

Nature Trust Protects Cherished Parrsboro Gem

(Halifax, N.S.) August 15, 2016 – The Nova Scotia Nature Trust announced today it has protected, forever, one of Nova Scotia’s cherished island gems - Partridge Island. Several generous island owners have come together to ensure that this natural, historic and cultural landmark is preserved, through a conservation easement agreement with the Nature Trust.

Situated in the narrow passage between the Minas Basin’s north shore and Cape Blomidon, the 21 hectare Partridge Island is a unique and highly significant place. Ringed by steep cliffs rising to 50 meters above the sea, its hiking trail and look-offs provide spectacular views of the surrounding land and seascapes.

Known as wa’so’q or “Heaven” by the Mi’kmaq, Partridge Island was a traditional place for gathering

significant materials that helped with survival including semi-

precious stones like amethyst and Jasper. It is also the home of the Mi’kmaq god-giant Glooscap’s grandmother. Generations of local families and visitors alike have enjoyed visiting the island, hiking, bird-watching, rock-hounding or searching for the next big fossil find.

One of only a few islands in the Bay of Fundy (actually connected to the mainland by a narrow beach), Partridge Island is ecologically significant in several ways. It supports a rich coastal hardwood forest, rare in Nova Scotia, particularly on islands. The tidal flats, salt marsh, steep cliffs and forests provide important habitat for 48 species of shorebirds, songbirds and raptors, including endangered species, and refuge for many spring and fall migrants. The island and surrounding beaches and cliffs are also internationally recognized for their diversity of gemstones, minerals and fossils.

“It’s amazing to see Partridge Island protected,” said Gregor Wilson, a Nature Trust Board member and supporter, with family roots in the area. “Many people assumed it was protected, just because it hadn’t been developed, and people have been visiting the island for generations,” he added. “But there was no protection. Things could have changed here drastically if the Nature Trust hadn’t stepped in.”

The story of its protection began with a historic conservation agreement between the Nature Trust and Acadia University. The agreement commits Acadia to legally and permanently protect several ecologically important lands owned by the University.



Photo by Len Wagg

“Environmental sustainability is one of the fundamental underpinnings of an Acadia education and if Acadia is going to do more than talk, we decided the responsible thing to do was ensure all of the ecologically sensitive properties we own are protected, in perpetuity,” says Acadia’s Dr. Tom Herman.

In 2012, the Nature Trust and Acadia signed Canada’s first conservation easement protecting University-owned land. Both Bon Portage Island and Hemeon’s Head (both on Nova Scotia’s south shore) have now been protected through this agreement.

While working to complete a conservation easement on Partridge Island, it was discovered that Acadia actually shared ownership with other landowners. Most of the island was once owned by the late Morley Taylor. His land was bequeathed jointly to Acadia and Dalhousie Universities, Sharon Taylor and another owner who wishes to remain anonymous. All four recognized the significance of the island, and the wonderful opportunity that its preservation offered, and have subsequently generously agreed to protect their land.

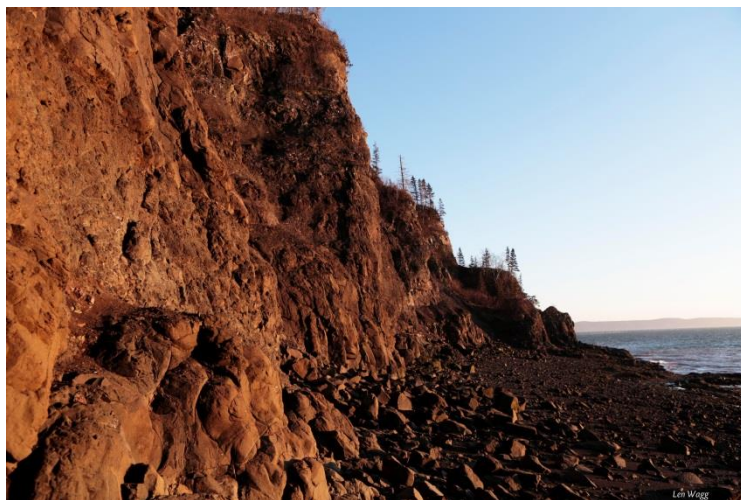


Photo by Len Wagg

“The conservation easement, covering over 95% of the island, ensures that the island’s unique natural values are protected, in perpetuity,” noted Dr. Herman. “It also ensures that generations to come can continue to explore, enjoy and learn from this unique place.” Both Acadia and Dalhousie have retained the right to continue to use the island as an outdoor classroom, research and learning site for their students and faculty.

Sharon Taylor, another of the island owners, is delighted to see the island protected. “Morley Taylor was very proud to own Partridge Island. I believe a wonderful man is looking down on all this excitement with a big smile - I know he would be so pleased.”

The Nature Trust is extremely grateful to the island owners, Acadia University, Dalhousie University, Sharon Taylor and an anonymous owner, for so generously agreeing to protect their land, for the benefit of nature, and for generations to come.

Protection of Partridge Island was also possible thanks to generous support from the Nova Scotia Crown Share Land Legacy Trust, the Government of Canada’s Habitat Stewardship Program, the Wilson Merriam Foundation, Gregor Wilson, Dave Wilson, Mary O’Regan, and Stephen and Suzanne O’Regan.

“Partridge Island is one of Mother Nature’s real gems, and one enjoyed by so many people, including my own 13 grandchildren,” said Stephen O’Regan, an enthusiastic project supporter. “It is such a great place for children to explore and enjoy nature. To realize it will be protected for future generations is a very comforting thing for me. I’m pleased to be a part of it.”

The Nature Trust will host a community celebration on August 21 at 1 pm at Ottawa House in Parrsboro. Following the celebration, the Nature Trust and our guides will lead a hike exploring the ecology, geology and Mi’kmaq stories of the newly protected Partridge Island. Contact the Nature Trust or visit their website for details and to RSVP.

Nature Trust Executive Director, Bonnie Sutherland noted that many people across the province will be delighted to learn that this beloved island is now part of Nova Scotia’s protected natural legacy.

“We invite the public to be a part of the island legacy, by joining us for upcoming celebration, and by making a donation to help us ensure that Partridge Island remains the wild and beautiful place it is today,” Sutherland said.

Tax-receipted charitable donations to support the long-term stewardship of Partridge Island can be made at www.nsnt.ca or by calling the Nature Trust at 902-425-LAND. Volunteers interested in helping to care for the island are also welcome.