

# Impact Report



Bras d'Or Lake  
Biosphere Region  
Association



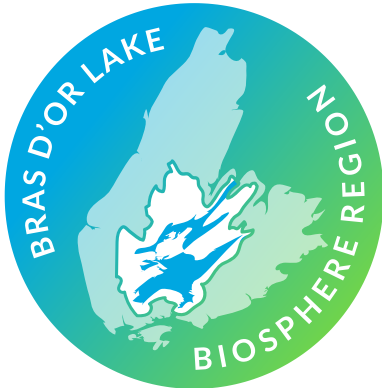
2024-2025



Bras d'Or Lake  
Biosphere Region  
Association

# Pitu'pa'q/ Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere

The Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Region is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. We are privileged to share this special space.



**KI'LEWEY**  
**PITU'PA'Q**  
BIOSPHERE REGION

Ki'lewey **mili-ala'sin**  
Ki'lewey **wlapesin**  
Ki'lewey **wli-anko'tmn**

## Mission:

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



**YOUR**  
**BRAS**  
**D'OR**  
BIOSPHERE REGION

Yours to **explore**  
Yours to **enjoy**  
Yours to **nurture**

## Vision:

We envision all things thriving in the special place that is the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere.



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# Message from the Executive Committee



Many of the accomplishments of the year will be highlighted throughout this report, but some principal areas of achievement in 2024 - 2025 are noted below:

1. The ongoing work for the Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) project including the addition of Dr. Colette Mesher, Project Manager. Thinking forward to the end of this project, Colette applied to two funding streams with focus on climate change and helped establish the Fund Development Committee.
2. The continued inclusion of the Mi'kmaq Language into website and social media products when possible.
3. Collaboration with the Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources' Climate Change team.
4. Changes to the Canadian Biosphere Regions Association's governance structure with Stan Johnson appointed as the Atlantic region's representative on the CBRA Board of Directors.
5. BLBRA's summer intern, Keagan Parris, conducted a preliminary audit and inspection of the signage around the Biosphere in 2024-2025. This will guide some of the work later in the year.

Along with these accomplishments, the Board has continued to address issues related to financial administration of the BLBRA. The first step was hiring the financial services of B. Taylor who worked with the Finance Committee and ECCC project team to support the bookkeeping throughout the year and engaging in a financial review with Grant Thornton.

The Board now feels that all gaps have been rectified moving into 2025 - 2026. Workplans and budgets for 2025-2026 have been developed with Bras d'Or Watch, Explore the Bras d'Or and the ECCC project being the immediate focus.

Finally, much appreciation to all the Directors, Committee Chairs and members, volunteers and staff for their amazing work in the Biosphere.

Sincerely, your BLBRA Executive,  
Allison McIsaac, Chair  
Terri Shobbrook, Vice-Chair  
Parker Donham, Treasurer (through October 2024)  
Kathleen Aikens, Interim Treasurer (through May 2025)  
Megan MacInnis, Secretary



