

**NIAGARA BRUCE TRAIL CLUB (NBTC)
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

APRIL 26, 2020

The minutes from the April 28, 2019 Annual General Meeting, the 2020 financial reports and the nominations for the 2020-2021 board of directors were posted on the Niagara Bruce Trail website on April 20, 2020 and all were approved through online voting. Voting was recorded by the Bruce Trail Conservancy.

DIRECTORS REPORTS (posted on NBTC website)

PRESIDENT – Lisa Etienne

I would like to start by thanking Past President Debbie Demizio for her support and for leaving the club in incredible shape. Her meticulous documentation and adoption of Eventbrite for all of our special events will forever make the work of the board and event coordinators easier.

This has allowed me some time to focus on our volunteers. We now have a spreadsheet with an updated list of volunteers for every group and event. The list is very impressive starting with last year's Annual General Meeting (AGM), 17 Board members and 8 additional volunteers. Our special event hikes require a lot of work but are well worth it due to the enjoyment of the participants and the large amount of money raised to support the Bruce Trail Conservancy. These include: Niagara End to End led by Trudy Senesi with 29 additional volunteers; the Laura Secord led by Janet Davey with 15 additional volunteers; the Steeltown Stomp led by Wendy Howick plus 8 additional Niagara volunteers and some from the Iroquoia club; the Merritthon led by Rhys Beak with 10 additional volunteers; and the Fort to Fort led by Lauren Doig, but unfortunately cancelled. Several members attended the Bruce Trail AGM in October and the Working Together Conference in November. Other special events include: Bruce Trail Day led by Margaret Northfield plus 6 additional volunteers; Debbie Demizio plus 8 assisting with the Niagara Ultra Marathon; and our Landowner Appreciation Dinner led by Koosje Stassen and 35 additional volunteers who include those that hand deliver the invitations and gift calendars to all Landowners and those that help with the dinner. Year-round activities include: 14 Trail Monitors, 21 Trail Maintenance volunteers, and 48 Trail Captains all coordinated by Rick Waters; 18 Trail Angels led by Jean Stephenson-Lucente; Margaret Northfield plus 3 additional volunteers teach the Learn to Hike and Hike Leader Training; and her team of 11 take care of our social media posts. She also coordinates numerous promotional events and tables covered by 20 more volunteers. Vince Zvonar oversees the 13 Land Stewards. Kathleen Orth, our Grapevine Editor has a crew of 10 that help with distribution. Finally, we have Alan Laver who schedules our 50 hike leaders and Floyd Bell who enters all of the hikes into the Unified Hike Schedule. New this year was a Badge Committee of 3. A very long list but I think it is important for all of our members to understand just how many volunteer bodies and hours it takes to make this club run so smoothly.

At the Bruce Trail Conservancy Annual General Meeting in September our club was awarded Philip and Jean Gosling Award for the reroute side trail east of the Louth Conservation Area. Rick Waters, NBTC Trail Development and Maintenance Director, accepted this distinguished environment award. This reroute included a new bridge built with the help of a group of volunteers from PCL Construction.

Our board is very grateful to all of our volunteers and have decided to implement two volunteer awards to be presented annually at our AGM. The Lifetime Volunteer Award recognizes a member(s) who has made a significant volunteer contribution to the organization at the club level over many years and the Volunteer of the Year Award recognizes a member or committee whose volunteerism has gone above and beyond in the year just completed.

PAST PRESIDENT – Debbie Demizio

Over the past year, I have remained an active volunteer on the board to facilitate a smooth transition to the new president. In addition, I continue to steward the ongoing implementation of the BTC's strategic plan at the club level.

