

Celebrating KHC's Ten Years of Success

Ian Attridge - November 23, 2011
KHC's Tenth Anniversary Celebration

Good evening, and welcome to this celebration of connections and success!

I've been involved in the Conservancy from the very beginning. Across Ontario, I was setting up land trusts, protecting land and helping landowners leave a legacy. So I decided – why not do it here? We had several discussions with key individuals and organizations like the conservation authorities to ensure that we wouldn't be stepping on anyone's toes. It all came together at a first meeting of people interested in forming a land trust on May 20, 1999, held at Mieke Schipper's house. Mieke, Ralph Ingleton and Hal Hooke, among others were there.

We envisioned a land trust for the Kawarthas - working with landowners to protect strategic parcels. We focused on important natural areas, but recognized the need to also help conserve our bioregion's cultural heritage and landscapes. We recognized in our incorporating documents the links between natural and cultural heritage, the need to gather and share information, and to work in partnerships. We knew that we were going to be a land trust, but also something more.

Before we became a formal legal entity, we helped others with several projects:

- We worked with the Fowlers, Viamede and the Township of North Kawartha to put a heritage easement on the Mt. Julian Inn's Clague folk paintings – this came about when Kathy Hooke, then President of the Peterborough Historical Society, on our suggestion asked the Fowlers to write in on the transfer “subject to a heritage easement”, saying that we'd work out the details later (and we did).
- On behalf of KHC, I did the legal work for Ontario Nature's purchase of 484 acres to add to their Altberg Reserve at Four Mile Lake; this is now managed by the Kawartha Field Naturalists.

We incorporated the Conservancy, getting our formal papers approved exactly 10 years ago today – November 23, 2001. The founding directors, three of whom are here tonight, were: Barbara Heidenreich, Mieke Schipper, Terry Rees, and Phred Collins. The Peterborough County Stewardship Council provided us with our first grant to cover incorporation expenses. We received charitable status at the start of 2002

We launched the Conservancy to the public in June 2002 as a celebration of signing a conservation agreement to conserve Mieke's land, held at her place. In those early years, the Board volunteered to do everything – they still do a lot to help out. We hired our first staff person, David Silburn, in 2003, and I became Executive Director in 2005. Carol Andrews joined our staff in 2006, followed by Leora Berman and Pat Learmonth leading our Land Between and Farmlands programs. These programs have now spun off into their own entities. Later, we added Craig Onafrychuk and Mike Kyffin to our GIS staff, and Laurie Keillor-Faulkner spent her year's sabbatical from Fleming College with us.

2005 was a significant developmental year for KHC as we secured key multi-year grants from the Metcalf, Trillium and later the Greenbelt and other Foundations. They understood our niche and role as bridgers, brokers and partners in conservation in the bioregion, across various lines:

- two Counties;
- natural and cultural heritage;
- governments and landowners; and,
- applying a spectrum of conservation tools, information and incentives.

I've played most roles in this organization over the years, from President, lawyer, and Executive Director, to host of our meetings, first office and fifth year anniversary party at our home. I get to work with great people here!

For me, one of the most rewarding roles at KHC is first meeting with keen landowners who steward amazing lands and waters, and then helping them leave a legacy of conservation. I also love being a volunteer, and a donor, because I believe in what we – all of us together - are doing to conserve the Kawartha landscape and its precious and diverse heritage.

In 2010, I took a year's sabbatical to travel, discover and learn in South America and Europe. Before I left, we hired Mike as the new Executive Director. I was pleased and confident to pass the leadership torch to Mike – he has jumped right in and done a great job, taking us through new projects and to new levels of success. For our new 740 acre Emily Creek property, he worked on it every week for a year, negotiating and arranging for the donation of such a significant project.

When I got back from sabbatical, I was excited about our new space, working with Mike, and with Suresh who was now leading our cultural heritage program. It has been a real privilege to work with these two guys, and with our growing Board and a fabulous crew of talented students and volunteers.

Indeed, I want to thank the current and previous Directors, staff, volunteers, partners and supporters for creating and sustaining this organization, and its vision for a sustainable Kawartha bioregion. These ten years of accomplishments and successes are a tribute to all of you – may we enjoy many successful decades to come!