



The Rucksack

Newsletter of the Friends of McNabs Island Society

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Spring 2026

McNabs Island Needs Your Help!

It is SPRING on McNabs Island and our volunteers are busy. We've had TWO spring work parties so far and there are more planned throughout the summer.

McNabs Island needs your help! We need help with our guided tours and help with our island maintenance projects! New to us this year is monitoring the endangered barn swallows at Fort McNab. For more details about how you can help, see page 5 and 6 of this Spring Rucksack!

Join our team of volunteers on McNabs Island this Spring!



Springtime at our McNabs Island Teahouse Outdoor Education Centre which was renovated entirely by our volunteers.

Photo credit: Catherine McCarthy

Friends of McNabs Island Society

The Rucksack

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We welcome contributions, ideas and feedback.

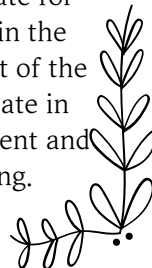
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Content is for members' interest only.



Annual membership to the Friends of McNabs Island Society runs on the calendar year. Your membership includes a year's subscription to the Rucksack newsletter and discount fares to our island events. Members support the ongoing care and development of the "Green Jewel" in Halifax Harbour.

The Friends advocate for funding to maintain the natural environment of the Island and participate in planning for its present and future well-being.



Friends of McNabs Island Board

2026 - 2027

President

- Cathy McCarthy

Vice President

- Brian Phelan

2nd Vice President

- Dachia Joudrey

Membership Secretary

- Cathy McKenzie

Treasurer

- Cathy Phelan

Newsletter Editor

- Theresa Rollet

Recording Secretaries

- Kara Gordon-McKay & Laura Napke

Volunteer Coordinator

- Mike Winslow

Board Members at Large

- Faye Power
- Elaine Russell
- Bethany Porter
- David Charbonneau

10 Year Pins Presented at the Annual General Meeting

Nine members were eligible this year to receive their 10-year pin. The Friends wishes to thank the following for their ongoing support:

- Genanne Beck
- Cynthia Van Kooten
- Diann & Wayne Robar
- Michelle Geizer
- Stephen Conrod
- Gordon Silver
- Malcolm Smith
- Paul Collins
- Ian Smith



Recipients Paul Collins on the left and Ian Smith on the right with membership secretary Cathy McKenzie.

Photo Credit: Dachia Joudrey

Friends of McNabs Island Society's 35th Annual General Meeting

By Dachia Joudrey with excerpts from Cathy McCarthy's Annual Report

The 35th Annual General Meeting of the Friends of McNabs Island Society was held on April 8, 2026 at the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History with emcee Denyse Contrasty welcoming 60 people in person to the event with 35 joining on Zoom. President, Cathy McCarthy presented a report which highlighted the Society's many activities in 2025.

There were some unforeseen circumstances in 2025 starting with the annual Beach Cleanup in June.



AGM Presenter Vanessa Smith with Cathy McKenzie
Photo credit: Dachia Joudrey

The event got cancelled at the last moment when gale-force winds prevented the Ambassatours vessel from landing at Garrison Pier. The passengers were disappointed as they were excited to help clean up the beautiful island!

Garrison Pier then closed for repairs for all of June and into July. In August, a serious drought forced the government to close many parks including McNabs Island due to fear of forest fires.

Fortunately, we managed to host the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design as part of their course *Time! Time! Time!* They visited the island three times and used the Teahouse Outdoor Education Centre as their base. The students later had a showing of their work at the Anna Leonowens Gallery in Halifax.

Other trips included hosting the Ulnooweg Education Centre Mi'kmaq Youth Camp, the ALNAAS newcomer family group, HRM Boys and Girls Clubs, a Volksmarch group, and the Nova Scotia Young Naturalists. In addition, trips were arranged for the HRM Mayor and Councillors and a national environmental planners' conference.

The popular guided Heritage, Forest Bathing and Coastal Shoreline Tours were held on Sundays during July and early August with the annual Fall Foliage Tours being held on October 19. This was the fourth year we welcomed the Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Centre to open the event with traditional drumming and singing of the Honour Song.

In November, a Volunteer Appreciation event was held at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic which included presentations. Volunteers celebrated the year's successes and made plans for 2026.

