

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
OF THE NIAGARA BRUCE TRAIL CLUB  
ROCKWAY COMMUNITY CENTRE  
APRIL 28, 2019**

**Board Members Present:** Debbie Demizio, Lisa Etienne, Rhys Beak, Alicia Aitchison, Diane Marlatt, Vince Zvonar, Margaret Northfield, Ruth Moffatt, Marinus Koole, Rick Waters, Kathleen Orth, Corrie Kellestine, Koosje Stassen

**Nominated Board Member:** Craig Church

**Regrets** – Jean Stephenson-Lucente

President Debbie Demizio opened the meeting at 4:01 p.m. and welcomed approximately 62 members. Debbie acknowledged the contributions of a committed team of volunteers and introduced the board members. She then outlined the Agenda for the meeting.

***A motion to accept the Agenda was made by Doug Thoms and seconded by Trudy Senesi. Carried.***

***A motion to approve the minutes from last year's Annual General Meeting held on April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2018 (posted on Niagara Bruce Trail Club website prior to meeting) was made by Trudy Senesi and seconded by Merle Richards. Carried.***

**Board Report – Debbie Demizio**

Debbie gave a brief overview of Bruce Trail Conservatory (BTC) 2025 strategy & 5 strategic priorities set forth by the BTC:

1. Accelerate Land Acquisition
2. Expand Fundraising
3. Build Brand Awareness
4. Increase Impact of Membership
5. Enhance Stakeholder relationships

Here is what the Niagara Bruce Trail Club (NBTC) is doing to meet those priorities:

1. Accelerate Land Acquisition.

- Last year we changed the club by-laws, separating Landowner Relations and Land Securement into 2 board positions. This will mean we have more volunteer commitment at the club level to this portfolio.

2. Expand fundraising.

- As a board, we have decided to focus on what we do well, which is organize hiking events. This year, we will have 5 event hikes and we have applied modest increases to the registration fees for these events. Profits from our event hikes are the major source of revenue for our club.

3. Build Brand Awareness

- There are several ways that we have built brand awareness over the past year.
- First, the board members have email signatures using the proper logo and colours. These are used for external communications. The website has the same icons.
- Second, we sell neck tubes, in the corporate green and branding.
- We use the same branding on powerpoint presentations.
- Finally, we use consistent naming conventions for special events on Eventbrite. Searchable by Bruce trail Conservancy – Niagara Club.

#### 4. Increase impact of membership

- Members of the NBTC can take the Hike Ontario hike leader training for free (\$60 value) to become a Certified Hike Leader.
- If you are a Certified Hike Leader and want to take a first aid course, our club will reimburse a portion of the cost (with prior authorization).
- We offer reduced pricing for badges to BTC members.

#### 5. Enhance Stakeholder Relationships

- Stakeholder is, “A person, group or organization that has interest or concern in an organization. Stakeholders can affect or be affected by the organization’s actions, objectives and policies”.
- In Niagara, the trail crosses 7 municipalities, Niagara On The Lake, Niagara Falls, St. Catharines, Thorold, Pelham, Lincoln, and Grimsby.
- Two of the municipalities – Lincoln and Grimsby – have undertaken consultation to develop master plans for Recreation, Parks and Culture. Our club has been represented at town halls, workshops, surveys and focus groups. In addition, we were contacted by the Pelham Active transportation committee to create a new side trail connecting the town to the Bruce Trail.
- In response to the concerns presented to Lincoln Town council regarding hiker safety where the trail goes along the road (on Seventeenth Street) and road crossings, (e.g. Quarry Road), the town has installed improved signage.
- We participated in the public consultation for developing a new strategic plan for the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, to ensure the Bruce Trail is preserved and have requested they consider developing an overnight rest area for through hikers.
- We continue to liaise with Niagara College. We provide a \$1,000 bursary annually to a student of the Environmental sciences faculty. We provided a special Hiking 101 program to masters students at Brock University.
- We have also provided hikes for mental health and participants at a youth convention.

