

**DRAFT Minutes of Meeting**  
**BLBRA Board of Directors Meeting**  
**Thursday, March 20, 2025, 1:30 – 4:00 PM**  
**Location: Bonnie Brae, St. Peter's**



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

Attendance:

<b>DIRECTORS (Member at Large)</b>		<b>DIRECTORS (Ex Officio)</b>	
Allison McIsaac ( <b>Chair</b> )	Y	Amanda Mombourquette ( <b>Richmond</b> )	N
Liz Campbell	R	Steve Parsons ( <b>CBRM</b> )	N
Tony Sylliboy	Y	Kirsty Lock ( <b>NSCC</b> )	Y
Parker Donham	R	Stan Johnson ( <b>CEPI</b> )	R
Adele Hunt	R	Tyler Mattheis ( <b>CB Partnership</b> )	R
Terri Shobbrook ( <b>Vice-chair</b> )	Y	Donna Matheson-Lefort ( <b>Victoria</b> )	R
Breah Sampson-MacDonald	N	Bonnie MacIsaac ( <b>Inverness</b> )	R
Megan MacInnis ( <b>Secretary</b> )	R		
Kathleen Aikens ( <b>Treasurer</b> )	Y		
Rod Thompson	Y		
Pierre LaRoche	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:** Colette Mesher (BLBRA Project Manager), Ron Newcombe (CEPI), Tyler Cole (CBP) and Hannah de Loe (ACAP)

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

Tyler Mattheis sends Tyler Cole of Cape Breton Partnership (CBP) as his proxy and with discussions it was decided that there will be a quorum. Pierre suggests that on the RJSC the Ex-Officio can be changed to an organizational unit instead of individual. Chair Allison McIsaac began the meeting by welcoming everyone to St. Peter's and acknowledging that the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. Board members and guests in attendance shared a quick round of introductions.

**Action Item:** Look into changing the ex-officio on the RJSC to an organizational unit instead of individual.

**2. Overview of Climate Change Proposal**

Colette gives a presentation about a Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund application. Colette worked on this proposal, that was due at the end of February 2025, with many of the partners and

wanted to give an overview\*. The primary objective of the fund is the reduction of greenhouse gasses (GHG). Colette felt that the fund aligned with a lot of what the Biosphere does with Biodiversity and groundwater. Colette has identified multiple partners and potential partners like Parks Canada, CBU, UINR, municipalities and Indigenous communities. There is another fund available called the Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund that can be applied for but is very competitive and much smaller. The grant is for local action on climate change in Nova Scotia and pre-screening is March 24 with an application deadline of April 22, 2025-we also have a letter of support from Parks Canada. Colette has created a Fund Development committee and had their first meeting and if anyone is interested in joining, please email [manager@blbra.ca](mailto:manager@blbra.ca).

*\*The presentation PowerPoint can be found in the March Meeting Folder on the Shared Drive.*

**3. Additions to and approval of the agenda:**

Kirsty wanted to add information about the EXPO, it will be included with the Communications report. ***Motion to approve the amended agenda made by Rod Thompson, second by Terri Shobbrook – motion passed.***

**4. Review and approval of the minutes:**

Allison reviewed the January 16 minutes. ***Motion to approve the January minutes made by Kathleen Aikens, second by Rod Thompson – Motion passed.***

**5. Business arising from the minutes:**

Allison reviewed the Action items, and they were all addressed. The input that Allison received about the MAB updated work plan and they said they are going to make a Canadian response to the work plan as well and Allison will share the information as it comes available.

**Action Item:** Allison to share information about MAB when it comes available

**6. Treasurer Report: Kathleen Aikens**

Kathleen's Treasurer report can be found in the BoD March 20 Meeting folder. Kathleen completed the Charitable return as we were several months in delinquency risking our Charitable status. The Biospheres information, along with other Charitable status organizations can be reviewed on the Canada Revenue Agency website. The BLBRA website uses Stripe for payments, and Kathleen is having a hard time verifying the organization as Stripe has rejected BLBRAs RJSC documentation and other ways to verify. Terri Shobbrook offered Kathleen to help with the Stripe situation. Terri suggested that we take the link off the website so people cannot access it for now – Pierre said that he can remove it. Kathleen verified the annual membership with the e-transfers and cash. There were 40 annual memberships along with the 105 lifetime memberships. Two of the payments were unsuccessful – our fault – but they still received membership. Kathleen is seeking a new Membership Committee Chair as she took on the Treasurer role and she will send out an email to the Board explaining the position.

