



The Rucksack

Newsletter of the Friends of McNabs Island Society

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Volume Twenty Eight Issue 1

Spring 2019

McNabs Island: An Island Ringed by Wrecks

Special presentation of the Friends of McNabs Island – May 1, 2019

Welcome to the Friends of McNabs Island Society's 29th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING and presentation on Wednesday, May 1st in the Small Craft Gallery of the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic.

**Special guest speaker will be historian and author Dan Conlin
presenting: McNabs Island: An Island Ringed by Wrecks**

McNabs island is encircled by shipwrecks, some tragic and some mundane. Many can still be seen at low tide. Join historian Dan Conlin for a fascinating illustrated talk about the shipwrecks of McNabs.

Dan Conlin is the curator at the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21. He also teaches at Saint Mary's University and has created a new course about piracy and privateering. Born in Berwick Nova Scotia, Dan studied journalism and history at Carleton University in Ottawa and then worked as a producer for CBC Radio in Ontario. He returned home to pursue a Master's in History at Saint Mary's University. One of his first steps in reconnecting with the province was to join the Friends of McNabs Island. He wrote the chapter on lighthouses and shipwrecks for the Friends' Discover McNabs Island guide.



Dan Conlin at sea aboard the brigantine Playfair
photo credit: Laura Dowling

"McNab Island has been the final destination for countless vessels for centuries. Their evocative timbers and rusty fittings still have secrets to reveal and stories to tell." – Dan Conlin.

Dan was curator at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic for 19 years where he was responsible for many successful exhibits including the Titanic display. He was also curator for a Pirates exhibit which led to his first book *Pirates of the Atlantic: Robbery, Murder and Mayhem off Canada's East Coast*. His second book, *War through the Lens: the Canadian Army Film and Photo Unit* was based on personal interviews and research that Dan conducted for his undergraduate thesis.

The Friends of McNabs Island Society is a volunteer-driven, registered charity dedicated to preserving and protecting McNabs and Lawlor Island Provincial Park. Since 1990, the Friends of McNabs have improved the trails and park facilities, organized community beach cleanups and offered guided tours to island visitors – making McNabs Island a welcoming park for everyone. This event is free and open to the public.

Friends of McNabs Island Society

The Rucksack

Included with membership

Web address: <http://www.mcnabsisland.ca>

Contact Address:

The Friends of McNabs Island
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We welcome contributions, ideas and feedback.

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Board Members at Large

☛ Dachia Joudrey

☛ Jackie Halsey

☛ Brian Phelan

☛ Faye Power

☛ Ian Smith

☛ Alexandra Vance

Get to Know your Board Members

Dachia Joudrey

Personal History: Retired social worker in Mental Health & Addictions Program, Nova Scotia Health Authority; holds degrees from MSVU (BPR) and Dalhousie (BSW); worked for many years in child welfare doing advocacy work and fundraising/special events

Interests: Traveling, hiking, history, genealogy, nature environmental concerns

How you got involved with the Friends of McNabs: Used to go to annual beach cleanup and when decided to volunteer chose this organization for its strong work in promoting environmental concerns, history and nature

Role as a member: Have assisted in special events/functions, fundraising for events, Friends of McNabs Island tour guide

Where we'll find you on the island/ doing what: Admiring the scenery, breathing the smell of the fir trees, explaining history to others, promoting nature and protecting it

Anything else you'd like to add: I worked for many years for organizations where government funding was scarce and I served on Boards of some of them; with Friends of McNabs I get to spend time doing what I enjoy and what helps with my mental health! A day on McNabs Island is never boring!



Dachia Joudrey on the beach near Garrison Pier

2018 BIRD COUNT on McNabs Island

by Mike Crowell

The 2018 Christmas Bird Count for Halifax was conducted on December 16. The weather was ideal for mid-December with sunny skies, temperatures ranging from -3° to +3° C and light winds. This year, the McNabs Island crew consisted of **Rich LaPaix**, **John Patterson** and **Mike Crowell**. After being shuttled over to the island by Mike Tilley, we split into two groups with Rich and John heading to the southern end of the island and Mike heading to the northern end. We spent 5 hours on McNabs Island and recorded 919 birds representing 43 species.

