

Minutes of Meeting
BLBRA Board of Directors Meeting
Thursday, September 21, 2023, 1:30 – 4:00 PM
Ross Ferry Firehall, 9651 Kempt Head Rd., Ross Ferry, NS, B1X 1P2



Our mission is to improve balance in the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere by encouraging community capacity building, conservation efforts, and sustainable development.

Attendance:

DIRECTORS (Member at Large)		DIRECTORS (Ex Officio)	
Allison Mclsaac (Chair)	Y	Amanda Mombourquette (Richmond)	R
Liz Campbell	N	Barbara Longva (Victoria)	Y
Tony Sylliboy	Y	Steve Parsons (CBRM)	R
Parker Donham	Y	Kirsty Lock (NSCC)	Y
Veronika Brzeski	Y	Stan Johnson (CEPI)	Y
Rodney Chaisson (Treasurer)	Y		
Bethsheila Kent	R	Tyler Mattheis (CB Partnership)	R
Terri Shobbrook(Vice-chair)	Y	Bonnie MacIsaac (Inverness)	R
Breah Sampson-MacDonald	N		
Wendy MacKinnon	Y		
Kirsten Campbell	R		
Megan MacInnis (Secretary)	Y		
Kathleen Aitkens (ACAP)	Y		

A quorum for the transaction of business at any meeting of the Board shall consist of 50% of the Executive Comm. plus 6 non-executive Board members. (Y= Present; R= Regrets sent; N= none)

Observers/Guests: Doug Foster (**Manager**), Zoe Nicholas (**BLBRA Admin Assist**), Ron Newcombe (**Chair Trails**), and Pierre LaRoche (**Chair Comm**)

Call to Order:

At 1:43 pm Chair Allison Mclsaac began the meeting by acknowledging that the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. Quick introduction of all who attended.

Special note: There were technical difficulties with the internet, giving challenges to connect to Zoom. Zoe Nicholas sent out an email cancelling the zoom portion of the meeting due to technical difficulties. Moments later the situation was solved, and Allison sent out another email inviting the BOD back to the meeting.

1. Additions to the agenda:

There are no additions to the agenda.

2. Approval of the agenda

Motion to approve agenda made by Allison McIsaac seconded by Terri Shobbrook. Motion passed.

3. Approval of minutes – June 22, 2023

Kathleen Aikens reported that she did a minor word change from the minutes to clarify a statement. Kathleen included the word “verify” to the third sentence of section 6.6 Membership Committee in the June 22, 2023 minutes.

4. Business Arising from the Minutes

Zoe Nicholas created a list of action items (Who, what, when format) and included it in the September 21 meeting folder on BLBRA’s Google Shared Drive. There are 5 action items completed to date and several ongoing.

5. New Business & Correspondence Requiring Action

- I. Letter of concern
- II. Ocean Wise Correspondence
- III. Two-eyed Seeing Conference
- IV. Intern summary
- V. Explore the Bras d’Or Presentation

I. Letter of concern

The BLBRA was copied on a letter from homeowners/community members in Islandview, Eastbay. It was reported that a private landowner was completing work on the property and filled in a small marsh (wetland) installing a wharf like structure. The letter was sent to the Minister of Fisheries, Minister of Environment NS, Minister of Natural Resources NS and CC’d to Mayor McDougall of CBRM, MP Jaime Battiste, MLA Keith Bain, Chief Leroy Denny (Eskasoni), Tom Johnson (EFWC), along with the BLBRA. EFWC fishery guardians went to take a look at the issue at hand and spoke to DFO to report. Allison spoke to some homeowners to get a better understanding of the situation. DFO reported that there was 3 issues:

- ☐ The fact the marsh was filled in (habitat destruction).
- ☐ The wharf structure.
- ☐ They are putting trailers and RVs on the spot. The concerns are about dumping (trailer sewage), and this concerns the organization Pitupaq.