CBRA decided to institute a membership fee for each Biosphere that participates with CBRA that will be \$2,500 a year. Kathleen explains that CBRA is a great networking organization that is directly linked to ECCC that can advocate for the Biosphere funding. Kathleen states it would make sense to include these costs in the administration costs in the ECCC funding and include it in applications for future funding as an overhead cost. **Kathleen motions to have a record of support for all members**

**supporting this initiative for CBRA membership fees, seconded by Terri Shobbrook – motion passed.**

Kathleen applied for the CBRA fund that provides some support for the Regional Gathering – being held at Fundy this year. Colette and Kathleen reached out to Southwest Nova and haven't heard back yet. If the gathering does not happen it is suggested that the Regional Gathering money be used to support Regional Reconciliation for the CEPIs Etuaptmumk/Two-Eyed Seeing conference. The Finance committee is not providing year end information yet as we are not at the end of the fiscal year.

We are on track to spend down the ECCC project as intended and there is a surplus of \$38,000 depending on end of year adjustments - there was a \$34,000 surplus from last fiscal year. The Finance committee is recommending a Financial Review Engagement completed by an independent auditor and there is no requirement in Nova Scotia to have one completed. Kathleen also recommended Grant Thornton, for timeliness, and they provided an estimated cost between \$5,000 and \$6,000. Kathleen has 2 motions she would like to put forward. **Kathleen motions to approve the Finance Committee to undertake a Review Engagement for FY2024-25, beginning shortly after the end of the fiscal year and concluding in advance of the Annual General Meeting, seconded by Pierre LaRochelle – motion passed. Kathleen motions to approve Grant Thornton as firm to undertake formal review engagement, seconded by Rod Thompson – motion passed.**

Kathleen met with the committee chairs and came up with a draft budget. Most of the committees' activities fall within the goals of the ECCC project (Biodiversity and Community Engagement) so they can be absorbed into that budget. The Draft Budget can be found in the BoD March 20, 2025, Meeting folder on the Shared Drive. Kathleen included a line in for Biosphere Swag and put in \$7,500 as a discussion starter. Terri agreed that environmentally friendly swag will cost more. The breakdown of the requested budget for each committee is on the **Draft Budget FY 2025-26** document in the **March 20,2025 Meeting** folder on the **Shared Drive**. **Kathleen motions to accept the treasurer as information, seconded by Terri Shobbrook – motion passed.**

**Action Item:** Kathleen to send out information about the Membership Chair in hopes of finding a Membership Chair

**Action Item:** Pierre to temporarily remove the stripe button from the website until the Stripe situation is resolved.

## **7. Committee/Project updates:**

- i. Community Engagement and Learning Committee**
- ii. Trails**
- iii. Communications (+EXPO)**
- iv. ECCC Update - Signs**

### **i) Community Engagement and Learning Committee – Kirsty Lock**

East Coast Credit Union Funds from last year that has to be reported on by April 2025. When the microscopes and a laptop that hooks up to the microscope for the Bras d'Or Watch events and the money will be used up.

The committee has been advertising since January for a facilitator for the committee to do school visits, Bras d'Or Watch events, and water monitoring. Veronika Brzeski was picked by the interview committee to be the facilitator – Veronika resigned from the Board as a Board Member. The CEAL committee submitted their budget to the Finance Committee and can be reviewed in the **Draft Budget FY 2024-25** document in the Shared Drive.

**ii) Trails Committee – Ron Newcombe**

Ron does not have much to report on as they have not had a meeting this year yet – there is one scheduled next week. The committee is trying to organize some Trail walks for the year. Kirsty says that Anne Marie MacKay the organizer of Oceans Day, wants the Expo to happen on the 8<sup>th</sup> and partners with them.