BTC REPRESENTATIVE – Corrie Kellestine

Director, BTC Board of Directors

- Member of Finance & Audit Committee
- Member HR Committee
- Meet with other Club Representatives to discuss information related to club activities
- Michael McDonald BTC CEO
- Leah Myers Board Chair as of January 1, 2020
- CEO and Board chair meeting quarterly with Club Presidents to discuss topics of common interest

BTC Mission: Preserving a Ribbon of Wilderness for Everyone Forever

BTC Vision: Bruce Trail Secured Within a Permanently Protected Corridor Along the Niagara Escarpment

Some Facts About the Bruce Trail Conservancy

- About 900 kilometers of Main Trail, of which 68% is secured
- Membership at 10,605 as of March 2020

Highlights from Fiscal Year ending June 2019

- 15 kilometres of trail secured or 4,175 acres
- 11,521 acres of Niagara escarpment land is entrusted to the BTC
- 11 new nature reserves completed

BTC Volunteers

- Approximately 1,400 volunteers
- We are thankful for the many volunteers who contribute their skills and time to help us attain our mission: Building and maintaining trails; caring for the land; working with landowners; organizing and leading hikes; club and board leaders; office support; newsletters and many other functions.

Bruce Trail Conservancy highly rated as an Environmental Charity by Maclean's and Money Sense magazines

MEDIA RELATIONS DIRECTOR – Margaret Northfield

Outreach Promotional Events

These events would not have been possible without the tremendous support of NBTC volunteers who represent the club with such enthusiasm!

Heritage Village, Vineland – Active Seniors Fair	May 5, 2019
Lincoln Library, Lincoln	May 14, 2019
Hiking 101	May & Sept
Station One, Grimsby, Charity of the month	May
Senior Showcase, Lincoln	June 5, 2019
Pelham Summerfest	July 20, 2019
Finger Lakes Trail Days	July 27, 2019
Senior Information & Living Fair, Fonthill	Oct 1, 2019

Bruce Trail Day, Niagara College
Balls Falls Thanksgiving Festival

Oct 6, 2019
Oct 11-14, 2019

Presentations

Heritage Village, Lincoln
Niagara-on-the-Lake Newcomers Club, Niagara College
Welland Boy Scouts

Feb 26, 2019
March 20, 2019
Oct 15, 2019

Media Connections

My City Guide – Niagara Falls
Metroland Media – Community Guide
NOTL – Community/Leisure Guide

Promotional Material

Sold 300 tube scarves (green). Created new Event Badge scarf to sell.
Created Events Poster
Mounted two Bruce Trail map posters
Framed all badges
Created generic business cards for website & social media
Created slideshow for Landowners & Members

Social Media			
	April 2019	April 2020	% Increase
Facebook	2374	2712	14.2
Twitter	110	195	77.3
Instagram	655	1228	87.4

The increase in followers on Facebook has remained steady since last year (21% increase 2018-19 vs 14.2% 2019-20). There is a significant increase in followers on Twitter (14.5% previously vs 77.3% this year) and Instagram (11.4% previously vs 87.4% this year). This is due to more postings and we have followed more participants (mostly conservation parks and other trails). Instagram attracts a younger demographic (25-40 years). One example is the informal survey revealed that attendees of our recent youth hike (36 in attendance), many non-members, had heard about it through Instagram.

DIRECTOR AT LARGE – Rhys Beak

The Bruce Trail has been permanently rerouted to cross the new bridge over the railway on Mewburn Rd at kilometre 9.0. The original Trail route over the CN tracks at Mewburn Rd had been closed since April 2009 after the bridge was closed to traffic due to poor physical condition and the primary Bruce Trail was rerouted through the southern side of Firemen's Park at Dorchester Rd to Mewburn Rd.

Dufferin Construction commenced work in March 2019; the Project managers worked with Bruce Trail executives, including myself, to lay out a temporary trail that would safely reroute our hikers around the construction activity. Any members that participated in the 2019 End-to-End will recall taking that reroute and the new location for the Checkpoint.