Over several meetings, the board brainstormed, then prioritized and created 4 SMART goals (Specific, Measureable, Actionable, Relevant and Time-limited) that align with the BTC’s strategic priorities:

- Goal 1: Identify the target properties where we have the best success of acquiring land. We monitor and send listings to the Land Securement Secretariat. The BTC has established a process to prioritize properties for acquisition, which is in process.
- Goal 2: Share information with landowners about severing land. We believe that landowners may not know about severing land. The BTC has developed a new *Options for Landowners* pamphlet, which describes several ways that they can release land to the BTC.
- Goal 3: Outreach to non-members. We are now providing Hiking 101 – a 3-week introduction to hiking. We have had such a great response to this program, that we now charge \$30.  
We also follow up with non-members who register for any of our events, to promote membership or donation to the BTC.
- Goal 4: Involve/engage more members. We have started to keep better records of volunteers and will work towards keeping better track of hours and recognizing volunteers. After all, volunteers are behind every success of this club.

#### **Board Development**

- The BTC’s AGM was held in September in the Peninsula and was attended by four board members (seven club members in total).
- There have also been workshops at the Conservancy related to trail development, land stewardship and hiking programs attended by your dedicated board member representatives.
- In January, the board appointed members Rhys Beak and Lisa Etienne to fill the vacant positions of Director at Large and Vice President, respectively.

## **Board Activities for the Past Year**

Debbie then provided a brief overview of the board activities for the past year, which are provided in the attached Directors' Reports.

Vince Zvonar was recognized for winning the Susan Oleskevitch Award at last Fall's BTC Annual General Meeting. This award is given to a Bruce Trail volunteer who has been actively involved in the physical work of trail maintenance and development, has a long-standing commitment to trail work, and is an outstanding trail worker.

## **Overview of next year....2019/2020**

- There are more reroutes to get as much trail as possible off-road
- We expect to secure 414 metres of trail
- We hope to have Niagara hikes on the Unified online hike schedule, in addition to the current formats (print and calendar) and we have 5 event hikes planned for this year. Special thanks to Floyd Bell for his valuable input into developing a system that should work for us.
- Financial reports standardized, allow e-transfers for badge payments
- Change of mailing address to PO Box

## **Treasurer – Marinus Koole**

- Over \$11,000 generated through memberships and donations
- Our big four hikes, through special efforts by our organizers and their volunteers, netted over \$11,000 in surplus funds.
- As noted on the Income statement, above maintaining our own section, we have forwarded \$21,000 to the BTC supporting the maintenance and preservation of this wonderful resource.
- Marinus thanked the members for their part in these accomplishments.

***A motion to approve the Financial reports was made by Trudy Senesi and seconded by Mary Leighton. Carried.***

## **Report of the Nominating Committee, Corrie Kellestine, Chairperson**

These are the nominations for the NBTC Board of Directors, 2019-2020:

President	Debbie Demizio
Vice President	Vacant
Media Relations & Publicity Director	Margaret Northfield
Past President	Debbie Demizio
BTC Representative	Corrie Kellestine
Secretary	Janet Davey
Treasurer	Marinus Koole
Director, Landowner Relations	Koosje Stassen
Land Securement Secretariat	Craig Church
Director, Land Stewardship	Vince Zvonar
Director, Membership & Volunteers	George Prins
Director, Trail Maintenance	Rick Waters
Hike Coordinator	Vacant
Newsletter Editor	Kathleen Orth
Archivist	Jean Lucente
Social Convenor	Diane Marlatt
Director-at Large	Rhys Beak

***A motion to approve the nominations was made by Dave Walters and seconded by Karen Couch. Carried.***

Debbie welcomed incoming Club president, Lisa Etienne. Lisa thanked and made a presentation to retiring board members Ruth Moffatt and Alicia Aitchison. Linda Bonnar was also recognized for her many years coordinating the Wednesday & Sunday hikes.

***A motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:05 was made by Vince Zvonar and seconded by Rick Waters. Carried.***

## **DIRECTORS REPORTS (posted on NBTC website prior to meeting)**

### **PRESIDENT – Debbie Demizio**

In my second and final year as President of Niagara Bruce Trail, I am proud to say that our Club continues to thrive and achieve its goals of delivering member value and increasing awareness in our community. By all accounts, last year has been a very successful year. This would not be possible without the hard work and perseverance of the Board and the volunteers, all of whom have contributed their time and skills to improve and sustain our Club and support the mission and vision of the Bruce Trail Conservancy.