# Board of Directors 2024 - 2025



**Allison McIsaac [Chair]**

Member at Large / EFWC

**Parker Donham**

Member at Large / Kempt Head

**Terri Shobbrook [Vice-Chair]**

Member at Large / Kempt Head

**Breah Sampson MacDonald**

Member at Large / West Bay

**Kathleen Aikens [Treasurer]**

Member at Large / Kempt Head

**Stan Johnson**

Member at Large / Eskasoni

**Megan MacInnis [Secretary]**

Member at Large / Coxheath

**Tyler Mattheis**

Ex-Officio [CBP] / Coxheath

**Pierre LaRoche**

Member at Large / St. Peter's

**Amanda Mombourquette**

Ex-Officio [Rich. Co.]/ Grand Greve

**Adele Hunt**

Member at Large/ Louisdale

**Steve Parsons**

Ex-Officio [CBRM] / Sydney

**Liz Campbell**

Member at Large / St. Peter's

**Kirsty Lock**

Ex-Officio [NSCC]/ West Bay

**Tony Sylliboy**

Member at Large / Eskasoni

**Donna Lefort-Matheson**

Ex-Officio [Victoria] / Victoria

**Veronika Brzeski**

Member at Large / Baddeck

**Bonnie MacIsaac**

Ex-Officio [Inverness] / Inverness

**Rod Thompson**

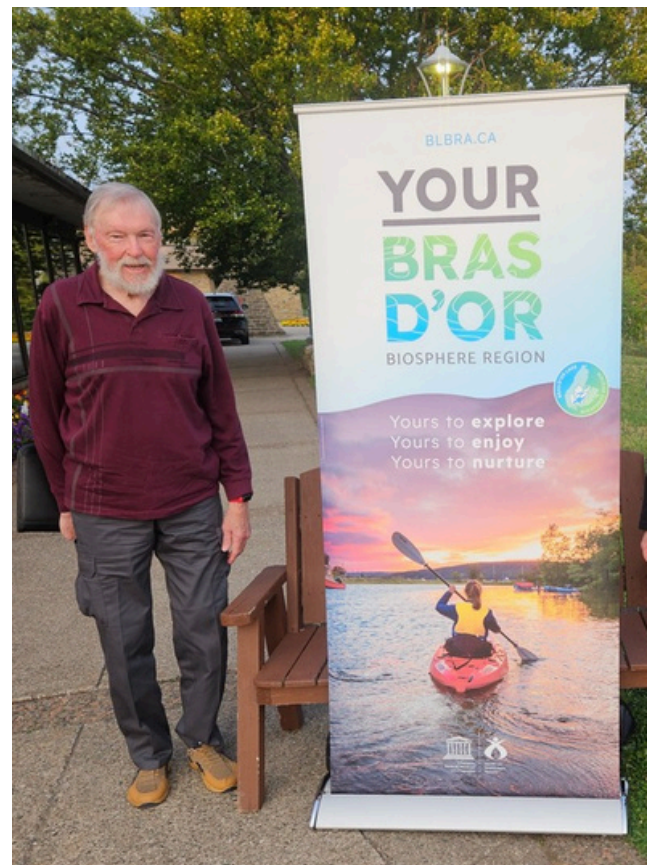
Member at Large / Glace Bay

# Strategic Pillars

During the 2022 -2025 Strategic Planning sessions facilitated by Acadia University's Entrepreneurship Centre, it was determined by the Board that the Association's key strategic goals can be grouped into four distinct, yet interrelated, priority areas referred to as Pillars, and aligned with UNESCO's 3 Pillars of Conservation, Economic development and Logistical support and their Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's).