The old bridge was completely removed in July 2019 as new approaches were built and the new footings were poured. The new bridge was finished in November 2019 and the Bruce Trail was rerouted to the original primary route on the north side of Fireman's Park. But, as with all new advances, there have been some compromises involved in our utilizing the new bridge route. The new bridge and approaches have significantly increased the speed and traffic activity along the trail route on Mewburn Rd. There are adequate sidewalk spacings to safely cross the bridge, but the new bridge and surface allow for much greater road speed. We would ask that all members on this new route pay special attention to crossing this high-speed section.

As a further consequence of the road activity the checkpoints for the End-to-End and Laura Secord hikes will, in the future, be moved to the north end of Fireman's Park in the cul-de-sac of Dorchester Rd at Kilometre 7.0.

HIKE COORDINATOR – Alan Laver

Hiking Program

The NBTC Hiking program continues to be one of the most active programs with over 100 organized hikes per quarter, catering for all levels from Leisurely to Brisk Pace and Easy to Strenuous Terrain. We currently have 47 designated hike leaders. This is down from the number of leaders we had last year as some of our volunteers chose to step down after many years of service and dedication. We wish them well and thank them immensely for their contribution.

We continue to look for volunteers to join the Hike leading team and become certified hike leaders. This certification is provided free of charge to members of the NBTC in return for a commitment to lead up to 3 hikes on each schedule.

The pre-requisites for the Hike leaders Course are: 1) Have participated in at least 5 led hikes in the past year. 2) Be a member 3) The desire to share the joys of hiking.

Please let me know if you are interested in becoming a hike leader. You can call me at 416-303-5613 or E Mail at alanjlaver@gmail.com .

Night hikes on the Bruce Trail have been introduced and are proving to be popular. These are monthly hikes closest to the full moon under cover of darkness with each hiker wearing a headlamp. Night hiking certainly provides a different perspective of the trail and offers something different for us to experience on the trails including wild life sightings of the nocturnal creatures and starlit skies.

Badges

During the year we established a badge committee which was mandated to take a look at the design of existing badges, the requirements to earn each badge and the introduction of new badges.

The Merritthon badge has been redesigned and we have introduced a Winter End to End badge, a Side Trail badge, a Night Hike badge and a 2-day End to End badge. These new badges have sparked an immense amount of interest from NBTC hikers and hikers from other clubs.

We have also changed to requirements for the Winter badge from 20 to 15 hikes and the Youth Trail Blazer badges have been changed to single hikes. Information pertaining to all badges can be found at <http://niagarabruce-trail.club/wp/badges/>.

Hike Calendar

We eliminated the paper / pdf version of the hiking schedule and encourage our membership to utilize the integrated on-line hike schedule. This has eliminated inconsistencies, enables us to provide more information about individual hikes and allows us to reach a wider audience. All hike information can be found at https://hikes.bruce-trail.org/ecwd_calendar/niagara/

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 second Expense line on the Income Statement, we have again sent over \$20,000 of the accumulated funds to the Bruce Trail Conservancy. We have held back some extra funds to carry us through this season without our regular event hikes.*
- *As shown on the Balance sheet, we still maintain a good reserve to keep our club activities operational through the coming year.*

Fundraising highlights

Our Five event hikes are a large source of raising extra money beyond our trail maintenance and again this year they were successful, with the approximate net money raised below.

- Fort to Fort - \$3100
- End to End - \$6300
- Laura Secord - \$2600
- Steeltown Stomp - \$2060
- Merritthon - \$1230

Some other significant financial impacts:

- The support of all your memberships, Hiking 101 and Merchandise sales.
- The St Catharines Road Runners again forwarded a significant donation directly to the BTC, which does not show on our financials.

We could not do any of this without your support and encouragement, both as active volunteers and in various other ways. We thank all of those renewing their memberships throughout the year, and encourage all of you to invite their friends to join our club.

Since the majority of our local fundraising occurs through hikes and group events which will not occur in the foreseeable future, the board has a challenge for you.