The Society published three Rucksack newsletters in 2025. We currently have approximately 265 members. We are active on Facebook with 7,500 followers and Instagram with 1,500 followers. We also have a YouTube channel where we post our AGM presentations.

One major highlight of the year was rebuilding the Timmins Cove Trail. We were very pleased to receive financial support from the Active Transportation Fund of Infrastructure Canada, the Recreational Trail Program of Nova Scotia Communities Culture, Tourism and Heritage, district funds from HRM Councillor Becky Kent and donations from our members.

Some work continued in the Teahouse Outdoor Education Centre, but the last major phase of the renovations to replace the broken cement floor has still not been addressed due to rising costs of materials and transportation. Hopefully this can be completed in 2026. (Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

We are pleased to welcome four new Board members: Elaine Russell, Bethany Porter, David Charbonneau and Kara Gordon-McKay (officially).

Our guest speaker for the evening was Vanessa Smith, an archaeologist and Curator/Registrar of Archaeology for the Nova Scotia Museum. Vanessa presented a very informative talk on the McNab family, early island settlers and showed archival maps depicting the island in the 1800s. This presentation is available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7AmPn012lc&t=2038s>



Recounting a Sunday School Picnic held on McNabs Island in 1924

by Janice Silver, Christ Church Historical Committee

Every July from as early as the year 1900 and continuing for many years, Christ Church in Dartmouth organized Sunday School picnics. Records indicate that the destinations for these in the early 20th century included the Hosterman's Grounds (Northwest Arm), Prince's Lodge in Bedford Basin, Silver Sands in Cow Bay and McNabs Island.

Fortunately, there are photos in the church's archives, as well as a newspaper account of the day's events from the picnic held in 1924 on McNabs.

The event held that year attracted more than 2,400 including 1,200 children! According to the newspaper account, the first boatload of people gathered in front of the church, marched to the ferry dock and boarded the steamer *Halifax* at 9am. It crossed to Halifax where it picked up more guests before docking at McNabs. Another boatload arrived in the afternoon.

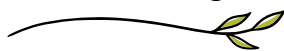
Activities included playing on the beach, singing, races, and playing games such as scramble for candy, peanuts and money for the "kiddies". Of course there was lots of food and the Dartmouth Citizen's Band provided entertainment at various times during the day. Understandably, those in the ice cream, soft drink and candy booths were kept very busy and there was someone on hand who did the lime juicing!

The winners of the 25 yard, 50 yard and 100 yard footraces as well as the 3-legged races were all listed in the newspaper the following day. There were at least 23 races that included boys and girls as young as 5 and as old as 14 and beyond.

The last boatload of picnickers came back at 8pm and were entertained all the way by the Dartmouth Citizen's Band. The event was considered a great success and according to the newspaper,

"A surprising feature of the day was that nobody was hurt, as is usually the case when so many children are allowed their freedom."

Apparently, the 2nd Dartmouth Scout Troop gave assistance throughout the day.



Couple strolling the beach on McNabs Island in 1924. Photo supplied by Janice Silver



McNabs Island Provincial Park Needs Volunteers

by Brian Phelan, Board Member, Friends of McNabs Island Society

In November 2002, McNabs and Lawlor Islands became a Provincial Park. In 2005, Nova Scotia Natural Resources (DNR) released a comprehensive Management Plan to serve as a guide for the province, partners and stakeholder groups to preserve and protect this important part of Nova Scotia for current and future generations. The Friends of McNabs Island Society was one of the key stakeholders and contributors in the development of the plan.

Over the decades, the Friends of McNabs Island Society have organized numerous park maintenance activities and projects through the generous support of our members, volunteers and students hired through the Canada Summer Jobs Programs. In 2023, the Friends of McNabs entered into a formal five-year Park Management Agreement with the Province. The Management Agreement replaced the need for Letters of Authority for all our volunteer activities. The Park Management Agreement identifies a number of areas where the Friends of McNabs can conduct park, trail, bench and other volunteer maintenance activities on the Island. These areas include the former Teahouse, now an Outdoor Education Centre, maintained and operated by the Friends, the remains of the 'English Gardens' located on the former Hugonin-Perrin Estate, as well as, numerous island trails.

