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The Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq.



EVENTS: Save the date at The Highland Village



Hector's Pt. Snowshoe Walk February 10th *Weather permitting

For details on this plus 5 more additional walks, click [here](#).

Get To Know Our Biosphere Communities

As you travel through the various communities of the Biosphere, these rural towns and villages strive to build capacity defined as strengthening the ability of communities to act on their own behalf to promote the well-being of their members. One of the aims of a UNESCO Biosphere is community capacity building through research, monitoring and education. In many respects, the community of L'Arche and the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Reserve share many of the same goals: building community locally, nationally and internationally; showing and growing respect for their particular environments; educating others about the values of their organizations; and sharing best practices with others. In the next few months, we'll take a look at some of our Biosphere communities. Some you may know better than others.

The L'Arche Community *by Josie MacEachern*

Over 35 years ago, Tom and Anne Gunn had a dream of starting a L'Arche community along the beautiful Bras d'Or Lake. With the help of neighbors and supporters of L'Arche, they were able to obtain property in Iron Mines, just a short distance from the famous lake, and today L'Arche Cape Breton operates six homes where 25 people with intellectual disabilities live and work with people who choose to share life with them.

L'Arche Cape Breton is part of an international federation of communities for men and women with intellectual disabilities and those who choose to share life with them. They live, work and learn together in a simple lifestyle that emphasizes the value of authentic relationships. This same ideal unites all L'Arche communities, creating a worldwide family. There are 154 L'Arche communities around the world, today.

L'Arche members believe that life, with all of its complexity, is a beautiful thing and that people with intellectual disabilities deserve the opportunity to live their lives to the fullest. To live out this vision and help to change the reality for people with an intellectual disability, L'Arche Cape Breton focuses on what people can do, not on what they can't.

The L'Arche community in Cape Breton also operates seven day programs that offer meaningful ways for members to spend their days, a chapel, a house of welcome, and a new facility called the Gathering Place. Assistants from all over the world come to live at L'Arche Cape Breton and experience the distinct culture of our island. Members choose to live relationships with intention in the community as a sign to the wider society that hope, love, and unity in diversity are possible.

At Ski Ben Eoin



Moonlight Snowshoe Jaunt on Feb. 17th * weather permitting

For details, click [here](#).



Adult Iceland Gull



Immature Iceland Gull

Photos: © Allan or Cathy Murrant

For a fantastic gallery of bird sightings
click [here](#).

At L'Arche Cape Breton we strive to provide an environment that encourages the capacity for relationship building and integration. L'Arche plans on-site social activities and the new Gathering Place will be used for community gatherings, training sessions and to display artwork produced at the community's craft studio. Members also enjoy events in the surrounding communities such as concerts, dances, and ceilidhs that highlight our local culture.

L'Arche demonstrates that people with intellectual disabilities have something to offer us all, often touching our hearts through their simplicity and vulnerability. We strive to provide an environment that encourages emotional, spiritual, and intellectual growth.

In many respects L'Arche and the Biosphere Reserve share many of the same goals: building community locally, nationally and internationally; showing and growing respect for their particular environments; educating others about the values of their organizations; and sharing best practices with others.

Learn more [here](#).



Meet The Residents: Iceland Gull

by Annamarie Hatcher

While many of our feathered summer visitors are wintering in South America, a migrant from the far north flies south to the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere to spend the coldest months! The Iceland Gull (scientific name: *Larus glaucooides*) nests on rocky cliffs in the far Arctic during the summer. They usually breed in colonies of 50 to 100 nests, placed on cliff ledges that can be more than 300 meters high. They sometimes nest among the rubble at the bases of cliffs or on rock islands. Because of this inhospitable habitat, scientists have not conducted as much research on this species as they have with other gull species. The visiting Iceland Gull arrives in the Biosphere around mid-November and leaves when winter starts to turn to spring. All gulls (in Mi'kmaq: *kloqntiej*) are notoriously difficult to identify because they change their colouration as they age. The Iceland Gull is very similar to our year-round resident, the Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*) and they often hang out together. However, the visitor from the north can usually be distinguished by looking at the underside of the wings as they fly. Iceland Gulls have pale undersides and Herring Gulls have black wing tips. Iceland Gulls eat mainly fish that they pick from the sea surface and are not as attracted to human garbage as are some of the other gull species. At this time of year they will likely congregate in ice-free areas of the Bras d'Or estuary where they have access to this year's abundant smelts. The recent reports from

SCHOOL MAWIOMI & CULTURAL SHOWCASE



2019 | INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF Indigenous Languages

- Crafts and booths
- Kajua competition
- Feast
- Live Music
- Atlantic wide video conference

Please join us for a celebration and feast in as we promote the Mi'kmaw Language through creative arts!

The event will also feature the launch of the L'nuta'ql album along with the official screening of Trevor Gould's short film Apajismk!

We'koqma'q Mi'kmaw School
Monday January 28, 2019 11am - 4pm

For more information please contact:
General info - giselle@kinu.ca
Craft or booth booking - shara@kinu.ca
Drummers and dancers - tgould@cmms.ca



The Launch of L'nuta'ql CD took place on January 28, 2019 in We'koqma'q (Waycobah). Check out the promo video on [You Tube](#)

L'nuta'ql is the largest collection of original songs in the Mi'kmaw language from songwriters across the Atlantic region. The project was meant to create incentive for artists to sing and create songs in the MI'kmaw language.

Learn more about the Mi'kmaq language [here](#)



our Biosphere indicate that Iceland Gulls are more common from Groves Point to the Sydney Bight than other areas of the estuary (Eskasoni, East Bay, Big Pond, Whycocomagh), but these numbers can vary as a function of available food.

https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Iceland_Gull/lifehistory#habitat



2019 | INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF Indigenous Languages

UNESCO has declared 2019 to be the international year of Indigenous languages. In 2016, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution proclaiming 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages and requested the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to serve as the lead organization.

