



# Cliffs of Fundy Geopark

## Lieutenant Governor's **Community Spirit Award** Submission



**The Cliffs of Fundy Geopark  
presents this application for a  
Lieutenant Governor's Community Spirit Award.**

While we are not a traditional “community”, we do represent all the communities along the north shore of the Bay of Fundy from Lower Truro in the east through to Apple River in the west. This area is 165 km long and stretches through Colchester and Cumberland Counties. Together, these 2 Counties, our Mi'kmaw partners and the residents of the hamlets and villages make up the **Geopark community** – a community which has received UNESCO Global designation and is becoming known world-wide.



It is the collaboration of everyone working together that shows our strength and our spirit. We support local business through our GEOfood program. We share our geoheritage and cultural resources. We

educate community residents and visitors in the geology, biology, and ecology of the Geopark. We take action on climate change. We celebrate many special days of the year. We anticipate gathering again once the COVID situation resolves. We have each other's backs in times of need.

Our Geopark community is delighted to share our stories with people from across the province, across Canada and around the world. Narratives have been written about us in numerous international tourism publications and on-line sites. Provincial and national media outlets continually tell our story. Travel writers, artists, and scientific researchers visit whenever they can, and our community welcomes one and all. It is not unusual to see a Geopark resident spending time with these visitors: providing directions; talking about our history; showing them how to harvest dulse in the Bay of Fundy or the best place to view the world's highest tides; or calling ahead to help the visitor find accommodation. The community spirit and sense of pride is strong.

*Please enjoy our Community Stories that follow.*



## Two Counties, Mi'kmaw Partners and Countless Organizations Working Together!

Cliffs of Fundy Geopark along the Fundy shore of Cumberland and Colchester counties proudly achieved UNESCO Global Geopark status in July 2020 after years of hard work and determination by the communities and citizens within the region.



Achieving this prestigious designation involved the cooperation of two municipalities, numerous community meetings, extensive consultation with the Mi'kmaw community, and the tireless dedication of community leaders of all walks of life. All were determined to share with the world what makes this special part of Nova Scotia so unique.

The process involved the development of two comprehensive application documents and two evaluation visits at national and international levels. Each required significant involvement from the community. Children participated in a day program painting artwork for international visitors; businesses showcased food and accommodation; museums hosted tours; communities coordinated hospitality; Mi'kmaw elders shared their connection to the land; and artists demonstrated their talents. This commitment continues to evolve and flourish today with new programs, including interpretive signage, a GEOfood program, community rock gardens, and beach cleanups.

In addition to outstanding geological attributes, the establishment of the Geopark has provided an incredible opportunity to celebrate the rich culture and heritage which is a significant source of pride in our community. Having our knowledge of the area validated by international recognition through UNESCO has boosted local confidence, and revitalized hopes for the future in our rural areas, especially for our businesses and our youth.

Our communities have faced life-changing challenges in recent years that are ongoing, yet we persevere with strength and the spirit of kindness, solidarity, optimism, and resilience. All these attributes are shown through collaboration and working together to achieve community goals as we strive forward. One such achievement is the Cliffs of Fundy UNESCO Global Geopark.

SUBMITTED BY

**Mayor Christine Blair**, *County of Colchester*

**Mayor Murray Scott**, *County of Cumberland*



## Small Community - Big Heart

The Age of Sail Museum is a community museum in the true sense of the word. Starting as the dream of a resident wishing to see the shore history preserved, it soon morphed into an idea that grabbed the heart of local people and politicians. Starting in 1988 with property, a picnic area, and a desire for more, Ross Colins had often wondered why no steps had been taken to build something to honour and educate people about the heritage of the Port Greville area.



In 1990, the residents were about to change this drastic oversight. With a gleam in their eyes, a determined, zealous group of local citizens decided they were going to erect a Heritage Centre to honour the lumbering, shipbuilding, and shipping industry that our determined forefathers had forged to the envy of most nations. Of course, there were a few obstacles they had to overcome, like no finances, no building, no direction, and little knowledge of how to proceed.

Well, they certainly overcame these “little” problems. In 1992 a historic building was donated, and generous donations made it possible to move and re-erect the building. Despite setbacks and challenges the center opened in 1994. Operating primarily with volunteers for the first 10 years the community supported the endeavors wholeheartedly—volunteering, donating, and fundraising—and continue to do so to this day. Starting with one building and 750 artifacts the center has continued to grow. It now hosts 7 display buildings, a café and giftshop and over 4500 artifacts. The Age of Sail Museum has been covered in magazines and tour guides as a “must see attraction” around the world. It is a testament to the enthusiasm of a small community with a big heart and a passion for their history.