## BLBRA Strategic Pillars

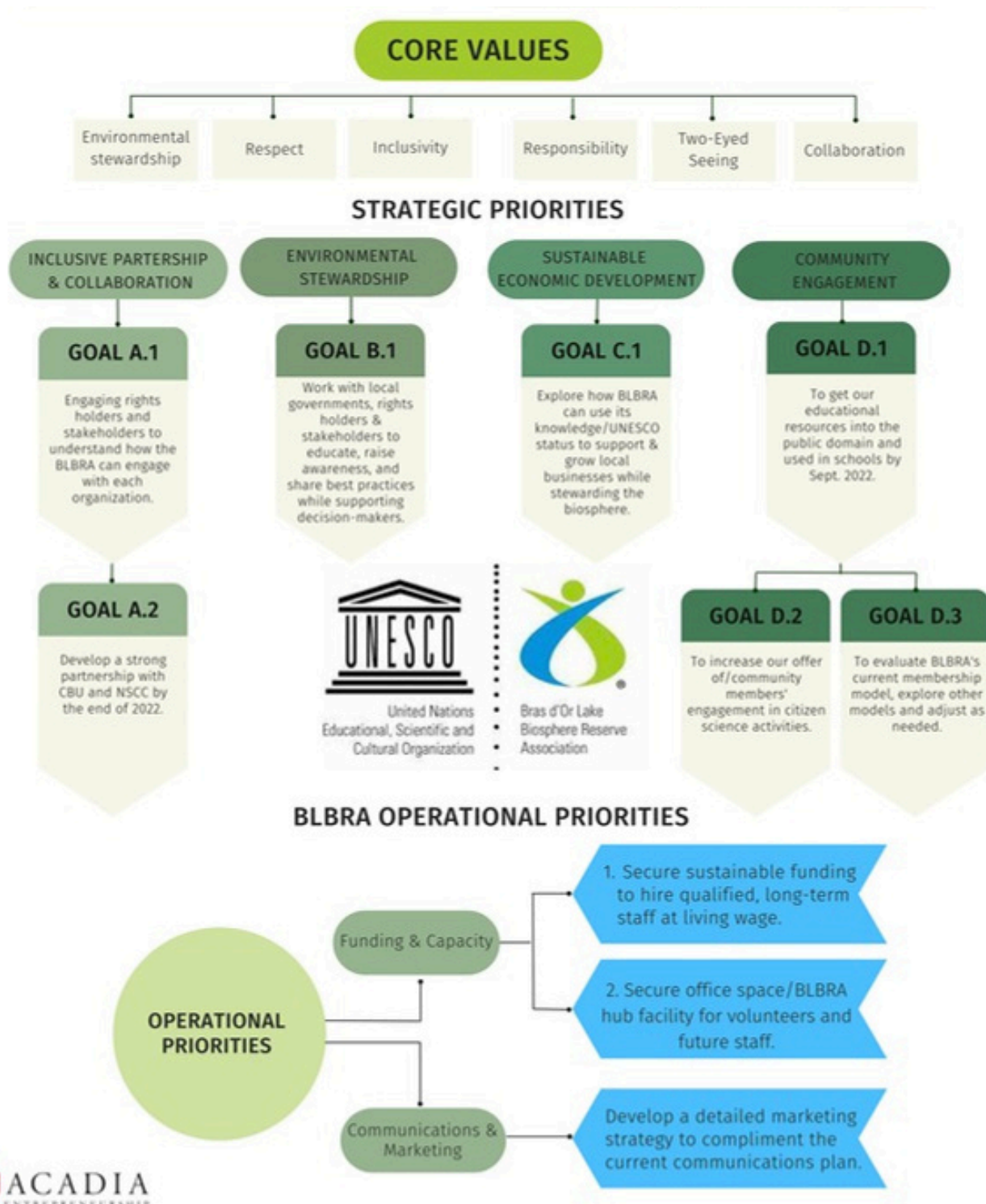
	Inclusive Partnerships & Collaboration
	Environmental Stewardship
	Sustainable Economic Development
	Community Engagement



# Strategic Plan Summary



Bras d'Or Lake  
Biosphere Region  
Association





# Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's)



The Stockholm Resilience Centre is recognized for separating the 17 SDG's into a 3-Tier Wedding cake illustrating how economies and societies should be seen as built on the biosphere, the base, and not seen as separate processes. It recognizes the over-arching need to form partnerships.

*"Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) provide a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests."* - UNESCO

## SDG's related to the Economy



## SDG's related to Society



## SDG's related to the Biosphere



# Our Strategic Goals



## Inclusive Partnerships & Collaborations

### GOAL A.1

Engaging rights holders and stakeholders to understand how the BLBRA can engage with each organization.

17 PARTNERSHIPS  
FOR THE GOALS



**Colette Mesher**



### Dr. Colette Mesher takes the Lead

This is an ongoing process and will continue throughout the years. Midway through 2024-2025, we welcomed our new Project Manager, Dr. Colette Mesher. Colette will continue to engage with the Bras d'Or Lakes CEPI, Pitu'pa'q, the Cape Breton Regional Municipality, Victoria county, Inverness County, and Richmond County and all rights holders or stakeholders. Additionally, partnerships and collaborations have taken place with Eskasoni Fish & Wildlife Commission, ACAP Cape Breton, and many more local organizations. The Trails, Communication and Community Engagement and Learning Committees play an important role in ensuring that this goal is addressed.

# Our Strategic Goals

cont'd



## Inclusive Partnerships & Collaborations

### GOAL A.2

Develop a  
strong  
partnership with  
CBU and NSCC  
by the end of  
2022.

4 QUALITY  
EDUCATION



The BLBRA has worked with CBU and NSCC to develop education and learning opportunities as well as marketing studies. NSCC holds an ex-officio position on the BLBRA Board of Directors. CBU Capstone studies and their World Tourism Institute are well aligned with our objectives. We look forward to current and future meaningful partnerships and collaborations with CBU and NSCC.

