

Rucksack Fall 1998

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NEWSBRIEFS

- Arthur L. Wright (alw228@netquarters.net) is looking for information on the family of a John Wright, who apparently settled on McNab's Island (then called Cornwallis Island) with his wife and four children in 1749.
- Vaughan Engineering has completed a study ("Site Investigation and Detailed Qualitative Risk Assessment, McNab's Island, Halifax, NS") for the Department of National Defence of two sites at the Fort Hugonin property, contaminated with petroleum hydrocarbons leaking from a heating fuel storage tank and from the former Building B5 (Flammable Stores). Two options are listed: Restriction of use of groundwater at the site for drinking purposes, or excavation and disposal of an estimated 50-100 cubic metres of contaminated soil at a cost of \$40-60 000.
- **Deadman's Island** in the Northwest Arm, featured in our Summer 1998 issue, is no longer in jeopardy. A proposed residential development on the "island" has been withdrawn due to widespread opposition. It is the burial place of a large number of prisoners-of-war.
- FOMIS donated a beautiful white vertebra, from a minke whale that washed up on Devils Island in 1993, to the Nova Scotia Nature Trust and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (Nova Scotia chapter).

The bone was auctioned off following a dinner on November 27, with David Suzuki in attendance.

AN OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTRE ON McNABS ?

For years FOMIS has expressed interest in leasing the former Island Teahouse, vacant since 1992. Since the business closed, we have asked successive Ministers of Natural Resources; namely John Leefe, Don Downe, Eleanor Norrie, and now Kenzie MacAskill; for a lease on the property.

In November we finally received an offer to lease from the provincial government. Its terms are, however, expensive; requiring FOMIS to pay surveying costs, appraisal fees, and full insurance. The building had been vandalized years ago and requires considerable repairs including new wiring, windows, doors, washrooms, and a supply of drinking water. We are currently in the process of preparing a budget and of determining how to fund such a venture.

The FOMIS outdoor education committee hopes to use the former Teahouse as an outdoor education centre for McNabs Island. Already, thousands of students use the island for field trips. Scouts, guides, and cadets camp on the island and complete requirements for their environmental and woodsman badges there. Dalhousie University has been holding field biology classes on the island for several years.

Now that the Department of Natural Resources has offered FOMIS a lease, we can actually move forward with planning for an outdoor education centre on the site. Anyone interested in helping the outdoor education committee is invited to contact the undersigned at 434-2254.

Catherine McCarthy

McNABS ISLAND ART ON EXHIBIT IN VANCOUVER

Julie McIntyre is a printmaker whose colourful travel history took her across Europe and Canada, and eventually to the shores of McNabs Island. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Queen's University and was in Halifax in 1988-1994 at NSCAD under the Open Studio Program.

Her current print exhibition, *Sea Stories*, is a presentation of carefully collected and positioned historical data collected from McNabs Island. The images were taken from objects washed onto the shores of the island such as weathered wood, fragments of lobster traps, nets, ropes, and even sandals.

Once collected and studied, the objects were either rubbed onto transfer paper or directly inked and pressed onto each print. The collection of twenty multicoloured monoprints combines stone lithography with collagraphy and printed wood grains. The show is a celebration of history's biographers, their tools and imaginations, as well as printmaking's virtuosity and the maritime tradition.

The exhibition also includes new works incorporating images of objects found on the shores of Granville Island. Julie is currently working out of Malaspina Printmakers Workshop on Granville Island in Vancouver. *Sea Stories* runs at the Vancouver Maritime Museum from October 1 until January 3.

Nancy Simovic

FALL BEACH SWEEP ON McNABS ISLAND

September 27 was the 16th cleanup of McNabs Island. Over 5000 bags of trash have been collected since 1991, when the Friends became stewards of the island's beaches. As coordinator of the cleanups, I always fret about the pending weather on island event days. The weather forecast for the 27th called for possible showers in the afternoon. After a 7 AM discussion with the duty meteorologist at the Environment Canada weather office, we decided to take a chance that the showers would be light and to go ahead with the cleanup.