Last year the Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC) launched a new strategic plan to 2025, with 5 strategic priorities:

1. Accelerate Land Acquisition
2. Expand Fundraising
3. Build Brand Awareness
4. Increase Impact of Membership
5. Enhance Stakeholder Relationships

Over the past year the board has been working to establish local club goals to support the 2025 BTC strategic plan. Brainstorming and prioritizing exercises were held to develop 4 “SMART” goals to assist the club in moving forward in a coordinated fashion. These 4 goals were approved by the board in November:

1. Identify target properties where we have the best success of acquiring land.
2. Share information with landowners about severing land.
3. Outreach to non-members.
4. Involve/engage more members.

Consistent with the BTC’s strategic priority to “Enhance Stakeholder Relationships”, we continue to engage with two local municipalities, Grimsby and Lincoln, to develop master plans for Parks, Recreation and Culture to ensure that the Bruce Trail and conservation of the Niagara Escarpment feature prominently in the recommendations. For Grimsby, the full report (over 130 recommendations) will be available online once it has been adopted by Council. <https://www.grimsby.ca/en/town-hall/parks-recreation-and-culture-master-plan.aspx>.

We participated in Lincoln’s Stakeholder Input Workshop for the development of their master plan for Park, Recreation and Culture, held in October. For more information about the Lincoln plan, go to <https://www.lincolnprcmp.ca>. We also engaged with Lincoln residents to explore rerouting the trail off 17<sup>th</sup> Street, but unfortunately have not had a positive outcome. In the meantime, the Town of Lincoln has installed additional signage on the cross streets (e.g. Quarry Rd, 17<sup>th</sup> Street) to improve road safety for hikers.

In January, the board appointed members Rhys Beak and Lisa Etienne to fill the vacant positions of Director at Large and Vice President, respectively.

Our club’s board of directors has been very active. Here are just a few key accomplishments of the past year:

- The hiking program continues to be robust. In the past year, we hosted 4 Event hikes, attracting record numbers of participants. In addition, we have offered hikes to a variety of community groups to enhance

relationships, attract new members and donations. We now have a new Youth Hiking program, with monthly hikes targeted to youth and 2 new badges, designed by youth.

- The club’s website was revamped last year, but new this year is improved functionality of the online hike calendar, with photos and meeting locations mapped. The Director of Media Relations has been actively promoting the club with information displays, presentations and promoting club activities on the website and social media.
- The Bruce Trail is only 62% secured in the Niagara section. Property owned or managed by the Bruce Trail Conservancy is overseen by local club volunteers. Tree damage caused by wind has been extraordinary the past year and kept our team of trail maintenance volunteers very busy. There were 5 sections of trail rerouted; some were to move the trail off-road and one side trail was rerouted at the request of a landowner. Construction of a bridge in the Louth Conservation Area was completed with the help of a group of volunteers from PCL Construction. There is a new trail monitoring program, established to provide additional oversight on the trail, with 9 volunteers recruited to date. Vince Zvonar was awarded the Susan Oleskevitch award by the Bruce Trail Conservancy for his long-standing commitment to trail work and outstanding contribution as a trail worker.
- Membership has continued to increase steadily, and the club now has over 900 members.

The Niagara Club continues to be an early adopter of technology. Our use of online registration for event hikes is now being adopted by other clubs. We have a great online calendar for the hike schedule. Our documents are filed in a shared drive for access by club directors and BTC staff. Club materials have been archived at Brock University, searchable by the online catalogue. Finally, posting the AGM materials on the club website should minimize printing and save a few trees.

I encourage you to read each of the Directors’ Reports for more detail on these and other activities and accomplishments, and invite you to attend the Annual General Meeting on April 28<sup>th</sup>.

Of course, the success of the Niagara Bruce Trail Club is the result of many dedicated volunteers, to whom I owe tremendous gratitude.

