners only. Please be reminded this is not a user's fee. You can mail us at the following:

McKinnon Harbour Survival
Association
P.O. Box 101
Iona, N.S.
B2C 1N8

Sincerely,

Charlie MacDonald
Chairman

Oakum and Nails

*He lives in a rest home, his last port-a-call
Spent his life on the water from springtime 'til fall
Sailed a boat that he built to withstand August gales
And the only things store bought were oakum and nails.*

When the herring came in on an early spring dawn

He'd patiently wait and first let them spawn

*Taking a harvest with the future in mind
Thinking less of himself and more of man kind.*

*The mackerel and cod were in bounty as well
Salting some for the winter and a little to sell
These customs and methods were tested and true
Passed on from ancestors who practiced them too.*

*His roommates a farmer and they get along well
Sharing land and sea stories that they like to tell*

*Although skin is wrinkled from time and tide
Recollections are plenty and lessons abide.*

*The farmer advised when out in the field
Save the little potatoes as part of the yield
It's food for the pig and the small ones will do
And late in the fall the pig will feed you.*

*Now listen in earnest as I tell to you
There is something I want each one to do
Reflect on elders who remind you of these
And the first opportune go visit them please.*

You won't find a board room with figures and grafts

*Or logistics reported on papers and drafts
Just old men in their glory sharing past tense
Translating life lessons into common sense.*

*The knowledge and wisdom that they possess
Will teach you and I to get more from less
Now I can't help but voice as I ponder today
Would resources survive if tethered their way...*

*He lives in a rest home his last port-a-call
Spent his life on the water from spring time 'til fall
Sailed a boat that he built to withstand August gales
And the only things store bought were oakum and nails.*

Hughie Mac Donald

This poem written by Hughie MacDonald is based on a combination of memories from his relatives about growing up in rural Cape Breton on the Bras d' Or. The title "Oakum and Nails" represents sentiments regarding "Douglas" a close neighbor who fished with his father on the 'Boom' in River Deny's Basin where Douglas and his dad harvested oysters a week at a time during the fall oyster harvest season. Values of the day were based on frugality and hard work. Oakum and Nails were the rewards from the proceeds of one fall's season of oyster harvesting.