BLBRA to write a support letter for the letter of concern from Islandview. The completed letter can be CC’d to the following but not limited to:

- ☐ DFO
- ☐ Environment Canada
- ☐ Canadian Food Inspection Agency
- ☐ MP
- ☐ Provincial leaders

The BOD in attendance voted to create a support letter for the letter of concern – all voted in favor of the letter.

Action item: Allison to write up a support letter for the letter of concern on behalf of the BLBRA and CC other interested/involved parties.

II. Ocean Wise Correspondence

Students from Ocean wise are coming down mid October and wonder if there was anything that could be arranged with the BLBRA. Suggestions are something similar as a quick Bras d'Or Watch like event, beach clean up, or field trip day. The group will be down for a week and wanted to complete some volunteer work. It is suggested by Allison that we reach out to the Community and Engagement committee to see if they have any ideas. A suggested idea was utilizing the trails like the Nicholson Trail.

III. Two-eyed Seeing Conference – Stan Johnson

The Two Eyed Seeing conference will be held from November 13 to the 15. Stan stated that they found a coordinator, Rise Communication, and that they are doing a great job. All information can be found on the website BrasdorCEPI.ca/conference. There are different packages available or group rates. There are also opportunities to present or ways to incorporate two eyed seeing in organizations. Allison M. said she reviewed the ECCC deliverables and there are funds available to cover BLBRA BoD registration through the ECCC project to gather Mi'kmaw knowledge. There is also some money from CBRA - \$10,000 split between the 3 biospheres. It was also suggested that the BLBRA sponsors 2 youth – one Indigenous and one non-Indigenous. BLBRA would also like to have a table/booth at the conference to promote the BLBRA. Stan Johnson and Ron Newcombe will get us in contact with the organizer, Noelle, to get any board of directors who wants to attend registered. Terri Shobbrook motioned that the BLBRA will sponsor the BoD's who wants to attend the Two Eyed Seeing Conference, get a table at the conference and sponsor 2 youth – Veronika Brzeski seconded the motion, Allison abstained, and motion passed.

Action item: Zoe Nicholas to get in contact with Two Eyed Seeing conference organizers. Inquire about sponsoring 2 youth for the conference: one indigenous and one non indigenous.

Action item: Zoe to contact BoD's and gather names for registration to the Two Eyed Seeing conference and book a table for the BLBRA.

IV. Intern Summary

Zoe Nicholas reported that our summer intern this summer (2023) was Sarah Dooley. Sarah did not work from the BLBRA office, her work plan was to go to events within the biosphere and advertise the BLBRA with a table set up. Some of the events that Sarah attended were: Iona's Ocean Day, Eskasoni and St. Peter's Bras d'Or Watches, and ACAP's Beach clean ups. Sarah has also helped Kathleen Aikens and Kirsty with a grant from TD bank for a Biosphere initiative. Zoe Nicholas asked the BoDs if they have any suggestions for a work plan for future summer students. Veronika Brzeski suggested asking Sarah about her experience and any recommendations on what the BLBRA can do for a better summer intern experience. Doug Foster suggested that future summer interns could do asset mapping (51 signs – not including trail signs) for the BLBRA. We have one sign missing – it was down and possibly stolen. Zoe Nicholas received data from Veronika Brzeski's summer intern that will be stored on the BLBRA shared drive.

Action item: Zoe to contact Sarah for feedback about exit interview.

V. Explore the Bras d'Or Presentation

Denis Thibeault was not available to provide the presentation. Ron Newcombe informed the board that Denis had moved away but may be available for next year's EtBD. The committee may have to try and find a replacement for Denis.

Action item: Seek a new representative for EtBD.

