

## **NATURE TRUST AND ACADIA SIGN FIRST CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROTECTING UNIVERSITY LANDS IN CANADA**



**Halifax, N.S. (September 8, 2012)** – Acadia University and the Nova Scotia Nature Trust signed a conservation easement protecting a spectacular coastal island off Nova Scotia’s south shore today. This landmark agreement makes a significant contribution to protecting Nova Scotia’s coastal legacy, and also makes conservation history, marking the first conservation easement protecting university lands in Canada.

At a community celebration in Woods Harbour, Shelburne County, Acadia University and the Nature Trust signed a conservation easement protecting forever, Bon Portage Island. The 300 acre island will remain in Acadia ownership, but the natural values will be permanently protected by a legal agreement with the Nature Trust.

Bon Portage Island supports a tremendous richness of pristine coastal habitats and species and is considered one of the most ecologically important islands in Nova Scotia. It is one of Nova Scotia’s last remaining large, unspoiled coastal islands and is part of an internationally designated Important Bird Area. Bon Portage Island provides a critical stopover for many migrating songbirds, shorebirds, waterfowl and raptors. It is also home to over fifty species of breeding birds, including the largest breeding colony of Leach’s storm-petrels south of Newfoundland.

The conservation easement between the Nature Trust and Acadia marks a significant step forward in land conservation in Canada; it is the first time in Canadian history that university land has been protected through such an agreement. Nature Trust Executive Director, Bonnie Sutherland, applauded Acadia for being an environmental pioneer among academic institutions in Canada. “We hope Acadia’s conservation leadership will inspire other academic institutions and corporate landowners across Nova Scotia and across the country to take action to do their own part in protecting Canada’s unique natural legacy,” she said.

This easement will permanently protect the outstanding wildlife and habitats of Bon Portage Island. For Acadia, it preserves an irreplaceable asset. The island is home to one of the

province's leading ecological research and field education sites, supporting a field school and unique learning and research opportunities, treasured by generations of Acadia students, and by other scientists and researchers. By ensuring the island remains undisturbed and unspoiled, the conservation easement protects these unique learning and research opportunities, as well as the scenic values enjoyed by generations of local residents.



Acadia's Vice-President Academic, Tom Herman, underscored the fundamental importance of the site to the university and its students. "Acadia's mission and mandate recognize environmental literacy as one of the cornerstones of the Acadia experience. For many students that understanding comes from direct experiences in places like Bon Portage Island," he said.

On this day one year ago, the Nature Trust and Acadia signed a memorandum of understanding committing the organizations to undertake ecological reviews of all Acadia's land assets, and to work to permanently protect the priority sites. With the conservation easement just signed on Bon Portage Island, Acadia and the Nature Trust have already begun work on yet another historic land conservation initiative.

"We have not only made conservation history today, but are keeping the momentum going with plans underway for our next joint conservation achievement this fall," noted Sutherland. The organizations are launching a fundraising campaign to raise critical funding to add two more unique sites to Nova Scotia's protected coastal legacy.

Sutherland noted that many Nova Scotians cherish our coastal legacy and lament its degradation. "By making a tax-deductible gift to this ground-breaking conservation campaign, all Nova Scotians can be part of protecting our coastal legacy"

"Forming a partnership with the Nature Trust to protect a special place seemed only natural," Herman added. "It was both innovative and appropriate, and we hope that other universities across the country will follow suit. For us, this marks only the beginning of a long and productive relationship between our two organizations."

For more information or to support the campaign, please visit: [www.nsnt.ca/bonportage](http://www.nsnt.ca/bonportage).

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