

Annual Report
Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve
2015 AGM
(Report from the Chair)

As Gary Nickel (our retiring Chair a year ago) stated in his Report to the AGM at that time, the assets of the Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve which will serve us well into the future "are contained in the experience and respect that have been earned by our staff... this is a community-based agency, neither government nor corporate, and that reality is truly significant."

Last year, the Board of Directors agreed by motion to move forward as a Board of Governors, working through an Operations Committee which will manage projects in collaboration with Working Groups, all under the management of the Executive Director. This governance and management model has, as predicted, allowed us to serve the larger community (federal and provincial governments, other municipalities, and our own local community), through service agreements, contracts, activities and projects.

We now have three formally-constituted and active Working Groups: The North Saskatchewan River Watershed Council (a client), the Prairie Waters Working Group, and the Redberry Lake Trail Association. Each of these has played an active role this past year; the NSRWC is our principal client under an administrative services agreement which brings compensatory revenue to the Biosphere Reserve for the use of office equipment, seasonal technician staff and - principally - the full-time services of John Kindrachuk (who also continues to provide his services to our organization as a volunteer Executive Director).

The PWWG is now an incorporated not-for-profit association which came into being to assist the province to grapple with the issue of zebra mussels and other aquatic invasives, but is growing to play a role with supporting watershed research and enhancing relationships with water research agencies like the University of Saskatchewan and beyond. The main goal of the PWWG is, in fact, to build the "Science" role of the Biosphere Reserve to be more effective.

The RLTA was formed and incorporated as a non-profit independent Working Group, under the leadership of Thomas Abe. It has been very successful in engaging the attention and support of a group of local and Saskatoon-based trail enthusiasts interested in developing a hiking and cycling trail around the circumference of Redberry Lake.

And, win some, lose some... we lost one: After several years and a lot of effort and expense, we have decided that we must drop the "Farmers Market" program because we were unable to find - or build - a group that would take on the project. This loss is symptomatic of something we and other groups in the community are finding out: there are lots of good ideas, lots of folks saying "how come we don't have the things here that I want" but not enough volunteers to make it happen.

The leadership of our Sector Board Members continues to be invaluable. Education Member Larissa Matechuk has been very active on our behalf through her role as a teacher at the school, and the Biosphere Reserve was successful in finding small (\$2000) funding support for an initiative she has planned with her students - the development of a community garden which will bring the energy of youth together with the wisdom of seniors. As the Culture Member of the Board - and also our Vice Chair - Larry Hawrysh continues to deal patiently with our national organization (CBRA) and ensure that - even when we tend to lose patience with "the feds" here at home, we continue to be in the loop nationally and internationally. One of the current initiatives at the national level is the development of "social enterprise" projects and Larry serves us well as the conduit to that initiative to

see if there might be potential benefits locally. And, as your Science representative, I have spent a bunch of time with the PWWG and the aquatic invasives initiative.

On the international front, the Biosphere Reserve has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Institute for Local Environmental Knowledge in Japan. There is no commitment of dollars either way in this MOU, but like a similar MOU with the Rhone Biosphere Reserve in Germany, these agreements strengthen our international relationships and enhance our credibility with government and other agencies here in Canada. Most importantly, they also help to move us from being simply the *subjects* of research to something more respectful and even collaborative.

So there has been lots going on. Lots, that is, except money. We have managed to position the reputation of our organization and the expertise of our personnel to a point where we can - and do - provide consulting and administrative services for hire, but as Board Members we all have to acknowledge that no government - not in Ottawa, not in Regina, and most certainly not here at home in our own municipalities - chooses to invest in our existence. And, our one inherited capital asset (that rather attractive log-sided building at Redberry Lake Regional Park) cannot generate sufficient revenue under current circumstances to pay its own utilities and insurance premiums, let alone maintenance and staff to remain open to the public. The lease for the land upon which the Centre and its boat shed are located (a lease which was predicated on the building being a visitor and interpretive centre) has lapsed and needs to be re-negotiated. However, without a more collaborative approach to operating that building, our organization cannot financially justify keeping the doors open. If that reality is to change, I expect that discussions with the Park Board will need to move beyond the negotiation of a lease, to a cooperative management approach.

Despite the gloomy outlook for what has been - incorrectly but emotionally - our "signature" building over the last 15 years, all things are not on the negative side. Thanks to the volunteer efforts of John, Susanne and Thomas, some things are working well for the community. We continue to participate with the now-provincially-approved district plan that bears our name. We have been able to apply for and manage (in cooperation with the youth group from the school) \$15,000 worth of funding which has put a new roof on the National Hall in Hafford. We continue to apply for grants and funding initiatives which may well bring further amenities to the Centre and activities - especially targeted at seniors - at the Regional Park. And, of course, there is Larissa's community garden initiative with students and seniors.

We are very pleased that the RM of Redberry was willing to lease us office space for both the Biosphere Reserve and the North Saskatchewan River Basin Council. This puts our organization and its principal client in a Main Street location in our community which truly *is* the core of the Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve, not as many suppose, the lake itself. At our new office location, management, staff and client groups can comfortably and conveniently work and meet at any time of year. This has been a big step forward (to say nothing of a considerable cost-saving measure for our own organization). And, I would be remiss if I did not thank Brian Yasieniuk for his assistance with some of the furnishings when we were moving in.

I would like to thank our Executive Director John Kindrachuk, along with Susanne and Thomas Abe for their willing help. As volunteers, their time and often financial contributions truly meet and exceed the Hafford community standards of which we love to be so proud.

It has been a challenging year, but our heads are still above water. We have found a way forward, and we will go there.

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