6. Updates

I. Treasurer - Rodney Chaisson

Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Region Association	
Income Statement	
April 1 to August 31, 2023	
INCOME	
Destination Cape Breton	1,500.00
Donations	0.00
Environment & Climate Change Canada	121,049.00
HST Rebate	0.00
Interest Income	20.94
Map Sales	90.00
Memberships	620.00
Total Income	\$ 123,279.94
EXPENSES	
Accounting	133.40
Board Operations	1,847.90
Bras d'Or Watch	56.70
ECCC Audit Fees	0.00
ECCC Equipment	2,094.17
ECCC Management & Professional services	0.00
ECCC Marketing	625.63
ECCC Materials & Supplies	2,184.05
ECCC Research Contract	25,500.00
ECCC Salaries & employment costs	54,492.26
ECCC Training	0.00
ECCC Travel	2,049.12
ECCC Project Total	86,945.23
Explore the Bras d'Or	1,250.00
Trail Committee	44.52
Total Expenses	\$ 90,277.75
PROFIT	\$ 33,002.19

Balance Sheet	
As of August 31, 2023	
Assets	
Current Assets	
Cash - Checking Account	156,239.60
Cash - Savings Account	5,020.94
Grants Receivable	0.00
Prepaid expenses	0.00
Total Assets	\$ 161,260.54
Liabilities and Equity	
A/Pay (EF&W)	\$ 58,309.47
Credit Card	\$ 2,094.17
Total Current Liabilities	\$ 0.00
Total Liabilities	\$ 60,403.64
Equity	
Opening Equity	67,854.71
Excess Revenue over Expenses	33,002.19
Total Equity	\$ 100,856.90
Total Liabilities and Equity	\$ 161,260.54

In preparation for discussion Rodney Chaisson read out the income statement and balance sheet. He stated that he fixed the word "PROFIT" in one section but forgot to change it in the next section. Rodney stated that the BLBRA needed a credit card and there were 2 ways: guaranteed by Board members or take \$5000.00 and put it in a savings (BLBRA went the savings account route). The savings account accumulates interest. Under the liabilities we have an account payable to Eskasoni Fish and Wildlife Commission and Doug's replacement laptop was paid with the credit card. Veronika Brzeski suggested BLBRA look into "Text Soup" for free programs the BLBRA can use free to nonprofits. Barabara Longva inquired about the travel policy and Allison Mclsaac replied that the board does pay travel if requested. Allison M. stated that if any of the BoD wanted to request travel to send the information to Doug Foster or Zoe Nicholas. Allison explains that the BoD members presence at the board meetings are calculated for in-kind to the ECCC project and that the BLBRA is on track for spending. Parker Donham asked if the BLBRA gets independent auditing and Rodney replied that the BLBRA has not been audited in the past. Allison Mclsaac replied that the project does not require an audit, but they could be at the end of the project if there is money in the budget. Terri Shobbrook motioned to accept the treasurer's report, Veronika Brzeski seconded it – motion passed.

Allison Mclsaac announced that Rodney is leaving the BLBRA both as treasurer and board member. Allison asked the BoD if anyone would like to step in as treasurer – no reply – it was decided to table the conversation about a replacement treasurer.

Action item: Seek a new treasure for the BLBRA.

II. Manager - Doug Foster

Doug Foster states that he has 3 topics to report on during this board meeting. Doug and Stan Johnson met with the Federal Minister of Tourism at the Highland Village in Iona. Doug described the meeting as short and sweet and commented on how well the Highland Village crew did on explanation of the event. Doug informs the BoD that the ECCC project is underway, and he is in the process of completing the request for extension into Year 4 and 5. Doug states that he is confident that the request on the extension of year 4 and 5 will be approved. Allison Mclsaac adds (for clarification) that the ECCC project already had the potential for renewal for year 4 and 5 when the project was initially granted. Allison also states that Environment Canada is happy with the progress that all the biospheres are making with the climate change projects so Environment Canada reached out to ask for a work plan for year 4 and 5 (with the same yearly budget). There are 4 major components to the work plan, and they are talking about the project in committee meetings/reaching out to the communities, working with Eskasoni's Indigenous protected conserved areas (ongoing), reaching out to municipalities and working on potential ways using mechanisms or identifying new areas that we can protect biodiversity (Doug has been working on). The second component is the hydrology project that the BLBRA has been working on with Dalhousie University and for years 4 and 5 it would be a continuation of the work that has already been done. The third component would be specifically looking at areas within the biosphere that could be identified as "other effective conservation measures" through existing legislation or identifying areas that we can recommend Nova Scotia Nature Trust to purchase as a significant critical habitat area. Allison explains that the third component would be what the BLBRA will focus on for the next 2 years and how to protect the biosphere in general. The fourth component of the project would be networking with the regional group of biospheres as well as the national group. EC is not looking to add any deliverables; they just want the biospheres to expand on their current work that must be submitted in October.