Although the weather conditions were ideal, we had an average turn out in regards to birds. Waterfowl were abundant with large numbers of American black ducks, long-tailed ducks, bufflehead, common goldeneye, greater scaup, common eider, and red-breasted merganser present. Gulls were not as abundant as they normally are. We recorded mostly herring gulls along with small numbers of ring-billed gulls, great black-backed gulls, and Iceland gulls. Land birds were hard to find this year. The most common species were black-capped chickadee, American crow, golden-crowned kinglet, song sparrow, and white-winged crossbill. A few raptors were present on the island this winter including bald eagle, northern harrier, sharp-shinned hawk, and merlin.

We had a few unusual sightings this year. We found a great blue heron near McNabs Pond and a northern flicker near the Hugonin Estate. Both of these species are common in Nova Scotia during the spring, summer and early fall. However, most great blue herons and northern flickers have left the province by late October. Birds that are present here in December are typically attempting to overwinter. Unfortunately, most of these birds do not survive the winter.

We also ran into three yellow-rumped warblers in shrub thickets on Maugers Beach. Normally you don't expect to see warblers in Nova Scotia during the winter. However, small numbers of yellow-rumped warblers successfully overwinter in Nova Scotia. They are able to do this because they are one of a small number of bird species that are able to digest wax efficiently. During the winter, small groups of yellow-rumped warblers gather in coastal areas to feed on the berries of Bayberry that have a thick waxy coating on their berries. On McNabs Island, bayberries are fairly common on Maugers Beach.

The Friends Make a New One - CUA provides \$2000 grant

The Friends of McNabs Island Society is one of nine recipients of the 2019 CUA Community Investment Grants initiative. The grant is for organizations and businesses that are creating a positive social and economic impact in the community.

Ashley Gallant, CUA's Communications and Community Impact Manager told us that the McNabs' application stood out from the very beginning because of the educational, historical and environmental components of our project.



Cathy McKenzie, Marie Mullally CUA;
Jacqueline Halsey

At a small reception on March 7th, Board members Cathy MacKenzie and Jacqueline Halsey were presented with a cheque for \$2,000 from CUA. The money will be used towards re-purposing a wonderful old, stone building, formally used as a teahouse, into an amazing Outdoor Education Centre.

A sincere thank you to CUA for supporting our work! And thanks to Cathy McCarthy for her excellent work on the grant application. ~ Jacqueline Halsey

Harbour Islands Visitor Experience

by Royce Walker

On Feb. 12, 2019 there was an exciting announcement made by Develop Nova Scotia (formerly Waterfront Development Corp.) that they were beginning the Halifax Harbour Islands Visitor Experience Strategy on behalf of Tourism Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Lands and Forestry and Parks Canada, the three project sponsors. The project would identify appropriate visitor activities for McNabs and Georges Islands, while protecting natural and cultural heritage resources, all with the intention of improving public access to the islands and creating improved tourism opportunities and experiences in Halifax.



The Friends of McNabs have long been working with our partners at Lands and Forestry and Parks Canada regarding the park. In more recent years, Friends have had good success with a number of projects in collaboration with Develop Nova Scotia. Now, with Tourism coming to the table, it appeared we had all the makings of the cross government team for which we have been advocating for a number of years, promising meaningful progress on implementation for McNabs Island Park. With the McNabs and Lawlor Islands Park Management Plan and other park policy available, Develop NS acknowledged the existing documents would provide the guiding principles and boundaries, and the project would build upon these documents. Develop NS recognized they had an aggressive schedule for the project, but expected to have their proposal ready to present to the project sponsors by March 31.

The Friends of McNabs and the Park Advisory Committee (PAC) quickly assembled a team to be ready to work with the Develop NS planners, as a key stakeholder and partner for McNabs Island.

