

Notes from the Winter Gathering

Quetico Lodge and Conference Centre

Atikokan/Quetico

January 17, 2020

Meeting Agenda and Topics

Land Managers Meeting

Crane Lake Visitor Center

Bike the Heart

General Partnership business and sustainability

Sustainable Recreation and Tourism—how to achieve it

Dark Sky Certification Initiative

Website Migration

Evening Presentations

Park Biologist, Brian Jackson

Red Pine Fire History in Quetico and the

Heart of the Continent region



Heart of the Continent Partnership

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www.heartofthecontinent.org - organization site

www.traveltheheart.org - geotourism web-site

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Attendees:

Trevor Gibb, Superintendent Quetico Provincial Park
Connie Cummins, Superior National Forest Supervisor
Bob DeGross, Superintendent Voyageurs National Park
Lisa Radosevich-Craig, SNF-External Affairs and Tribal Liaison
Shane Lipsit-Fraser, A/Superintendent Kakabeka Falls PP
James Bennitt, Project Lead—Ontario Parks
Frank Jewell, Saint Louis County Commissioner
Michael Crotteau—USFS -(via con-call)
Chris Stromberg, HOCP Coordinator

Shoreline at Quetico Lodge and Conference Centre >>



Stepping into 2020, the goals that we initiated over a dozen years ago remain relevant today:

- To build region-wide dialogue, cooperation and capacity among communities, public land managers, conservation, recreation, and industry groups to benefit our border region and to enable vibrant communities to flourish alongside healthy public lands
- To create opportunities for groups to work together in new ways that can benefit the lakes, forests, wildlife, and people of this ecosystem

Our goals to create sustainable growth through shared initiatives will make our region stronger

Mission: The Heart of the Continent Partnership works to inclusively build vibrant and resilient communities that value and protect public lands in northeastern Minnesota and northwestern Ontario

Crane Lake Inter-agency Visitor Center—Bob briefed us on a request for the development of visitor center and boat launch . “ Together, Voyageurs, Superior National Forest and Quetico are the cradle of conservation” Our next steps will be connecting with other partners and creating a sub-group to discuss a volunteer program initiative that could be facilitated from the proposed center as well as a training facility and possibly historic building preservation training.

Bob - "There is a need to encourage a new audience and new visitors" Connie suggests a board of directors to help with consistent direction

Dark Sky applications—Trevor shared Quetico’s draft application . He will be running it by the Royal Astronomical Society. Bob has been talking to the local paper-mill and border patrol—A plan was agreed upon that we will coordinate a March application submission to the IDA and an April plans for launch/celebrations/media blast—James said that Kakabeka Falls and Quetico facilities can be used for educational programs on Dark Skies. Other thoughts were how we may approach communities to see if they want involvement—not dictating involvement in dark sky preservation but educate and consider collaboration. Connecting with friends groups and foundations, especially before launching and celebrations are key.

Bike the Heart—Frank touched on the successes of the Bike The Heart series of rides, the lesser attended and the well-attended, the diverse mix of rides including paved, dirt roads and single track. The first year of Bike The Heart was fun and created a buzz with cyclists and social media. Some clubs and organizations want to do it again. If we choose to continue to help host a series of rides we will look into creating a team that can help orchestrate the events.

Sustainable Recreation— Connie brought guidelines for a framework of guiding principles for sustainable recreation that included a solid foundation requiring 3 key ingredients; a **social, economic and ecological** foundation to benefit, maintain and support long term goals. A hand-out was shared that illustrated these pillars as well as showing five critical success factors 1- visitor satisfaction 2- protect natural and cultural resources 3- be financially sustainable 4-create a shared vision 5-manage effectively.



The need for more conversation

The group touched on discussions on an environmental congress to re-invigorate the organization with a large scale event. There is a need to re-engage friends and foundation groups to our table. Continue to invite community members to our meetings including First Nation community members. We should create subgroups to take on tasks such as events, website migration, grant writing, and web sustainability

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HOCP Winter Gathering

Attendees

Randy Larson—Starry Skies Lake Superior
Cythia Lapp—Starry Skies Lake Superior
Brian Jackson—Quetico Park Biologist
Lynn Palmer—HOCP member
Constance Cummins—Supervisor, Superior National Forest
Frank Jewell—St. Louis County Commissioner
Linda Braun—Min. Energy, Northern Development +Mines
Tonia Kittelson—Chair HOCP
Robert DeGross—Superintendent, Voyageurs National Park
Waverly Dovey—Atikokan Tourism
Katie Hannon—Atikokan Economic Development
Trevor Gibb—Superintendent, Quetico Provincial Park
Shane Lipsit-Fraser- A/Superintendent, Kakabeka Falls PP
Gary Davies—Neebing Economic Development
Lisa Radosovich-Craig—Superior National Forest
Chris Stromberg—Coordinator HOCP
Michael Crotteau—USFS -(via con-call)



General Partnership Business

Tonia Kittelson, Chair of the Heart of the Continent, welcomed everyone to Quetico Lodge and Conference Centre. Tonia started the meeting by a thanking Chris Stromberg, HOC Coordinator, for his commitment to the partnership. She also thanked the Atikokan Economic Development Corporation for its ongoing support, office space and helpful staff. Tonia emphasized the need to have continued funding to support that position. She touched on who the Heart of the Continent Partnership is and the need for this sort of organization.