**nscc**  
Strait Area Campus



Discussions about data storage for monitoring and related data have been held with CBU and will continue.





# Our Strategic Goals

cont'd

## GOAL B.1

Work with local governments, rights holders & stakeholders to educate, raise awareness, and share best practices while supporting decision makers in strengthening protective regulations and creating regenerative practices.

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



## Environmental Stewardship

As a learning place for sustainable development the BLBRA was actively involved in sharing local information directly with stakeholders and via its website, newsletter and new media.

We searched out best practices as a member of the The World Network of Mountain Biosphere Reserves (WNMBR) and plan to join the World Network of Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserves (WNICBR) and look at addressing coastal erosion issues among other concerns.

We participated in regular meetings with the Atlantic Region Biospheres and the Canadian Biosphere Regions Association (CBRA) to discuss leveraging the network and activities of the 19 member sites, fostering interconnected communities dedicated to sustainability and biodiversity conservation.



# Our Strategic Goals

cont'd



## Sustainable Economic Development

### GOAL C.1

Explore how BLBRA can use its knowledge/ UNESCO status to support & grow local businesses while stewarding the biosphere.



UNESCO and CCUNESCO provide international and national leadership on balancing environment, local economies and job creation, rural development and cultural preservation. The BLBRA promotes use of best practices and shares related resources developed internally and by UNESCO in support local businesses and communities. One example was distributing ‘A guide to Supporting Sustainability Practices in Tourist Accommodation Facilities’ (CCUNESCO)

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



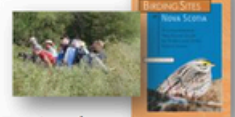
9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



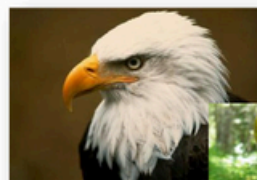
families



tourism



business and industry



conservation



research and education

# Our Strategic Goals

cont'd



## Community Engagement

### GOAL D.1

To get our educational resources into public domain and used in schools.

4 QUALITY EDUCATION



The Community Engagement and Learning (CEAL) committee has been successful in engaging schools throughout the biosphere and also has educational resources available on the website. They were able to hire a facilitator on contract to move their efforts forward developing kits and overseeing the Bras d'Or Watch events. See the CEAL report on page 19.

Both the Community Engagement and Learning (CEAL) committee and the Trail Committee have been active and running events such as the Bras d'Or Watch and Forest Walks creating opportunities for fun and learning across the biosphere.

### GOAL D.3

To evaluate BLBRA's current membership model, explore other models and adjust as needed.

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



The membership model continues to be evaluated and with the creation of a Fund Development committee, new plans and further changes are expected in the near future.

### GOAL D.2

To increase our offer of community members' engagement in citizen science activities.

13 CLIMATE ACTION





# Our Strategic Goals

cont'd

## Operational Priorities

### Funding & Capacity

1. Secure sustainable funding to hire qualified, long-term staff at living wage.



Environment and  
Climate Change Canada  
Environnement et  
Changement climatique Canada

The Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) project funding has been extended for 2 years until March 2026. This will allow the BLBRA to keep both the Project Manager and Administrative Assistant positions. Other funding opportunities have been investigated and the search will continue into next year through the efforts of a new Funding Committee.

Office and equipment space continues to be provided in-kind by Eskasoni Fish & Wildlife Commission

2. Secure office space/ BLBRA hub facility for volunteers and future staff.



Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Region  
Association (BLBRA)  
4115 Shore Road  
Eskasoni, NS B1W 1M4



# Other SDG Efforts

As can be seen, through the BLBRA committees., partners and ECCC project work, we have been contributing to a variety of sustainable development goals, addressing not only the sustainability of our biosphere, but goals that contribute to the betterment of society and the economy. More examples are described below.

## 6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



We and our partners at EXP, CEPI, Dalhousie, ECCC, EFWC and others have individually and combined looked at our mountain Water Towers through ongoing hydrology studies to evaluate and ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. We and CEPI continue to support efforts to divert wastewater from the Bras d'Or. There is also zero tolerance for the dumping of sewage from pleasure boats into the Bras d'Or.

