



Directors' Report for the Year Ending December 31, 2013
Annual General Meeting
March 22, 2014

The earth is family. Is there anyone here who has never been hurt by family - or has never been nurtured by family? No? So family is never simply a romantic, feel-good relationship; it is how we are able to live.

In these early years, Friends of Redtail Society is setting out to show that we humans can and must do better in adjusting our behaviour to suit the realities of the forests. We see that it is not required to drain the pond to catch the fish. And draining the pond makes a dead end. We are showing that such terms as "Nature Preserve" imply that it is OK to degrade all the rest of the forests outside those preserves. I ask you - if you and I went in to business together and hired one hundred people, would we announce with pride that WE are preserving the integrity, the resilience and the beauty of 13 of those employees but all the rest are open to degradation? What would the Department of Labour have to say about that? Yet that pattern is fine for the woods - so we are told. But we can see this for what it is: a ruse to cover and to excuse dead-end behaviour in industrial activity in the forests.

At FRS we will adjust our activities to suit the needs of the woods. For corporations this pattern means that there will be a shift in motivation: the needs of the forests will come before the needs of their shareholders. The only alternative is to send a message to the future saying that we send *our deepest regrets* but we just have to keep on degrading the life processes of the forests in order to do business. This existing pattern takes as a given that to make an industry thrive requires - above all else - keeping the shareholders happy. FRS will show that is not a given. It is an illusion. It is the addict's argument. It is saying we need more of the poison that is killing the forests just to keep us going. But we know that is not realistic and therefore it is not required.

Degrading the life of the forests is something some of us have been doing in Nova Scotia for a long time. No one would trade the forests of 50 years ago for the forests here today. That is to say nothing of the forests that were here in 1914. Today there are of course fewer livelihoods possible because of this slaughter. Every ten-year old child knows that pattern cannot continue. So, FRS puts the needs of the forest before money. After all, that is what we all do in our families: in matters of the family, other needs than money must come first.

That is a look at what FRS is trying to do. But - has what the Board actually been doing over the past year been in harmony with that vision? Here is a summary. See what you think.

Right here at last year's AGM we launched a Speaker Series named: "Talking Forests: Living and Learning From The Land" with a presentation by wildlife biologist Bob Bancroft. In reference to the current use of wood in Nova Scotia, Bob remarked: "We are in a race to the bottom - a ton by ton race." And, "We have created rivers that flush like toilets instead of going up and down gradually." And finally: "Rebuilding healthy forests will actually create jobs."

In May, well known forester Will Martin came up from Windhorse Farm near New Germany to talk about the practice they name *Enrichment Forestry*. The previous owners had for generations kept meticulous records of work done in their forests. In a paper explaining Enrichment Forestry the current owners state that from this 100-acre wood “ 7.5 million board feet of lumber has been harvested” in 168 years. They go on to state that that figure is 2 million more board feet than if it were clear cut 4 times in that time.

This remnant of healthy Acadian forest would not exist today had it been cleared through the years. So, as Aldo Leopold says, “Conservation is not austerity.”

Next was a presentation in June by board member Volker Klum , “The Common Sense Approach to Building Shelter”, a short introduction to natural building.

In July mycologist David Boyle delivered the workshop “Cultivating Mushrooms” in which he spoke about the essential role of fungi in nature and methods for growing a variety of edible mushroom species. He also guided participants through the process of inoculating hard wood logs with mushroom spawn, which should bear fruit this spring.

In September Board member and photographer Joella Arsenault presented her photo series entitled “Four Seasons”. Joella provided an up-close look into the life of the FRS forest.

In October FRS member Steve Harder and forester Peter Neilly took a group into the forest for their presentation “Mapping the Forest” using DNR’s three-part publication Forest Ecosystem Classification, the culmination of 10 years of field research of which Peter was a leader and principal author.

In February Joella and Billy MacDonald teamed up to take a group to the forest for their presentation “Winter Tracking”.

Our other big work this year has been to continue negotiations with the Department of Natural Resources. For more than two years the Board has been actively seeking, as the Department would put it, managerial control of about 300 acres of Crown Land adjoining FRS land. There has been no answer yet. It is a frustrating exercise because, to name just one aspect, this is already public land. And we have already demonstrated that FRS land is community land, so why should this relatively isolated, small piece be held so tightly within the grasp of an industrial concern? The struggle to wrest this from industry and put it in the hands of local community will continue. We all owe much thanks to Board members Bernadette Romanowsky, Michelle Ferris and Candace Sweet for giving so generously in these negotiations. The time and precision these three have put in to this is a marvel, but not a surprise. Thank you.

I wish there were time here to tell you adequately about all the “little” things FRS members have been doing which, together, add up to significant endeavour. In very brief form: There have been many improvements to the Craig’s Way footpath including the placement of a large guide sign at the head of the path and a donor recognition sign. Many thanks to Steve Wark for donating the design of these signs. The installation of the signs and many hours of maintenance and bridge work were done by Billy MacDonald. Volker Klum donated the labour to install several large boulders at the Porter Road entrance to the footpath. Thank you all.

But one of the little things was really a big thing. Xander Martin comes from Millsville and lives there with his parents. Last year some forest was stripped away nearby their home. I am guessing Xander thought of it as his forest because it was a place where he belonged. After it was gone he wanted to do something to help make things better, to help right that wrong. So he

made a bottle drive and raised about \$1000. A big chunk of that he gave to Friends of Redtail Society. Thank you Xander.

Now it is time for the Board members to stand as their names are called. Vice-chair Volker Klum, Treasurer Michelle Ferris, Secretary Candace Sweet, board members Joella Arsenault, Ursula Klum Billy MacDonald, Tom Miller, Bernadette Romanowsky.

It is with regret that I will be leaving the Board today for family reasons. It has been a privilege working with all of you.

I want to close with a quote from farmer, teacher and excellent friend , Keith Helmuth of Woodstock, New Brunswick. Keith writes:

I have struggled too long with the uncertainties of weather and of plants and animals to think in terms of unity with creation. But harmony - now that is a different matter! There *is* a ragged harmony, an outrageous harmony, indeed, a hazardous harmony in which we are all embedded whether we know it or not. From the individual point-of-view it is perhaps a sad harmony because it composites our brilliant egos into dust. But for the community – the community of cells forming an organism, the community of persons forming a society, the community of land forming an ecology, a home place – in all this it is the harmony we have and the one we need to learn.

Thank you for listening. Please feel free now to ask questions.

C.H. Kennedy,
Chair