In closing, it has been my honour to represent the Niagara Bruce Trail as president over the past 2 years. I will pass the torch to Lisa Etienne, who will be an excellent leader for our club. She will be leading a dynamic board with members who are both energetic and enthusiastic.

Happy trails!

*“Goals transform a random walk into a chase” – Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi*

**MEDIA RELATIONS DIRECTOR – Margaret Northfield**

<b>Outreach Promotional Events</b>	
<i>These events would not have been possible without the tremendous support of the NTBC volunteers who represent the club with such enthusiasm!</i>	
Heritage Village, Vineland – Active Seniors Fair	May 26, 2018
Pelham Summerfest	July 21, 2018
Hiking 101	May & September 2018
Station One, Grimsby	May 27, 2018
Annual Bruce Trail Day	September 30, 2018

<b>Presentations</b>	
Bioblitz, Niagara College	November 1, 2018
Heritage Village	February 26, 2019
Niagara on the Lake Newcomers, Niagara College	March 20, 2019

<b>Media Connections</b>	
St. Catharines Leisure Guide	

Niagara on the Lake Leisure Guide  
 Niagara This Week Online – submitted two articles, September & October  
 Brochures displayed in regional libraries and community centres  
 Website – numerous updates. Check out <http://niagarabruce-trail.club> for latest information!

<b>Social Media</b>			
	<b>April 2018</b>	<b>April 2019</b>	<b>% Increase</b>
<b>Facebook</b>	<b>1960</b>	<b>2374</b>	<b>21.1</b>
<b>Twitter</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>14.5</b>
<b>Instagram</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>655</b>	<b>11.4</b>

## Trail Angels

Six of our trail angels helped 51 hikers over the past year. We have a couple more lined up for April.

## **BTC REPRESENTATIVE – Corrie Kellestine**

### **Director, BTC Board of Directors**

- Member of Finance & Audit Committee
- Recently joined HR Committee

## **Some Facts About the Bruce Trail Conservancy**

- About 900 kilometers of Main Trail, of which 67% is secured
- Membership at 10,667 as of March 2019

## **Highlights from Fiscal Year ending June 2018**

- 5 km of trail rerouted off road
- 1,400 volunteers
- 8 new nature reserves
- \$5.3 million in revenue
- Development of 2025 Strategy

## **Town Hall Meetings**

First of 3 has been held, covering the following topics:

1. Getting to know our Board of Directors and Staff
2. The Bruce Trail Conservancy's 2025 Strategy
3. All Donations Matter / Celebrating our Successes

There are still opportunities to attend:

- Saturday, May 4, 1-3 pm, Mono Community Centre, Mono, Ont
- Sunday, May 26, 1-3 pm, Best Western Inn, 1800 2nd Ave E, Owen Sound, Ont

## **Communications Update**

BTC website ([bruce-trail.org](http://bruce-trail.org)) has recently undergone a refresh, to enhance security and efficiency of site; improve user experience; and set stage for functional improvement and integration of other software.

## **Strategic Communication and Engagement Plan**

- To guide further communication about 2025 Strategy

- More proactive and transparent engagement with membership

## **HIKE COORDINATOR – Alicia Aitchison**

### **Outreach to Non-members**

NBTC led hikes for many community groups in 2018, which increased awareness of the BTC, created positive relationships and yielded both new memberships and donations. Some of the groups included:

- Niagara Region Mental Health – we hosted weekly Mood Walks in May and June
- 4H Hiking and Wildlife group
- St.Johns Presbyterian Church in Grimsby – Children’s Hiking Program – 2018 Mission Camp
- CUPE Union
- Travel group from Estonia
- Local Cub Scout groups

### **Youth Hiking Program**

NBTC created a Youth Hiking Program in 2018. Two new badges were created for Youths 15 and under:

- Young Trail Blazer Badge – to earn this badge, four 90 minute hikes must be completed on the Niagara Bruce Trail.
- Young Nature Blazer Badge – to earn this badge a written submission is required after completing a hike on the Niagara Bruce Trail, that describes how you used one or more of you five senses on the hikes – what did you see, touch, taste, smell or hear during your hike?
- We partnered with St.Johns Elementary School for a badge artwork design competition, which yielded 23 fantastic submissions from which the winners were chosen and the badge designs were created.
- Youth hikes started December 2018 and are now held monthly on the first Sunday of the month at 2pm, a different location each month.
- Attendance has been up and down based on weather but we’ve had up to 46 participants at a youth hike in January, including many non-members.