We acknowledge that Covid19 has affected us all in very different ways, and some of you need extra support due to financial, emotional or social stress. We also know that some of us have capacity to provide extra support, so the board issues this challenge.

Let's still raise \$20,000 for the support of the BTC this year, through special donations.

A special appeal with details will be forwarded to all members of how to participate. Thanks for considering this.

New to us this year, you can send direct e-transfer payments to nbtctreasurer@gmail.com for badge payments or direct donations to the Niagara club, which has minimized our cash transactions. Do not use any password and please mention what the payment is for in the note. If you wish a receipt for a donation you need to provide your name and address.

Thanks for your support.

DIRECTOR – LANDOWNER RELATIONS – Koosje Stassen

This past year 165 calendars and invitations were packaged and labelled ready for distribution to each of the volunteers. We had 12 new volunteers step up to help deliver calendars. Many of whom reported back that they had been successful in making contact with many of the landowners.

A very successful Landowner Appreciation Dinner was held November 1, 2019 with approximately 100 people in attendance.

July 2019 club directors met to talk about strategy that focuses on supportive landowners on the optimum route and how to turn that support into possible securement.

January 2020 club directors met to review properties on the optimum route and identify Niagara Bruce Trail top 10 target properties.

February 2020 club directors met with Lyndsey Wilkerson, Landowner Stewardship Coordinator from the BTC to discuss the new Landowner Stewardship Program.

During the course of the year the landowner address list was updated with approximately 20 address changes.

Another productive year with many thanks to all of the volunteers.

DIRECTOR – LAND SECUREMENT SECRETARIAT – Craig Church

The efforts of many were realized this year with the completion of acquisition of the Masterson property on the north side of Warner Road (Map 2). The acquisition of approximately 57 acres secured 373 m of Optimum Route and will remove 615 m of Bruce Trail from roads in the area. Additionally, the property and future trail will provide excellent access to Woodend Conservation Area and improve the overall trail experience in the area.

The 2018-2019 fiscal year saw the BTC acquire a total 4,179 acres, securing a total of 15,151 m of Optimum Route and 11 new nature reserves. Momentum continues with 6 properties currently active within the Niagara Section and a total of approximately 63 active across the entire trail.

Art Welter joined me this year as our alternate with the BTC's Land Acquisition Committee and has been a valuable resource to me. I am currently in the process of assembling a small team to assist with acquisition efforts in our section. Please reach out if you have an interest or background in real estate or related fields. This past year has been a year of learning for me in terms of the land acquisition process along the trail, and I look forward accelerating land acquisition in the Niagara section.

LAND STEWARDSHIP DIRECTOR – Vince Zvonar

Over the last year I made 12 visits to properties that we look after. Some have been to check on trees falling on adjacent properties and a few to check on reported trespassing on our properties. Our main problem is still on Bright's properties with horses using our trail. We have tried a couple of different ways of blocking the trail to discourage them from using it, along with BTC/HTF sending the horse stables a letter telling them that they will be responsible for restoring the trail. We'll keep checking to see if our actions/efforts have done any good.

Motorcycles or dirt bikes are trespassing on our new property in Niagara on the Lake (by St. Paul's Road). We have tried blocking the trail by downing trees over the trails. Time will tell if it will discourage motorcycles.

In 2019, the BTC acquired one of the biggest properties in the Niagara area. The 52 acre property will be known as Woodend Meadows (previously known as Masterson's property). The BTC is still working on different options to sever the property and as soon as that is done, we will decide on a trail route over the property.

We have four new Land Stewards: Dean and Marlene Bonsma will look after the Taylor property; Lauren Doig - Thirty Road; Marion Hanover – the NOTL property and Dave Burch will look after Woodend Meadows.

Thank you to all land stewards for looking after your properties. Great job, couldn't do it without all of you.

