

Approved Minutes

Board of Directors' Meeting

Thursday, January 15, 2026 - 1:30 – 4:20 PM

Location: East Bay Volunteer Firehall | East Bay, NS

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

1. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Allison began the meeting at 1:40 pm by welcoming everyone and acknowledged that the meeting was being held on Cape Breton Island – Unama'ki, in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people.

The Board members and attendees then shared a quick round of introductions.

ATTENDANCE

DIRECTORS (Member at Large)		DIRECTORS (Ex Officio)	
Allison McIsaac (Chair)	Y	Steve Parsons (CBRM)	N
Terri Shobbrook (Vice-chair)	R	Bonny MacIsaac (Inverness CT)	N
Adele Hunt (Treasurer)	Y-Zoom	Kate Cave (Richmond CT)	Y
Megan Bunyan (Secretary)	Y	Donna Matheson-Lefort (Victoria CT)	Y-Zoom
Anik Martin	Y	Tyler Cole (CBP)	R
Jay Denny	Y	Stan Johnson (CEPI)	Y
Kathleen Aikens	Y	Kirsty Lock (NSCC)	Y-Zoom
Liz Campbell	N		
Rod Thompson	Y		
Tony Sylliboy	R		
Vacant			
Vacant			
Vacant			

*A quorum for the transaction of business at any meeting of the Board shall consist of:
50% of the Executive Comm. (2) and 6 non-executive Board members. Y= Present; R= Regrets sent; N= Absent*

QUORUM DECLARED

Guests: Regina Cozzi, Sr. Lab Instructor & X-Oceans Outreach Director, St. FX University via Zoom

Observers: Colette Mesher, BLBRA Project Manager; Pierre LaRochelle, BLBRA Administrative Assistant; Eileen Crosby, past board member; Veronika Bezski, past board member - Zoom, Ron Newcombe, Trail Committee chair. (CEPI), Candace Christiano, past board member - by Zoom.

2. Additions to and Approval of the Agenda:

There were no additions to the agenda as presented and reviewed by Allison.

MOTION to approve the agenda as is made by Adele, seconded by Megan. **Motion Carried**

3. Presentation - Regina Cozzi, X-Oceans Outreach Director, St. FX

[“X-Oceans Outreach](#) provides hands-on activities and workshops to promote ocean sciences, preservation and marine biodiversity to rural communities, schools, summer camps and youth organizations across Nova Scotia. Our goal is to enhance ocean literacy and ocean stewardship to youth grades K-12 through STEM and experiential learning.”(website).

Regina expanded on the program mentioning that they are mobile, traveling by van to upwards of 28 schools, French and English, and teaching some 6,000 youth per year across Nova Scotia. The program integrates with the official school curriculum. Some students come to the X-Oceans facility in Antigonish.

Popular resources are live organisms and invertebrates, not always encountered easily. And preserved. Oceans-11 classes interested in dissection content. Have Ocean floor map activities, climate change activities. Hire about 20 university students (undergraduate and graduate) a year to help deliver the [various programs](#). Students are purposely diverse in their background and programs.

Other than outreach they connect with a lot of national and international organizations to create wider opportunities. They do an annual Ocean’s Day event, (1,400 attendees!). Students get to learn the logistics around planning such an event. Use [Mitacs Funding Opportunities](#) to engage students such as the [Globalink Research Internship - Students](#). Also Promo Science grants.

Note: During follow up questions Regina noted that CBU delivers similar services through the [CBU - Let’s Talk Science](#) program however would be open to having discussions about any collaboration or student engagement.

ACTION ITEM: Colette will discuss the parttime/fulltime opportunities with her CBU contacts and get back to Regina.

ACTION ITEM: BLBRA, per comment from Donna, may want to consider reaching out to MLAs or the Minister of Education to get more of this type of content into the K-12 curriculum.

ACTION ITEM: Colette will email xoceans@stfx.ca and follow through regarding potential engagements with the BLBRA. Regina supported the idea to send a few students/exchange students to participate

ACTION ITEM: Jay will pass on the email xoceans@stfx.ca contact information to her teacher contacts. As well Jay will investigate getting some of X Oceans Outreach programs into the First Nation(s) community.

4. Review and Approval of the Minutes: November 20, 2025

MOTION to approve the agenda as noted made by Kathleen, seconded by Rod. **Motion Carried**

5. Business arising from November 20, 2025 meeting.

i. Review of Action Items

Contracting options (see Treasurer’s Report)

ii. Letters of support guidance

Discussion arose regarding the handling of requests for letters of support from other organizations or interests. Some requests are in a rush. Some existing partners, some new to us. It was agreed that the requester should in general align with our goals, not be detrimental to our reputation. Also considered if more than one request of support for the same external competitive initiative should be issued. Do all requests need board approval? Perhaps the executive committee can give approval if there is no significant financial commitment.