SUBMITTED BY

**Oralee O’Byrne**, *Age of Sail Museum*



## A Sense of Ownership and Pride in Economy – Population 375

Economy citizens are resourceful, proud people, of Scottish and Irish descent, having settled here as early as the mid 1700's on land granted by the British government. Descendants of those "Planters" still live on those same properties and occasionally in the original homes.



When our Clam Festival committee decided we needed a larger building to hold entertainment for our annual festival and provide a recreational facility for all ages, a local citizen immediately donated \$100,000 toward the campaign. Another gave a piece of land for the

extension to our former schoolhouse, turned recreation centre. An architect prepared plans and offered his work pro gratis. A community cement floor layer donated his skills for the floor from the pour to finish. A local electrician wired the entire 55' x 100' building at no cost. Many community members joined in painting the interior. Every family in the community offered help by finding discarded chairs and tables from schools and anyone with a truck helped get them to our site. Appliances, sinks, dishes, pots and pans were donated by community citizens.

The Economy Recreation Centre is used by senior's committees; rug hookers and quilters; volleyball tournaments; pickle ball and badminton; children's summer camps; community suppers; dances; wedding receptions; garden club gatherings; meetings; funeral receptions; election polling station; and private parties. There is also a well-equipped exercise gym. The building and 2 kitchens are shared with the community church for all their dinners and other events.

A Board of Directors manages the operation of the building, but the whole community feels a sense of ownership and pride in this huge endeavour. Our community always pulls together, like they did two hundred and fifty years ago. It's all about community spirit—it's in our blood!

SUBMITTED BY

**Anita MacLellan**, Economy, N.S.





## The Birth of the Parrsborough Shore Historical Society

When Captain Francis “Biff” Bowker, from the Mystic Seaport Museum in Connecticut, visited Parrsboro fifty years ago, he was dismayed to learn many of the area’s marine antiques—the embodiment of its sailing history—were being sold off piecemeal to collectors. At his urging, his friend Captain Conrad “Con” Byers organized a “show and tell” at a local hall, inviting people to bring their models, paintings, and marine antiques.



The community spirit that flowed from that event has been sustained ever since and spawned the formation of the Parrsborough Shore Historical Society as well as the *Ottawa House By-The Sea Museum*. The story is best told by Capt. Byers himself. Following are excerpts from his speech at the Annual

General Meeting of the Society in 2017, just a few months before his death.

“...the place was packed! That was the beginning of the Historical Society, really.... Everyone brought their paintings and models and so on. They told how they happened to have them and that really sparked the community. ... shortly after that happened there was talk ...we really should have a Historical Society. So, we had a meeting among citizens and decided to register as a society. ... our first meetings were at the Band Hall and then they were at people’s homes, ...We represented the whole Parrsborough Shore from Five Islands to Apple River. ...”

In 1980, the Society persuaded Nova Scotia to purchase the historic *Ottawa House By- the-Sea*, so-named by former owner Sir Charles Tupper. It was then leased to the Society which promptly established a museum by the same name. In 2015, the Province transferred ownership to the Society and this year, 2021, the museum celebrates its fortieth anniversary, thanks to amazing community spirit and sustained support.

SUBMITTED BY

**Harriet McCready**, *Ottawa House By-The-Sea Museum*



## In Memory of Emily

When I moved back home to Nova Scotia in 2020, one of the first things I did was go to Thomas Cove with my friend Emily McLaughlin. She was telling me all about how the area had just received the UNESCO designation as the Cliffs of Fundy UNESCO Global Geopark! Economy was where she grew up and was a very special place that we explored together.

I remember the pride she took in explaining the many years it took to be officially recognized by UNESCO, and she made sure to point out the Geosite signs to me when we went to our favorite places. It is no secret that this place is special, but for it now to be on the world stage changes and broadens the respect people have for the place.

Emily passed away in late 2020, but she made sure to send me a job posting that the Geopark had put out before that happened. I ended up getting the position! Living in the Geopark and learning more about its geological significance has only made me feel more connected to my friend, as well as solidifying my own pride of place – resulting in greater meaning from my work, my home, and my adventures along the Fundy shore.

