



Friends of
Mashkinonje

THE WETLANDS

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OBSERVER

Home of the Nodding Trillium, the Sandhill Crane, and numerous other species



A Testament to Partnerships and Protecting the Natural Environment

By Chuck Miller, Park Superintendent

Killarney / French River / Mashkinonje / W. Sandy Island / Manitou Islands Provincial Parks

Colourful umbrellas, rain coats, and ball caps were the order of the day as the Minister of Natural Resources, the Honourable David Ramsay, cut a white ribbon, officially opening the Loudon Peatland Trail at Mashkinonje Provincial Park. Mr. Ramsay, a supporter of the park as the local MPP, called the park “a testament to partnerships and protecting the natural environment.”

Many folks involved with the park were present to join in the celebrations, including lodge owners, naturalists, professors, farmers, mayors, equipment operators, municipal councillors, youth interns, economic development professionals, landscape architects, children and my co worker in the civil service. Our thoughts were also with those community-minded individuals who have volunteered at the park but were unable to attend.

Under the protection of a green army mess tent in pouring rain and with the comments, “of course it is wet - it is a wetland”, Dr. Peter Beckett, Master of Ceremonies from Laurentian University, got the celebrations underway in a spirit of fun and friendliness that characterizes the project.

Projects like the Loudon Peatland Trail do not happen on their own and the opening provided an opportunity for Ontario Parks to say thank you; to the many Friends volunteers lead by Harley Lang; for the ongoing financial support from Economic Partners of Sudbury East – West Nipissing; for the volunteer funding efforts from raffles, silent auctions and annual picnics by the Friends; and for the leadership and generosity of the Municipality of French River.

Angela Martin, President of the Friends of Mashkinonje, spoke of the relationships and friendships that have developed during the project and thanked new partners such as the Shell Environmental Fund as well as those that have helped at every step along the way - Economic Partners – Sudbury East West Nipissing. She recalled watching young people being changed by their experiences at Mashkinonje by learning, experiencing nature, being involved in their community and having shared experiences with others.

Claude Bouffard, Mayor of French River, recalled the origins of the project – when as the President of the Sudbury East Board of Trade (SEBOT) – Kevin Cameron of Lakair Lodge proposed the idea of developing the park to provide opportunities for guests to see nature back in 1998. Mr. Bouffard also recalled and thanked FedNor and Human Resources Development Canada for their support and early involvement in supplying staff to Mashkinonje to complete resource inventories and planning. Planning was completed in 2004 with the release of an approved Park Management Plan.

With the Minister of Natural Resources as a witness, the ongoing relationships of the Friends of Mashkinonje, Municipality of French River, and Ontario Parks were formalized with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding to continue to operate and develop the Park.

On reflection - for all those involved - the changes that have occurred since the completion of planning in 2004 are considerable.

“Thank you” was also extended to D & J Contracting, Bayview Excavating, Due North Marketing, Municipality of St Charles, Municipality of Markstay-Warren, Daniel Longlade of Collins Barrow CA, Sturgeon Falls Brush, Fryer Forest Products, MNR Fire Management, Pepsi, Woods Canada, and Columbia.

Angela summarized the thoughts of many with the comment “the knowledge base and cooperation of the partners has created a park that will contribute to the enjoyment, health and well being of the local communities and visitors for many years to come”



Signing of the Memorandum of Understanding

L to R: Dr. Peter Beckett, Vice President Friends of Mashkinonje, Angela Martin, President Friends of Mashkinonje, Chuck Miller, Ontario Parks, Mayor Claude Bouffard Municipality of French River

Signing: The Honorable David Ramsay, Minister of Natural Resources

ACCENT: Mashkinonje Provincial Park by Rob O’Flanagan, *The Sudbury Star*

A Place of Unparalleled Beauty

If you’re used to slogging through the bush with a long stride at breakneck pace, your momentum might be hampered by someone like Angela Martin, a well known naturalist and lover of the unparalleled Mashkinonje Provincial Park near Monetville.

Martin will definitely slow you down. In the process, you might come under her influence - stopping, looking and listening like never before.

With 270 bird species and extremely rare plant life (including three species of insect-eating flowers), Mashkinonje is just the place for sensory indulgence and awakening.

“I could spend hours down at the boardwalk, just sitting there, enjoying what is happening and just looking what is there” said Martin, president of both the Friends of Mashkinonje and the Nipissing Naturalists Club, a group of avid nature lovers who frequent the park. “If you have a favourite spot in the park, it is just magical.”

