

Acadia protects bird island Nature Trust award honours university

By GLEN PARKER Mon., Oct. 3, 2011



Tom Herman

WOLFVILLE — Acadia University in Wolfville has become the first university in Canada to protect land through a conservation easement.

The university has committed to protecting Bon Portage Island forever through a formal partnership with the Nova Scotia Nature Trust.

Bon Portage Island, also known as Outer Island, is in southwestern Nova Scotia off Shelburne County's coast. A conservation easement permanently protects the land under the provincial Conservation Easements Act, but it allows for continued use and enjoyment of the land by the owners.

As a result of the agreement, the trust recently awarded Acadia and Tom Herman, the university's academic vice-president, the 2011 Nature Trust Conservation Award.

"I think the attractive element is that it's an agreement in perpetuity to protect the landscape for perpetuity," Herman said at his office Friday. "Both parties are in it for the long run."

The university hopes the agreement will "spark awareness and interest" about this concept across Canada, he said.

"This is an opportunity for other institutions to step up to the plate and do the same thing."

Nova Scotia author Evelyn Richardson, who once lived on the island, gave the land to the university.

Herman said the agreement also presents an opportunity for Acadia students to be involved in the monitoring and management of the property.

"This is important. It develops an environmental stewardship for our students."

In a news release announcing the award, trust executive director Bonnie Sutherland said Herman was specifically recognized "for his vision, passion and leadership in bringing together this groundbreaking conservation partnership between Acadia and the Nature Trust."

Bon Portage is among the province's few remaining large, unspoiled coastal islands, and one of its most ecologically significant. The island provides a critical stopover for many migrating songbirds, shorebirds, waterfowl and raptors.

It is also home to over 50 species of breeding birds, including the largest breeding colony of Leach's storm petrels south of Newfoundland and Labrador.