SUBMITTED BY

**Leah Benetti**, *Community Member*, Colchester County



## Parrsboro Community Playground Provides Leadership to New Town Centre

As a long-time Parrsboro resident and Dad to two young children, I have been advocating for 3 years to have a fully accessible, inclusive play area and community park in the heart of Parrsboro. The vision includes a walking trail, natural playscapes mixed with traditional features, geological highlights, community garden, educational historical story boards, and Indigenous installations, as well as washroom facilities and a covered common area.



Cumberland approved the project and provided a parcel of land (in the heart of the community) for the playground. The Cliffs of Fundy UNESCO Global Geopark, Fundy Geological Museum, Ship's Company Theatre, Parrsboro Creative, Parrsborough Shore Historical Society, the Farmers' Market and

the Parrsboro Board of Trade all have formally agreed to contribute to the project. A pavilion is included in the design which can host outdoor events for the Theatre as well as the rest of the community.

The large statue of Kluskap currently on the site is in dire need of care and repair. We are working with the Indigenous community to develop the cultural interpretation component of the playground to a standard of which all the community can be proud. Robert Bernard of the NS Indigenous Tourism Network has agreed to assist specifically with this portion of the project and is providing guidance and learning opportunities.

Due to the tremendous support received from community groups including seniors, youth and the schools, Cumberland has requested we also gather feedback from residents of the area regarding the use of the former Town Hall grounds which is adjacent to the playground property. This presents a unique opportunity to create a beautiful common area in the centre of town, which already boasts mature maple trees, a newly renovated band stand, and proximity to Main Street.

SUBMITTED BY

**Matthew Brewer**, Chair, *Parrsboro Community Playground*





## New Life for the Old Palliser Property

Ever since Colchester County decided to buy the old Palliser property in Lower Truro, the community has been onboard with developing the site into a prime tourist destination. The new Fundy Discovery Site is a place not only for visitors to view the tidal bore but where locals can enjoy a walk or bike ride along the dykes on the Cobequid Trail, have a quiet lunch in the shade of the mature trees, watch their children make mudpies in the sand kitchen or scale the towers and navigate across the rope bridge. Enthusiasm has run high as residents have watched each new development. Their praise at the quality of work and ingenuity shows a great sense of community pride.



When the UNESCO Global Geopark evaluation team made an unscheduled stop at the Fundy Discovery Site in 2019, they made a strong recommendation that the site be included within the Cliffs of Fundy Geopark boundaries as they felt it would make the perfect starting point for visitors arriving from the

southern part of the province, giving the community an opportunity demonstrate their pride of place.

In September of 2020, an Open House was held to celebrate the completion of the washrooms and the natural playground. Over 500 people attended and were treated to music, barbecue, and cake as well as the timely arrival of the tidal bore. There were rave reviews of the work completed so far, and anticipation of the next steps: a pedestrian bridge spanning the Salmon River for active participation connecting the Blue Route in Onslow to the Cobequid Trail in Lower Truro as well as an interpretive centre.

This new jewel has become an integral part of the Cliffs of Fundy Geopark.

SUBMITTED BY

**Kathy Fisher**, *Fundy Discovery Site*, Visitor Centre Supervisor



## It is Never About the Money

It is never about money. In my voluntary role as Parrsboro Shore Ambassador over several years, I have enjoyed meeting many hundreds of people from all walks of life who come here to visit or stay. My job is to provide a warm welcome and help guide them towards the best experience possible. It has given me a “front row seat” to some changes occurring along what is now the Cliffs of Fundy Geopark, changes that seem an omen of a future that embraces the best of our past — our Mi'kmaw heritage and lore, our unique geology showcasing the breakup of Pangea, and our cultural traditions — with new “blood”, people arriving to populate our shores with fresh ideas, energy and passion to spare.



Until a few years ago, the population of this area was on a decades-long downward spiral, with grim implications. In 1996, a report (Municipal Government Study for Cumberland County) had this to say: “The downward trend of Parrsboro's population and commercial tax base are starting to impact negatively”. It was added

that the loss of voluntarism was feared, as was the loss of community identity.

From my vantage point, there appears to be a renaissance underway, where new people as new volunteers are serving their community across a variety of non-profits and local causes. And there is an increased interest in Mi'kmaw traditions, history, and place names. The Cliffs of Fundy Geopark appears to be arriving at just the right time to drive this combined passion, interest, and curiosity. As a former member of the Nova Scotia Museum Board of Governors, it seems to me that the Geopark is in the vanguard of the tradition of “outdoor museums”, combining life long and self-directed learning. And I celebrate its potential.

SUBMITTED BY

**Sandy Graham, Parrsboro Ambassador**