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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.

Spring has arrived!



Coltsfoot is a perennial plant that looks similar to a dandelion. This wild edible plant is unusual in that the flowers bloom and die before the appearance of any leaves.

Save The Date!

Notes from the Chair

By: Bruce Hatcher, Chair of the Board of Directors

Last week was notable for the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Association (BLBRA). Shortly after our Association's very purposeful Board meeting at the Whycocomagh Waterfront Centre, I attended the Annual General Meeting of the Bras d'Or Stewardship Society (BSS) at its traditional home in Baddeck. The proceedings highlight the crisis of human capacity in the Biosphere, as a motion to wrap up the affairs of this important organization (see T. MacNeil's article in the previous BLBRA Newsletter) came within three votes of being carried. Many Board members had served for the entire, 20+ year history of that organization, and their average age was said to be 78 years! The good news is that three (somewhat younger) members of the Society volunteered to take up some of the seats on the Board that were vacated. Hence, there is a chance that the BSS will survive to carry on its important work. It is telling that two of the BSS Board members also serve on the Board of the BLBRA, and at least four of the BLBRA Board members also serve on the Steering Committee for the Collaborative Environmental Planning Initiative (CEPI) for the Bras d'Or Lakes: we are stretched very thin on the governance ground around the estuary, but we are mutually invested in the activities of our partner organizations. A significant decision was made to purchase life-time memberships in the Biosphere Association for all 96 of the Society's members! That donation of human resources almost doubles our Association's membership (previously 118 members), bringing a rich pool of experience and talent to the organization, as well as a substantial cash infusion. I welcome all of you who have worked for so long and so well as stewards of a charismatic ecosystem. This is breaking news, and it is yet to be determined how we will honour and build on the generous contributions of the Bras d'Or Stewardship Society, but as I see it, the outcomes can only be good.

Àros na Mara World Oceans Day Festival

June 7-10, 2018 – The Port of Iona and the Barra Strait, overlooking the beautiful Bras d'Or Lake, comes alive with festivities acknowledging World Oceans Day. This is our 4th year acknowledging and celebrating this world wide UNESCO designated event. World Ocean Day will be celebrated on Sunday, June 10th. We are pleased our Festival has been chosen by Destination Cape Breton as one to attend in 2018! Join us for some festivities, fun and food while enjoying and learning about the Bras d'Or Lake. Please check: www.arosnamara.com for updates.

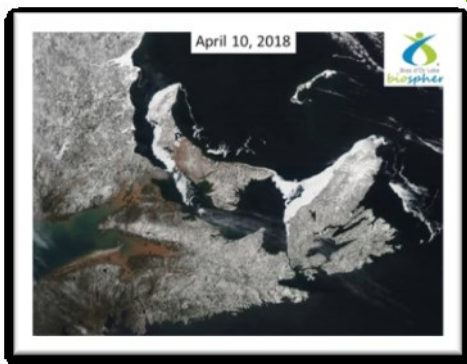
Never heard of Pessamit?

Pessamit is a First Nations reserve and Innu community in the Canadian province of Quebec, located about 50 kilometres southwest from Baie-Comeau along the north shore of the Saint Lawrence River at the mouth of the Betsiamites River. It is across the river directly north of Rimouski, Quebec. It belongs to the Pessamit Innu Band. In 2017, the Canadian Biosphere Reserve Association held its AGM in the Manicouagan-Uapishka Biosphere Reserve located in Pessamit territory.

How did we look from space this April?

From: Fred Baechler

What a difference a few spring days make! A spring storm blanketed the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere with 35 cm of snow on April 8. Bare ground and deepening green pictured on April 6 was covered in white in the April 10 picture from NASA's Aqua satellite. Spring snow is often referred to as 'nature's fertilizer'.



Pessamit Call for Reconciliation

The Board of Directors of the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Reserve Association has joined the Pessamit Call for Reconciliation, initiated in part by the Canadian Biosphere Reserves Association. In doing so, we have agreed to make reconciliation a priority and to take action.

"The Pessamit Call for Reconciliation is launched as a result of meetings to discuss the responsibilities and opportunities for Biosphere Reserves and, by extension, other sites designated by UNESCO in Canada and around the world, to strengthen relations with Indigenous Peoples." In this year marking the 10th anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the 10th anniversary of the Manicouagan-Uapishka Biosphere Reserve, of which the Innu Council of Pessamit is a founding member, UNESCO's networks and partners in Canada need to demonstrate leadership. They must ensure a genuine commitment to Indigenous cultures when establishing and governing Biosphere Reserves. In doing so, the partnership will promote and uphold UNESCO's values and priorities in Canada and in the world.