Lisa helped with filling in the history of the partnership and some of the training that was initially done with The Conservation Fund and “Balancing Nature and Commerce” training. The talk of our Community Congress spurred the question of where funding originated from for the past big HOCP projects. Lisa noted that the congress funding was primarily raised from donations from foundations such as the Quetico-Superior, Northland and Blandin Foundations. Frank described the history of funding the National Geographic geotourism site was primarily from working with the Thunder Bay Regional Tourism, City of Thunder Bay and the City of Duluth and Saint Louis County.

Next Steps

Gary suggested a good spirit out-reach is needed and should have a team member from each side of the border for future funding of projects. Gary is working on a list of potential supporters.

More opportunities to acquire funding for the TravelTheHeart WebSite/MapGuide should be available with the new migration and Phase III of the new site.

Tonia shared a budget model from Doug Franchot (past Chair HOCP) which mirrored our current need for bigger and more consistent funding.—a “step up” on the marketing and promotion and revisit past involved organizations.

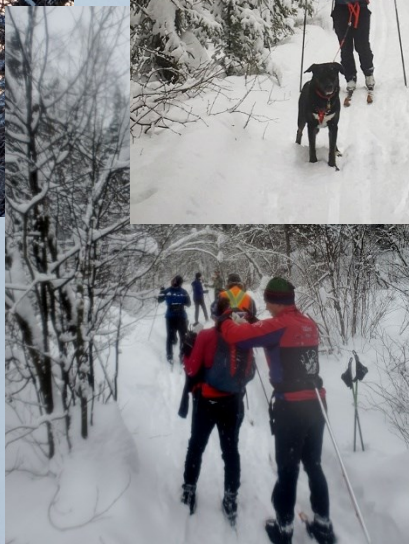
Sustainable Tourism

Superior National Forest Supervisor, Connie Cummins, presented on and encouraged group discussion on Sustainable Recreation and Tourism:

- Are we meeting the needs and demands for recreation?
- Are we maintaining the facilities based on the demands?
- Partnerships, cultivating relationships, citizen and community involvement.
- Housing volunteers that come from distances.
- Making smarter investments for long term sustainability.
- Continued protection of public lands with the increased numbers of visitation and popular sports such as mountain biking and ATV use.

HOCP appears to be a natural choice as an umbrella forum to help with this project but it will likely need a sub-group of members to help. A board of directors may also be considered so as not to make past mistakes and be sure that what is being worked on is relative to the need.

There are increased challenges with decreased funding and work overload. It was agreed on that that a sub-group to help work on those challenges and dust off the ideas that came from our past recreation/tourism summits to see what we are already doing well and how we can share ideas to improve.



*On *Saturday we
 *ventured * outdoors
 * in* Quetico's
 *winter wonderland *
 * * * * *

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Dark Sky Initiative

Heart of the Continent Partnership along with the public lands of Voyageurs National Park, The Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness within the Superior National Forest, Quetico, La Verendrye, and Pigeon River Provincial Parks have been working with Starry Skies Lake Superior, a division of International Dark Skies Association on becoming designated as dark sky preserves. Light pollution can affect all living creatures and the benefits of protecting our dark skies and the ability to see stars can not only be healthy but also a draw for tourism. It is becoming exceedingly popular for travelers and astrophotographers to seek our protected dark sky areas.

Bob DeGross pointed out that it is much easier and less expensive to protect dark skies than to repairing an area with light pollution. We have the opportunity right now to preserve an already dark. Trevor Gibb agreed and also stated that you can find dark skies in the tundra but our wilderness and night skies are very accessible. Cynthia Lapp of Starry Skies Lake Superior talked of how artificial light has an ill-effect on the planet. The Starry Skies Lake Superior has presented not only to HOCP but is working with several organizations and communities on the benefits of warm coloured lighting, wildlife-friendly lighting and less lighting over-all. Randy Larson, also from SSLS pointed out that parks are ideal places for educating the public. Bob said that VNP will also see the benefits of cost savings. Both Bob and Trevor talked about partnering with Professor Joel Halverson of the University of Minnesota on an educational program that included a planetarium caravan.

