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LIVING

Land trust protects Kawarthas

Agency opening stewardship partnerships, Trent University is latest addition

At a time when environmental news is usually disheartening to say the least, it is encouraging to know that the Kawartha Land Trust (KLT) is making great strides to preserve the landscapes and natural habitats that make this part of Ontario so special. Formerly known as the Kawartha Heritage Conservancy, the KLT is a not-for-profit charitable organization committed to protecting the land we all love.



**DREW
MONKMAN**

OUR CHANGING SEASONS

The Trust, first established in 2001, works with landowners and community members to identify and protect key ecological features of the Kawarthas. The KLT acquires a protective interest in land by receiving land donations or by managing properties, many of which have significant cultural value. The organization can also enter into long-term conservation agreements and provide professional advice about creative land conservation approaches.

PARTNERSHIPS

Protecting iconic rural landscapes and exceptional wildlife habitat is just part of the land trust's work. Drawing upon many of the policies and experiences of land trusts such as the Nature Conservancy of Canada, which continues to rank as one of the top charities in Canada in terms of performance and outcomes, KLT is developing a long-term plan focussed on land stewardship. Stewardship refers to efforts that serve to protect and enhance the ecological values of the land. In this context, the work is usually undertaken by volunteers, so a key part of the plan is to develop innovative partnerships. These include a new long-term partnership with Trent University. The affiliation recognizes the shared values of both organizations when it comes to the importance of land conservation and preservation in the Kawarthas. Both parties acknowledge the need for priority setting for research projects and for improved use of research outcomes in order to benefit the broader community. To achieve this goal, a Research Outreach Advisory Committee has been established, made up of members from both Trent and KLT. "This agreement provides an excellent opportunity to elevate research projects and attract funding support for



Kawartha Land Trust photo

Some of the participants in the youth stewardship day on the Ingleton-Wells property north of Viamede Resort on Stony Lake.

both students and faculty in the areas of Geography, Biology, Canadian Studies and others," said Dr. Neil Emery, vice-president Research & International at Trent.

Thanks to this new partnership, it will be much easier for Trent staff and students who are doing research in the Kawarthas to identify priority locations and themes for their work. It only makes sense that the impressive talent base doing research at Trent be used for the betterment of the Kawarthas region.

Work underway at David Young's property near Emily Lake is one example of how this partnership is already paying off. KLT has been doing stewardship work there and recently carried out a biodiversity inventory of the myriad species of plants and animals. Two Trent researchers are now involved. One is looking at the emissions of different gases from Emily Lake - important information in a time of climate change - while the other is studying sustainable agricultural practices on the property. This illustrates the Trust's focus on care and understanding of the landscape, first and foremost, before any formal arrangements with a

landowner contemplated.

The Trust is also very involved in the "Kawarthas, Naturally Connected" initiative, a partnership project led by KLT to identify and prioritize land use and conservation activities across the Kawartha region. Among other things, the project provides important information as to which lands should be protected. Had this project been completed 10 years ago, we may have been able to protect important natural areas such as the Dewdney Caves near Buckhorn that have important geological significance.

STEWARDSHIP PROJECTS

This past summer, KLT was involved in several hands-on stewardship projects carried out in part with cottage associations, schools groups and community members at large. On July 29, a number of eager volunteers from Stony Lake turned out for a youth stewardship day on the Ingleton-Wells property north of Viamede Resort. The objective was to provide an opportunity for young cottagers to lend a hand with stewardship activities on this 75 acre property that was recently donated to the KLT. The four youth volunteers assisted KLT

staff and property stewards to locate and document several endangered Bутternut trees using GPS technology. The trees were marked and buffer zones were laid out for future management purposes. In order to better protect a recently discovered Red-shouldered Hawk nesting site, participants documented the location using GPS coordinates and established a buffer zone to restrict human activity along the adjacent hiking trail during the sensitive May to June nesting period.

A special highlight of the day was having Ralph Ingleton, one of the original property donors, join the group for part of the day. Ralph, a local cottager, lifelong environmental educator and well known artist, shared his extensive knowledge of the property and its natural history with the group. Of particular interest was Ralph's description of native artifacts that were discovered on the site during a recent archaeological investigation.

This event was another clear example of the benefits derived from KLT partnerships with local community and lake stewardship organizations. Not only did the participants contribute to a better

understanding of the Ingleton-Wells property's natural features, but through the various management activities they helped to assure that these features will be protected for years to come.

KLT's strategic plan is proving very successful, thanks largely to the many committed volunteers who carry out the lion's share of the work. The number of donors has gone up five-fold in the past two years; the number of lands protected has tripled in three years; and almost 20 new sites are currently in negotiation. The organization has benefited from community support in other ways, as well. For example, Brand Health Communications provided KLT's new public face - a new name and logo - with focus group assistance from Jim Russell of United Way of Peterborough and District and David Love from Agents for Good.

KLT receives time-specific, project-based funding from the Trillium Foundation, Environment Canada, the Community Foundation of Greater Peterborough as well as private foundations. However, annual giving and bequests from committed individuals and families will be the funding source of the future. The Trust hopes to build annual giving from individuals and families from 10% of its funding to 50% over the next three years.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT NEEDED

Unfortunately, there is no "magic" in making land conservation a reality and certainly no on-going government assistance. As is the case with so many endeavours these days, success depends primarily on community support. Although an ecological gift of land is a wonderful way to help the KLT in its mission, you don't have to own land to be involved and to make a difference. By giving time as a volunteer or making a financial contribution, every one of us can help make the vision of a protected landscape of linked natural areas in the Kawarthas a reality. The KLT's office is at 156 McDonnell St. in the attractive yellow brick building (space donated by Linda Whetung, one of the Trust's major supporters) at the corner of George St. Visit their website at www.kawarthaheritage.org or call 705-743-5599 to speak to executive director Mike Hendren. The email address is info@kawarthalandtrust.org

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