



ALGOMA HIGHLANDS CONSERVANCY

www.algomahighlandsconservancy.org

Fall 2009

Dear Friends:

Algoma Highlands Conservancy To Purchase King Mountain!

As I draft this newsletter, days are getting shorter and the woods are beginning to morph into their coat of many colours. What better time to take the old hiking boots for a walkabout and to celebrate the beauty of the natural environment in the Algoma Highlands!

As many of you already know, Saturday September 19th was indeed a very special day for the Algoma Highlands Conservancy. More than 40 people gathered at the Stokely Creek Lodge in the dappled sunlight of a beautiful fall day to honour key individuals and agencies contributing to the success of the *King Mountain Legacy Lands Campaign*. In the shadow of King Mountain, we joined together in recognizing these many contributions, this major achievement, and the formal commitment of the Conservancy to purchase and protect the King Mountain area.

Following a brief *Annual General Meeting* of the Conservancy's Board of Directors, President Doug Pitt introduced the Board and gave an overview of the Conservancy's history and achievements. Among these was the 1996 purchase of Norm's Cabin, which continues to be a primary destination for cross-country ski enthusiasts using the trail system, and maintained as a significant local history element and testament to the legacy of local personality, Norm Bourgeois. Also significant was the 1999 acquisition of the Robertson Cliffs property, which incorporates protected peregrine falcon nesting habitat and one of the best hiking trails in the region. Doug also reviewed the Conservancy's role in brokering the recent tripartite agreement with neighbours Astina Forest AG and the extended Byker family as new owners of the Stokely Creek Lodge. This agreement stands as a model of multiple landowner cooperation and assures continued use of the entire Stokely trail system for silent-sport recreation. New Board secretary, Ken Coulter, then unveiled a beautifully engraved granite plaque, which has been mounted on a natural boulder extracted from the local area and placed beside Stokely Creek, near the lodge. The monument will stand as a lasting expression of gratitude to individuals and agencies whose combined vision, dedication, and generosity have led to the current level of success in the *King Mountain Legacy Lands Campaign*; an effort that has culminated in the protection and conservation of this beautiful area for both current and future generations. Those listed include Chuck Peterson, Gaylen and Susan Byker, Stephen Holmes, Doug Pitt, and the EJLB foundation.

Doug then thanked all that have contributed to the mission of the Conservancy thus far, reiterating that success has really been the result of a team effort by many hard working and dedicated volunteers, coupled with the generosity of more than 250 individual grassroots donors, the Byker family, Chuck Peterson, the EJLB and McLean foundations, and Astina Forest AG.



From left, Gaylen and Susan Byker, Harry and Patrick Peterson, and Doug Pitt join in honouring all that have contributed to the success of the King Mountain Legacy campaign.

Current Status

Legal proceedings are on schedule for a purchase closing date next month (November 2009). Doug noted that the purchase will lock in a 3000 acre (1214 hectare) platform for our core values; silent sport recreation, research, and outdoor education – in perpetuity! He expressed excitement and enthusiasm about working with Stokely Creek Lodge and neighbours, Astina Forest AG, to showcase how multiple landowners can work together and support each other’s primary interests in silent sport recreation, sustainable forest management, conservation, and environmental protection on the broader Stokely land base of more than 8000 acres (3238 hectares)!

While this was great cause for celebration, Doug emphasized that the closing of this deal will be extremely demanding financially. The recent global economic downturn has been hard on the Conservancy’s investments and, likewise, the ability of donors to contribute. Doug mentioned that the Conservancy will be applying essentially all of its available resources and will be borrowing some funds to seize this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and close the deal. Given upcoming stewardship and maintenance costs, Doug stressed that:

“We must not become complacent about fundraising simply because the land is now Secure!”

The Conservancy will have to continue to work hard to acquire corporate sponsors and foundation support; seek new private donors; and foster continued relationships with existing donors to pay off its loan and raise money required for land ownership, maintenance and operational costs.

At the End of the Day

This day of recognition and celebration was appropriately fulfilled with many individuals taking hikes in all directions around the Stokely and King Mountain properties. Thanks so much to Bob Yankus, Lucy Gagnon, Ed Pierce, and Mike O'Connor who lead these hikes! Many of us got to see first-hand the extensive and excellent work that Bob and Lucy have put towards creating two new snowshoe trails; one following along Stokely Creek and the other, a more challenging trail up the north face of King Mountain, leading to a spectacular vista over the lower Stokely area and out over Lake Superior.



Photo by: Bob Yankus

Stokely's trails are seeing lots of activity, not only when the snow covers the ground, but also in the spring and fall by hikers, nature photographers, and all others who simply want to soak up nature's beauty.

Of course a day at Stokely is never really complete without sampling some of the sumptuous Culinary delights provided at Stokely Creek Lodge by Chef Yvette Leonard, and orchestrated by lodge manager Jamie Martin. Many participants took advantage of this opportunity and also observed the beautiful new décor elements that Susan and Gaylen are implementing throughout the lodge. Gaylen made several toasts, including to the AHC, Bob Yankus and Lucy Gagnon, and especially to the members of the Peterson family whose exploratory initiatives in the area dating back into the mid 1950's blazed the trail to where we stand today. Continuing to look forward, we were all excited to hear about the most recent trail maintenance and improvement activities that will allow reopening of the Sam and Tier Lake area, as well as extensive plans for new snowshoe trails that will definitely put Stokely Creek on the map as a premier destination for that activity, perhaps matching its ranking as one of the top 5 cross-country ski areas in North America!

On behalf of the Board of directors, I offer many thanks to all who came out to celebrate this happy occasion with us! We sincerely hope that you embrace this pivotal point in the history of conservation and protection of the lands we all affectionately know as Stokely Creek and King Mountain, and that you will join forces with your friends to help us follow through on our commitment to be good land stewards for our children and all future generations who will undoubtedly come to enjoy this little piece of heaven here on earth.

Sincerely,

Board of Directors, Algoma Highlands Conservancy