Public input began Feb. 14 with the first stakeholder meeting attended by the Friends/PAC team, along with representatives from Fisherman's Cove, the Halifax Citadel Society and MP Darrell Samson. This was a facilitated discussion managed by the consulting team of EDM Planning Services and The Economic Planning Group, hired by Develop NS for this project. The intent was to provide input for the consultants to begin to understand the nature of opportunities for the islands. Following the stakeholder meeting the Friends provided the planning team with a comprehensive document of comments regarding McNabs and tourism opportunities, along with other background information, including our 2010 visitor survey compiled with data from interviews with visitors on the island.

In addition to stakeholder meetings, Develop NS created an online survey and scheduled three public 'pop-up' sessions in Eastern Passage at Fisherman's Cove, in Halifax at Scotia Square, and in Dartmouth at the Alderney Ferry Terminal, intended to engage the public, and solicit feedback and ideas as input for the project team to consider. Joe Shea and Royce Walker from the Friends of McNabs were able to attend the pop-up sessions to generate discussion focused on McNabs Island, share some of the activities and events organized by the Friends, and talk about the types of 'tourism' experiences that would work in a Natural Environment park, as McNabs Island has been designated. The Friends and PAC left Develop NS a standing offer to help the planning team in any way we could to support the project and create a quality proposal for McNabs Island.

On March 14, our Friends / PAC team attended a review of the draft visitor experience proposal for

McNabs. The consultants provided a summary of the public input gathered, and the process they used to evaluate the information, a review of the long list of possible visitor experiences for McNabs, and a short list they intended to recommend in the initial phase of the project implementation.

The final page presented by the consultants was a map illustrating the proposal on the island, and it was this information which caused our team to be very surprised. It was immediately obvious that significant portions of the proposal did not comply with the requirements of the Management Plan or the Trail Plan, in particular respecting the Environmental Protection Zone, areas which have stringent controls regarding where and what kinds of park infrastructure, such as trails can be constructed. The proposal included assumptions regarding the Maugers Beach breakwater and Lighthouse being included as park features for visitor experiences, and focused only on the Garrison Pier to Back Cove corridor and the south end of the island, while remaining silent on the remainder of the island and other park resources.

The Friends/PAC team met the following week to review and discuss the project information presented March 14, and to draft a thoughtful and balanced reply, to ensure constructive feedback for the project planning team, and to ensure they understood the policy and practical limitations contained in the Management Plan and other park documents.

Key items in our feedback were:

- Many of the proposed visitor experiences are presently taking place on McNabs Island, and we would support continuation of these activities in compliance with Lands and Forestry policies
- We would fully support the introduction of a Mi'kmaw visitor experience
- We recognize the need to implement new visitor experiences with a phased approach, but the proposal must consider the entire park resource inventory and provide a strategy for future implementation phases.
- We would NOT support construction of new trails or other infrastructure that does not comply with the Management Plan park zoning and/or the Trail plan.
- The inclusion of Maugers Beach breakwater and Lighthouse in the proposal is not affordable or sustainable given the cost to repair and maintain as park infrastructure.
- We would fully support the replacement of Range Pier to improve the access connection with Eastern Passage

The Friends and PAC team members were very disappointed with the initial draft proposal. In particular, we were concerned by the extent to which the proposal did not comply with the Management Plan. There had been a number of conversations between Friends/PAC and members of the Develop NS team and consultants regarding the Management Plan and the importance of the project abiding by the principals, policies and practices stated in the Management Plan. It is unclear at this time how the draft proposal strayed so far from that guidance. *cont'd* ►

Visitor Experience Strategy

Develop Nova Scotia is preparing a Visitor Experience Strategy for the Halifax Harbour Islands — Georges Island and McNabs Island.

It will identify which visitor activities are appropriate on each island, as well as ways to protect their natural and cultural heritage resources.