Languages play an important role in the daily lives of all people. It is through language that we communicate with the world, define our identity, express our history and culture, learn, defend our human rights and participate in all aspects of society, to name but a few. Through language, people preserve their community's history, customs and traditions, memory, unique modes of thinking, meaning and expression. They also use it to construct their future.

Language is pivotal in the areas of human rights protection, good governance, peace building, reconciliation, and sustainable development.

As part of reconciliation and in keeping with the aims of UNESCO biospheres, the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere supports and promotes the Mi'kmaw language.

Learn more [here](#).



In recognition of the Year of Indigenous Languages, Sebastien Goupil (center) Secretary-General for the Canadian Commission for UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)



If you take your dogs for walks along salted paths, make sure that you clean their paws before they lick the toxic salt off themselves.



Wildlife is dying due to road salt, and it must stop. Read more [here](#).

On the sunnier side of life in the Biosphere...

Coming again this summer



stopped in Eskasoni briefly on Monday to meet with Chief Leroy Denny (right) and Tom Johnson (left). They shared in a discussion on the preservation of the Mi'kmaq language. Mr. Goupil then carried on to We'koqma'q (Waycobah) to help celebrate the launch of the CD - **L'nuta'ql**. Mr. Goupil also had an opportunity to tour the Biosphere while in Unama'ki (Cape Breton).

Best Practices Corner: Road Salt does more than melt ice *by Annamarie Hatcher*

With the freeze-thaw winter that we are having, road salt is being heavily used to make our roads and walkways safer. However, we all know that the use of road salt means increased corrosion on our vehicles and road infrastructure. We also know that the salt can seep into groundwater and contaminate wells. We continue to use it because it is cheap and readily available. What we don't know, perhaps, is that there are toxic contaminants in road salt. In the Biosphere it may be time to conscientiously weigh up the advantages and the disadvantages. For those who thought that road salt was just a coarser version of table salt that would just wash away during spring rains, think again!

Sodium chloride (road salt), is largely composed of 40 percent sodium ions and 60 percent chloride ions but other components like ferrocyanide, phosphorus and iron can represent up to 5 percent of the total weight. Chloride is soluble and toxic to plants and animals. The other contaminants in road salt such as lead, chromium, cadmium and magnesium increase the toxicity of chloride in the environment and in many areas the chloride and other contaminants build up. There is no natural process by which chlorides are metabolized or removed from the environment. These impurities find their way onto vegetation and into the soil, groundwater, rivers and lakes causing significant impact to the environment. The impacts on trees and grasses are apparent along some roadways but other impacts are not as visually obvious. Many water bodies such as ponds, marshes and the Bras d'Or estuary are downstream of roadways that are salted in the winter and, eventually, the salt and the impurities may end up in these water bodies. If the flushing rate of the receiving water body is low, contaminated water (which has a high density) may settle at the deepest part. This can lead to stratification or layering which can impede turnover and mixing. The dense bottom waters can become low in oxygen and high in nutrients, changing the ecology of the whole water body.

It is not only the chloride that can cause environmental toxicity. Ferrocyanide is often used as an anti-caking compound in road salt. Usually this compound is quite stable but bacterial action and sunlight can break it down, causing release of cyanide into the environment. Ingestion of road salt by eating directly, pets licking salty paws, and by drinking snow melt and runoff can produce effects such as drooling, vomiting, diarrhea, decreased muscle function and in severe cases, cardiac abnormalities and even death (www.aspc.org).

So, as you peruse the shelves at the local hardware store looking for de-icing alternatives, take a look at the list of ingredients. Calcium chloride is

The next Board meeting of the BLBRA will take place on February 20 in the Theatre of the A.G. Bell National Historic Site. Time: 1:30 All are welcome!

Be sure to visit our website at blbra.ca



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The BLBRA welcomes your comments or suggestions. Let us know if you do not wish to receive this newsletter. Address your comments or suggestions [here](#).



a popular de-icer. It will melt snow faster and at lower temperatures than salt does and it's not as harmful to plants or animals. On the downside, there are still issues with chloride in the environment. Potassium acetate is sometimes used as a preventive measure, to keep ice from bonding to pavement. This solution blocks ice from forming at very low temperatures and it is noncorrosive and requires fewer applications. On the downside, it is biodegradable and, when washed into water bodies, is broken down by bacteria, depleting the oxygen.

What is the most environmentally-friendly approach to managing slippery walkways and driveways?

- You will be one step ahead if you keep snow clear so that it doesn't turn into a solid sheet of ice when temperatures change.
- Provide a clear path for the sun to shine directly on your driveway or walkway by clearing overhanging branches.
- Make use of materials that increase traction such as sand and the ashes from your wood stove. Particularly good are dark coloured particles because they heat up on a sunny day, creating pockets of melted ice on that driveway.
- If you have to use road salt or other de-icers to stay safe, try to minimize the amount that you use and be mindful of where that contaminated meltwater will end up.

Remember that when you chose a deicer, you're not just making a choice for your wallet and your driveway; you're making a choice for the environment! Here are some useful resources:

<https://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/02/140204-melt-snow-ice-salt-beet-juice-pickle-brine/>
<https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/a-look-at-the-alternatives-to-rock-salt-for-de-icing-roads>

Check This Out! Looking for some serious winter fun in your Biosphere? Participate in the 22nd Annual Great Backyard Bird Count, running from February 15-18, 2019. In this easy Citizen Science project, people around the world count birds for at least 15 minutes from the warmth of their homes or while out walking. To find out more, visit: <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/get-started/>