In addition to sharing quarterly synopsis of weather insights from Jonathan Buffett of the Cape Breton Mesonet, we have engaged Dalhousie through the ECCC grant to do a report on Climate Change Impacts on Ground Water Recharge in a Low-Mountain Area. This specifically looks at the impacts of climate change on the Christmas Brook watershed's groundwater resources. The work specifically aims to quantify how groundwater resources will change in a warmer future with less snow and more rain.

## 13 CLIMATE ACTION



## 4 QUALITY EDUCATION



Our fulltime and term staffing, summer student hiring and volunteer engagement practices, along with our educational resources developed by the Community Engagement & Learning Committee (CEAL) committee, have provided us with many opportunities to provide a wide range of impactful learning for both young and old across many demographics.

Our staffing, summer student hiring practices and volunteer engagement are non-discriminatory and are fully committed to achieving gender equity, 'leaving no one behind', whether in education, science, technology, safety, peace or inclusiveness. We thus empower all women and girls and those of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

## 5 GENDER EQUALITY



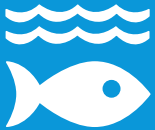
**KI'LEWEY**  
**PITU'PA'Q**  
BIOSPHERE REGION

Ki'lewey **mili-ala'sin**  
Ki'lewey **wlapesin**  
Ki'lewey **wli-anko'tmn**

# Other SDG Efforts

cont'd

## 14 LIFE BELOW WATER



Activities offered during Bras d'Or Watch, supporting youth participation, creating and deploying educational resources and fostering a joy of the outdoors, to jointly working with CEPI to roll out 'Explore the Bras d'Or', all supported research and economic development, fostered collaboration and encouraged life long learning of aquatic and terrestrial life all through the lens of climate change adaptation and resilience. Our goal is to conserve and support the sustainable use the oceans, seas and marine resources.



EXPLORE THE  
BRAS D'OR | WJINENE'N  
PITU'POQ

<https://explorethebrasdor.com/>

We work to protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainable land management practices, promoting reforestation, and addressing the underlying causes of desertification, ultimately aiming to improve the livelihoods of those living in affected regions and protect the environment, and and halt biodiversity loss.

## 15 LIFE ON LAND



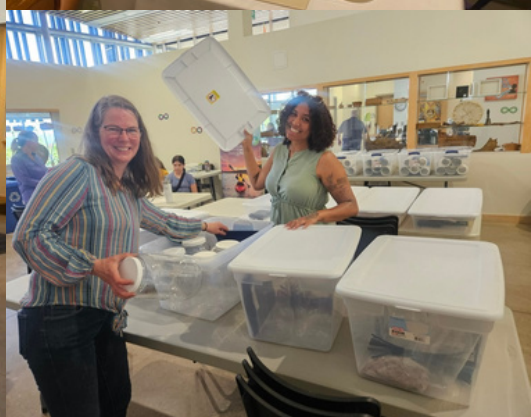
## 17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.



# BLBRA in Snapshots





# BLBRA in Snapshots

cont'd





# Committee Highlights

## Community Engagement & Learning Committee (CEAL)

CEAL is made up of about 8 active members who are working hard to increase awareness and understanding of the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere through a variety of activities and offerings. The learning opportunities include interactive facilitations of teaching kits in the local schools, citizen science opportunities to monitor a variety of parameters around the lake using testing kits, hands-on explorations for all ages at the Bras d'Or Watch events, and distribution of information through social media and website, just to name a few. The following numbers indicate the impact that the committee has had in 2024-2025



- Information was shared and interactive learnings offered with over 25 people at the BLBRA Expo in Baddeck.
- 8 people joined foresters to walk the Nicholson Trail
- 57 local species cards were developed by ACAP and rolled out over 29 weeks on social media and on the website to encourage readers to start a collection and learn more.
- 7 reviews were posted from our first Adventure Lab in Battery Park
- 600 or more learners experienced the workshops at schools and camps
- 100 or more people participated among 4 Bras d'Or Watch events
- Water monitoring kits piloted and 5 distributed to volunteer citizen scientists to take monthly measurements at select Biosphere locations.