Halifax's Harbour Islands are highly visible and historically significant places that offer visitors an opportunity to connect with history and nature. The islands provide a setting for outdoor experiences in landscapes that range

from historic military fortifications and former settlements to unique natural habitats and wilderness areas.

The Friends and PAC believe the initial proposal would have benefited from the experience and knowledge of our more than 25 years of working on the park, and providing visitor experiences, had our team been invited to collaborate more closely with the consultants in drafting the initial proposal. Several of our members have a professional background, experts in fields related to the McNabs Island project

The most recent update from Develop NS, in mid-April, stated an interim report had been provided to Tourism Nova Scotia at the end of March, and the planning team is in the process of reworking the proposal to address the feedback received from Friends/PAC and other stakeholders. Develop NS stated they hoped to have a revised draft proposal ready the Friends and PAC to review soon. A new timeline for the project finish date has not been provided.

The PAC and Friends of McNabs are dedicated to the successful implementation of McNabs Island Park.

We look forward to working together with Develop NS in the near future to review the revised project plan and to help build a proposal compliant with the Management Plan offering improved and new Tourism experiences, and finally to realize the full potential McNabs Island has to offer as the signature park for Halifax and Nova Scotia.

Letters to the Editor

We would love to receive and print letters that speak to matters relating to McNabs Island. We read all letters and print those that space allows. Email info@mcnabsisland.ca.

January 18, 2019

Dear All,

BARRY-1948-2018

Let me add my tribute to Barry Edwards. He had strong opinions and a healthy skepticism on matters McNabs Island, but regardless of who he agreed, or differed, with, his loyalty was to the island, to its defenders and to its futures as a publicly-owned island refuge for all to use wisely forever. To Barry those users included the deer and at least one bear, their rich berry feeding grounds, the marshes, and the numerous evidences of historical human habitation reaching back to the Mi'kmaq people and their shell midden and up to a treasured A.J. Davis intact bottle.

Barry was in many ways a loner, yet welcomed a conversation about any element McNabs Island history, geography, or the military forts, their graves and artefacts. It didn't matter whether you had the Ph.D of Roger Pocklington, my M.Sc., or the experience that led you to wonderful Island photographs, or into the politics of locating a possible Point Ives regional sewage treatment plant, the cutting of and the maintenance of trails and roads on the Island, or the painting of a 19th century soldier who rendered a view of the McNabs cottage – Barry was able to discuss and appreciate all aspects of the Island. I thank you, Barry.

It pained me to see his legs slowly give out and betray his wish to continue to get about our community. My lasting image of Barry will always be of him with a serious walking stick riding on a transit bus and pushing himself to get about and remain active. Go Well – Stay Well, sir. And let us all walk in the footprints of a fine volunteer keeper of the land and his memory.

Alan Ruffman

Lovers of McNabs

By Faye (Cleveland) Power

Marge and Mac MacKay were the caretakers of Fort Hugonin, McNabs Island, from 1945 to 1953, when they moved to Purcell's Cove, Halifax, and later to California with their five children, David and Louise (both born on McNabs Island), Heather, Bruce and Lynette.

Mac (Lyman) McKay, 97, formerly of Miramichi, N.B. died February 7, 2019. His bride of over 73 years, Marjorie Cleveland McKay, died at 93 on January 2, 2017. Marge was the daughter of Colin Cleveland, keeper of the lighthouse on the northern end of McNabs Island for 26 years.

Mac had gone to McNabs Island on a blind date with the girlfriend of Joyce (Marge's sister) that Mac's friend, Cliff Hignett, arranged. Everything went great until Mac laid eyes on Faye's sister, Marge, a petite, blue-eyed gal. It was quite obvious that Mac only had eyes for Marge. Joyce's girlfriend, Bertha, couldn't have been too upset as she remained a lifelong family friend. Joyce and Cliff celebrated over 60 years of marriage, and Marge and Mac over 73 years.