ACTION ITEM: Colette will create a process and checklist of core issues for vetting requests from others for letters of support; and routing for approval and signature.

6. Treasurer Report/ Update

i. General Review

Adele reviewed the January 2026 Income Statement and the Statement of Financial Position in the meeting folder. ECCC tracking to budget overspending in some areas is balanced by underspending in others so still in balance. We are in a healthy position and should be able to continue delivery of our

MOTION to accept the reports with the completion of 4QTR information, made by Adele, seconded by Stan.

Motion Carried

Discussion arose regarding contracting for services and competitiveness requirements based on value and experience. It was recognized that the cost, timeliness of filling a position, and the experience of the applicant, all bring their own value to awarding any particular contract.

MOTION that the BLBRA will issue a request for proposal for all contracts exceeding \$10,000.

For project extensions, existing contractors may be exempt for proposal requests for tenders and be offered a contract extension at the recommendation of the committee or board made by Adele, seconded by Rod.

Motion Carried

Note: During follow up questions in Trails discussion below Allison brought up 2025 - 2026 budgeting.

ACTION ITEM: ALL COMMITTEE CHAIRS are reminded to prepare budgets for the next year.

7. Committee/ Project Updates

i. Community Engagement and Learning Committee (CEAL)

a. Kirsty reviewed her notes via chat. CoastReach locations were established.

b. **Hopes to use new funding for a facilitator again.**

c. CEAL Committee Chair position to open June 2026

ACTION ITEM: All were/are reminded that as of June 2026 the CEAL Chairperson position will be open to all, board member or not. [\(see Board Manual 2025\)](#).

ii. Trails Committee

a. Ron reported that the December Trails Committee was cancelled due to weather; however they are moving forward with planning for 2026 and are actively reviewing the Trails Walking series, updating the Trails page and looking at brochure development.

b. Ron reported that the Irish Cove Trails group is looking at extending its trail.

c. Ron is also looking at various 'swag, take away' items to provide trail users participating at any BLBRA trail events.

Note: During followup questions Colette mentioned that there are funding requests outstanding for summer students, as well as a possible Trans Canada Trail grant.

Funding for Irish Cove trail work is starting to flow through the treasurer for charitable status and issuing of receipts.

ACTION ITEM: Ron will submit a 'swag' budget to Adele.

iii. Anik/Jay - Water Rangers and Ocean's 11.

Anik and Jay spoke of water rangers and selection of monitoring sites. They will be getting kits.

ACTION ITEM: Anik and Jay were asked by Colette to track any In-Kind time; and asked by Veronika to alert her when the kits come in so she can add them to the biosphere 'data network'.

iv. Communications

- a. Newsletter: Pierre asked for articles to be submitted from Gaelic and municipal perspective.

ACTION ITEM: Pierre to look at pushing out our articles to media like the Reporter, Victoria Reporter and the Oran.

- b. Social Media: Pierre built out the current Meta Business Suite to ensure FB and Instagram are linked. Megan and Colette have access.
- c. Atlantic Corridor: Pierre reported that Mike Carpenter of the Atlantic Corridor had sent out a survey and asked that members take a look and perhaps enter some ideas around possible events and the like.

ACTION ITEM: ALL may want to [contribute to the survey](#).

- d. Kathleen mentioned that David Gabriel, Sydney area, part of Washbrook Greenway Coalition, is active in the trail field and actively engaged with the Baille Ard Nature Trail in Sydney. He could be a resource to help explore the development of instructive tour(s) as part of an Atlantic Corridor activity. Anik mentioned the Kluska Trail potential. As well the need to have 10-15 passenger tour shuttles available was highlighted.

ACTION ITEM: Pierre will inform Mike Carpenter of **David Gabriel** as potential contribution to the corridor project.

v. ECCC and Proposal Development Update

- 1.1. Working along with EFWC on the community engagement and knowledge transfer on the research outcomes and establishing additional Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs).
- 1.2. Colette also reported on her pursuit of additional grants including three new ones: Community-led research, the EcoAction Stream 2 (forest water protection) and the Green Municipal Fund. She is presenting and working through the submission process with First Nation and other municipalities. Two others have been declined. The Knowledge Translation grant was successful and will provide funding to translate and custom tailor the delivery of the ECCC findings back to targeted audiences, communities and municipalities explaining how the ECCC research can be applied. The efforts will start in April and will be a good way to reconnect with the general communities within the biosphere.
- 1.3. Other grants were an application for the Circular economy with CBRA and a grant for looking at plastics along with .

vi. Fund Development Committee

- a. Working towards a March target date to prepare a letter to go out as well as building up a year long communication plan calendar for regular pushes out through Facebook and other platforms to build up awareness, membership and increase other funding streams. The early target is to encourage membership, new and renewal, during the April membership drive.