### Committee Members

Kirsty Lock (chair)  
Break Sampson-Macdonald, Megan MacIniss  
Veronika Brzeski, Jay Denny  
Anik Martin, Chris King  
Kathleen Aikens

Kirsty Lock





# Committee Highlights

cont'd



## Communication Committee

The communications committee was busy pushing our new branding and message of environmental stewardship, sustainability economic development and community engagement through new media, our website (7,000 annual visits), 4 newsletters and 9 bulletins (average 700 subscribers, 51% opens), local events, tradeshow and tourism conferences.

In the Fall we had a booth at the The Unama'ki - Cape Breton Island Tourism Summit - an event for all tourism operators, industry leaders and partners. Our emphasis was on being an UNESCO ecotourism destination.

### Committee Members

Pierre LaRochelle (Chair)  
Zoe Nicholas  
Megan MacInnis

We later attended a Destination Cape Breton's Sustainable Tourism Plan - Engagement Session in Port Hawkesbury where we spoke of the Atlantic Tourism Corridor project with Destination Canada and our complementary emphasis on sustainable social, environmental, economic and cultural environments in the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Region.



Proud member of the  
Canadian Biosphere  
Regions Association

As a member of the Canadian Biosphere Regions Association (CBRA) Communication Community of Practice (COMCop) we participate in regular online meetings sharing approaches to promotion and impactful initiatives where feasible.



We continue supporting and promoting our Explore the Bras d'Or initiative with CEPI and Ocean's North to encourage all to take in the local experiences around the lake during summer in the ever expanding calendar of events.



Pierre LaRochelle



## Membership Committee

In 2024-25, the Membership Committee focused on membership administration, renewal, and recruitment. Our activities included:

- Emails to all past annual members.
- Letter and rack card mailed by BLBRA staff.
- Facebook posts advertising for membership.



The Membership Committee was available for membership recruitment at the Biosphere Expo on June 9, as well as the special meeting on June 13 and the rescheduled AGM September 12, 2024.

We closed out the year with 144 total members; 104 lifetime and 40 annual. This was a slight decrease from 2023-24, where we recorded 46 annual members.

This year, the membership committee experimented with different forms of member recruitment: social media versus in-person. We have concluded that in-person recruitment is far more successful than online. Our most consistent membership sign-ups were generated from the Expo event in Baddeck and the Association's AGM.



### Committee Members

Kathleen Aikens (Chair)  
Doug Foster

### 2025-2026 Priorities

Membership priorities in the next year include increased member engagement and recruitment with leadership from the newly implemented Fund Development Committee. The Membership Committee Chair will continue to oversee membership administration, including working with the Treasurer and staff to create financial processes for membership sign-ups at Biosphere engagement and tabling events, like World Oceans Day and Bras d'Or Watch.

Kathleen Aikens



## Trails Committee



The Trails committee been working on partnerships and collaborations with like minded organizations and community groups. They had a successful year with their Walk the Watershed Trail series. They also participated in the Hike Nova Scotia Summit (May 31 - June 2, 2024)



### Walk the Watershed 2024 Trail Series:

**May 25: East Bay Hills Trail**

**June 15: Whycocomagh Provincial Park  
The Forest Floor**

**August 17: Iona Beach Walk  
MacCormack Provincial Park  
Habitat Hopscotch**

**September 28: Uisge Ban Falls Provincial Park  
The Fungus Among Us**

### Committee Members

Ron Newcombe (Chair)  
Maureen Cameron-MacMillan  
(Secretary)  
Candace Christiano  
Teresa MacNeil  
Bethsheila Kent  
Don Crosby



**Ron Newcombe**





# Committee Highlights

cont'd

## Fund Development Committee

The Fund Development Committee was convened in early 2025. We met to discuss goals and options for how to secure long term funding as well as project based funding.



There are several different types of funding we are considering. One is shorter term, fixed time funding that are linked with a specific project that can range from 6 months to 5 years. Endowment or donor centered funds are more sustainable but harder to secure. There is also a possibility of securing long term government funds at the municipal, provincial or federal levels.