DIRECTOR TRAIL MAINTENANCE & DEVELOPMENT – Rick Waters

Highlights 2019/2020

Trail Changes and Improvements

- With the completion of the Mewburn Bridge the Main Trail has been returned to its original route. The original route was closed from April 2009 – November 16, 2019
- We repaired the stairs at the pedestrian bridge over the QEW and put in bollards to discourage motorcycles driving up the stairs and across the bridge. This repair was paid for by a donation from a club member, Andrew Marshall
- The BTC purchased the Masterson Property on the east side of Woodend Conservation Authority. When the severances are approved, we will be able to take the Bruce Trail off of Warner Road, giving us a more direct route from the Screaming Tunnel to Woodend Conservation Authority.
- The portion of the Bruce Trail that goes through Royal Niagara Golf Course was moved early March 2019. This section was always wet and muddy and has been moved to higher ground that gives the Trail better drainage. 65 volunteer hours of work went into making this new trail. Thanks to everyone that assisted.
- A new agreement was signed with the St Lawrence Seaway Authority to allow us to walk on their property along the Welland Canal.
- We have a new handshake agreement to continue using the Bruce Trail with the new owners of the Mike Weir Property. They have been very supportive of our continued use of the Trail.
- We have increased the number of Trail Monitors to 14 since we started this program last year. It has been very helpful in getting more people looking at and reporting the condition of the Trail.
- I want to thank all the Trail Captains and Monitors that have looked after sections of the Trail over the years. The Bruce Trail couldn't exist without the hard work and dedication of these volunteers
 - Trail Captains that resigned 2019/2020:
Bill and Jan Sward, Simon Kelly, Robert Nunn, Dean Pollack, Alicia and Bob Atkinson, Robert Goulding, Bob Darral and John Abbott.
 - Welcome new Trail Captains:
Bill French, Dave Wilson, Erv Overmyer, Trevor Price, Howie McCrae, Alan Laver, Philip Dowell, Jean Lucente

Plans for 2020/2021

- Train 5 new Sawyers and recertify 2 Sawyers May 2020
- Continue with improvements to the Niagara Bruce Trail and the structures on the Trail. Train new Trail Captains and Trail Monitors as required.

NEWSLETTER EDITOR – Kathleen Orth

A subscription to The Grapevine is one of the member benefits of NBTC. The Grapevine is published quarterly. The issues are posted on NBTC's website and available for anyone to read. NBTC members can receive the newsletter by email or by print mail. About 300 copies are mailed. NBTC prints 100 copies as well, 50 for BTC and 50 for the club's public relations director.

The club executive regularly provides updates to keep members informed and highlight the success of club activities and events. As well, club members are encouraged to provide items of interest to the newsletter.

The club ceased distribution of a print hike schedule with the Spring 2020 issue. In 2019, Canada Post imposed a flat \$200 annual fee for all users of publication mail.

The Grapevine currently has one regular paid advertiser: Brown Rabbit and may secure other advertisers.

Thanks to board members for their assistance, and to the newsletter volunteers, led by Sheila Massey, who organize and prepare the print version of the newsletter.

MEMBERSHIP/VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR – George Prins

We now have 932 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 in Special Collections and Archives. More information on the collection is available on our web site under Resources-NBTC Archives-Searching Aid.

Trail Angels Program - Trudy Senesi & Jean Stephenson-Lucente

The Trail Angels Program is becoming increasingly popular in the Niagara section of our trail. We have a wonderful group of volunteers who are meeting these requests. This has also been helpful for fund raising for the BTC as the folks are asked to donate to the BTC in lieu of any reimbursement to the volunteers. Big thanks to the volunteers.

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 stores 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 295 Individual badges to hikers who had completed various Niagara Bruce Trail hikes. Most hikers are now paying for their badges using e-transfer.

Report of the Nominating Committee, Debbie Demizio, Chairperson

These are the nominations for the NBTC Board of Directors, 2020-2021:

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