They say laughter is the best medicine. I am sure Mac came into this world with a smile on his face and left this earth with one too. The doctors told him at 70 that if he had another heart attack, there wasn't enough left to save him. He didn't die until 27 years later.

The picture of the four of us is my husband Terry Power, myself - Faye (Marge's baby sister - she is 24 years older than me) and Marge and Mac.



McNabs Island Beach Cleanup

Sunday June 2 (rain date- June 9)

Time: 9:30AM – 4:30PM

Celebrate Environment Week and Oceans Week by helping clean up McNabs Island Provincial Park! Over the past 29 years, our volunteers have collected more than 13,500 bags of garbage and recyclables from the beaches of McNabs and Lawlor Islands Provincial Park.

Two Departure Locations: Murphy's on the Water, Cable Wharf or Eastern Passage: A&M Sea Charters 87 Government Wharf Rd, Fisherman's Cove.

Registration is now FULL. Add your name to the waitlist on Eventbrite.

McNabs Island Herb Tour

Sunday July 7

Time: 9:30AM – 3:30PM

Stroll through McNabs Island with biologist Sarah d'Apollonia of Eastcoast Wild Foods and discover the many edible herbs that grow along Nova Scotia's coastline and in our woodlands. Space is limited to 27 people. In the event of heavy rain or gale force winds, the tour will be cancelled.

Departure Locations: Eastern Passage: A&M Sea Charters, 87 Government Wharf Rd, Fisherman's Cove.

Cost: \$20 (members and children/youth under 16), \$25 (non-members).

Tickets on sale via Eventbrite.ca

Discover McNabs Island Summer Heritage Tours

July 7, 14, 21, 28, and August 4, 11, 18, 25
Times: 9:30 – 3:30 and 10:30 – 4:30.

Hike through Canadian history on McNabs Island! Learn about the important role the Island played for the Mi'kmaw First Nations, the early French settlers, and the British, who built several fortifications overlooking Halifax Harbour to protect the Port of Halifax. Space is limited to 27 people per trip. Note: In the event of heavy rain or gale force winds, the tours will be cancelled.

Departure from Eastern Passage: A&M Sea Charters, 87 Government Wharf Rd, Fisherman's Cove.

Cost: \$20 (members and children/youth under 16), \$25 (non-members).

Tickets on sale via Eventbrite.ca

Fall Foliage Tours of McNabs Island

Sunday October 20 (rain date October 27)
Times: 9:30 – 4:00

Join the Friends of McNabs Island Society for the annual Fall Foliage Tour of McNabs Island Provincial Park. See the island in its autumn splendour and participate in guided history and nature tours.

Two Departure Points: Halifax: Murphy's on the Water, Cable Wharf, on the Halifax Waterfront and Eastern Passage: A&M Sea Charters 87 Government Wharf Rd, Fisherman's Cove.

Cost: \$20 (members and children/youth under 16) \$25 (non-members).

Tickets on sale via Eventbrite.ca.

Annual Membership to the Friends of McNabs Island Society runs on the calendar year, includes a year's subscription to the society's newsletter and discounts at our events.

The Friends of McNabs Island Society is a volunteer-driven, registered charity dedicated to preserving and protecting McNabs and Lawlor Island Provincial Park. Since 1990, the Friends of McNabs have improved the trails and park facilities, organized community beach cleanups and offered guided tours to island visitors - making MacNabs Island a welcoming park for everyone.

Renew Your Membership Now!

Thank you for your much needed continued support

Renew your membership directly via our website:

mcnabsisland.ca/membership-application

or 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 88 474 194 RR0001

Visit our website or contact us info@mcnabsisland.ca or mcnabsisland.ca/contact
Cathy (902-434-2254).

For updates, follow us on [facebook.com/McNabsIsland](https://www.facebook.com/McNabsIsland) and Twitter [@mcnabsisland](https://twitter.com/mcnabsisland).

If you are already a member, invite your friends to join you. Talk to coworkers. As more people become aware of and support these gems, the better we will be able, together, to take care of them.

This issue went to print in April 2019