Martin knows her Spotted Sandpipers from her Short-billed Dowitchers, and is encyclopedic in her knowledge of the park’s plant and animal life. She can point out a bladderwort, sundew or pitcher plant - all protein-consuming varieties - and moose tracks and droppings make her giddy with excitement.

“The reason I worked on the park was for the protection aspect” said Martin.

“Mashkinonje is small, like a postage stamp in the whole scheme of things. But at least it is a small area within our area where things are going to be protected. They are going to be sacred.

It’s taken a long time for Mashkinonje’s unparalleled ecosystem to open up to the public. Scientists like Laurentian University biologist, Peter Beckett, have long known about the park’s unique flora and fauna. And a handful of Second World War draft dodgers understood intimately the park’s sense of isolation and its ravenous insect life. But tourists are just beginning to discover it.

Designated a provincial park in 1963, Mashkinonje was long considered inhospitable wetlands. The locals called it “the big swamp”. A natural anomaly unlike any other in Canada, the park has become one of the key components of an eco-tourism initiative aimed at bringing more visitors into the French River and West Nipissing region.

Trail development in Mashkinonje has been supported by a close-knit group of locals, many of them connected to commercial resorts and lodges in the area, and supported by Sudbury East Board of Trade, area municipalities and businesses.

Some years ago, this group saw a need to draw more attention to this extraordinary area, both for ecological and economical reasons.

Development has been slow, with projects going ahead when funding is available. A contractor valued the construction of the picturesque boardwalk at around \$70,000. Friends of Mashkinonje, with the help of Cambrian College carpentry students, built it for under \$10,000.

Chuck Miller is park superintendent for Killarney, French River and Mashkinonje provincial parks. “Most of Mashkinonje’s various wetlands are visible from elevated areas, making it an exceptionally varied and beautiful place to visit”, he said. “Even if you go for a short hike, and with a little bit of knowledge, you can see things that you wouldn’t normally see in a very short time,” Miller said. “You can hike 300 – 400 metres and see three or four different types of wetlands. Some of the rich wetland types support quite a bit of animal life.”

“The park is primarily for hiking”, he said, “but there is also a federal boat launch at the south end of the park that offers access to Lake Nipissing and an MTO picnic site on the West Arm. Regional tourist attractions such as the new French River Visitor Centre, opening in mid-July, and the Dokis First Nation Annual Powwow are close at hand.

“The park would be sitting there as a piece of Crown land with a park boundary drawn around it, if it wasn’t for the lodge owners and the people living adjacent to the park,” Miller said, adding that one lodge owner in particular, Kevin Cameron, got the ball rolling on park development in 1998.

“In 1998, there was a mill fire in the town of Alban, and about 100 jobs were lost,” Miller added. “The area was looking for replacement economic activity. There were funding partners that were looking at regional economic issues. Ecotourism was a buzz word back in the 1990s, and it was kind of a natural fit that has really helped develop the area economically.”

Martin has taken a number of children through the park.

“This one little guy who was about 10-years-old, was looking really serious,” she explained, “and then he said, ‘The only thing I am going to leave behind is my footprints.’ That’s what it’s all about for me”.

WETLAND

Mashkinonje, which is classified as a provincially-significant wetland, is also a world-class wetland, according to Harley Lang, one of a select group of deHavilland Canada DHC-2 Beaver owners/pilots, who was born in Sturgeon Falls and raised near the park.

The 72-year-old describes himself as a “bush bunny”, and is widely credited with mapping the park’s 35-kilometre trail system. It’s fair to say he knows it like the back of his hand, or the cockpit of his airplane. He is one of the Friends of Mashkinonje.

The park, which is small in comparison to other provincial parks, measuring just 2,400 hectares, holds all four types of wetlands – bog, fen, swamp and marsh. From the air, the impressive Loudon Peat land looks like the top of a bald head wearing a thick floral wreath. There are vast peat lands further north in Ontario, but the appearance of one in this area – especially one of this shape and size – is extremely unusual.

“At first, many people thought it was a meteor strike, because it looks like a straight-on impact from space,” Lang said, adding the Loudon Peat land is about three-and-a-half miles around. “It was actually formed by what’s called a carbonic pipe, which is like a bubble in porridge. You get a kind of burp and concentric waves moving out from that.”

The geological event happened more than a billion years ago, when the Earth’s surface was hot and malleable. The waves are evident in the islands and shoreline of Lake Nipissing’s West Bay and West Arm. There are seven ridges of the waves encircling Loudon Peat land.