Doug's third topic of discussion is the Climate Change application that has a deadline of today (September 21, 2023). Doug explains that the application was not submitted for several reasons including him having health issues and questions around the initial thinking on where to apply. Doug stated that it was decided to shift towards NRCAN with 60 % under the Federal government with some conditions, and 40% in-kind and he got a verbal commitment from the province that they would pick up a significant portion of the in-kind. Through this they could draw on the indigenous component, which is 100% funding with no in-kind matching contributions. Doug states that the timing and discussions have been difficult to move along. Doug suggests that the project would need to create a steering committee to help move things along. Doug Foster proposes that the BLBRA should not rush into the project and have more discussions on the guidelines of the climate change project. Veronika Brzeski informs the BoD that last year the deadline date was the same as this year (September 21 at midnight) for the Climate Change and Adaptation funding and suggests it may be a yearly funding. Veronika says that the BLBRA would have a year to prepare for the 2024 funding and she would like some input or even contribute to the proposal. Doug states that it is a good idea to not only have Veronika involved but also other board members and experts to be involved in the process.

Action Item: Create a steering committee for a Climate Change and Adaptation program application.

III. Trail Committee – Ron Newcombe

Ron Newcombe informed the board that the Explore the Bras d'Or event was not well attended, and he plans on reviewing what they think may have gone wrong at their next meeting. The first EtBD event was a hit but year 2 and 3 were not a success while following the same model as the first year.

IV. Communications Committee - Pierre LaRochelle

Pierre LaRochelle informs the board that the communications committee is seeking a chair. ECCC and CBRA are looking for a submission from the BLBRA for the Storytelling project and Pierre believes that we should submit something. Pierre explains that he will be about a week late sending out the newsletters and he did not get any feedback whether everybody got their invitation to submit an item of interest to the newsletter.

Pierre states that there is funding potentially for the Bras d'Or Watch from the Credit Union about sustainability, and it could be tied together with the ECCC project. He believes that the BDW can adapt some of the key components of the ECCC project and get some funding for a few more years for the BDW. Pierre explains that Kathleen Aikens and Kirsty Locke have been looking on how to connect them and it would show ECCC how active the BLBRA is with the BDW activities and finance additional locations.

Allison explains that the Showcase/Storytelling project is a way that the Biospheres show the work that they have been doing around Canada. The BLBRA has a scheduled date of January 11, 2024, to present and if any of the Board members would like to work on it. The project is also there to help all the biospheres engage with each other. Allison requested that the link be resent to the BoD email list if any of members would like to attend the online events that will be starting in the Fall.

Action item: Seek a Chair for the Communication committee.

Action item: Look into submitting a piece from the BLBRA to the Storytelling project - January 11, 2024. Zoe Nicholas to send a link to BoD about the Storytelling initiative.

Action item: Pierre LaRochelle , Kirsty Locke and Kathleen Aikens to look into the Credit Union funding for BDW.