The threatening weather meant that only forty hearty souls turned out for the event, down considerably from the 220 who volunteered for the spring cleanup. Since there were so few volunteers, we decided to concentrate on cleaning up just Ives Cove. Except for a small group, who said that they would rather do Back Cove, the rest of us headed down the road to Ives Cove.

Sure enough, by one PM the showers had started. At first there was a slight drizzle, and at one point the skies appeared to clear. Then the rain started and didn't stop. It became impossible to continue the cleanup. The optimists among us, without proper rain gear, sought shelter from the driving rain in

the woods. The rest of us, in Gortex and rubber boots, stuck it out for a while longer.

By two PM even the most hearty were soaked and headed for the shelter of the large veranda in Conrad House, wishing that we could go inside for a cup of tea. The rain and wind continued for the rest of the afternoon. Eventually we headed back towards Garrison Pier and boarded the Haligonian III. Docking at the pier was difficult as the southwesterly had turned into a gale.

The net garbage count was only fifty bags. Captain Mike Tilley, in charge of transporting bags of collected litter to a BFI dumpster in Eastern Passage, made a special trip to Back Cove in the rain to collect the bags supposedly left there. There were no bags, and the group that had promised to clean up this beach turned out to be mere sightseers, along for the free ride to the island. They didn't fill up a single bag of trash!

Thanks to all who gave up their Sunday and helped out in the drizzle, fog, and rain; and to Parks Canada (Halifax Defence Complex) for their financial support, to David Seaboyer of the NS Department of Natural Resources for his on-island help, Murphy's on the Water for a discount on the boat charter and for the hot coffee on the return voyage, to BFI for the free use of a dumpster, and to Chris Naugle and Mike Tilley for transporting the trash to Fishermans Cove.

Catherine McCarthy

(Editor's note: The writer has organized all of our society's sixteen(!) beach sweeps. Bravo!)

A SUNNY FALL FOLIAGE FORAY

This year's event took place on Sunday, October 18. The weather was classical Indian Summer. It was sunny, breezy on the coast, but sheltered in the woods.

David Seaboyer, the island's caretaker, again opened the Conrad and Matthew Lynch houses. The visits were supervised by Cathy Kelly and Charlie Calaghan. The NS Lighthouse Preservation Society arranged for the Canadian Coast Guard to open the Maugers Beach Light.

Royce Walker led a history tour, visiting such sites as the forts and the site of the old school. Mike Crowell led a nature hike on the north end of the island, while Bob Guscott led one on the south end.

Personally, I have learned much from the hike, particularly the role of the Alder Flea Beetle in killing stands of alder on the island. We didn't see any beetles, but noted mined leaves on many alder bushes. The cause of death of many older alder stands, which had lost their last leaves in previous years, was impossible to determine.

Seventy-six people took part in this fun event, making up for our disastrous rained-out Fall Beach Sweep the previous month.

Dusan Soudek

POLITICIANS TOUR McNABS ISLAND

On Saturday, September 29, FOMIS organized a guided tour of McNabs Island for local members of the federal House of Commons, of the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly, and of councillors of Halifax Regional Municipality. We felt that it was important for our elected officials to experience first hand the island's natural and cultural resources. We hoped that, by being more familiar with the island, local politicians would support our efforts to finally put in motion a strategy to have McNabs and Lawlor Islands become an official island park.

Kevin Deveaux (MLA for Eastern Passage - Cole Harbour) and Peter Stoffer (MP for Sackville - Eastern Shore), whose respective ridings include the three Halifax Harbour islands of McNabs, Lawlor, and Devils; assisted us in sending invitations to the event to all elected politicians in Metro Halifax. FOMIS board members Judy Campbell, Du an Soudek, and Catherine McCarthy; together with Colin Stewart of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (NS branch), hosted the event.

Mart Johanson and Ron McDonald represented Parks Canada (Halifax Defence Complex), whereas the Nova Scotia Department of natural Resources sent Brian Kinsman, Bob Blumsum, and island caretaker David Seaboyer.