Support from the communication committee as well as relationship development with fund raising experts are being undertaken to explore all fundraising options.

### Committee Members:

Colette Mesher (Chair)

Eileen Crosby

Don Crosby

Adele Hunt

Support the Biosphere

**Make a donation**

**DONATE**



Colette Mesher

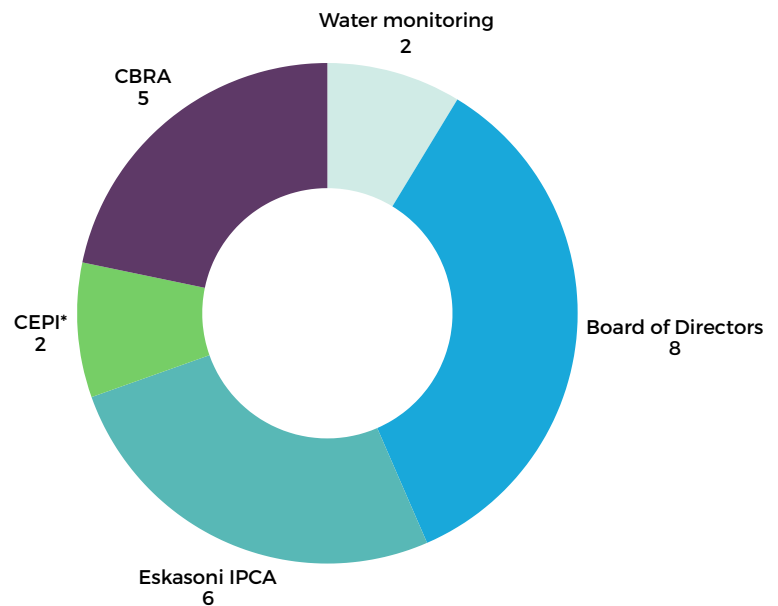


## Theme 1: Governance and Management

A team member has attended all Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCA) committee meetings with research knowledge shared. The Eskasoni Watershed Protection Committee brings together technical experts and project partners to discuss the results of this project and to build upon the bigger scope of biodiversity conservation through watershed protection.



Board meetings were organized and attended to keep the BOD informed of the project as work progressed. Presentations and updates have ensured that there has been an increased awareness about the project among the Biosphere Board, partners and stakeholders.



Number of meetings attended

## Theme 2:

## Research (hydrological monitoring)

Results from Reid Dauphinee's MSc showed that the wetlands and the area surrounding the wells are of highest conservation priority for groundwater recharge and streamflow generation.

The groundwater flow model from Reid Dauphinee's thesis was completed and showed that streamflow infiltration contributes 60% of pumping well water, while the local recharge into the fractured rock around the wells accounted for the remaining 40%. The wetland model being developed by Julia Gillette includes snow depth projections and groundwater recharge but needs further calibration, with forest and well models still to be developed.



The team has submitted a paper for publication (Hydrological Processes) based off of Reid's work and is currently under external review.



EFWC land and fishery guardians, Species at Risk and IPCA staff participated in knowledge transfer and learning opportunities during field work excursions with traditional knowledge and western science working side by side.





## Theme 3:

## Documentation and prioritization



The Project Manager gathered information from First Nations organizations and other sources to better identify priority areas. Key indicators identified by First Nations include cultural significance, threats due to climate change, habitat degradation and invasive species.

Mi'kmaw youth have been involved in data collection and monitoring as well to ensure that a Two-eyed Seeing Approach is applied to the fieldwork for this project.



Virtual communications through social media and newsletters were used to communicate with a wide audience. The BLBRA partnered with ACAP-CB to highlight species within the Biosphere. Expanded use of teaching kits and continued organization of events like Bras d'Or Watch and Explore the Bras d'Or also helped to raise awareness about biodiversity within the Biosphere. A summer intern was able to gain knowledge about the Biosphere and Canada's efforts to conserve and protect biodiversity for years to come.

## Theme 4: Knowledge Transfer

The theme of the CBRA National Gathering (September 16 – 19, 2024) was Biodiversity Blueprint: Achieving Biodiversity Targets through Biosphere Regions. The National Gathering took place in the Waterton Biosphere Region (Alberta) located in the territory of the Siksikaitsitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy), including the Kainai and Piikani Nations, and within Treaty 7 Territory.