This is where the McNabs Island Provincial Park, through the Friends of McNabs Island Society, needs volunteers.

The Friends of McNabs are reaching out to our members and the public who have an interest in helping with trail and garden maintenance on McNabs Island. Most of the work involves using hand tools such as clippers, loppers, hand saws, pruner poles and other hand gardening tools. For the use of any power tools like a chainsaw, brush saw, gas-powered lawnmower or grass whip, DNR sets the requirements for qualifications and training to operate these power tools on the Island. We are required to follow these requirements under our Management Agreement. If you are qualified to use any of these power tools, please let us know.

We have SIX volunteer workdays scheduled for 2026. All of our Volunteer Workdays are led by an experienced workday coordinator. The workdays are on a Saturday with a rain date on the Sunday. This is an all-day event with a departure from Eastern Passage at 8:30 am and a return from the island at 4:00 pm. Space is limited to 29 persons. The cost of the boat charter is paid for by the Friends of McNabs Island.

If you are interested in being added to our email list of workday volunteers, please send an email to info@mcnabsisland.ca.

Volunteers of all ages are welcome.

(Continued on page 6)



McNabs Island Volunteers discussing work day plans - May 2, 2026
Photo Credit: Catherine McCarthy

(Continued from page 5)



McNabs Island Volunteers building a park bench May 2, 2026
Photo credit: John Van Gulp

SCHEDULED VOLUNTEER WORKDAYS FOR 2026 SEASON:

Saturday May 23 (Rain Date May 24)
Saturday June 20 (Rain Date June 21)
Saturday July 18 (Rain Date July 19)
Saturday August 22 (Rain Date August 23)
Saturday Sept. 19 (Rain Date Sept. 20)
Saturday Oct. 17 **No Rain Date** as
Sunday Oct. 18 is our Fall Foliage Tours Event
on McNabs Island

Thanks to all of our enthusiastic, wonderful volunteers who have helped out over the years! We welcome new volunteers too. Come and join in on the fun!



Leaving a Legacy

Did you know there are many ways to donate to your favourite charities?

You can donate via:

1. Donations of cash, cheque, and online through PayPal, Canada Helps, e-transfer (EMT),
2. Planned Giving through your estate planning,
3. Bequests through your Will,
4. Life Insurance policies can include charities as beneficiaries,
5. RRSPs/RRIFs can also state charities as beneficiaries,
6. "In Memoriam" donations when someone passes.

Contact us, or your financial/estate planner, for more information on giving charitable donations to the Friends of McNabs Island Society. There can be tax incentives for you in giving to charities such as ours.

Your future donation can help sponsor on-island children's day camps, ongoing trail maintenance, restoration projects and resources for the newly restored Teahouse Outdoor Education Centre. By leaving a lasting legacy you help shape, maintain and preserve the future of McNabs and Lawlor Islands Provincial Park for future generations to enjoy.



Deteriorating Revetment Wall at Ives Point Battery. Photo by Catherine McCarthy

Ives Point Battery and its NEW Fence

By Catherine McCarthy

This spring, the Province hired a fencing contractor to install a permanent chain-link fence around the ramparts and most of the historic features of Ives Point Battery. Historians tell us that Ives Point Battery was the linchpin in the Halifax Defence Complex which protected the Port of Halifax. This fence effectively prevents visitors from accessing the ramparts and admiring the spectacular view of Halifax Harbour from this unique vantage point on the north end of McNabs Island.

In the late 1990s, Parks Canada stabilized Ives Point Battery by bricking-in the doors and windows, replacing the roofing and installing

railings above the high walls. The federal government then transferred the fort to the Province for safekeeping. The Province agreed to maintain the historical integrity of the fort which was constructed over a ten-year period in the 1860s. In the 30 years since the Province became responsible for Ives Point Battery, they have done very few repairs. Vandalism has been a problem for some time. Many of the bricked-in doors and windows, installed by Parks Canada to stabilize the site, have been smashed open.

In recent years, one of the granite lintels above one of the, now open, doorways in the high wall started to bulge outwards and looked like it would collapse. This is directly below the heavy Victorian-era 10" Rifled-Muzzle Loading guns. We alerted the Province to the problem of the failing lintel and hoped that the Province would get this fixed before there was any further deterioration. The Province installed a temporary fence and put up signs warning visitors to stay off the wall and ramparts. They also hired an engineering contractor to do a structural assessment of the Battery.

