

News & Views

June 2016

Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust
Preserving the land  Protecting the future



OUR VISION AND MISSION President's Reflections

I am grateful to Christine Peringer for generously and ably leading our Board through a day long Strategic Planning Session early this year. Affirming our identity, the essence of who we are, through a careful and succinct statement of our Vision and our Mission was the first task. These statements serve as a springboard to develop strategies to make flesh of our shared vision. These strategies change as insights deepen and as experience dictates, but without progress the vision is nullified.

In this regard I take satisfaction that in the past decade we have protected over 2400 acres of truly beautiful wilderness areas. We have emerged as a cutting-edge land trust in providing innovative and meaningful nature experiences. The importance of this has been underscored by the 2016 conclusion of the U.S. Land Trust Alliance: "People will embrace land conservation when land conservation embraces people." We will not rest on our laurels - we will and we must do more.



South Pond at Rose Hill Nature Reserve

Photo: Eleanor Thomson

However for this newsletter my primary reflections relate to the statement of Vision and Mission. A Board committee took on the difficult and thought provoking task of encapsulating our core essence. Succinct they were. Without loss of clarity the statements contain fewer than three and a half times the words of the 2007 version. Well done!

A comparison with the 2007 version shows that we remain true to our original vision. To me this is of utmost importance. A vision and mission statement is a window into the soul of an organization. It is a living, inspiring, transformational manifesto, collectively binding us together in shared purpose, values and dreams.

The simplicity of a vision and mission statement is its strength. It empowers imagination, stimulates creative thought, and kindles our emotions. Think of how remarkable it is that neither you nor I can see things through the same perceptual lenses we did ten years ago. Although we have changed we remain true to the vision and mission. The basic underlying dream remains and continues to inspire.

In my reflections I vividly relived my experience as a ten year old standing bewildered, broken, and powerless as bull-dozers tore out the trees and obliterated the animal trails that had been my playground, my refuge. Adults destroying my sanctuary - the place I loved. I was numb.

But you know what? Our 2016 vision and mission statements would have resonated in the soul of that heart-broken ten year old just as it does to my 79-year-old self.

As I reflected upon this truth one thought flooded into consciousness. Just as diversity of species protected by appropriate habitat is of cardinal importance, diversity of backgrounds on our Board, in our membership and among our supporters are critical to continued and expanded leadership in conservation. Life experiences shape our brains - our personalities.

No one background has greater claim to truth. The scientist, the ecologist, the lawyer, the economist, the engineer, the philosopher, the musician, the artist, the poet all see the world differently - each with their own pathways to truth. The Vision and Mission will speak differently to each of us but together they will make incarnate an orchestra more marvellous, much richer and more inspiring than is possible for any monolithic composition.

Now to combine my philosophical musings with pragmatism, I urge each to read the Vision and Mission Statements thoughtfully and carefully.

OUR VISION: Beautiful Mississippi-Madawaska wilderness protected for all time, where native flora and fauna thrive and people engage with nature.

OUR MISSION: To legally protect and steward private lands having ecological, biodiverse, aesthetic, and cultural value and to foster engagement with wilderness.

Don't you find in these simple statements something of beauty, of depth, of transcendent meaning that stirs you? Something you want to be part of?

I believe I can authentically blend the voice of the ten year old boy who has become the 79 year old man by saying: "I believe in this Vision and Mission - I will not depart from them."

OUR SPRING EVENTS SPREE

MMLT has been very busy this spring with a number of outdoor events. In this part of the province we have a window of opportunity just before black fly season begins when you can enjoy the woods without interference, so we take advantage of that.

We took our first opportunity on April 24th at High Lonesome with our guest speaker Dan Rubinstein, author of *Born to Walk: The Transformative Power of a Pedestrian Act*. It couldn't have been better timing because everyone is longing to enjoy the sights and sounds of spring after the long winter. About 75 eager walkers showed up to hear Dan's presentation about the numerous benefits of this simple act. Inspired by Dan's informative talk, we then set out in various directions along the 8 km of winding trails at High Lonesome. It was a great way to welcome the spring!



Ottawa author Dan Rubinstein signs copies of his book at High Lonesome Nature Reserve.

The following Sunday, May 1st, we held our third annual Creativity Blitz, also at High Lonesome Nature Reserve. The Creativity Blitz has gathered a loyal following and despite the fact that it was cool and rainy, a couple dozen hearty souls showed up. MMLT volunteer Jacquie Christiani is the driving force behind this inspirational event, drawing on nature to express your creativity.

With their art supplies, musical instruments, journals, cameras and the help of mentors posted at each "Wow" spot, participants are inspired and express themselves individually or collectively, such as the creation of this [accordion poem](#), each adding lines not knowing what previous scribes had written. This event is a wonderful demonstration of how nature inspires art.

Another annual springtime event for MMLT is the spring nature walk at Blueberry Mountain. This year it was held on Mother's Day and many families chose to bring Mom along. Once everyone had gathered, we all headed up to the plateau, a level clearing beside the waterfall on the way up the mountain. Early spring is the best time to view the waterfall which is at its peak from the melting snow.

"Grey Owl" led the children in some wilderness games, including a demonstration on how to walk in the woods as quietly as a fox so that you don't startle the wildlife and frighten them away. For instance when a Blue Heron hunts it can freeze, standing absolutely still on one leg. This is not an easy position to hold as the children

demonstrated. They practiced creeping up on a blindfolded child without being heard.

As usual, the view from the lookout on Blueberry Mountain was breathtaking with shoots just opening, creating a soft green haze across the hillside as far as you can see.



"Grey Owl" made a guest appearance and led the kids in some wilderness games. Photo by Sheila Stojakovich

MMLT SUSTAINER IN PERPETUITY

MMLT's legal obligations to conserve the lands under our protection last in perpetuity, truly a meaningful legacy for future generations.

There is a way that you, a believer who shares this commitment, can similarly leave a legacy for future generations: be a MMLT Sustainer in Perpetuity. This can be done in your will. A bequest of \$25,000 directed to the MMLT Sustainability Endowment Fund will yield for MMLT just over \$1,000 annually in perpetuity. In this way, your support for our land conservation will last forever.

If you have questions or would like to be added to our mailing list, please contact Susan Sentesy, Program Manager, at ssentesy@mmlt.ca or 613-253-2722.

*Office Hours: 8:30 - 4:30
Monday to Friday*