**iii) Communications – Pierre LaRochelle**

Pierre submitted the Communication budget to the Finance committee and wants to highlight 2 items. The Expo, which had one in St. Peters and Baddeck, was organized by Veronika last year in Baddeck and Pierre hopes she can organize the Expo for this year. Capacity in June would be a concern with everything happening in June like the AGM. Instead of having an Expo at the World's Ocean Day in Iona we can have a display table or two and interns attend. The information brochures and rack cards need to be updated for the Biosphere. Terri Shobbrook would like to help work on new materials for the Biosphere to help for a travelling road show. Kirsty will contact Pierre, Terri, CEAL Committee, and Zoe to brainstorm what that can look like and have it ready to display on June 8<sup>th</sup>. Pierre is proposing that 2 highway signs be branded with the new branding – the two signs will be strategically picked. Terri suggests that Rack cards be distributed out to visiting centers and restaurants.

**Action Item:** Kirsty to contact Pierre, Terri, CEAL Committee, and Zoe to brainstorm what that can look like and have it ready to display on June 8<sup>th</sup>.

**iv) ECCC Update – Colette Mesher**

Colette explains there are 4 main themes to the project: Governance/ Management, Research, Documentation & Prioritization and Knowledge transfer. Governance/management is attending events to talk and discuss the Biosphere, presenting and reporting. The research is the work that the Master students have done and all the information from the Dal students and Exp is on the shared drive. When his manuscript is approved, we will be able to put it on the website. Documentation and prioritization is familiarizing with the Decision Support Tool is a database for the government to get to the 30% goal of protecting wetlands. The Knowledge transfer is focused on CBRA with the discussions and meetings with CBRA in which Colette attends – the National Gathering is TBD.

There is approval for the funding for 2 indigenous interns through the Clean Foundation. Colette would like the interns to have as many experiences as possible while working for the BLBRA.

The CEAL facilitator was picked, and they are expecting to increase engagement. They are figuring out a reporting matrix that will help in future events.

## **8. Ex-Officio/Partner Updates**

- i. CEPI*
- ii. Richmond County*
- iii. Victoria County*
- iv. Inverness County*
- v. CBRM*
- vi. Cape Breton Partnership*
- vii. NSCC*
- viii. PHP*

- i. CEPI – Ron for Stan Johnson*

Stan Johnson is out and Ron will be reporting for CEPI. There is going to be another Two-Eyed Seeing conference next Spring and possibly hold a youth event this fall. There are 2 new coordinators at CEPI.

- ii. Richmond County – Amanda Mombourquette*

- iii. Victoria County – Donna Matheson Lefort*

- iv. Inverness County – Bonnie MacIsaac*

- v. CBRM – Steve Parsons*

- vi. Cape Breton Partnership – Tyler Cole*

Next week there is a Mi'kmaw Tourism event at the Membertou Trade and Convention Center on March 26. COVE does a winds turbine demo where they go to beaches to teach kids about renewable energy and will be in Cape Breton summertime - they will be at the Worlds Ocean Day

- vii. NSCC – Kirsty Lock*

The students semester is coming to an end and their students are out looking for work terms – if anyone needs a student its unpaid work.

- viii. PHP –*

## **9. Canadian Biosphere Region Association (CBRA) Update**

Was covered with all the other discussions.

## **10. New Business & Correspondence Requiring Action**

In conjunction with the St. Anne's Mission, also a great time to engage the Mi'kmaw community, and have a road show table. There is a training portion and try out paddle portion to the event. The breakdown of the costs in the **March 20 Meeting folder**. Zoe is looking for the BLBRA to help raise awareness of the event and have a table set up for engagement.

Colette was approached by Peter Warren from Publishing for Development who runs the UNESCO and Google Arts & Culture initiative - they are really beautiful photographs – does the Biosphere

want to be part of this. There is a cost and it is \$3,250 USD roughly \$5,000 CAD and we would also half to provide the images. The document can be found on the **March 20, Meeting folder**.

Swag – Colette is waiting for correspondence back from Ethical Swag which is a local organization. Colette sent them our logos to get an idea of what they can do and she will send it around when she receives them – her goal is to have something by June 8.

**Action Item:** Colette to send around samples when she gets them.

**11. Adjournment - Next meeting:**

Next meeting will be on May 15, 2025, at We’koma’q Volunteer Fire Department, We’koma’q First Nation from 1:30pm - 4:00pm.

Minutes by Zoe Nicholas verified by Megan MacInnis. Please email any corrections, clarifications, or omissions to Megan MacInnis by email [secretary@blbra.ca](mailto:secretary@blbra.ca) .