By joining the Pessamit Call for Reconciliation, we agree to make reconciliation a priority and to take action.

1. Publicly acknowledge that all sites designated by UNESCO in Canada as Biosphere Reserves are located on Indigenous lands. The Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Reserve is located on the traditional, unceded territory of the Mi'kmaw nation in the district of Unama'ki.
2. Provide a culturally respectful environment to welcome meaningful participation of stakeholders from all relevant cultural backgrounds and their worldviews in the governance, planning, and activities of Biosphere Reserves. This participation must be based on relationship-building through mutual respect and trust that will lead to shared governance methodologies. It also implies building a solid understanding of the historical, social, environmental and economic elements that will underlie the development of a culturally-safe common ground.
3. Assist in highlighting and protecting Indigenous Nationhood, as well as the rich and distinct Indigenous cultural elements such as ceremony, stories, languages, and other traditions, which are associated with the territories where Biosphere Reserves are located.
4. Ensure that Indigenous knowledge is valued and reflected in the daily work of Biosphere Reserves and their partners to support sustainable development, biodiversity conservation and capacity building.
5. Recognize the importance of creating collaborative discourse that will invite diverse Indigenous perspectives.

Beer in the Biosphere

(from Victoria Standard, March 28, 2018)



The Big Spruce Brewery in Nyanza is a good example of a sustainable low-impact industry in the Biosphere. The craft brewery is rolling out a special brew in honour of the Nova Scotian premier, Stephen MacNeil. The brew is called 'The Real MacNeil' and it will be released on April 27 to kick off Nova Scotia Craft Beer Week. Check it out- click on the beer!



Congratulations and thank you!



Tom and Carol Anne Johnson, and their five children, are the recipients of Nova Scotia's 2018 Family **Volunteer Award**. Tom also serves the Biosphere as a Board member. The Johnsons live in Eskasoni.

Meet the Residents: The white-headed Sea Eagle

By: Annamarie Hatcher



The bald eagle (Mikmaw: Kitpu) is a large bird of prey. It prefers a fish diet but will take small mammals, birds and carrion. Bald eagles are sexually mature at four or five years of age. They mate for life and return to the same nest year after year to mate and raise their offspring. In the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere they mate in March- April and large juveniles leave the nest in August. The scientific name of the bald eagle is derived from *Haliaeetus* (Latin for "sea eagle") and *leucocephalus* (from the Ancient Greek for "white head"). The range of the bald eagle includes most of Canada and Alaska, all of the contiguous United States, and northern Mexico. The bald eagle plays an important role in the ecological balance of the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere and is a valued resident. Kitpu is sacred in Mi'kmaw culture because its' accomplished flying and soaring abilities mean that it can carry messages to and from the Creator. The Biosphere has the ideal conditions for Kitpu with extensive estuarine areas with abundant fish, contiguous areas of mature and healthy forests and low density of humans. Not only are they valued residents, the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere is very important for the whole Northeastern North American bald eagle population. According to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Nova Scotia has the highest concentration of breeding bald eagles in northeastern North America and most Nova Scotian eagle nests are found on Cape Breton Island, concentrated around the Bras D'Or estuary.

We are grateful to Tuma Young who submitted the photo of two bald eagles at Ball's Creek.

Sometimes sustainability is just another word for common sense.

Here is a good article for businesses regarding sustainability practices with case studies on how small steps can mean a lot. (Gordon Kerr)

<http://www.chamber.ca/publications/5-minutes-for-business/>

Did you know that...

Burning grass in the spring does not make the new grass come in greener and actually encourages weed growth

If your grassfire damages property you are probably liable for the costs.

Click on sparky (below)



Check out these resources on the web (click on the links)



Common Myths about burning grass



Domestic Brush Burning in Nova Scotia: FAQs



Burn restrictions: Nova Scotia



Forest protection

Did you know that...

The work of the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Reserve Association is largely accomplished by dedicated volunteers.

Best Practices: Burning Grass in the Spring

By: Rod Beresford, Westmount Volunteer Fire Department



Springtime throughout Cape Breton has something for almost all of all of our senses. We feel the warm, spring sun reach our faces at a new angle and intensity. We smell the unmistakeable essence of burning grass in our neighbourhoods and fields. Exactly when the practice of burning grass started in farmers' fields and who started it is unclear but it may have evolved from an early practise of burning blueberry patches to increase production. This spring ritual takes place every year in fields and residential areas across the island despite the hazards and annual cautions. It is important to understand some basics and safety considerations about grass fires.