### **Event Hikes**

As always, our Event Hikes in 2018 were a great success – involving both members and non-members and raising funds to support the Bruce Trail. In 2018 we hosted the following event hikes:

- Fort-to-Fort - April 2018 – 121 Registrations – 70 badges earned.
- Niagara End-to End – May 2018 – 245 Registrations, 127 non-members & from follow up post event 39 are interesting in membership. 105 badges earned.
- Laura Secord Hike – June 2018 – 127 registrations. 103 badges earned.
- Steeltown Stomp (co-hosted with Iroquoia Club) – September 2018 – 187 registrations, 153 participated – 100% completed!!

### **Hike Calendar**

In addition to our hike schedule, all of our hikes are posted on our website calendar, complete with all hike information, including a map of the meeting point: <http://niagarabruce-trail.club/wp/calendar/>

## **TREASURER – Marinus Koole**

Through the efforts of key leaders and many volunteers, our Niagara Club has once again generated a generous amount to transfer to the Conservancy beyond those used for maintaining and promoting our own section of the trail.

- *As noted on the first Expense line on the Income Statement, we have sent \$21,000 of the accumulated funds to the Bruce Trail Conservancy.*

- *As shown on the Balance sheet, we still maintain a good reserve to keep our club activities operational through the coming year.*

We are thankful for the continuing support of all of those renewing their memberships throughout the year, and we encourage all of our members to invite their friends to join our club. As we plan for the next year, I encourage you to contact the board to inquire about opportunities where you can share your time, talents and treasures to benefit our Trail.

We also invite you to explore ways where you can support the Bruce Trail Conservancy directly through various options at <https://brucetrail.org/pages/ways-to-give> as we continue preserving Niagara Escarpment land, maintaining our Trail, and making it available for all to explore.

### **DIRECTOR – LANDOWNER RELATIONS – Koosje Stassen**

A very successful Landowners Appreciation event was held last November with many Land Owners and guests in attendance.

We had seventeen members of the Niagara Bruce Trail Club volunteer to deliver calendars and invitations for the annual Landowners Appreciation Dinner. This year the volunteers were asked to deliver these calendars directly to owners in order to make personal contact as opposed to just leaving the invitations in the landowners mail box. Many volunteers reported back that they had been successful in making contact and had a chance to visit with many landowners. This is just one more way to keep open, friendly relations with the landowners.

Last April the Landowner list of names and addresses was updated with plans to update it again this April.

### **DIRECTOR – LAND SECUREMENT SECRETARIAT – Ruth Moffatt**

Land acquisition within the Niagara section of the conservancy continues to be a challenge. With the urban sprawl of housing development pushing prices further, acquiring property is often out of reach.

In June 2018, we were the recipient of 11 acres of land in Niagara-on-the-Lake and the Region of Niagara. This allowed us to secure 238 metres of optimum route and while there are six active properties on our property list, there is just one scheduled to close in August 2019. This property would see 414 metres of optimum route secured. We continue to monitor potential properties via the MLS and have spoken with three landowners whose property is for sale about severing and selling the part in which the trail passes, without success.

This is my final board report as the Land Securement Secretariat for the Niagara Bruce Trail Club and I extend my thanks to those that assisted in this role. Since this position attends a monthly meeting at the conservancy level, my thanks as well to the Land Securement Secretariat Committee. I've learned a lot in the past three years and wish those continuing in this role much success.

### **LAND STEWARDSHIP DIRECTOR – Vince Zvonar**

No major issues came up last year.

Last July the Thirty Road property was audited by Bruce Trail Conservancy staff and Ontario Heritage Trust. No issues have been identified.