We learned about ecosystems and biodiversity in the region as well as learned about projects taking place in the area. Each biosphere was given a chance to provide an update along with Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) and CCUNESCO. Sessions on biodiversity, Indigenous engagement and Indigenous-led conservation also took place. BLBRA Board member, Stan Johnson, gave a talk about conservation and Indigenous Language. Stan has also recently agreed to be the CBRA Atlantic Region representative on the CBRA Board of Directors.

# Biosphere Staff

We have had the great pleasure to work with both Doug Foster as project manager, Zoe Nicholas as administrative assistant and Keagan Parris as the summer intern thanks to the ECCC and Foundation Clean funding. Through their hard work, a great deal was accomplished and set in motion. We wish them the best for the future.



Doug Foster  
Project Manager  
(June 2022-June 2024)



Colette Mesher  
Project Manager  
(Dec 2024- Present)



Zoe Nicholas  
Administrative Assitant

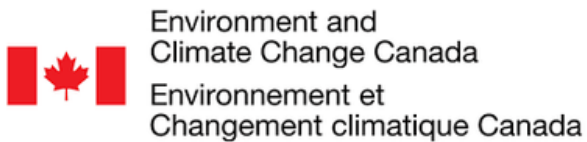


Keagan Parris  
Clean Leadership Summer Intern

# Acknowledgements



Through a variety of partnerships and funding applications, we have been able to expand our activities, hire staff, undertake impactful activities and support knowledge transfer.





# Contacts

## OFFICE STAFF

Project Manager -  
Administrative Assistant -  
Submit a question or comment online

[manager@blbra.ca](mailto:manager@blbra.ca) (902) 322-4651  
[adminassit@blbra.ca](mailto:adminassit@blbra.ca) (902) 322-6309  
<https://blbra.ca/contact>

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

[exec@blbra.ca](mailto:exec@blbra.ca)

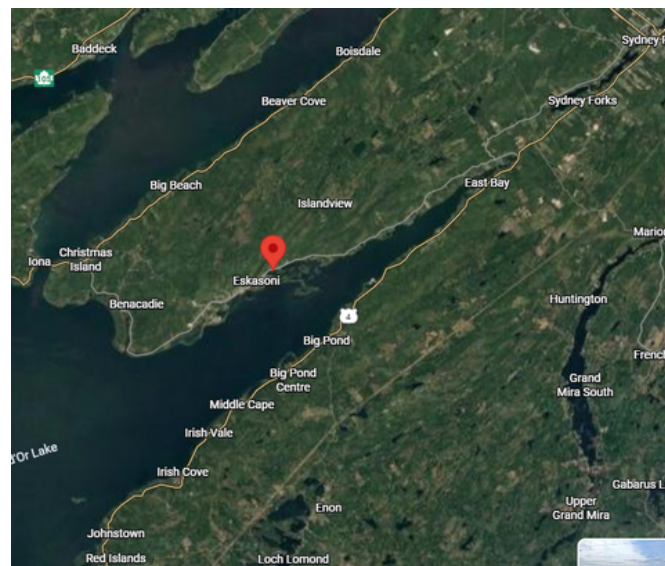
## COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Citizen Engagement and Learning Chair -  
Communications Committee Chair -  
Fund Development Chair -  
Trail Committee Chair-

[sciencechair@blbra.ca](mailto:sciencechair@blbra.ca)  
[communications@blbra.ca](mailto:communications@blbra.ca)  
[manager@blbra.ca](mailto:manager@blbra.ca)  
[trailschair@blbra.ca](mailto:trailschair@blbra.ca)

## PHYSICAL AND MAILING ADDRESS

Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere Region Association (BLBRA)  
4115 Shore Road  
Eskasoni, NS B1W 1M4





[www.blbra.ca](http://www.blbra.ca)



[www.facebook.com/blbra/A](https://www.facebook.com/blbra/A)



[www.instagram.com/blbra\\_cb/](https://www.instagram.com/blbra_cb/)



2024-2025



Bras d'Or Lake  
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