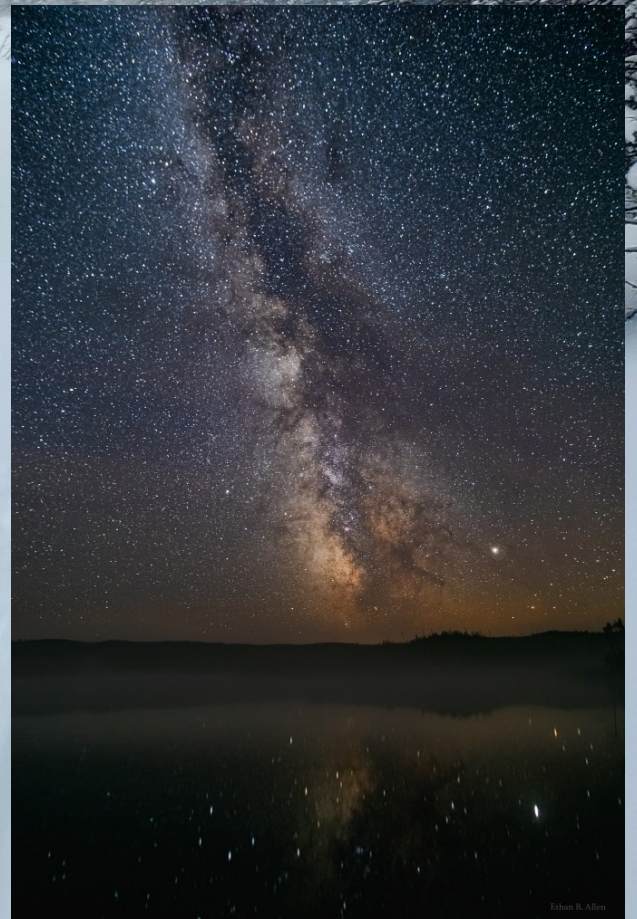
As a designated certified dark sky preserve destination your park/forest will become stewards of overseeing that the park or forest is meeting the requirements with upgrades to facilities and scheduled light assessments. Connie suggested recognition of good stewards should be part of our ongoing plan.

It was agreed that we are working on a very big and worthy project and consideration of a big launch celebration should be discussed after each organization becomes designated.

Heart of the Continent Partnership encourages becoming stewards of the places we love and connecting people to our public lands. Not only with sweat and hard work in the backcountry, but within the hearts and minds of the people that work, live and visit the Heart of the Continent.



Dark Sky Friendly Lighting at
Quetico Provincial Park




Night Sky Photo La Verendrye Provincial Park
by Ethan B Allen

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Chris Stromberg shared with the group the proposal to migrate the geotourism website, which has the potential to save costs substantially and to improve the product for customers.

A short presentation was given to the group from Jen Frandsen of Elebase Inc. Elebase was formally known as Old Town Creative and have been working with National Geographic on the geotourism sites. Unfortunately, our connection and equipment made the presentation rather lackluster but the new site will offer a number of new options such as GIS downloading, connections to Instagram, easier user-friendly and a new 2020 look.

Geotourism creates an authentic visitor experience and benefits its residents economically, environmentally and culturally, which helps achieve the mission of the Heart of the Continent Partnership.
<https://www.traveltheheart.org/>

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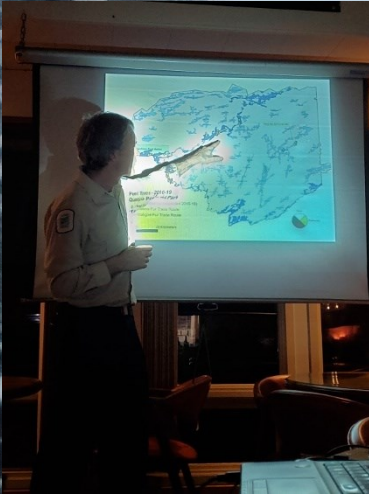
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HOCP Winter Gathering

Evening Presentation with Brian Jackson
Quetico Provincial Park Biologist
Red Pine Fire History in Quetico and the
Heart of the Continent

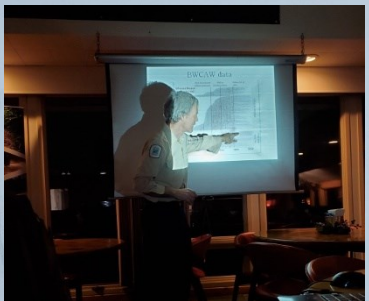


Quetico Park biologist Brian Jackson gave an evening presentation about research using analysis of tree rings and fire scars to reconstruct centuries of low intensity wildfires that have burned throughout the region. The research is conducted by examining fire scars on red pines and cutting stumps to reveal the rings of trees that can be hundreds of years old.

Dr. Evan Larson of the University of Wisconsin, Dr Kurt Kipfmuehler of University of Minnesota and Lane Johnson of the Cloquet Forest has been doing similar research and have assisted and shared information with Jackson and members of Lac La Croix First Nation. Indigenous people, as well as early European, ignited fires for a variety of purposes; opening up areas for hunting grounds and creating prime blueberry patches were a couple of possible reasons. Fires would often not affect the large pine or only create scars at tree bases but would rid the underbrush improving regeneration. Fire scars on the big pines can be found throughout the park recording the number of times the trees survived fires.



Brian also talked about the scarring of pine trees for the collection of resin or sap which was used in construction and repair of birchbark canoes among other things. Throughout the Heart of the Continent along the canoe routes of the voyageurs and the indigenous people before them, there is scarring on large pines that aren't from fire or badly chaperoned boy-scouts. These scars on old pines are typically shoulder height to knee height to access the sap from the tree easily.



If you are interested in attending our next meeting it will be posted on the Heart of the Continent page in the near future.

<https://heartofthecontinent.org/>