ACTION ITEM: ALL are encouraged to identify events to Colette early so they can be incorporated into the media promotion efforts well in advance.

8. Ex-officio/ Partner Updates

i. CEPI:

- a. Stan reported that the recent Youth Forum was a success. Theresa Harroun, Youth Coordinator, CEPI also presented at the just held CEPI bi-annual council meeting. The Council looked at annual plans and budget. Stan noted that the budgeting for Explore the Bras d'O the Bras d'Or initiative needs to be reviewed as some current outside funding may decrease. It is hoped to extend the event from the end of July, first week in August to July 21 to September 20th. Suggested that the Biosphere and partners should look at possibly funding a coordinator position. Consider Canadian Heritage's Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism Program (MARF). Brings people together.

ACTION ITEM: STAN/BLBRA/CEPI will review Explore the Bras d'Or funding.

- b. CEPI 2026 Workshop - **Listening to the People of the Lakes** will be held March 10-12 at Membertou. It will be coordinated by Eleanor Anderson, CBU - Shannon School of Business - Community Economic Development, Tourism & Indigenous Business.
- c. A new CEPI website is being developed and should be rolled out soon.

ii. Richmond County:

- a. Kate reported that Richmond County, a member of the Pitu'paq Partnership Society, a Society of the First Nations and five municipalities in Cape Breton who are working towards bettering the health of the Bras D'Or Lakes, has been involved in their environmental monitoring and interactive flood mapping project. Richmond County (together with the other members of the Society as clarified by Donna) will be looking for a part time administrative and project development person to manage Pitu'paq project initiatives.

iii. Victoria:

- a. Donna pointed out that there is now a Victoria Reporter insert in the weekly Port Hawkesbury Reporter. Adam McNamara is the local journalism initiative reporter for the Victoria County insert.

iv. Inverness County

v. CBRM

vi. Cape Breton Partnership - Regrets

vii. NSCC: Nothing new to cover off.

viii. PHP

9. Strategic Plan review

i. Discussion

Looking for best dates - either late January or early February. Could be a Saturday. Hosted by the EFWC. Likely 10am - 3 pm. Could be online. Strategic Plan in the morning. Governance in the afternoon. Any changes would have to be passed at a board meeting. Could also do a questionnaire or reformat for comments ahead of time.

ACTION ITEM: Colette will send out a Doodle poll.

ACTION ITEM: Pierre will send out an editable copy for markup.

10. New Business & Correspondence Requiring Action

- i. **Staff contracts.** Allison stated that there are now funds to extend Colette's project manager position for another 7 months. Still looking and additional funding.

- ii. **Canadian Biosphere Region Association (CBRA) Update**

- a. UNESCO is searching for a Youth representative, 18 - 35. Possible attendance at the MaB conference in the Fall, in Nanaimo, BC, funding dependent.

ACTION ITEM: ALL can connect with Colette if they want to learn more.

- b. Colette is establishing a contact with a biosphere in Scotland who is also looking for accommodation contact information at St. Anne's Gaelic College.

ACTION ITEM: Veronika will reach out to contacts at St. Anne's Gaelic College and let Colette know.

11. UNESCO update

12. Bat Conservation Update

1. Discussion

Kathleen spoke of ACAP's involvement with [NS Bat Conversation](#) and the increasing risk that white-nose syndrome, caused by an invasive fungus, has on their population. Good news is that some populations are rebounding and becoming resistant to the fungus. Trying to promote bat sighting and reporting tools. [Click here to see the report format](#). If you know someone who wants to get rid of the bats on their property, report that also so they may be removed safely to a better breeding area.

Lastly, avoid spelunking in and among caves during the bats winter hibernation season to avoid disturbing them and perhaps spreading disease with contaminated gear.

ACTION ITEM: Kathleen will consider providing a bulletin to send out to our members.

13. Adjournment at 4:00 pm

Next Meeting: March 15, Bonnie Brae, St. Peter's 1:30 pm – 4:00 pm

Minutes prepared by Pierre LaRochelle and verified by Megan MacInnis. Please email any corrections, clarifications, or omissions to Megan MacInnis. email secretary@blbra.ca.