Last fall, 15 of 16 property inspection reports had been submitted either on line or via email. Thank you to all Land Stewards for your work, inspections and reports.

I have visited several properties, one with a land steward to show her the survey bars. On the Klacko property two additional T bars with our property tags were put in place. Our biggest problems have been trees falling on neighbours' properties. A tree came down off Switzer property onto their back yard, which I cleared. Two trees came off the Pennachetti property. We cleared one tree ourselves and fixed the damaged fence. The other tree had to be taken down by a tree clearing company.

The problem with horses trespassing through our Bright's property will have to be addressed again. Our main trail will likely be put back on this property in October or November when the new bridge on Mewburn Road should be open.

## **DIRECTOR TRAIL MAINTENANCE & DEVELOPMENT – Rick Waters**

### **Highlights 2018/2019**

There were 5 Trail changes (re routes) the last 12 months:

- A trail near Morningstar Mill through Short Hills was introduced to avoid walking on DeCew Rd
- A new Jim Rainforth Side Trail as a result of a land owner removing permission to walk on his property
- A trail change east of Louth Conservation area which takes the main trail off a farmers field and a seasonally wet area and back into the woods on the side of the Escarpment
- A new trail from Angels Gate Winery now connects the main trail at Mountainview Conservation Area
- A trail change in Woodend Conservation Area was made to take us off the access road to DSBN Classroom in Woodend and into the bush.

Niagara Bruce Trail Club started a Trail Monitor Program this past year. We now have 9 Trail Monitor Volunteers walking our trails as an extra set of eyes to make sure our trails are safe for hikers. We could use more.

BTC implemented a new Chain Saw Safety Policy in 2018. Any volunteers helping a work crew remove trees are required to read the policy and sign, accepting this Policy.

The last 12 months have seen strong winds at different times causing many trees to fall on the trail. Chainsaw crews have been kept busy keeping the trails clear.

### **Plans for 2019/2020**

Mewburn Road rail crossing will be completed by December 2019 and we will be returning to the original trail before the bridge was closed and we had to re route through Firemen's Park.

Several more trail changes are planned to take us off roads in 2019.

Improvements will be made to stairs and the addition of more stairs to some of our more difficult climbs in Niagara.

## **NEWSLETTER EDITOR – Kathleen Orth**

The Grapevine reaches over 800 members of the Niagara Bruce Trail Club, with about 300+ receiving print copies. The newsletter regularly features 8 pages of reports from Board Members, submissions from club members, items of interest and two regular advertisers - Brown Rabbit and Blaq Bear. The Grapevine print distribution includes a copy of the 4-page seasonal Hike Schedule.

Rowan Shirkie, previous editor of The Grapevine, provided valuable assistance to the current editor in the transition. Also, several club members regularly assist with preparing the print newsletter/hike schedule for mailing. Thanks to Rowan, Sheila Massey, and Board Members - everyone, for their contributions over the past year to ensuring the success of The Grapevine.

### **MEMBERSHIP/VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR – George Prins**

We have experienced a healthy increase of 81 members (10%) since last year. We now have 909 in our membership. New members have been sent welcome letters and that has created much interest in the on goings of our Niagara Club.

### **SOCIAL CONVENOR – Diane Marlatt**

With the assistance of many hard working volunteers, we hosted a number of events over the past year. These included the Annual General Meeting, the lunch for the Laura Secord event hike, Bruce Trail Day, the Landowners' dinner and the President's New Year's hike and lunch.

### **ARCHIVIST – Jean Lucente**

The Archives for the Niagara Bruce Trail Club are housed at the Brock University Library, Special Collections. More information on the collection is available on our web site under Resources-NBTC Archive Collection and Searching Aid. We can look at our Archives by setting up an appointment with Brock.

### **SECRETARY – Janet Davey**

The Board of Directors of the Niagara Bruce Trail Club meets monthly with the exception of July and August. Minutes of all meetings are shared with the BTC. The Niagara Board has begun storing club documents including meeting minutes on its own Google Drive. This allows for greater access for board members and succession planning.

In the last year, we issued 195 Individual badges to hikers who had completed various Niagara Bruce Trail hikes.