“There seems to be a power here,” said Lang, who has tromped through the park since boyhood. “People are attracted to it because of its unique shape and location. You don’t normally expect this type of thing in the heart of the Canadian Shield.”

“People should come here to experience a unique wetland scene, in reasonably compact acreage,” said Lang. “They can view all manner of wetlands that are available in the Great Lakes Basin.”

“You can never stop learning about the many life forms that are in the park” said Martin. “We don’t know everything that there is. As humans beings we think we know everything, but we don’t. There is so much more to be learned.”

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Herve and Ursula Sauve
Bonnie Brownstein
Don and Val McGimpsey

Our apologies to Terry and Cathy Armshaw for misspelling their name in our last newsletter.

THANK YOU

Fryer Forest Products for donating the wood chips used on the parking lot islands
Rip and Elaine Drobeck for becoming a Tamarac Swamp Sponsor

Nodding Trillium



This is one of 30 nodding trilliums found near the Loudon Peatland Trail. The nodding trillium is the same height as the red and white trilliums but the flowers are smaller and grow below the leaves. Although this is in the nodding trillium range, they are not found very often. They were discovered on a field trip by a group from the Nipissing Naturalists Gateway to Nature Conference last spring. This spring, the Friends of Mashkinonje cordoned the area with the nodding trilliums and moved the trail to protect them.

With funding from the Shell Environmental Fund, Canadians from Vancouver Island to Newfoundland continue to take personal action in support of the environment.

Friends of Mashkinonje has received \$5000 from the SEF. With these funds we plan to build a bridge to complete the coastal trail.

Created in 1990, the Shell Environmental Fund is a national program intended to make a local difference. A total of over \$11 million has been granted to more than 4000 environmental projects across the country. These projects include habitat restoration, beach and road clean-ups, waste reduction and recycling programs, trail-building, educational initiatives and other innovative environmental projects.

Individuals, schools, community associations, service clubs and environmental groups have used the grants of up to \$5000 per project to improve and protect their environment.

The Shell Environmental Fund accepts applications for projects that are action-oriented, innovative, and community-based. Representatives of three environmental organizations and one Shell employee make the funding decisions. For information about the Shell Environmental Fund, visit the SEF website at www.shell.ca/sef or call the SEF Administrator at (403) 691-2071.



Our thanks to Economic Partners Sudbury East - West Nipissing for their donation of \$5000.

This grant was used to complete the Loudon Peat land parking lot and to print our brochure.

Friends of Mashkinonje
Picnic and Annual General Meeting

Sunday, August 20, 2006

Location: Welcome Lodge, Musky Island Rd. off Hwy. 64 South

11:00 am Annual General Meeting and Election of Officers (members only)

12:00 – 1:30 pm *Silent Auction*

12:00 Lunch: Corn Roast, Sausage on a bun, Desserts, or bring your own

2:00 pm **Boat ride to Lapin's Beach and Trail Hike** (\$10 per person)

For further information, contact Liz Lang: (705) 898-2108, Angela Martin (705) 594-1153

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT: Angela Martin

I believe that all of the people involved with the creation of the Mashkinonje Provincial Park have had a very rewarding experience. We have learned, accomplished new things and created a legacy for generations to come. This was evident at the ribbon-cutting ceremony, signing of the Memorandum of Understanding, Chuck's write up in every newsletter, and Rob O'Flanagan's article in the Sudbury Star. I don't need to say more except thank you too for caring and we hope that you will continue to be a Friend of Mashkinonje and introduce us to your family and friends.

FOM DIRECTORS

President

Angela Martin

Vice President

Dr. Peter Beckett

Secretary/Treasurer

Liz Lang

Members

Carmelle Girouard

Bob Wilson

Chuck Miller

Friends/Ontario Park

Superintendent

Parks Liaison

Killarney, Ontario

CONTACT US

We hope you enjoyed our newsletter. To view past editions, visit our website

www.mashkinonje.com

or contact us at:

Friends of Mashkinonje
Site 8, Box 1, 99 Lang's Landing,
Monetville, ON, P0M 2K0

mashkinonje@hotmail.com

For anyone who wishes to know more about the world that surrounds us, the Mashkinonje Provincial Park is a great place and will remain that way for decades to come. Protecting this area in its natural state is our goal. Your continued support will help us share our wonderful wilderness.

Thank you for being a Friend