The evidence for burning grass to benefit fields is controversial. The Province of Nova Scotia has a website that provides useful information about why burning grass is not a good idea (see link). That said, there must be some compelling reasons for doing it because it has likely taken place for centuries. Prior to lighting any fire, you also need to check the NS Fire Index for your region daily (see link). This index changes quickly and often based on local weather conditions so frequent checks are a necessity. Furthermore, you should never burn grass, regardless of the fire index, if there are dry and/or windy conditions in the forecast.

If you initiate the burn, you need to make sure you have enough help during the event. Keep in mind that that "ideal conditions" can quickly change unexpectedly and unpredictably. It is your responsibility to make sure that the fire does not extend into the woods or to nearby structures. As a volunteer fireman for 15 years, I have seen this happen many times. You will need such items as shovels and/or heavy brooms to "snuff" or "beat" out the fire to channel its' progress. You also need an adequate supply of water that can be transported quickly to any area of the burn zone should the shovels or brooms not do the job. Many things can go wrong while burning grass in addition to the obvious dangers of smoke inhalation and serious burns. There are often hidden dangers in fields such as aerosol cans and other combustibles that can explode. Another overlooked danger of burning grass relates to the large volume of smoke created that can cause breathing difficulties and potential medical

*Support the Bras d'Or
Lake Biosphere. Join the
BLBRA.*

**Your voice matters.
Mobilize it through
membership.**

BLBRA Meetings

Our next meeting is in...

St. Peter's Thurs., May 10
Iona Thurs., Jun. 14
Meeting times are 1:30 -4:30
pm. **All are welcome.**

Note: The AGM will follow the
Iona meeting. Time- 6:30;
Place – St Columba Church Hall

Contact Us: email us at:
contact@blbra.ca or
Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Assoc.
532 Chebucto St. P.O. Box 711
Baddeck, NS, B0E 1B0



*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](#).*



emergencies for people with asthma or other lung conditions.

If you do plan to burn fields or patches of grass near homes or other structures, you must make safety your number one priority. It is imperative that you do everything possible to (1) prevent property damage, (2) reduce the impact on local fauna (e.g. songbirds and reptiles), and (3) conduct any activity in a manner that will ensure no harm comes to you or anyone else. For homeowners and property owners who plan to burn their grass or who have neighbours who do so each spring, it is a good idea to make sure that you do not have combustible debris in the path of the planned grass fires. It is also advisable to limit the amount of tall grass near firewood or other valuable assets on your property. A good practice is to keep the grass cut low near such things in your yard to prevent fire from reaching them.

The only legal outdoor burning in Nova Scotia is that which takes place in a confined container (usually with a lid to act as a spark arrester) or small piles (see link), and this is all dependent on the fire index in your area. It is never a good idea to set fire to open fields. It can extend beyond your planned range because fire is so unpredictable and it changes because of local conditions that can increase its intensity, direction, and rate of spread. Also, bear in mind that local fire departments have limited resources and we hear of situations where fire departments were occupied extinguishing grass/brush fires when a report of a structure fire was received. This results in firefighters having to leave the grass fire, go back to the fire station to get the proper equipment to attend the structure fire (because grass/brush fires require different equipment and apparatus than structure fires), and then respond to the structure fire. All of this increases the response time to attend the structure fire. Furthermore, fighting grass/brush fires is physically demanding because they often occur in hot, dry weather, and this strains available human resources even further.

As a final word of caution about lighting open fires, you can be held responsible and charged under various Acts with significant consequences if your planned small fire extends into the woods or reaches other properties, regardless of whatever precautions you may have put in place.

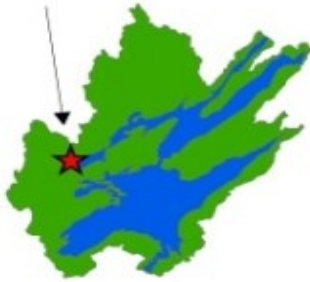
Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Featured Trail

By: Lynn Baechler

There are a number of trails throughout the Biosphere; some are well-known and well-used while others are less so. This issue of Biosphere Highlights features the popular [Salt Mountain Trail](#) located in the Whycocomagh Provincial Park. The trail and associated camping sites are maintained by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The trail is well-marked and is steep in places. The views up the Skye River valley and over the Bras d'Or Lake are spectacular. The park is open from mid-June to mid-October. Although considered a seasonal trail, it is suitable all year for either walking or snowshoeing despite the lack of winter maintenance. Access to water and restrooms is seasonal. A plaque on the trail commemorates the donation of Salt Mountain by Isabel Stewart Farley in memory of her brother Hugh McLennan who was killed during World War 1. **Trail map – next page**

Whycocomagh Provincial Park Salt Mountain Trail

You are here



Trail Notes:

Approximate Length:
Loop - Total 3.3 km + small treks
to viewplanes
2.7 km (wooded)
+ 0.6 (field / campground)
Elevation Parking Lot: 22 m
Highest Elevation: 225 m

Early Succession to Mature
Tolerant hardwood forest:
American beech, Sugar maple
and Red oak, ferns, lichens

● Viewplanes to W, S and E
● Crown Land

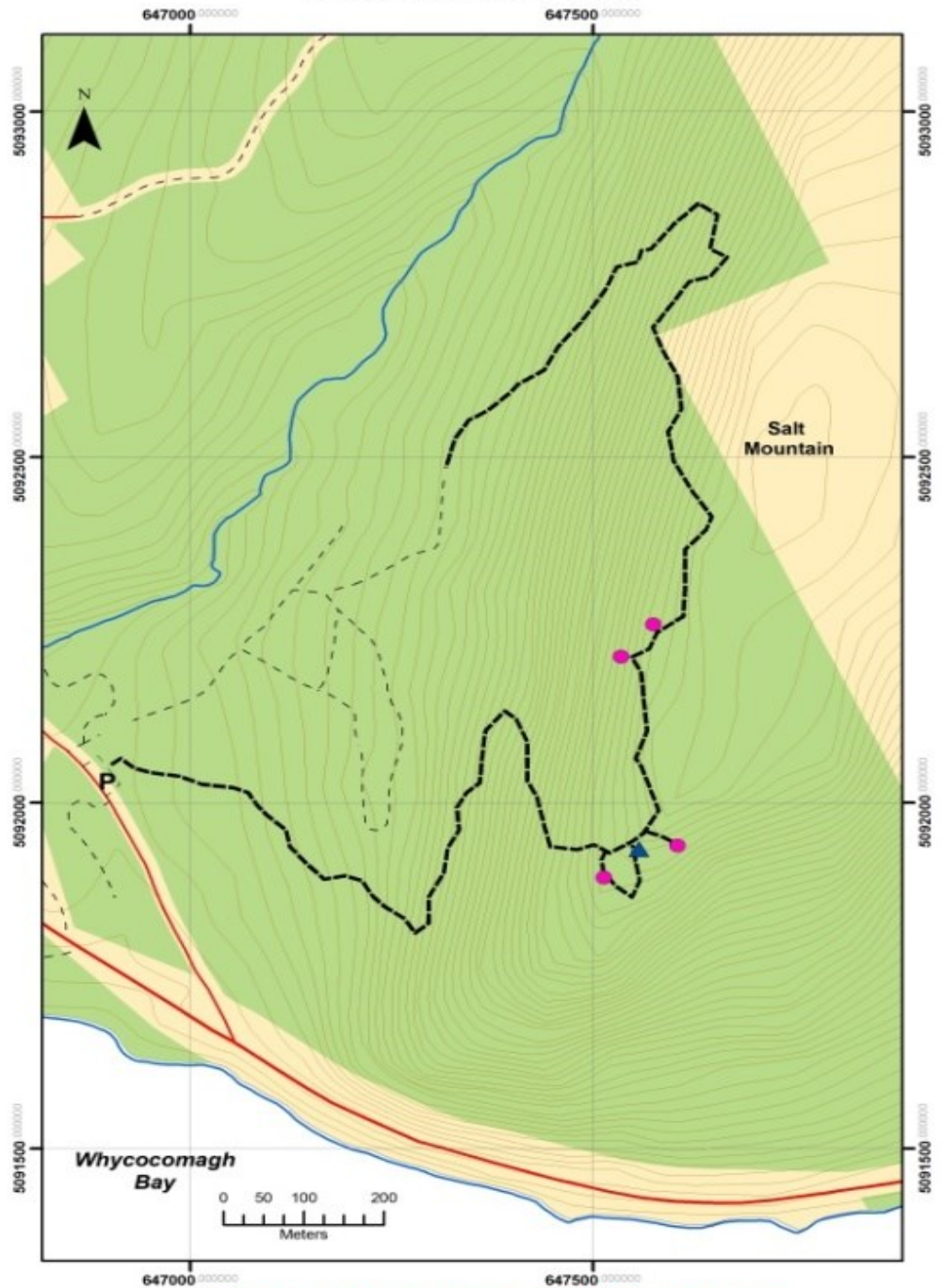
▲ Monument to Hugh MacLellan

Parking, washrooms, water

EFFORT: Intermediate



www.blbra.ca



Please carry out what you bring in, respect land owner's property
and know you are on the trail at your own risk. Have fun!

'Walking Around the Bras d'Or'

A project of the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Reserve Association

Basemap including Crown Lands
Downloaded from GeoNova Project
Service Area Study and Municipal Relations
Project - Unpublished Topographic Map
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