V. Community Engagement & Learning Committee - Kirsty Locke

Kirsty Locke starts out by stating that she will talk about certain points on the report and the report is available on the shared drive for those that would like to review it. Kirsty informs us that a lot of the committee work is a work in progress, and they are still working on things like the teaching kits, getting the forestry information QR codes for the Nicholson Trail and still working on the Adventure Lab. In the report is also an update on how the Bras d'Or Watch events in Eskasoni and St. Peters which were both reported to be a success. Kirsty let the board know that Veronika is doing great work in the Baddeck area between Kidston Island and the salt marsh below the historic site all of which relates to the objectives of the biosphere. For the funding that Pierre was referencing Kirsty plans on looking at it with more detail, she does not know enough about it to make a comment now. Kathleen speaks on the Credit Union funding and Melanie, the contact, who suggests that the BLBRA put in for a bigger funding amount with a portion of funding for the St. Peters 2024 BDW and the rest to fund programs within the BLBRA that falls under that umbrella. Kathleen is going to get in contact with Kirsty to go over the application and guidelines. The ongoing water monitoring and temperature testing with the citizens in science around the lake falls under the scope of the funding. Veronika reports that a summer student collected data on tree surveys on Kidston Island and all the information was sent to Zoe Nicholas who uploaded it on the BLBRA shared drive for open access. The data included flora and fauna species and counts made periodically with various people around.

Action item: CEAL committee working on projects that are ongoing: teaching kits, QR codes for the Nicholson Trail and Adventure Lab.

VI. Membership Committee - Kathleen Aikens

Kathleen Aikens, committee chair, begins by saying the committee has only met once since the last BLBRA board meeting. The meeting recapped what went well like the Expo that was held in St. Peters brought in new memberships and a chance to talk with people. The process for the AGM went well for processing members. There is now a membership list going forward that is official based on the information presented to the board. The membership committee is proposing two changes to bylaws that will be presented to the BoD at the 2024 AGM and would like to discuss the review. The membership committee suggests the bylaw stating "Members will be admitted to the association upon payment of a membership fee to be determined by the board of directors and approval by board of directors" striking out the "approval of board of directors" as there are already provisions that membership can be withdrawn with majority vote by BoD. Currently the BLBRA has not practiced approving members at BoD meetings and the BLBRA has enough protection for removing a member if needed. The second proposed bylaw change is language from "The membership year begins on the date the individual becomes a member" to "The membership will commence on April 1st and end March 31st the following year" and this will allow the BLBRA to have one invoicing period instead of many to update people on membership. It was suggested by Veronika Brzeski that if the BLBRA changed the wording to "fiscal year" then the BLBRA would not have to change bylaws if the dates change. Kathleen suggested that these two proposed bylaw changes be put over to the Fall bylaw review. Barbara Longva motioned to move the proposed bylaw changes as presented by the membership committee be put over to the Fall bylaw review – Seconded by Terri Shobbrook – motion passed.

Action item: Review of the bylaw change for the Membership section to be brought up at the 2024 BLBRA AGM.

7. Ex-Officio / Partner Updates

I. CEPI - Stan Johnson

No new updates aside from the Two-Eyed Seeing conference report Section 5.III – New Business above.

II. Richmond County - Amanda Mombourquette

Sends regrets.

III. Victoria County - Barbara Longva

Barbara Longva had a meeting with Stan Johnson about the Two – Eyed Seeing conference and determined that they will sponsor the conference but was not sure on what level. The Victoria County council will sponsor any member who wants to attend the conference. There was a meeting regarding the sea wall trail, a session with the Mi'kmaw trails, issues in the Cabot Trail with RV's not utilizing campgrounds, and the OIC bylaw second reading happening Oct 10. Terri Shobbrook is the new transit coordinator for Victoria County. The municipal boundary review was approved.

Purchased land in New Haven to put the new transfer station as the old transfer station was not big enough.

IV. Inverness County -

Sends regrets.

V. CBRM -

Sends regrets.

VI. Cape Breton Partnership - Tyler Mattheis

Sends regrets.

VII. NSCC - Kirsty Locke

Update was provided with the CEAL committee report.

VIII. Port Hawkesbury Paper - Megan MacInnis

No new updates.

Special word from the Chair, Allison McIsaac, thanking Rodney for all the work he completed as the BLBRA treasurer. Rodney was presented with a farewell present.

8. Adjournment - Motion to adjourn by Allison McIsaac – Motion passed at 4:04 pm

Next meeting: November 16 @ 1:30pm – Highland Village, Iona

Minutes by Zoe Nicholas verified by Megan MacInnis. Please email any corrections, clarifications, or omissions to Megan MacInnis by email secretary@blbra.ca .