MP Gordon Earle (Halifax West); MLA's Kevin Deveaux, Darrell Dexter (Dartmouth - Cole Harbour), and Don Chard (Dartmouth South); and regional councillors Harry McInroy (Eastern Passage - Cole Harbour South),

Sheila Fougere (Connaught - Quinpool), Bill Stone (Prince's Lodge - Clayton Park West), and Bob Harvey (Lower Sackville) and their families enjoyed a beautiful day on McNabs Island. For some, it was their first trip to the island.

We picked a wonderful day for a harbour cruise, travelling aboard Captain Ed Kiley's Sea Tiger from Eastern Passage to Garrison Pier. The four-hour tour included Fort McNab and the McNab family cemetery, the former Island Teahouse at the abandoned Hugonin-Perrin estate, tours of the Conrad and Matthew Lynch houses, and a visit to Fort Ives. A great day was had by all. I am sure that McNabs Island gained more friends, interested in protecting the "Green Jewel of Halifax Harbour".

Catherine McCarthy

GOVERNMENT STRATEGY FOR HARBOUR ISLANDS RELEASED!

Finally, there are some good news about McNabs Island and Lawlor Island! On November 13, only three years after public hearings on the issue, the long awaited federal-provincial position on the future of the two outer Halifax Harbour islands, the elusive Land Use Strategy, has been released!

Everyone who took part in the 1995 hearings got invited to a reception at the Citadel to mingle with Parks Canada and N.S. Department of Natural Resources (DNR) brass and to witness ministers Ken MacAskill and Andy Mitchell sign the document.

Naturalists, history buffs, hikers, campers, and just plain island aficionados will be pleased with the joint government position: As of November 13, Parks Canada has transferred Lawlor Island and almost all of its holdings on McNabs Island, except Fort McNab National Historic Site, to the province for a future provincial park.

Lawlor Island will be largely left to its nesting great blue herons and ospreys, while there will be only limited infrastructure on McNabs Island in order to preserve its wild character. Acquisition of the remaining few acres of private holdings on McNabs will be a "high priority" for the province, and the privately owned Devils Island "could potentially be incorporated" into the future park.

Any thoughts of a fixed link to the mainland are out, and an outdoor education centre on McNabs Island is in. So are partnerships with "interested parties", provided "such development is compatible with natural and cultural

heritage resource conservation and protection objectives". Neither The Friends of McNabs Island Society (FOMIS) nor other potential partners are mentioned by name.

The eight-page Land Use Strategy makes no mention of the Hugonin Point/Fort Hugonin property, to this day administered by the Department of National Defense, which everyone assumes -rightly or wrongly- will also be transferred to the province at some future date. There is no mention of any new funds for the future provincial park, nor is there a time line.

For the first time in the recent history of the two islands there appears to be a broad consensus as to what should be done with them: The two senior levels of government, the local MLA (Kevin Deveaux), the local MP (Peter Stoffer), and above all, the public, all agree that the unique and increasingly valuable natural character of the outer harbour islands should be preserved in perpetuity.

The transfer of Lawlor and McNabs Island federal properties has been negotiated for nearly a decade: The process was rudely interrupted in the early '90s, when McNabs Island was chosen as the site for a regional sewage treatment plant, a plan since abandoned, and in the spring of 1995. This time, Ron MacDonald, the Dartmouth MP whose riding included the three outer harbour islands, blocked the planned transfer.

The Land Use Strategy and the transfer of federal lands from Parks Canada to DNR represent a giant leap forward in the development of a wilderness park on the two islands. Kudos to The Honourable Kenney MacAskill (N.S. Minister of Natural Resources) and The Honourable Andy Mitchell (Secretary of State for Parks) and to their respective staffs for completing a long and arduous process.

Nova Scotians and visitors to our province can look forward to a new natural park on McNabs Island and Lawlor Island. A park providing not only appropriate recreational opportunities and economic benefits, but above all preserving the islands' natural and cultural heritage.

Dusan Soudek