The engineering report determined that urgent repairs were needed in several areas including stabilizing the Barrack Casemate Ironstone Revetment Wall where the two 10" Rifled-Muzzle Loading guns are still mounted in their original 1870s emplacement. The report recommended that the 16' Revetment Wall and the 8' and 9' walls beneath the Breech-Loading Battery Position and Magazine be fenced off as these areas are a public safety hazard. The report detailed a list of repairs needed to all of the military buildings at Ives Point Battery. The estimated cost of repairs amounts to approximately \$7,000,000. As far as we know, there are no plans to do any repairs to Fort Ives Battery.



Fencing to contain the crumbling revetment wall at Ives Point Battery Photo credit: John Van Gulp

McNabs Island Guided Tours on Sundays in July and August

We are offering a variety of guided tours this summer. All our tours begin with a 30-minute boat ride aboard the Captain's Pride departing from Fisherman's Cove in Eastern Passage

Tickets are now on sale via Eventbrite!

<https://www.eventbrite.com/o/friends-of-mcnabs-island-society-10724104906>

McNabs Island North End Heritage Tour July 5, August 2 and August 23

South End Heritage Tour July 19 and August 16

Learn why the Island was important to the Mi'kmaw First Nations, the early French settlers, and the British, who built several forts on the island to protect the Port of Halifax. Admire the panoramic view from Fort McNab National Historic Site and learn more about the endangered barn swallows that live in the fort. Discover where Midway King, Bill Lynch, got his start in the fairground business. Learn the tragic story of the SS England, quarantined with cholera off McNabs Island in 1866.

McNabs Island Coastal Shoreline Tour July 12 and August 9

Learn about the changing shape of the island as beaches and coves come and go. Stroll along sandy Maughers Beach, which didn't exist 80 years ago. Walk around peaceful McNabs Pond, which has changed from a cove to a tidal inlet, then to a freshwater pond and now back to a tidal inlet again.

Forest Bathing Hike on July 26, 2026

Join the Friends of McNabs Island and **Wil Brunner**, a certified Nature and Forest Therapist, with www.softpinewellness.ca for a Forest Bathing Tour on McNabs Island. Experience Forest Bathing, Japanese Shinrin-Yoku, and welcome a mindful sense of calm and exploration through a new perspective.

All our tours include a visit the **Teahouse Outdoor Education Centre** located in the **English Gardens** not far from Garrison Pier. At the end of the day, relax on the beach and dip your toes into the cool waters of Halifax Harbour. Departure for our Summer Tours with A&M Sea Charters is at 9:30 am from 87 Government Wharf Rd in Fisherman's Cove, Eastern Passage. The boat leaves McNabs Island at 4:00 pm, arriving back in Eastern Passage at 4:30 pm. Space is limited to 24 people per trip. Get your tickets early!

\$40 per Adult (non-members), (Forest Bathing \$50)

\$30 per Adult for Friends of McNabs Island Society members, (Forest Bathing \$40)

\$20 for children/youth 16 and under, (Forest Bathing \$30)

Babies and toddlers 4 years old and younger are FREE courtesy of the Friends of McNabs Island.

Even our youngest visitors need a ticket!

For Tickets, go to Eventbrite:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/o/friends-of-mcnabs-island-society-10724104906>

Renew Your Membership and/or Make a Donation!

Thank you for your much needed continued support.

Renew your membership with e-transfer:

info@mcnabsisland.ca

directly via our website:

<http://mcnabsisland.ca/join-friends-mcnabs-island-society>

send a cheque payable to:

The Friends of McNabs Island Society

PO Box 31240, Gladstone RPO

Halifax, NS B3K 5Y1

The Society is a registered charity:

CCRA Number 88847 4194 RR0001

Email: info@mcnabsisland.ca or mcnabsisland.ca/contact

Phone contact: Cathy (902) 434-2254

For updates, follow us on
facebook.com/McNabsIsland,
and Instagram

@friendsofmcnabsisland

If you are already a member,
please invite your friends &
coworkers to join.

The more people become aware
of and support McNabs Island,
the better we will be able to take
care of it.