

2014 Annual Report – Bras d’Or Lake Biosphere Reserve

The Bras d’Or Lake Biosphere Reserve is in its third year. There is an active group of 25-30 members who are involved in a variety of activities related to governance, networking, awareness building and projects related to the promotion of the natural history of the area and how we can live more sustainably. We do not have any paid staff and so most of the work is done on a volunteer basis or through small, short-term contracts. Here are some highlights of our work over the past year.



Education Resource Committee: This group is working on a teacher/student resource manual that will be both a hard copy, written document supplemented with a variety of on-line resources – to promote the natural history of the Biosphere Reserve within the context of a Grade 4 science curriculum in local schools.

Organizations Related to the Bras d’Or: We are one of seven local organizations that work on the stewardship of the Bras d’Or watershed. We meet four times a year to share updates and to discover how we can help each other. These meetings are a great, informal way of keeping up to date with each other.

Signage for the Biosphere: We contracted a local graphic designer to map out a signage master plan for the Biosphere. He came up with some great concepts surrounding “welcoming” signage, “wayfinding” signage and the creation of “portals” to the Biosphere. We are all quite excited about the power of this signage to promote the BR with tourists – both local and from away! Fundraising efforts are now underway to help implement this plan.

A Biosphere Trail: Since the heart of our biosphere is the Bras d’Or Lake and the people here have such an affinity with it, the idea of a trail that went around the lake has always been a positive, well supported goal to work toward. The example of the Bruce Trail in the Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Reserve has inspired this in great measure although, as we have discovered, there are many existing trails and many avid participants using them! With funding from a university research program, we have managed to hire a facilitator and hold a series of workshops around the biosphere to gauge people’s interest and to gather information about trails that already exist. A lot of information has been gathered and a final report is due soon.

Museum Display: Parks Canada has reached out to us as a partner and we now have a Memorandum of Understanding that describes our mutual goals and commits us to work together for common goals. One of these is to promote Alexander Graham Bell’s interest in the environment of the Bras d’Or and to use that to mount a display in the Alexander Graham Bell museum in Baddeck that describes and promotes the UNESCO designation for the watershed. This will be a valuable public awareness piece for us with approximately 70,000 visitors passing through the museum annually!